



Ministry of Education and Employment



REFERENCING

of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF)
to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
and the Qualifications Framework of the
European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA)

A DOCUMENT FOR FURTHER CONSULTATION
AND IMPLEMENTATION

3rd revised edition April 2012

The Malta Qualifications Council is currently composed of Mr Joseph Abela Fitzpatrick as Chairman, Mr Joseph Farrugia, Mr Vince Farrugia, Ms Veronica Grech, Ms Joan Micallef, Ms Charmaine Portelli and Mr Emmanuel Zahra as Members.

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Some of the photos are attributed to Austin Tufigno

This document establishes the referencing of the Malta Qualifications Framework to the EQF and the QF/EHEA in accordance with the criteria and procedures agreed by the EQF Advisory Group and the Bologna Follow-Up Group.

A document prepared by the Malta Qualifications Council.

It is available on the Malta Qualifications Council website: www.mqc.gov.mt

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Preface

This document was first published in September 2009 to demonstrate to EU Member States the referencing of the Malta Qualifications Framework (2007) to the European Qualifications Framework as well as the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. Malta was the first country (as recognised also by the Council of Europe) to reference its framework to two European overarching frameworks (EQF and QF-EHEA) as well as the Transnational Qualifications Framework of the Small States of the Commonwealth.

This third updated edition features the process of implementation of the Malta Qualifications Framework which is taking place every day with the use of the framework and its increasing influence on learners, training providers, education institutions as well as employers, trade unions and social partners across the country. We have witnessed development in a number of key areas such as the implementation of the learning outcomes approach across many qualifications at all levels; the increasing interest in the so-called *stateless* or international qualifications; sectoral qualifications frameworks with initiatives coming from the printers' association and those engaged in the teaching of art, drama and music in public institutions.

All parts of the report have been updated to reflect progress achieved during the last fifteen months. Part Five shows the implementation of the referencing process evolving into change and innovation at different levels of the framework through greater attention for transparency, transferability and progression. MQC's vision to *value all learning* is coming

to fruition. More and more people are referring to the MQF and the processes linked to it as a point of reference for quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of qualifications.

During 2011 and 2012, the Ministry of Education and Employment concluded its process to present to Parliament amendments to the Education Act as well as three Legal Notices that provide a legal framework for the Malta Qualifications Framework, the validation of informal and non-formal learning as well as the quality assurance, accreditation and licensing of all programmes and institutions of further and higher education in Malta. A reading of these legal frameworks will enable readers to link the institutional developments of the MQF to its legal and institutional foundations.

I do hope that this updated version of Malta's referencing report will continue to build the necessary blocks in our system of qualifications and education; that will assist more learners to be attracted to lifelong learning, more employers to regard the system of education closer to work environments and that social partners continue to embrace change in our education as a sociological constant.

I do hope that this report will also serve as a point of reference at regional and international levels to all those who wish to embark on a learning experience in Malta in one of its many recognised public and private institutions imparting education of a very high standard.

Dr James Calleja

MQF Referencing Report Coordinator

Acknowledgements

Many individuals have contributed to this Referencing Report throughout the years 2008-2012. Their contribution has either been through their active participation in one or more of MQC's activities on the Malta Qualifications Framework or through their preparation of written contributions on specific issues such as the secondary school leaving certificate and profile, the comparability between ISCED and MQF, sectoral qualifications frameworks, the level-rating of qualifications and the reviews of national and international experts.

The following is a list, in alphabetical order, of individuals who have given a written contribution which is included in this edition of the Referencing Report:-

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A final word of thanks goes to the Minister of Education and Employment the Hon Dolores Cristina who continues to support the referencing process in no small measure. This year in particular, she spearheaded the enactment in Parliament of a robust legal framework for the MQF and its implementation.

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Message

April 2012

Hon. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education and Employment



The economic crisis that has hit European States and the developed world has brought to light the importance of sustained human capital in an uncertain labour market economy.

My government's approach to fight this uncertainty, was to increase the 2012 national budget in education by 4% over 2011. This is in line with our policy to invest heavily in education and training as a means to challenge the economic crisis by empowering individuals to re-skilling and lifelong learning.

This 3rd edition of the *Referencing Report* is a remarkable achievement for the Malta Qualifications Council and the National Commission for Higher Education. The two agencies have worked hand-in-hand in 2011 to enable their employees to meet the new challenge of a single agency with the task of building a more transparent and effective qualifications and quality assurance structure for Malta. This Report indicates that, although work is still in progress, a great deal has been achieved since the referencing of the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2009. The qualifications and quality system that the single agency has created is rendering positive results, with an increasing interest from a wide range of stakeholders coming from public and private education and training institutions as well as foreign higher education universities who wish to partner Maltese institutions with the intent to provide more degree and diploma programmes.

I continue to regard the *Referencing Report* as an important tool that helps to bridge the gaps between the various educational systems in Europe and to build a culture of mutual trust and transparency. The *Report* is a political expression of a Member State of the European Union eager to accomplish its European role in implementing the EU2020 strategy as well as the *Bologna* and *Copenhagen* Processes towards a common European Education area.

This document is testimony of Malta's strong commitment to link our long-standing system of qualifications to that of other Member States, promote mobility and ensure that all learning is valued on the labour market.

The process to reference our Framework of Qualifications to the Frameworks at European level has served as a catalyst for deeper and wider discussions on our qualifications at all levels. During 2011 a nationwide consultation process led to a new curriculum framework for compulsory education in 2012; a new eLearning platform will see most of our syllabi transformed into eContent making education an attraction for lifelong learning; an increase in vocational training qualifications with embedded apprenticeship schemes will enable our young generations to avoid the pitfalls of early school leaving; a learning outcomes approach implemented across all our national qualifications system will ensure

greater transparency in assessment procedures; a sustained increase in the number of government scholarships will open new opportunities for our people to match our standards with those of other European partner higher education institutions; the new legislation which I presented in Parliament in January 2012 to establish the Malta Qualifications Framework, the quality assurance and accreditation system and the validation of informal and non-formal learning are considered by all stakeholders as milestones in our history of education, quality assurance and qualifications.

This *Report* also reflects the results of systematic consultations with key stakeholders as well as Malta's active participation in the Commission's activities, the EQF Advisory Group, ENQA and ENQA-VET as well as the conferences and seminars convened by the *Bologna* Secretariat, CEDEFOP, ETF and the various EU Presidencies.

I personally consider Malta's *Referencing Report* as an evolving point of reference of our education and

qualification system. I expect that from the interaction at national and international levels that this 3rd edition of the *Referencing Report* will generate, we will further enhance and fine tune our insights, ideas and the experience itself of having qualifications based on learning outcomes aligned to level descriptors and backed by established standards and criteria in quality assurance.

Malta's contribution to the EQF and the QF-EHEA process has achieved a significant step through this *Referencing Report*. I am confident that the updating of this *Report* and the underlying consultation and evolution of the process itself will contribute to our need to ensure that education and training serve the individual, as a person and as an active worker in our labour market. My government's overarching policy in education is to provide increased support that empowers people of all ages in an inclusive context. This *Report* links the many initiatives within my Ministry in a structure that makes our qualifications and education system accessible, transparent and inclusive.

Summary

This report outlines the referencing process of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) and its application to a system of awards in education and training.³ It provides a conceptual and institutional background that led to the setting up of a European Qualifications Framework and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area and how the Malta Qualifications Framework which, like the EQF, is also based on an eight-level system, can be referenced to the EQF and the QF-EHEA.

Malta's NQF captures formal, informal and non-formal learning in a single comprehensive credit system that cuts across the MQF and level descriptors based on learning outcomes. This process follows the publication of Legal Notice 347 of 2005 which saw the birth of the Maltese Level Descriptors for a framework of qualifications.

The roots of the level descriptors of the MQF were the political, economic, cultural and social priorities of a nation which since 2004, is part of the European Union. What followed was an evolution of this process supported by the equally challenging developments of the EQF and the QF/EHEA namely the *Copenhagen* and *Bologna* processes backed by the Lisbon strategy and now the EU 2020 strategy particularly the flagship initiative for new skills for jobs.

The introduction of the document is followed by the methodological framework applied by MQC to the three qualifications frameworks and an overview of activities organised or led by MQC to satisfy the overarching criteria established by the EQF Advisory Group and the *Bologna* Follow-Up Group (BFUG) to formulate the referencing process.

Part One of the report sets out the European context that supported the political and educational magnitude of the *Bologna*, Lisbon (now EU 2020) and *Copenhagen* processes. Malta has been an active participant in the three processes and the Malta Qualifications Framework is a reflection of these initiatives. Emphasis is placed on the shift from learning inputs to learning outcomes and how programmes of studies that become part of the MQF will respect this paradigm.

It is the learner, not the Frameworks that is at the centre of Malta's referencing process.

In Part Two a more transparent and structured overview of the knowledge, skills and competences expected to provide the content of qualifications aligned to the MQF and referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA is outlined in more detail. Central in this tapestry of interacting forces on the learning process is the credit system that will enable training providers to match their qualifications to the level descriptors and the learners to gauge their capacity in progressing from one level of qualification to another. The credit system is based on a uniform scheme in which, with the exception of Level

³ The Glossary of selected definitions is found in Annex 2.

1 (40 credits) all other levels have 60 credits for one full-time year of study or training. One credit represents 25 hours of formal (contact hours), informal (self-study) and non-formal learning (backup training and learning experiences). The scope of this policy is to inculcate a credit system as early as possible in the lifelong learning process.

Part Three contains the substance of the referencing process. This is explained through a detailed cross-referencing to the EQF and the QF/EHEA based on the criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications to the EQF; an outline of the level-descriptors of the MQF compared to those of the EQF and the QF/EHEA with practical examples taken from already existing home-grown programmes based on learning outcomes in Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education institutions in Malta. In an attempt to map the progression from one level to another within the MQF the report provides a detailed table of learning outcomes ascending from Level 1 to Level 8 as referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA. This is explained in more detail for every level to facilitate a better understanding of the qualifications awarded in Malta.

Part Four goes beyond the referencing process to outline the added value that an MQF referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA has in terms of visibility of lifelong learning, attraction to qualifications and learning environments, mobility as well as competitiveness in a globalised society. The role of stakeholders in this process is emphasised to illustrate the need for an open system of qualifications (represented by a Qualifications Framework referenced to international standards) in which learners, the training providers, the quality assurance and accreditation agencies, employers, employees and multi-nationals find a user-friendly environment to grow in a lifelong learning culture.

In Part Five four key developments have been added to illustrate the implementation of the referencing process in the context of learning outcomes stateless qualifications, sectoral qualifications frameworks and awards and qualifications in art, drama and music. The detailed structure aims at assisting training providers design qualifications which can be pegged to the MQF using, credits, learning outcomes, workloads and quality assurance mechanisms.

This version also carries the reviews of four national and four international independent experts.

Introduction

The publication of Legal Notice 347 of 2005 provided the foundation of Malta's Qualifications Framework and established the principle of level descriptors for nationally recognised qualifications. Between October 2005 and June 2007 regular consultations with all stakeholders led to the consolidation of an eight-level qualifications framework and level descriptors which capture both the national and the European dimensions and structures in education.

The launching in June 2007 of the Malta Qualifications Framework was the first step in a long process to build a whole quality system of qualifications as well as a culture that goes with it. The referencing process is the second important step in rationalising the Framework with principles, indicators and mechanisms that will make the Framework relevant and effective to our educational system. When we talk about level descriptors, learning outcomes, progression, transparency, recognition, and accountability we are referencing what we learn and how we learn it, to what one is capable of knowing or doing.

The scope of this referencing report is therefore threefold: (i) the first to ensure that qualifications are valuable and worthwhile learning experiences across all sectors; (ii) the second that learning becomes borderless and frameless allowing learners the freedom to learn without bureaucratic or superfluous constraints; (iii) the third is to build a culture of quality both in the provision and in the formation of a workforce capable of meeting the challenges of an increasingly sophisticated knowledge society and a labour market economy.

A framework of qualifications is a mechanism that promotes structured profiles of all learning experiences within formal, informal and non-formal contexts¹. Learning becomes worthwhile and an added value to one's own career, professional or personal enrichment. Based on specific competence matrices and learning

outcomes, the learner is constantly witnessing the building of a number of qualifications leading to standards required in given sectors. If the objective is to become a lawyer, then learning experiences on taxation will link theory or knowledge, skills or applicability and competence or responsible autonomy with specific learning outcomes. A learner aspiring to become a professional tile layer will similarly experience learning blocks which are vertically connected (through progressive levels of difficulty) and horizontally related via knowledge, skills and competences. Learning outcomes express this vertical and horizontal connectivity that makes such experiences worthwhile.

Transparency in any learning process is a *sine qua non* to quality. When qualifications are spelt out through learning outcomes, then the learning process is freed from excessive bureaucracy and sometimes meaningless cultural diversities. To learn is to free your capacities to higher levels of acquisition. A qualifications framework locks learning in a quality regime that frees the learner from excessive entry criteria for lifelong learning but spells out those key competences necessary to succeed. On the other hand it will become much clearer that assessment will be entirely based on outcomes that reflect thought, practice and responsibility.

The third important objective of a referencing process is to ensure that learners become learners and not simply passive recipients of curricula, programmes of

¹ Agreeing on how many levels a qualifications Framework should have is like telling your architect how many rooms you need to live comfortably in a house you wish to build. The referencing process can be compared to the identification of the proper furniture and other utilities that should go in a kitchen but not in a bedroom, in a living room but not in a study, in a washroom but certainly not in the dining room.

study or training courses. Building a culture of quality that respects a referencing process is a major step in ensuring the provision of learning experiences and a relevant formation of a flexible workforce. In a labour market which is increasingly becoming insecure, demanding and unpredictable, knowledge, skills and competences must match this demand. Injecting quality and standards in learning is a prerequisite for the required competitiveness expressed in the Lisbon Strategy and in Government's policy to achieve excellence in at least six key sectors namely: medicine, education, tourism, financial services, environment and information technology and one regional area, Gozo. People today must know how to learn (learning to learn) how to grasp opportunities and exploit these productively (entrepreneurship) and how to ensure that active citizenship and democratisation become the pillars of our quality of life.

Why do we need a referencing process to meet these challenges?

A referencing process is an opportunity to discover other qualifications frameworks and level descriptors and how these can fit into over-arching frameworks such as the EQF.

For a qualification to be integrated in the Framework the learner must demonstrate that at the end of a learning process one has achieved the learning outcomes leading to a particular qualification. This must be assessed and certified by an MQC accredited awarding body. Thus, certificates of attendance to courses for which the learner is not assessed are not valued as a qualification and cannot be assigned one of the levels of the MQF.

This exercise has helped MQC to contextualise an education system of a small country in the broader context of a European education paradigm. The essential value of the European Qualifications Framework is that it will transform educational systems into a *Schengen* paradigm in which borderless mobility becomes an economic and a political strength. In order to achieve this state-of-play "Frameworks" must be related, they have to be referenced to a meta-Framework (EQF), so that divergences and contrasts in educational programmes will be ironed out through a flexible learning outcomes approach. When all qualifications Frameworks are referenced to the EQF, a new level of trust, accountability and quality assurance will emerge across all Member States of the European Union. Such referencing will certainly make European education more visible and attractive within the Union but more importantly beyond it too. Initiatives have already been taken notably by the European Training Foundation to link the EQF to the qualifications Framework of New Zealand, South Africa and Australia and the long-standing European ones such as those of Ireland, Scotland and England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Malta is also an active partner in a Commonwealth project which aims at establishing a Trans-National Qualifications Framework for Small States within the Commonwealth. Ministers of Education approved the TQF in their meeting in Kuala Lumpur in June 2009. In March 2012, Malta was among other Commonwealth States to launch in the Seychelles the Transnational Qualifications Framework for Small States of the Commonwealth.

Referencing qualifications frameworks helps economies diversify their productivity and service provision and enables workers to seek new pastures without the unnecessary and cumbersome processes needed to recognise qualifications and to value prior learning.

This proposal is therefore a contribution towards a new qualification culture built on four key principles:

- **quality**
- **transparency**
- **transferability**
- **progression**

This referencing process facilitates the realization of the key principles underlying today's and tomorrow's learning cultures. People are eager to learn how

to get qualified. Hence access to education is not enough anymore. Access must be complimented with attraction, flexibility and recognition of all a person knows and is capable of doing.

We hope that this 3rd edition of the Referencing Report will serve to reach the widest possible consensus on a quality assurance culture for as many home-grown and foreign qualifications as possible in Malta. Being one of the smallest member states of the European Union is an opportunity for a rapid growth in this sector and an equally fast attraction to education and training in Malta. A strengthened referencing process will also accelerate the development of a quality assurance culture which will cut across all levels of education from pre-school to adult and life-long learning.

Malta’s educational system is in a process of reform, innovation and growth. Adding a referencing process to strengthen home-grown and foreign qualifications is a timely initiative which will further enhance the new structures of our educational system. In doing so we must ensure that in rationalising the Malta Qualifications Framework and in linking it to the EQF and the QF/EHEA, we do it with one target in mind – to retain and attract more learners to education and training, value and reward all learning.

At the centre of this process is the learner, the incumbent of a learning process that will make or break Malta’s economic growth as a Mediterranean Nation and an active member of one of the biggest markets in the world, the European Union.

Malta’s Referencing Process – 10 overarching principles

1	An eight-level system which captures the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area; and which in turn establishes parity of esteem between general education and vocational training across all MQF Levels.	1
2	There is one credit system which cuts across the whole Framework of Qualifications and which is based on the guiding principle that 1 credit equals 25 hours of all forms of direct contact, self study and non-formal learning.	2
3	All programmes of study and training from pre-school to adult education are based on a learning outcomes approach, which is based on a three-fold system of knowledge (theory), skills (practical application) and competence (autonomy and responsibility).	3
4	Qualifications which are classified in the Malta Qualifications Framework reflect 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.	4
5	The acquisition of formally assessed key competences up to Level 3 of the Malta Qualifications Framework is a pre-requisite for further education. This also applies for the acquisition of key competences up to level 4 of the Malta Qualifications Framework as a pre-requisite for higher education.	5
6	The Secondary School Certificate and Profile is an official record of compulsory education and includes all forms of formal, informal and non-formal learning. This will act as an example to instil a culture towards valuing all forms of learning from the foundation stages of the lifelong learning process.	6
7	MQF Levels 2 and 3 are represented by official Certificates particularly the Secondary School Certificate (SEC) awarded by the University of Malta or VET qualifications detailing the knowledge, skills and competences acquired during formal learning and including (if applicable) other forms of informal and non-formal learning.	7
8	MQF Level 4 is represented by a Diploma which may either be a VET Diploma or a Matriculation Certificate; Level 5 by an Undergraduate Certificate or Diploma, a VET Higher Diploma or a Foundation Degree.	8
9	There is one area of Higher Education representing academic and research degrees as well as Vocational and Professional Degrees and Continuous Professional Development courses (CPDs).	9
10	All official documents carrying an MQF/EQF or QF/EHEA referencing shall be determined following a stated protocol agreement between the training/education public or private provider and the authorised quality assurance agency.	10

The Methodological Framework of the Referencing Process

The following is an overview of the different stages in referencing Malta's National Qualifications Framework to that of the European Qualifications Framework. The process has been a learning experience and we envisage that such positive experiences will continue to clarify the referencing process which by no means do we acknowledge that with this document, it has come to an end. On the contrary, the end of the referencing process has been the start of its implementation at all levels of education.

The steps that Malta has taken to reference such level descriptors can be termed as the initial phase of a longer process which will see the experiment of this report develop against tangible evidence of referencing the MQF to the EQF. In brief the steps taken in this process and which are evidenced in the long list of activities organised to lead to this report are the following:

- Establish a broader understanding of the level descriptors of the EQF and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) in the context of the Maltese education culture and system;
- Develop a methodological framework in which both sets of descriptors can be matched and challenged at the eight level system of both frameworks;
- Establish the nature of progression between one level and another in the context of both frameworks and including the descriptors of the (QF-EHEA);
- Verify the level of difficulty established between one level and another of the three frameworks EQF, QF/EHEA and the MQF;
- Test the comparability between the two frameworks (EQF and MQF) at all levels and the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA at levels 5 to 8;
- Match the conceptual significance of each level descriptor at each of the eight levels of the EQF and MQF framework and the EQF, MQF and QF/EHEA;
- Call upon key players in the education sector to challenge the referencing process at all stages of its development.

The referencing process came at a time when Malta was introducing the Qualifications Framework based on an eight-level system. The MQF is now at the implementation stage. Legal Notice 347/2005 established the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) in October 2005 to steer the

development of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). Later the Ministry of Education established that MQC would also act as the National Coordination Point for the MQF. MQC is responsible for defining the levels of qualifications and competences within the MQF. Such levels are based on generic not sector specific level descriptors which are flexible and can be applied to all qualifications.

For a qualification to be integrated in the Framework it was established that the learner must demonstrate that at the end of a learning process one has achieved the learning outcomes leading to a particular qualification. This must be assessed and certified by an MQC accredited awarding body. Thus, certificates of attendance to courses for which the learner is not assessed are not valued as a qualification and cannot be assigned one of the levels of the MQF.

This report analysed common features of qualifications such as levels with level descriptors, quality assurance systems, a description of learning outcomes, the division of learning into study units and credit systems. These common features make the EQF a Trans-National Framework adopted on an international scale, and enhance transparency and promote transferability of qualifications at national levels through national qualifications frameworks. In adopting this methodology, particular attention was therefore given to the broader context of a level descriptor such as the assessment procedure, the workload, the quality assurance and the progression expected from one level of difficulty to another.

MQC followed a set of criteria which was agreed upon by the EQF Advisory group and which provide a methodological guideline for the referencing process. These ten indicators include:

1. the responsibilities and the legal competence of the relevant bodies involved;
2. a demonstrated direct link with the EQF;
3. learning outcomes-based qualifications and the link to the validation of informal and non-formal learning and credit systems;
4. transparent inclusion of qualifications in one of the levels of the framework;
5. a quality assurance policy that corresponds to European principles;

6. the quality assurance body that maintains the referencing process;
7. the involvement of international experts in the referencing process;
8. the publication of a report on the referencing process (this report);
9. a public listing at European level indicating those Member States which completed the process; and
10. the referencing process completed by the established EU time frames

This report shows how the MQC is implementing this process, how most of the criteria fall within the remit of this public agency as the authority responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of the National Qualifications Framework.

In our methodology we focused on the roots of the level descriptors of the MQF as the political, economic, cultural and social priorities of a Nation which is now part of the European Union. Such level descriptors were read keeping in mind:

- the economic and social development of a small nation within the larger Union;
- the impact of the EQF and the QF-EHEA level descriptors on the culture and system of our education;
- the relevancy of the level descriptors of the MQF to the EQF and the QF-EHEA;
- the portability of such level descriptors to lifelong learning, the validation of informal and non-formal learning and greater transparency of qualifications within a changing labour market.

What followed was an evolution of this process supported by the equally challenging developments of the EQF and the QF/EHEA namely the *Copenhagen* and *Bologna* processes backed by the Lisbon strategy.

We adopted a methodology in which level descriptors were shown on two columns next to each other to facilitate comparison of both the level descriptors of the EQF and of the MQF. Such comparison is based on the EQF learning outcomes paradigm of the Knowledge, Skills and Competences. The learning outcomes of the MQF introduces the term applying knowledge and understanding and distinguishes between types of skills such as those in communication, judgement and learning like the level descriptors of the QF/EHEA, and equates competences with autonomy and responsibility. The level descriptors of the MQF are also referenced to the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA). This aspect gives more transparency and value to qualifications accredited and quality assured by MQC.

The changing character of qualifications from national, to European and international, from theoretical to practical, from learning inputs to learning outcomes and the greater emphasis in investment in a highly-skilled labour force that meets current and future industry requirements necessitated stakeholders' involvement and MQC's participation in and organisation of national, European and international activities. This methodological approach is evident in the detailed table shown below. Such events in which the MQC and stakeholders were involved were fundamental for the MQC to keep up with developments in the field and to ensure that the referencing process reflects the needs and aspirations of our education and employment policies.

The local stakeholders' contributions were also a key element in the shaping of the Malta Qualifications Framework and its referencing to the EQF and the QF/EHEA. Involvement in the design of learning outcomes, qualifications, occupational standards and the MQF itself gave stakeholders a sense of ownership which facilitated the synergy between education and training and industry, thus creating mutual trust and new forms of transparency.

This Referencing Report and the process leading to it were also based on research leading to the publication of four policy documents published by MQC which make up the *Valuing All Learning* Series as well as discussions based on the proposed principles. The Volumes on the Malta Qualifications Framework focused on:

1. A National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning;
2. Vocational Education and Training;
3. the Quality Assurance Policy; and
4. the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

We hope that this document will first and foremost serve to further the reflections of the international community on the methodology, the standards and criteria used for referencing qualifications frameworks. This is a relatively new area of study and while we think that our walking has been steady and progressive, we still acknowledge that we are far from claiming scholarship in this field of policy design. Secondly we augur that this report will be useful for learners, training providers, policy makers and stakeholders in their attempt to familiarise themselves with the MQF, in the context of its referencing to the EQF and the QF/EHEA.

The conclusions of the referencing report were brought together as a result of the following activities held in Malta between 1st October 2005 and 15th July 2009. Activities held in 2010 and 2011 aimed at implementing and updating the referencing process.

Date	News and Events	Entities / people involved
October 2005	Publication of Legal Notice 347	MQC
January – April 2006	Design of the first draft of the MQF	MQC
1 st November 2006	Launching of the Consultation Process and the presentation of the brochure: A Qualifications Framework for Malta – A First Guide	Organised by MQC Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
29 th November 2006	National Conference on the MQF entitled "From National to European: Linking Qualifications Frameworks Effectively"	Organised by MQC in collaboration with <i>Forum Malta fl-Ewropa</i> . Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
January – May 2007	Design and preparation of the first 3 policy documents in the Valuing All Learning series for consultation and the Key Competences document: Vol 1: A National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning; Vol 2: Guidelines for a VET system for Malta's NQF; Vol 3: A Quality Assurance Policy for VET Descriptors of Key Competences in the National Qualifications Framework: Levels 1 to 3 ¹	MQC in consultation with key stakeholders Six working groups designed level descriptors of the eight key competences as the basis for the design of curricula, programmes and syllabi.
21 st June 2007	National Conference to launch the MQF and the presentation of the brochure: A Qualifications Framework for Malta – A Second Guide	Organised by MQC Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
July – December 2007	Consultation with stakeholders on the new MQF	Led by MQC Participants included: public and private training providers,

University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.

24 th October 2007	National Conference entitled "Towards a National Learning Area for Vocational Qualifications"	Organised by MQC Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
29 th November 2007	MQC signs the first protocol with the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) which confirmed all the levels of qualifications with the MQF	The Minister of Education, Youth and Employment, MQC and ITS
November 2007	Dr James Calleja is appointed member of the EQF Advisory Group	MQC is now involved in discussing policy recommendations related to the EQF
January – February 2008	Design and preparation of the 4 th policy document in the Valuing All Learning series for consultation: Vol 4: Frameworks for the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Malta	MQC
May 2008 – January 2009	A series of 12 EQF/MQF Information Seminars	Organized by MQC Participants included: specific target groups such as guidance and counselors; college coordinators and heads of schools; Human Resources Managers; employers and trade union activists; students' and parents associations' representatives; teachers and lecturers; and NGOs
27 th June 2008	Launching of Vol 4, the Policy Document on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning	Organised by MQC with the collaboration of the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.

June 2008-June 2009	Participation in the ENQA-VET Thematic Groups on making VET more Attractive in Indicators and in Peer Learning Activities (PLA)	MQC
June 2008 – June 2009	Consultation meetings with key players on the referencing process and protocols	Led by MQC Participants included: the University of Malta, the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST), the Institute of Tourism Studies, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC)
June – September 2008	Consultation Group on the design of the School Leaving Certificate to include learning outcomes and to value all learning	Led by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) with the collaboration of MQC.
September 2008	The publication of a report compiled by the ETSE Leonardo da Vinci Project entitled “Empowerment of Transparency in the Vocational Framework of Security Employees	The project co-ordinated by Lithuania and MQC was one of the consortium partners.
25 th September 2008	National Conference entitled: Validating Informal and Non-Formal Learning: What it means to Employers, Organizations and Learners	Organised by MQC with the collaboration of the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) and the Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD) Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers’ associations, students’ representatives, parents’ associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
September 2008 – April 2009	Preparation of the first draft of the Referencing Report	Exchange of information on the methodology of the referencing process: The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF); the Qualifications and Credit Authority (QCA) Draft 3 of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)
18th-19th November 2008	ENQA-VET Peer Learning Activity on the Recognition of Prior Learning	Organised by MQC with the support of the ENQA-VET Secretariat Participants included: representatives of ENQA-VET members from across Europe and stakeholders from Malta.

5 th December 2008	<p>The Final Conference of the EQF-FRAME Leonardo da Vinci Project. The Project's deliverables were formally launched. These included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. EQF-FRAME Flexible References and Methods of Evaluation 2. The European Qualifications Framework and Tourism Studies 3. Manual for Referencing Qualifications in Tourism Studies to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning 	<p>EQF-FRAME Project co-ordinated was MQC. The consortium was made up of partners from Austria, Italy, Greece, Slovenia and Spain. Participants included: key stakeholders representing the tourism sector and others representing students and education.</p>
10 th December 2008	<p>Third Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Designated Authorities Conference</p>	<p>MQRIC and MQC organised this Conference Participants included: Designated Authorities</p>
April – June 2009	<p>Reviews by national and international experts</p>	<p>The referencing process steering committee is composed of the board members of the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC), Dr James Calleja Chief Executive MQC, Ms Doris Mangion Senior Manager Standards and Qualifications MQC and the following 4 national and 3 international experts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Suzanne Gatt, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Malta 2. Mr Felix Borg, General Manager Operations, Employment and Training Corporation 3. Dr Jennifer Cassingena Harper, Commissioner National Commission for Higher Education 4. Mr Emmanuel Zahra, Director, Institute of Mechanical Engineering, Malta College of Arts Science and Technology. 5. Mr Tom Bain, former Assistant Director Scottish Qualifications Authority 6. Dr James Keevy, Director Research, South African Qualifications Authority 7. Mr Vincent McBride, Senior Specialist, Planning Monitoring Evaluation Unit, European Training Foundation 8. Dr Jim Murray, Chief Executive, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

5 th May 2009	Tourism Sector Skills Unit Meeting on the referencing process	organised by MQC Participation of the Tourism Sector Skills Unit representing the industry, the Designated Authority - The Malta Tourism Authority and the Institute for Tourism Studies
5 th May 2009	EQF/MQF and Referencing Information Seminar	Organised by Heritage Malta Participation of Heritage Malta executive and managerial staff
26 th -27 th May 2009	ENQA-VET PLA on the impact of the common Quality Assurance Framework	Organised by MQC with the support of the ENQA-VET Secretariat Participants included: representatives of ENQA-VET members from across Europe and stakeholders from Malta.
June - November 2009	Stakeholders Meetings on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning for the Agribusiness and Printing Sectors	Organised by MQC Participants included stakeholders representing the Agribusiness and the printing sector
3 rd June 2009	Presentation of the second draft of the Referencing Report to the Council members of the MQC	The Council members of the MQC
4 th June 2009	Colloquium on the validation of informal and non-formal learning	Led by MQC Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' associations, political parties, NGOs, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.
22 nd June 2009	EQF/MQF and Referencing Information session as part of the EQUILIFISE Project	Organised by (Institute for Financial Services) IFS-Malta with the collaboration of MQC Participants included: people from the financial services sector
25 th June 2009	Introductory Meeting on the validation of informal and non-formal learning and the aims of the pilot project (VINFL of 10 individuals coming for the Printing, Agribusiness and Care sectors)	Organised by MQC and FHRD Participants included HR Managers or SME representatives from the Printing, Agribusiness and Care Sectors
15 th July 2009	Presentation of the third draft of the Referencing Report to the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport and key stakeholders	Led by MQC Minister responsible for education and key stakeholders

August 2009 - June 2010

Dissemination of and Consultation on the Referencing Report

Led by MQC

Participants included: public and private training providers, University of Malta, trade unions, employers' associations, students' representatives, parents' association, political parties, NGO's, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.

1st September 2009

Stakeholders Meetings on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning for the Hair and Beauty Sector.

Organised by MQC

Participants included stakeholders the Hair and Beauty sector

10th-11th September 2009

The fourth draft of the Referencing Report to be discussed by the EQF Advisory Group

Organised by the European Commission

Participants included the EQF Advisory Group

2nd October 2009

Gozo Regional Committee Seminar on the EQF, MQF and the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning

Organised by the Gozo Regional Committee

in collaboration with MQC Participants included: NGO representatives and education and training providers

14th October 2009

Launching of the School Leaving Certificate by the Minister of Education

Organised by the Directorate of Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) in collaboration with MQC

Participants included: Principals of Colleges and Heads of Secondary Schools, Education and training Providers and stakeholders representing the industry

22nd-23rd October 2009

Peer Learning Activity on the Involvement of Stakeholders in the NQF

MQC with the support of the European Commission,

the members of the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Cluster, and the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry Participants included: the members of the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Cluster: CEDEFOP, European Commissions and European Training Foundations representatives (ETF): stakeholders from across Europe and Malta

4th November 2009

Launching of the published Referencing Report for further consultation

Organised by MQC with the support of the European Commission

Representation in Malta Participants included: public and private training providers, trade unions, employers' associations, political parties, NGO's, government entities, Designated Authorities, and the general public.

4 th November 2009	Fourth Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Designated Authorities Conference	MQRIC within MQC organised the Conference Participants included: Designated Authorities
15 th December 2009	Final Conference on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning	Organised by MQC Participants included Designated authorities, NGOs and the general public.
2010 - 2011	ISCED consultation process	MQC took the initiative to launch a consultation process with the National Office of Statistics to discuss the new ISCED 2011.
10 th January 2010	Turkish/Cypriot Delegation visit MQC	15 Higher Education officials which formed part of a Turkish/Cypriot delegation were briefed about the MQF and the Council as well as the referencing report of the MQF to the EQF.
12 th February 2010	Information Session Malta Employers' Association	This information focused on the recent developments of the MQF. Over 50 employers from the public and private sector attended the session.
26 th March 2010	EQF/MQF Information Session at the Employment and Training Corporation	This information session focused on the EQF, the MQF, the Referencing Report and level rating of qualifications. Over 40 staff members from the ETC attended this session.
March 2010	Launch of Occupational Standards in the Printing Industry	MQC launched the Occupational Standards in the Printing Industry and commenced work on establishing occupational standards in a number of other spheres including agribusiness, care, hair and beauty, photography, the band-clubs sector and the youth sector on auto-surveyors.
8-9 April 2010	Greek Delegation Study Visit	5 education officials visited Malta on a study visit. Participants were briefed on the MQF and the Referencing Process.
22 nd April 2010	New Zealand Delegation	The delegation was briefed about the MQF and the validation of informal and non-formal learning.
2-8 May 2010	Danish Leonardo da Vinci Study Visit	The theme of this study visit was 'Guidance goes Global' and the Danish participants were briefed on the MQF and the referencing process.

25 th May 2010	Brazilian Delegation Study Visit	The key objective of this visit were to seek opportunities of co-operatrion between entities in the 2 countries. The delegation were briefed on the EQF and the MQF.
14 th June 2010	Designated Authorities Meeting	Over 20 participants from various local Designated Authorities attended this meeting.
13 th July 2010	Information Meeting in collaboration with the National Commission for Persons with a Disability	MQC initiated a dialogue on inclusive Education in collaboration with the National Commission for Persons with a Disability. Participanst were briefed about the EQF and the MQF.
7 th July 2010	National Coordination Point Information Meeting	The target audience for this information meeting were higher education officials, teaching staff and representatives from trade unions and workers' representatives. 60 participants attended this session.
3 rd September 2010	National Coordination Point Information Meeting	The target audience for this information meeting were higher education officials, teaching staff and representatives from trade unions and workers' representatives. 50 participants attended this session.
10 th September 2010	National Coordination Point Information Meeting	The target audience for this information meeting were higher education officials, teaching staff and representatives from trade unions and workers' representatives. 50 participants attended this session.
30 th September 2010	Designated Authorities Meeting	18 representatives from local Designated Authorities attended this meeting.
11-23 October 2010	Kosovo Study Visit	The Director of the National Qualifications Authority Kosovo, Ms Teuta Danuza, visited MQC on a 2 week study visit. Ms Danuza was briefed on the MQF and on the Referencing Process.
19 th November 2010	National <i>Bologna</i> Seminar	This seminar focused on quality assurance in Higher Education. It was attended by 60 participants
30 th November 2010	Annual Designated Authorities Conference	This conference was attended by over 60 representatives from local Designated Authorities.

14 th December 2010	National <i>Bologna</i> Seminar	This session focused on the challenges of the European Higher Education Area and exploring ways of better coordinating reforms of the <i>Bologna</i> and <i>Copenhagen</i> process. Over 60 participants attended this session.
20 th January 2011	National <i>Bologna</i> Seminar	This seminar focused on the relevance of higher education to employability. Over 50 participants attended this seminar.
21 st January 2011	INLearning Final Project Meeting and National Conference	Over 100 participants attended this Final Conference which marked the end of this project. The main deliverables of the project were officially launched during this conference. The project promoted social inclusion through the development of a methodology framework for the validation of informal and non-formal learning.
3 rd February 2011	National Awards System Referred to the MQF	This colloquium was used to launch the document 'Classifying Qualifications – A National Awards System Referred to the MQF'
7 th February 2011	National Coordination Point Information Meeting	The target audience for this information meeting were higher education officials, teaching staff and representatives from trade unions and workers' representatives. 50 participants attended this session.
16-17 February 2011	National <i>Bologna</i> Seminar	This seminar focused on student-centered learning in higher education. Over 60 participants attended this seminar.
10 March 2011	National <i>Bologna</i> Seminar	This seminar focused on education, research and innovation and the relevance to Higher Education Institutions. Over 50 participants attended this seminar.
13 th April 2011	National Coordination Point Information Meeting	The target audience for this information meeting were higher education officials, teaching staff and representatives from trade unions and workers' representatives. 50 participants attended this session.

18-19 April 2011	National <i>Bologna</i> Seminar	The topic of this seminar was international openness and the international dimension. Over 60 participants attended this seminar.
20 th April 2011	National Coordination Point Information Meeting	The target audience for this information meeting were higher education officials, teaching staff and representatives from trade unions and workers' representatives. 50 participants attended this session.
11 May 2011	EUPA Study Visit	The theme of this study visit was 'Bolstering Education in Malta through restructuring and empowerment'. 11 participants participated in this Study Visit.
20 th May 2011	National <i>Bologna</i> Seminar	This seminar discussed the main developments of Learning Outcomes. Over 60 participants attended this seminar.
16 th June 2011	Romanian Study Visit	The theme of this visit was 'The Process of Defining Qualifications. Maltese and Romanian experts shared their experiences in referencing qualifications frameworks within the context of NQFS and the EQF/QF-EHEA.
27 th September 2011	ESF 1.28 – VQPACK Final Conference	Over 100 participants attended this conference. Extensive references were made to the MQF and the Referencing Report.
31 st October 2011	NQF Inclusive Final Conference	The conference was organised by MQC and MCAST. Over 50 participants attended this conference.
8 th November 2011	ECVET National Conference	100 stakeholders from the field of education and industry attended this conference.
29 th November 2011	EQAVET National Conference	105 stakeholders from the field of education and industry attended this conference.
30 th November 2011	6 th Mutual Recognition of Qualifications – Designated Authorities Conference	This conference was attended by 60 representatives from various local Designated Authorities.

Criteria for the Referencing Process

An overview of the state-of-play 2012

Table 1: EQF Indicators for Referencing - Malta's state-of-play

Criterion 1

The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.

Legal Notice 347/2005 established the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) which is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Malta Qualifications Framework; to promote and facilitate lifelong learning access, transfer and progression; and to foster the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta⁹¹. This legal notice will be replaced and superseded by the Further and Higher Education Act which will give a regulatory mandate for MQC's in its role to maintain the Malta Qualifications Framework.

The Malta Qualifications Council is an entity entrusted by Government with the linkage between the various sectors of public and private education in vocational education and training. MQC acts as the broker between the making of a qualification, the delivery of the learning experience/s and the final certification process normally expressed in a transcript. Over the last few months MQC has acted as a promoter for the introduction of the Diploma Supplement for qualifications at MQF levels 5 to 8 and is working closely with VET institutions to introduce the Certificate Supplement for qualifications at levels 2 to 4 of the MQF⁹². Furthermore MQC level rates all qualifications in the Framework and aligns such qualifications to the MQF and assists all training providers (including HE institutions) to re-design the course descriptions based on learning outcomes. MQC works closely with other government agencies such as the Directorate for Standards and Quality in Education - DQSE (which regulates compulsory education), the National Commission for Higher Education - NCHE (which advises government on policies related to further and higher education) and the Directorate for Lifelong Learning which co-ordinates all adult education programmes. MQC also has special relationships with the Employment and Training Corporation, the University of Malta and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology as well as with many other private training institutions, Government Agencies and Authorities and private and church schools. All such key players have had a central role in the design of the MQF and are currently supporting MQC in fulfilling the objectives of the Framework itself.

Criterion 2

There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.

One of the pre-requisites for the referencing of the MQF to the EQF is that there must be a clear link between both Frameworks, in terms of progression of the levels of difficulty demonstrated through the level descriptors. The link between the MQF and the EQF is demonstrated in Part 3 of the report. Each level of the MQF has been matched to that of the EQF from levels six to eight to the QF/EHEA. The matching process has shown that there is clear referencing between the three overarching frameworks and that such referencing will lead to the design of qualifications which can be easily referenced to the various levels of the framework. Particular attention has been given to how progression within one framework matches that in other frameworks and that such progression is reflected in the levels of difficulty between the levels in the framework. The meticulous analysis of each level to the two frameworks illustrates a transparent referencing procedure.

91 LN347/2005, Employment and Training Services Act, (CAP.343), Malta Qualifications Council Regulations, 2005, B4949.

92 Refer to Annex 8 for a specimen of the Diploma Supplement used by the University of Malta and a specimen of the Certificate Supplement.

Criterion 3

The national framework or qualifications system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.

MQC has established standards on which education and training institutions agree upon when both parties sign Protocols and to which they are obliged to adhere to. These standards include aligning qualifications to one of the levels of the MQF, providing Learning Outcomes and credit-based qualifications, clear assessment procedures and eventually the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. Further and Higher Education institutions in Malta already work with a credit system. The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been in operation at the University of Malta for a number of years; vocational education is largely based on a cumulative credit system and mechanisms are in hand to introduce the ECVET system across all vocational education and training. The MQF also recommends a credit system that cuts across all the levels of the framework from the lowest to the highest and which includes compulsory and adult education. There is a wide support for such a system which would facilitate referencing and recognition processes. In June 2008, the Malta Qualifications Council presented its draft policy on the validation of informal and non-formal learning. Several projects at national and European levels (EQF –INLearning Project led by MQC) are underway to test the proposed system and ensure its alignment to the MQF at the earliest possible. The Ministry of Education is also committed to introduce a new School Leaving Certificate (SCL) in which formal, informal and non-formal accreditation of learning is recorded. The new SLC (awarded at the end of compulsory education – 16 years of age) will be launched by the Minister of Education in October 2009 and its full implementation is targeted for October 2010.

Criterion 4

The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.

These standards are transparent and define the workload, method of assessment and internal and external Quality Assurance (a full list of the standards which all education and training providers must meet is available in table 8 of the Referencing Report). These are easily available from the website of the Malta Qualifications Council and discussed on a one-to-one basis during meetings with education and training institutions. Since 2005, MQC has published three policy documents (Valuing All Learning Volume I, II and III) highlighting the procedures to include qualifications in the MQF and has organized several activities to inform training providers and key players in the various educational sectors on how qualifications will be included in the MQF. These standards and procedures will apply to all formal qualifications of institutions which have been accredited to provide education and training. A Protocol is being signed between every education and training institution and MQC indicating the standards and procedures used to reference qualifications to the MQF.

Criterion 5

The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).

The Malta Qualifications Council is the body responsible for the National Qualifications Framework and hence it also assumes the responsibility to quality assure those qualifications that fall within the Framework and which correspond to the level-descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. It is MQC's responsibility to quality assure vocational training and learning experiences which fall within

informal and non-formal education as well as continuous professional development qualifications. The quality assurance policy has been published in 2007 (Vol III of the Valuing All Learning series – A Quality Assurance Policy for VET) and the referencing of qualifications to the MQF is channeled through a quality assurance policy in which credits, learning outcomes, QA internal and external policies, quality infrastructure and staff profiles are all verified. Two other public institutions harmonise this process and ensure quality standards in compulsory education, higher and adult education respectively namely the Directorate for Standards and Quality in Education (DQSE) and the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE). In 2009, a Further and Higher Education Act will bring all these initiatives under one coherent regime which would be applied across all education and training activities in Malta provided by public or private accredited institutions.

Criterion 6

The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.

The Further and Higher Education Act which will be published in 2009 will establish the criteria on which accrediting bodies will be established in Malta. It is expected that a Quality Assurance Agency will be responsible for all further and higher education qualifications and that such agency will tap the already existing resources available within the National Commission for Higher Education and the Malta Qualifications Council. Once this process is set in motion, one cannot exclude the setting up of private Quality Assurance Agencies in Malta. MQC will ensure that all public and private Quality Assurance Agencies will endorse the referencing process. To-date the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (for compulsory education) has supported the referencing process and will shortly be signing a Protocol on the new School Leaving Certificate which reflects the level descriptors of Level 1 of the MQF.

Criterion 7

The referencing process shall involve international experts.

Experts for Member States were called upon to peer review Malta's referencing process at all levels of the MQF. These experts were selected on the basis of experience and expertise in undertaking similar processes in their country of origin. The international experts are Mr Tom Bain Former Assistant Director of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Dr James Keevy, Director, International Liaison, South African Qualifications Authority, Mr Vincent McBride, Senior Specialist Planning Monitoring Evaluation European Training Foundation and Dr Jim Murray, Executive Chairman National Qualifications Authority Ireland. Their reviews were discussed by MQC's working group and recommendations were inserted in the second and third drafts of the Referencing Report. Electronic communication facilitated the review process and synopsis of their reports has been carried out in the final draft of the Referencing Report. National experts were also consulted to ensure focus and contextualization. Persons selected to undertake the review were individuals who worked closely with MQC or who held senior managerial positions within public institutions covering vocational and higher education, employment, research and innovation. The persons selected were: Mr Felix Borg, General Manager Malta Employment and Training Corporation, Dr Jennifer Cassingena Harper, Commissioner National Commission for Higher Education, Dr Suzanne Gatt, Senior Lecturer Faculty of Education University of Malta and Mr Emmanuel Zahra, Director, Institute of Mechanical Engineering (MCAST). All local reviewers acted in their personal capacity and not as representatives of their institutions. Their reports have also been published as part of the Referencing Report. This was decided as part of the transparency policy that MQC adopts.

Criterion 8

The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point and shall address separately each of the criteria.

A series of information meetings on the European Qualifications Framework which took place in 2008 and early 2009 facilitated in no small measure the process of consultation on the referencing report. Employers, Human Resources Managers, trade unions, students and parents associations, counselling psychologists, career counsellors, private and public training providers, higher education representatives, public and private agencies that provide training in art, drama, music, sports and crafts, the Church authorities and others were among those who participated in such meetings. It is the objective of the Referencing Report to define the underlying principles behind the referencing process, its development and implementation, and the impact it will have on stakeholders. The report will be published in November 2009 and launched at a national seminar which will be addressed by national and international experts and by the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. It will be presented to all key stakeholders for further information and consultation. Although the document is in its final stages of development, MQC will update its referencing process as more and more stakeholders air their views on how Malta's qualifications continue to be referenced to the National and the European Framework. The report has been designed in such a way as to facilitate its reading. The report will be published in hard and soft copy form and a copy will also be placed on the MQC website. An abridged form will also be published for quick review and brochures and posters will also be printed to give the process more visibility across the various sectors of our education and training arena.

Criterion 9

The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.

Malta was among the first two Member States (along with Ireland) that presented the Referencing Report to the EQF Advisory Group on the 10th of September 2009. The Report had very positive feedback from Member States particularly for Malta's innovative aspect of referencing the Malta Qualifications Framework to the EQF and the QF-EHEA.

The Council of Europe, the European Training Foundation and CEDEFOP were particularly supportive of this methodology which, in this initial phase of development requires more experiential evidence of its applicability. Different States will have diverse methodologies in referencing their national qualifications frameworks to the EQF but the EQF Advisory Group applauded Malta and Ireland for taking the initiative to design the structure of a relatively new type of report. It is expected that there will be a Register at EU Level listing the Member States which have completed the referencing process.

The Malta Qualifications Council informed the European Commission in August 2009 that it has completed its report and that it intends to present it in September 2009 following official endorsement by local key stakeholders and the Ministry of Education. It is also expected that the Commission will provide a virtual link to the report when the final published version will be sent to it in October 2009.

Criterion 10

Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and EUROPASS documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.

Level-rating of courses provided by public education and training institutions has been agreed upon between public and private education and training institutions and MQC. This is being formalised in Protocols which bind these institutions to indicate the level of the MQF and EQF on all new transcripts and certificates awarded by such institutions. This procedure is first being conducted with public institutions and will be followed with private education and training providers who shall also follow the same process as the public institutions. All institutions have agreed to level-rate all qualifications, ensure that qualifications respond to a learning outcomes approach, to a credit system which is in line with EU tools (such as the ECTS and ECVET) and that quality of education is based on the principles and processes of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Higher Education and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) for Vocational Education and Training. MQC's Protocols will indicate clearly how such clear references on all certificates and diplomas will be shown and how such information will also be included in transcripts and the Certificate and Diploma Supplements.

This process has already started with all public providers as well as with a number of key private providers. It will be finalised by 2012 as recommended by the European Commission.

Since 2010, several conferences, seminars and consultation meetings were held to discuss the results of the referencing process and to build-up a more robust implementation road map across the whole spectrum of the MQF.

The following is a select list of meetings held during 2010 with various stakeholders. These are the details of the meetings and the main outcomes in relation to the initial phase of the implementation of the referencing process.

1.

The 4th Conference of the Designated Authorities - "The Essential Framework and its impact on the Recognition of Qualifications"

Hosted by Malta Qualifications Council and held at Dar I-Ewropa (Europe House) – Valletta on the 4th November 2009

Speakers :

Dr James Calleja: Chief Executive Officer also in his capacity as the Mutual Recognition Coordinator
Mr Joseph Abela Fitzpatrick: Chairman Malta

Qualifications Council

Mrs Doris Mangion: Senior Manager Standards and Qualifications

Mr Jens Bjornavold: Expert CEDEFOP

Mr Sean O'Reilly: Manager, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Mrs Helga Ellul: President of the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise & Industry

Participated

Representatives from Trade Unions

Representatives from Employers Organizations

Desk Officers of the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre

The key outcomes of this conference in relation to the referencing process were the following:

- The need for transparency in relation to qualifications of a professional nature
- Structures that provide a platform for cooperation and dialogue between designated/competent authorities and qualifications agencies
- Cooperation that strengthens coherence of qualifications systems
- Research and training initiatives to reinforce the learning outcomes' orientation

National Qualifications Frameworks were seen as instruments to:

- Support Lifelong Learning
- Facilitate the recognition of a broader range of learning
- Establish a number of levels (though this is a very technical issue). It is not the number of levels that count but the national system of education and the national situations and cultures of education.

The success of such processes are based on the involvement and dialogue of stake holders in order to develop NQFs. There are important lessons to be learned in this field particularly in ensuring that qualifications frameworks meet the needs of learners and economic growth. Adequate quality assurance processes for each qualifications framework is also essential. Although there are many different Awards, yet all awards can be classified and aligned to the levels of a Qualifications Framework. Designated authorities can assist Qualifications Authorities to make such a process more effective, transparent and technically correct.

Stakeholders stand to benefit from such an instrument. Some of the benefits of national frameworks are: the recognition of all learning; transparency of learning outcomes; the building of trust across the education and training system. The EQF acts as a neutral reference point to facilitate the dialogue between national frameworks or systems of qualifications. It also supports mobility and lifelong learning. The responsibility of stakeholders is to meet European responsibilities by fulfilling national responsibilities – transparent implementation, accurate levelling of qualifications to the NQF and strong quality assurance procedures.

On the other hand, the duty of the social partners is to play a key role in education, training and employment. Through social dialogue employers:

- Influence educational curricula,
- adopt joint programmes,
- promote lifelong learning,
- develop occupational sectoral standards,
- provide training for vulnerable groups
- help avoid social inclusion.

Employers also recognise the importance of Learning Outcomes based on curricula from an early stage at school and the means to higher levels of education that match the demand of business. The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have specific needs; they are the back bone of our economy. More needs to be done on occupational standards but we also need to validate what is already there, in our enterprises.

A question was raised on “Who can assess?” Speakers agreed that certainly not teachers, but people in that particular sector who make use of the machines and tools, and who determine the proper standards and the level of competences. Common initiatives in the areas of education will ensure employability. Investing in people is the best form of social welfare, wherein training will always be the more beneficial option in the long-term for both employers and employees alike.

2.

Study Visit by a Greek Delegation from a leading Trade Union

8-9 April 2010

Malta Qualifications Council

Participants:

Mr Michalis Kouroutos, Secretary of Education of GSEE
Mr Nikos Fotopoulos, Research Associate of KANEP/
GSEE

Ms Elena Bakatselou, Research Associate of KANEP/
GSEE

Study Visit coordinated by

Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive MQC

Ms Valerie Attard, Communications Manager MQC

The objective of this study visit was to explore the processes used in Malta in setting up the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and in finalising the *Referencing Report* of the MQF to the EQF and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. The study visit was part of the Malta Qualifications Council consultation process to test the MQF at national and international levels. The CEO of the MQC was invited by the Ministry of Education of Greece in February 2010 as key speaker during the launching of the National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of Greece.

The study visit to Malta consisted in a number of presentations as listed below followed by discussions on how institutions and systems respond to a new structure such as a national qualifications framework. The following is the list of presentations provided namely on:-

- The Implementation of the Malta Qualifications Framework - Ms Doris Mangion;
- The Validation Process of Informal and Non-Formal Learning – Mr Richard Curmi ;
- How to communicate the MQF to stakeholders – Ms Valerie Attard ;
- The relationship between the MQF and the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) Office – Ms Josephine Sultana;
- The Impact of the Qualifications Framework on the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) - Mr Joe Cutajar.

Meeting were also scheduled with Professor Grace Grima, Director General, Quality and Standards in Education, Ministry of Employment, Youth and the Family; Ms Veronica Grech, University Registrar and MQC Council Member, University of Malta.

On day two a consultation meeting was held at the Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry in Valletta

Speakers:

Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive, Malta Qualifications Council

Ing Ray Muscat, Malta, Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry

Ms Jeanelle Catania, Executive, Policy and Business Development, Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry

Mr Michael Parnis, General Workers Union

Mr William Portelli, Confederation of Malta Trade Union (CMTU)

Mr Arthur Rossi, Confederation of Malta Trade Union (CMTU)

The importance of Lifelong learning for Maltese employees in the traditional sectors was emphasised.

Later a meeting at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), Main Campus, Paola with

Professor Maurice Grech Principal and Mr Donald Friggieri, Consultant was held. The meeting was characterised by a discussion on the role of a public vocational college plays on Malta's economic growth, employment and attraction of investment.

The key conclusion of this consultation meeting was that Malta has the capacity to offer foreign guests the techniques necessary to set up a qualifications framework which responds to the education culture of a given society and the European Qualifications Framework. In each of the governmental and non-governmental organisations visited, the qualifications framework of Malta is now well placed in the system of qualifications and structures of courses and programmes of studies. Furthermore, these initiatives have served to ensure that the European tools concerning credits, quality assurance, recognition, transparency and the validation of informal and non-formal learning are applied as a means to attract and retain learners in a lifelong learning process.

3.

MQC participates in GWU Conference Workers Memorial Building, Valletta, 7th November 2009

The Youth Section of the General Workers' Union organised a half-day seminar on the *Recognition of Qualifications* on Saturday 7th November at the Workers Memorial Building. The seminar was addressed by the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport the Hon. Dolores Cristina, the Opposition Spokesman for Education the Hon. Evarist Bartolo, the CEO of the National Commission for Higher Education Mr Jacques Sciberras and the CEO of MQC Dr James Calleja. In her address, the Hon. Cristina stressed upon the importance of quality in the recognition of qualifications and announced the setting up of a Malta Quality Assurance and Qualifications Authority to ensure that all institutions and programmes respond to nationally established processes and criteria of quality assurance across all public and private Further and Higher Education institutions.

The Hon. Bartolo delved into the need to ensure that quality assurance in Malta cuts across all institutions so that learners are guaranteed recognised and quality assured qualifications. He emphasised that although

quality assurance is not an easy process, government should do its utmost to monitor the provision of further and higher education by private institutions especially of institutions which may provide qualifications which are not up to the standards established by public institutions. Both Mr Jacques Sciberras and Dr James Calleja spoke about the processes that lead to quality assurance and recognition respectively. They gave a detailed account of the role of the NCHE and the MQC respectively and how these two institutions are collaborating together with the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education to filter all qualifications before any award of a licence to open tuition centres.

The seminar was also addressed by the Secretary General of the General Workers Union Mr Tony Zarb who spoke about the need to safeguard young people from falling victims of unrecognised qualifications and learning processes particularly within the private sector. A discussion followed after each presentation in which young people asked questions about the processes needed to ensure quality and standards in all qualifications.

4 Information Forum

Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI), 25th November 2009

This information forum was organised by the Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI) at their premises in Valletta. Ms Maria Bartolo Galea, Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) was invited to deliver a presentation on the ETC, Prof. Maurice Grech gave a presentation on the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and Ms Doris Mangion, Senior Manager Standards and Qualifications delivered a presentation on MQC Council. Ms Mangion's presentation centred on the National Qualifications Framework.

The audience consisted of Education Committee members, Human Resource Committee members and representatives from the Malta College of Art, Science and Technology and the Employment and Training Corporation.

The main outcomes of the seminar in relation to the Referencing Report were:-

- The need to bring education and employment closer together through joint activities;
- To recognise informal learning through a process leading to a formal qualification;
- To attract more learners to education and training by providing direct hands-on working experiences in industry;
- To ensure that in the design of qualifications employers play a consultative role and later contribute to the training itself.

5

TTNET Malta Information Meeting

The EQF and the MQF – Tools for Transparency – Institute of Tourism Studies, 1 December 2009

TTNetmalta held an information meeting in connection with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) following the official launching of the Report entitled *Referencing of the MQF to the EQF and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA)*. The information meeting was organised in line with TTNNet's mission to provide continuing professional development opportunities to trainers and teachers engaged in providing vocational education and training.

Ms Doris Mangion, Senior Manager Standards and Qualifications, MQC represented MQC at this meeting by delivering a two-hour presentation on the function and services of MQC and the Referencing of the NQF with the EQF and the QF/EHEA. The session was followed with a number of questions from the floor. The audience was made up of vocational teachers and trainers, training consultants, personnel working in public and private training institutions and in the Human Resources area.

The main outcomes of this seminar were the following:

- Qualifications frameworks are excellent tools for teachers to design awards based on a student-centred approach
- A learning-outcomes approach to qualifications is a good indicator of acquired knowledge, skills and competence
- Teacher training institutions must be in the forefront in promoting a learning-outcomes approach to qualifications; training should start in these institutions.

6

VINFL National Conference

15th December 2009

This conference addressed the link between the MQF and the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

One of the objectives of MQC is to establish a national system for the documentation and validation of informal and non-formal learning. The Council aims to introduce a national system whereby all knowledge, skills and competences are recognised. This will ensure that people are re-introduced to learning. In order to accomplish this, the Council has embarked on a number of projects with different sectors of stakeholders to establish a system which will allow all individuals the right to document all their informal and non-formal learning and thus have their learning validated.

The priority areas for establishing such a system include the establishment of sector skills units, the setting up of occupational standards and the development of methods and tools for the assessment and recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

One of the aims of establishing and developing such criteria, is to ensure that employers have the correct skills to support their business success and development, training institutions devise programmes that are demand-driven and individuals possess competences for employability. MQC therefore aspires to establish a strong foundation, where the contribution of all available educational influence is acknowledged and through the acquisition, renewal and upgrading of knowledge, skills and competences the individual's self-fulfilment is enhanced. In a nutshell, this explains the title of the conference – *retooling for the future*.

The Conference speakers hailed from a wide spectrum and incorporate representatives from the public and private spheres. The opening session included an address from the Hon. Dr. Lawrence Gonzi Prime Minister of Malta, as well as an introduction by the Chairman of the Council Mr Joseph Abela Fitzpatrick and of the Chief Executive of the Council Dr James Calleja. The set-up of the conference incorporated two roundtable discussions to allow as much interaction and discussion as possible. The first roundtable discussion incorporated social partners' viewpoints and those of

voluntary organisations. Amongst the speakers were representatives from the Malta Council of Economic and Social Development (MCESD), the Malta Employers Association (MEA), the National Commission Persons with Disability (KNPD), the Catholic Action Youth Movement (ZAK), the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions (CMTU), Malta Federation of Professional Associations (MFPA) and a number of Unions. The second roundtable discussion brought together a number of private and public stakeholders.

The over two hundred conference participants came from various walks of life and included participants from the educational sector, public and private training providers, local council representatives, NGO's, student representatives and voluntary organisation representatives. The conference also aimed to foster an opportunity for networking on issues related to the application of the validation process in the context of the referencing process.

7

Consultation at MQC with the Hon. Evarist Bartolo Opposition Spokesman for Education

21st December 2009

The Hon Member of the House of Representatives was presented with a copy of the *Referencing Report* and was briefed about the services and functions of MQC and the MQRIC office. Also present in this meeting were Mr Joseph Abela Fitzpatrick, Chairman MQC, Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive, MQC, Ms Doris Mangion and Mr Richard Curmi, Senior Managers MQC and Ms Carmen Dalli and Ms Valerie Attard, Managers MQC.

Dr James Calleja briefed the Hon. Bartolo about the setting up of the Sector Skills Councils. He also mentioned the implementation of the *Referencing Report*. Mr Richard Curmi briefed the Hon. Bartolo about the National VINFL Conference and the work carried out so far in connection with the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning.

The main outcomes from this meeting were:

- the importance of linking a national framework of qualifications with accreditation, quality assurance and licensing processes for further and higher education including vocational training;
- the need to set up structures that increase transparency, transferability and mobility among

- learners, workers and teachers;
- the need to invest heavily in key competences in compulsory education;
- the importance of governance of MQF.

8

Information Session

The Malta Qualifications Framework

Its Relevance to Employers – 12th February 2010

The Malta Employers' Association organised an information session about the recent developments regarding the Malta Qualifications Framework. Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive and Mr Richard Curmi Senior Manager were invited to talk about the referencing process and how qualifications can be classified in the MQF. The session ended with a discussion and questions from the floor. Around 50 participants attended this conference which was held at the Hotel Phoenicia in Floriana.

The main outcomes were the following:

- the need for structured dialogues with employers on qualifications;
- the setting up of structures to validate informal and non-formal learning across as many sectors as possible;
- the importance of flexible learning pathways for all;
- the need for permeability between vocational education and training and higher education.

9

A Learning Outcomes Approach to implement the EQF

Date - 7th July 2010

Venue - Bastion Suite, San Gorg Corinthia

NCP – Seminar 1

Speakers

Dr James Calleja, CEO, Malta Qualifications Council (MQC)

Mr Vincent McBride, European Training Foundation, Member of EQF Advisory Group

Ms Doris Mangion, Senior Manager, Malta Qualifications Council (MQC)

Participants

60 participants attended this seminar. These included

Directors and Human Resources Managers from various Public Institutions.

The main outcomes of the seminar were the following:-

- The *Bologna* process harmonised qualifications. MQC is now working on a transparent structure without excessive bureaucracy and on a Level Rating Process of all qualifications to the MQF.
- The Qualifications Framework is a neutral a neutral tool and not linked to any institution
- It is important that all countries respond to the impact of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) on recruitment and the job implications through the setting up of a national qualifications framework
- The European Union has little competence in Education and Training. The EU is limited in what it can do in Member States Education and Training systems. The EQF is a common reference point. It links our education and training systems closer together. It makes it easier to show what their qualifications and learning might mean. It is a translation device.
- The EQF follows on from around the world for several decades. There are several other qualifications frameworks all over the world and a number of partners outside the EU who are also developing National Qualifications Frameworks.
- There are a number of key ideas within a Framework. Each Framework has several levels and each level is described in terms of Learning Outcomes. Each Framework contains a series of different education types. Qualification Frameworks give the opportunity to include Private Sector Qualifications. For the most part private training does not have recognition so the training gives the opportunity for recognition of such qualifications.
- The Public Sector hasn't been very good at recognising private qualifications. The Maritime Sector has been very good at this but there are a lot of other industries particularly new industries in which recognition is still lacking. Frameworks open up this system and link the public and private sectors. The idea that there are no dead ends in qualifications.
- The Framework encapsulates Higher Education and Vocational Education qualifications. The number of levels varies greatly in a Framework. Such as the Scottish Qualifications Framework.
- Learning Outcomes have been around for 40 years but in the last 20 years they have been gaining importance.

- Education is often described in terms of length of study or an institution e.g. a college course or a University course. Another way is according to delivery e.g. this is a modular course or a dissertation course. This has a good track record but over the past 20-30 years this has changed. We are now in a context of Lifelong learning. So this model is reaching its limits. The idea of Learning Outcomes is to find another way of Valuing All Learning. Judgements will be made on the quality of learning based on Knowledge, Skills and Competence. This gives more flexibility in recognising learning.
- As you go up the framework the knowledge goes deeper and becomes more specialised. When we talk about skills it is the ability to do things. Also skills are really the ability to think and reason.
- Reference was made to the policies, reforms and the Maltese Educational System. One of the reforms was that of the School Leaving Certificate. The School Leaving Certificate will now include various categories to give it a holistic approach. This will include attendance, formal education, personal qualities, non-formal education and informal education.
- The level-rating process in Malta can be categorised into 2 groups. The foreign qualifications offered in Malta and the local qualifications. The difference between the level rating processes of foreign and local qualifications was outlined. The MQC Protocol system (leading to a Register of Regulated Qualifications) is a formal agreement between the 2 parties. The protocols are reviewed annually except for the larger entities such as the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), the University of Malta (UOM) and the Directorate for Lifelong learning within the Education Department where they are reviewed every two years.
- Reference was also made to the link between the MQF and Quality Assurance Mechanisms. These include both internal and external mechanisms. Internal mechanisms focus on course content, lecturing, exam papers, assessment, teacher training and feedback. External mechanisms focus on the Malta Qualifications Framework's regulatory function.

10

A Learning-Outcomes Approach to implement the EQF

National Coordination Point

NCP - Seminar 2

3rd September 2010

Target Group – Officials from state Higher Education and Vocational Education Institutions

Speakers:

Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive, Malta Qualifications Council

Mr Loukas Zahilas, Senior Expert, Qualifications and Learning Outcomes, CEDEFOP

Ms Doris Mangion, Senior Manager, Malta Qualifications Council

Participants

Over 50 participants from the field of state vocational and higher education attended this seminar. The participants came from various public institutes including the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), THE University of Malta (UOM) and the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS).

Main outcomes:

- There is a link between the development of NQFs and the structural challenges in society. Our society is aging. The workforce is becoming older and the majority of people will be people above the age of 50. We therefore need more knowledge and skills intensive occupations. We also need better educated European citizens amongst youth and women. These are the structural challenges.
- The working age population will decline as from 2013. There will also be a decline in the European population and especially in the working population. This is an indication of the need for change. The demand for high qualifications is also rising. Lower qualifications will not be so much in demand.
- Our view on qualifications has developed considerably over the past few years. Qualifications are at the centre of the policy agenda and our understanding and use has changed significantly. We are gradually moving to a more developed view of the elements that make up a qualification.
- Qualifications can also be viewed as currencies. Qualifications are carriers of information for individuals, employers and education and training

institutions. Qualifications can signal the level and value of specific learning experiences and learning outcomes.

- There is a need to address inflated qualifications. Not only may the value of formal qualifications be inflated (higher qualifications are required for jobs at a lower level of knowledge, skills and competence) the value of alternative forms of learning may be systematically overlooked.
- Shift to Learning Outcomes – More and more countries use learning outcomes for qualifications frameworks, standards, curricula and assessment. There is a broad agreement how Learning Outcomes can increase transparency and strengthen accountability. Learning Outcomes also introduce a common language enabling comparison of qualifications.
- The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) has acted as a catalyst for National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) developments in Europe. Malta, France, UK and Ireland have already set up the National Qualifications Framework and three of them have also already completed the referencing process.
- CEDEFOP overviews these developments and publishes an overview of the developments of each country twice a year.
- Most NQF's in Europe are presented as communication frameworks. Communication frameworks increase the transparency of the existing qualifications systems – they do not suggest changing them.
- Over the next few years we will have more home-grown qualifications so this will be a problem at both a European and at National level.
- During 2010 MQC has signed over 21 protocols with both private and public training institutions. This process will transform the MQF into a transparency tool and an effective reference point for learners.
- There exists a divide between the academic value against the vocational results. This dates back to historical reasons. Those who opted for vocational training often lacked the key competences. What we need is that no one leaves compulsory education without having achieved at least a Level 3 in all key competences. This minimum requirement should be irrespective of whether you aim to opt for higher education or vocational education. The issue of parity of esteem is at the core of this important measure. This applies for everyone including gifted

children, normal children or children who need help.

- By 2012 we must all have our Framework of Qualifications and the referencing of these qualifications. This also brings with it a culture change. Malta is still in this process of change despite the Framework being launched in 2006. The story will really start in 2012.
- One of the challenges of the future is to recognise all forms of learning. One has to take into account the difficulties. No one can generalise as the European Society carries traditions and cultures which bring many centuries of history together. To push the European Vision one needs more trust by means of more quality assurance. This is a long way and it is impossible to be successful if the process does not have all actors on board. Parents, teachers, trainers and of course the individuals are key players.

11

A learning outcomes approach to implement the EQF

National Coordination Point

Date - 10th September 2010

NCP - Seminar 3

Speakers:

Dr James Calleja, Chief Executive, Malta Qualifications Council

Ms Doris Mangion, Senior Manager, Malta Qualifications Council

Foreign Guest Speaker

Mr Sean O'Reilly, Project Officer, National Qualifications Authority, Ireland

Participants

Over 50 participants attended this seminar. These participants came from a number of private and public training institutions.

The main outcomes were the following:-

- Reference was made to industry driven qualifications – the birth of a qualification should be in industry.
- We need increased currency of a single qualification. There is no one fixed learning form. The bridge between informal learning and non-formal learning.
- The importance that the MQC needs to act as a platform for stakeholders. The contribution of industry is extremely important. The intimacy

between colleges and industry is also paramount to success. Qualifications belong to everyone and not just the Ministry or educational institutions.

- The Framework of qualifications should be a catalyst for reform. If we have a new School Leaving Certificate this means that more employers will understand the skills and competences that an employee has obtained even outside the school-environment.
- The Recognition of qualifications can take months, this is because we lack transparency. This is why frameworks of qualifications are being developed. At a national level there will be level-rating processes of the content and the assessment processes.
- The Irish case study was used to illustrate the development that NQF brought to a system of education which is now more linked to employment and employability. What is being sought is parity of esteem and to have the individual's knowledge, skills and competences recognised. This is about benefits for the individual. The Irish Qualifications Framework is the entity that allowed this to happen. The Irish Qualifications Framework has ten levels. Every education and training system is unique and meets the needs of a country in various ways. For Ireland it was very important that they had a single framework.
- Mention was made of the Recognition of Prior Learning. In many ways this is seen as the Holy Grail. If we have an efficient system in terms of Recognition of Prior Learning this will be the key to all. However it is far from easy to implement. It

is still very much a work in progress. There are also issues of a wider acceptance of Recognition of Prior Learning. We still have procedures and historical issues in place where there are policies which prevent this. There are still anomalies in the system. It is actually quite difficult to deliver. It can be actually very resource intensive. It needs a lot of guidance.

- Policies related to access, transfer and progression specifically must be made more visible. Providers must tell prospective learners exactly what they need to achieve at the end of the learning process. Providers must also tell prospective learners broadly how they will be assessed. The mention of 'awards' rather than 'qualifications' is seen as a better approach.
- Learning Outcomes is the essential element of all of this. The framework needs to continue to move and to change. Communication is vital. The individual award holder does not need to know the details but they need to know enough to navigate the system. The learner needs to know what they can gain from the system and even employers need to know what they can gain from the system.
- The publication of the MQC document Classifying Qualifications – An Awards system referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework will provide guidelines on how a qualification must have a clear set of learning outcomes. A qualification is represented by a learning outcome. Learning outcomes must represent occupational standards. We need to recognise all learning for the individual who has put in time and effort to learn.

Note: Activities held during 2011 are featured on pages 26-27



PART ONE

The European Education Platform





The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is in response to the process of globalisation and the impact of the Lisbon Agenda on education and training. One of the challenges of globalization is the cross-border cooperation between education systems to provide comparable qualifications for the mobility of learners, teachers and workers.

1. The Development of the European Qualifications Framework

Education frameworks in Australia, South Africa and New Zealand proved to be a useful tool that stimulates national reform and international co-operation to foster mobility. The interest in the EQF from countries outside the EU which are European Higher Education Area (EHEA) participants promotes the integration of education policy at a European and international level.⁶

Education is a key factor leading to Europe's economic prosperity, to make Europe 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustaining economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.'⁷ The Lisbon targets: economic growth; productivity; employment; human capital; future-oriented investment and fiscal sustainability are all directly linked with education and training.

Although the EQF was formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 23rd April 2008 it was a process which kick started in 2004. An EQF expert group was set up, and there were a series of consultations and the eventual setting up of the EQF Advisory Group on which Malta is represented by the Malta Qualifications Council. The primary objectives of the EQF are to promote lifelong learning, transparency, transferability and mobility. It differs from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in that the EQF includes all learning characterized by eight levels of difficulty whereas the EHEA is restricted to Higher Education

with the first, second and third cycle of the *Bologna* process. Both Frameworks promote transparency and comparability of qualifications, mobility and the transfer of credits as well as lifelong learning from different perspectives.

Experts representing the European Commission, national authorities and social partners are members of the EQF Advisory Group. This group aims at discussing issues pertaining to the implementation of the EQF, the design and maintenance of the NQF and the referencing between NQFs and the EQF. Currently there are two sub-groups of the EQF Advisory Group, one focused on quality assurance and the other on the criteria for referencing the NQFs to the EQF.

Similarly the Recognition of Learning Outcomes Cluster is made up of 38 members who are academics, representatives of national governments and authorities; representatives of stakeholders such as employers' and workers' unions; and European experts representing CEDEFOP, the European Commission, and the European Training Foundation. This cluster's main objectives are the sharing of experience and the monitoring of national policy developments and enforcement of EU legislation by the national authorities. This is a forum where legislation and policy definition is discussed and contributes to policy development at a European Level through the European Commission. A number of peer learning activities are organized annually on specific topics which contribute to the design, development and implementation of

⁶ Jens Bjornavold CEDEFOP Brussels, and Arjen Deij ETF, Turin status description as of 18th December 2008.

⁷ European Commission, 2000, Lisbon Target.

the National Qualifications Framework. Following the Education Council of 12th May 2009 which adopted conclusions and endorsed the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (Education and Training 2020)⁸ the role of the cluster shifted as a support group to the EQF Advisory Group which will assist in the implementation of the NQFs.

1.1 The *Bologna* Process

Before the 1990s when qualifications were established within a national institution the need for transparent and portable qualifications was not felt.⁹ The *Bologna* Process dates back to 1998 as a political commitment between the Education Ministers of France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom who met in Sorbonne and agreed on mutual cooperation in Higher Education.

In 1999, 29 European Ministers responsible for Higher Education met in *Bologna* and signed the *Bologna* Declaration¹⁰ to lay the basis for establishing a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. Malta was among the foundation signatories of the *Bologna* declaration which identified the following primary objectives:

- Adopting a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- Adopting a system of two main cycles (undergraduate/graduate);
- Establishing a system of credits (such as ECTS);
- Promoting mobility by overcoming obstacles;
- Promoting European co-operation in quality assurance; and
- Promoting European dimension in Higher Education.

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Framework adopted in Bergen in 2005 concerns all countries of the *Bologna* Process, currently 46, whereas the EQF for Life Long Learning concerns the countries of the European Union, the European Economic Area and party to relevant EU programs in education, currently 32. Its objectives are to embrace higher education qualifications at the national level and facilitate transparency, recognition and mobility among higher education degree holders. They concluded

the Dublin level descriptors which include knowledge and understanding, applying knowledge and understanding, making judgements, communication skills, and learning skills. A level descriptor is determined by the level of difficulty and the degree of specialisation.

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was introduced in 1989 as a pilot scheme within the Erasmus programme to compare and read qualifications easily.¹¹ With the introduction of the Erasmus programme which facilitates students' and workers' mobility a new concept was introduced, i.e. the accumulation and transfer of credit. It was agreed that learners should achieve 60 credits per year, and for each credit one must dedicate 25 working hours on all educational activities. There will be an annual total of 1500 hours composed of contact hours, seminars, conferences, tutorials, reading, research, written and oral tests, and examinations. Thus the total number of learning hours includes contact hours, self study and assessment. Work-based learning of students following HE is also assessed in terms of learning outcomes and is given credit accordingly.¹²

Harmonisation of credit led to a standard grading system, so that credits all over Europe would have the same value. Learners across Europe who obtain passing grades are divided into five subgroups: the best 10% are awarded an A-grade, the next 25% a B-grade, the following 30% a C-grade, the following 25% a D-grade and the final 10% an E-grade.¹³

The *Bologna* Follow-Up Group (BFUG) is made up of the *Bologna* participating countries as well as the social partners. The aim of the BFUG is to implement the decisions taken by ministers in ministerial meetings held every 2 years and to prepare for the following ministerial meetings. The BFUG meet twice a year in EU countries holding the Presidency.

The BFUG is split into subgroups which are responsible for the following areas: data collection, stocktaking, employability, European Higher Education Area in a global setting, lifelong learning, mobility, qualifications Frameworks, and social dimension.¹⁴ The progress of the BFUG is registered in HE through:

8 DG EAC website: http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/news1383_en.htm.

9 Sjur Bergan, (2007), *Qualifications – Introduction to a concept*, Council of Europe Higher Education Series No.6, Council of Europe, p25.

10 Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education, The *Bologna* Declaration of 19th June 1999, <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

11 Directorate General for Education and Culture, ECTS Users' Guide, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and the Diploma Supplement, Brussels, 17th August 2004 http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/ECTS_DS_Users_guide_en.1094119167134.pdf, p3.

12 *Ibid.*, p7.

13 *Ibid.*, p13

14 http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/about/how_it_works.htm

- the implementation of the 3-cycle system;
- Quality Assurance;
- The recognition of degrees and study periods; and
- Incorporating research within HE.

The primary objective of the BFUG is to ensure and facilitate the comparability and the link between NQFs and the EHEA Framework, sustained by a relationship based on co-operation.

In 2005, following the Berlin *Communiqué* the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) together with the European Students' Union (ESU), the European Universities' Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) were mandated to design the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance Report (ESG).¹⁵ These internal and external quality assurance standards provide consistency of quality assurance procedures, which enhance mutual trust. The ESG is a tool which guides what and how should higher education institutions provide and assure that courses are founded on the principles of quality.

The ESG is based on the following three key standards:¹⁶

- internal Quality Assurance at provider level;
- external Quality Assurance at provider level with the involvement of external reviewers; and
- the external Quality Assurance agencies at system level.

The first standard is about an agreed, shared and published debate within all staff members and students of the institution concerned. The information should be publicly available so as to be as transparent as possible. The students need to be aware about the importance of their role in submitting feedback, that they are instrumental for improvement and that the information that they submit forms part of a bigger plan.

Assessment must be learning outcomes-based, consistent and published so that students should know what is expected of them. Quality Assurance should involve teaching staff in approving, monitoring and reviewing programmes. This self-evaluation is then reviewed by objective external reviewers which ensure follow-up and periodic reviews.

The third standard is about the role of external Quality Assurance agencies which have an officially

independent status and accountability. The external verifier reviews, evaluates and assesses internal quality assurance procedures and assures teachers are qualified and competent. The value of external quality assurance lies in the fact that the verifier has the role of ensuring that follow-up recommendations are implemented. Their strategy and plan should be sustained by adequate resources in order to be effective. So far there are not enough agencies listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). External quality assurance mechanisms strengthen the credibility of the internal process and gives accountability to the institution. There is a consensus between HE and VET policy-makers and institutions that there is a need for a culture of quality assurance which will be the driver of the three key standards. The 2007 (London), 2009 (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve) and Budapest/Vienna (2010) Ministerial meetings led the launching of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) based on achieving greater mobility, transparency, international openness and employability through reformed higher education qualifications based on a learning outcomes approach. A further important feature has been quality assurance across the whole spectrum of higher education.

Ministers of Education committed themselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010. They also underlined the importance of ensuring cohesion between the QF-EHEA framework and the EQF.

At the core of the *Bologna Process* is the three cycle system as expressed in the Dublin Descriptors. The Dublin descriptors offer generic statements of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with qualifications that represent the end of each of the *Bologna* cycle. They are not meant to be prescriptive; they do not represent threshold or minimum requirements and they are not exhaustive; similar or equivalent characteristics may be added or substituted.

The descriptors seek to identify the nature of the whole higher education qualification. A first cycle qualification (Bachelor) typically includes 180-240 ECTS credits. These are qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle. A second cycle qualification (Master) typically

¹⁵ European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, *The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) Report*, 2005, Helsinki, Finland.

¹⁶ Marzia Foroni, "Bologna and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance – building a Euro-Med Network for transparency and transferability," presentation during the Euro-Med Seminar for Bologna Experts on 23rd June 2009.

includes 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle qualifications that signify completion of this cycle. Third cycle qualification (doctorate) are qualifications that signify completion of this cycle to which no ECTS have been assigned.

Parallel to this development the document *Towards a European Qualification Framework for LLL* announced that an EQF would consist of a set of common reference points located in a structure of 8 levels. These 8 levels were defined through learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and personal and professional competences. These levels would be supported by a range of tools such as an integrated European credit transfer and accumulation system, Europass, Ploteus database on learning opportunities. The document also stipulates that EQF would be broader than the QF- EHEA. Many regard the EQF as a *meta*-framework with at least 7 main characteristics:

- necessary and relevant
- implemented on a voluntary basis
- a translation device
- based on learning outcomes
- structured in eight (8) levels
- based on quality assurance principles and standards
- its implementation requires a serious commitment by stakeholders at national level particularly in articulating an NQF and in referencing the NQF to the EQF.

Stephen Adam in a report “based on the analysis of individual country 2007 stocktaking submissions on the implementation of NQFs claims that “there is potential confusion and concern about the relationship between the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and the *Bologna* Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, although, the London Communiqué indicated that: ‘We are satisfied that national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA will also be compatible with the proposal from the European Commission on a ‘European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning’. There remains an unease that the two frameworks may diverge in their understanding and use of credits as well as to which countries should articulate their national qualifications

frameworks. The Ministers in London clearly indicated *the Framework for the EHEA is the one to which all higher education in Bologna countries must articulate*. It is evident that several countries in their reports have indicated they will articulate with the EQF and do not mention self-certification with the *Bologna* framework for the EHEA. The European Commission draft recommendation of the EQF to Parliament dated 7th September 2007 does not detail the mechanism by which NQF will articulate with the EQF. Furthermore, articulation/self-certification to one overarching framework (either *Bologna* or EQF) cannot necessarily lead to automatic reciprocal recognition in the other. The two frameworks are different in emphasis: one for higher education and one for lifelong learning. These issues will need to be resolved to avoid future confusion.”

Malta took the decision to reference its MQF to both the EQF and the QF-EHEA through a meticulous exercise which matched level-descriptors of the MQF to those of the EQF and the QF-EHEA. Similarities at all levels were seen as a strong argument to conclude that the three frameworks can be referenced to each other in a comparable manner. Malta’s long-standing system in higher education of a Bachelor, Masters’ and Doctorate levels helped facilitate this referencing process.

On the other hand, the vocational sector (at European and national levels) is much more fluid and open to discussion on issues of referencing. The *Copenhagen* Process (2002) is on its way to establishing a robust regime based on quality assurance and transparency across many systems of VET across Europe. The launching in 2009 of the European Quality Assurance Reference framework (EQARF) is an important step in establishing this process on solid ground.

1.2 The *Copenhagen* Process

The *Copenhagen* process focuses on the VET sector and emerged from the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda where in 2002 the Council Resolution set to promote enhanced European cooperation in VET. The Common Quality Assurance Framework developed 10 Indicators which emphasise the role of Quality Assurance in motivating learners to study in VET. The emphasis on Quality Assurance and the following targets aim to set standards for qualifications that meet today’s and tomorrow’s labour market requirements.

Table 2: The 10 Indicators of the EQAVET

Overarching Indicators for Quality Assurance	
1	Relevance of Quality Assurance systems for VET
2	Investment of Training of Teachers and Trainers
	Indicators supporting quality objectives for VET policies
3	Participation rate in VET programmes
4	Completion rate in VET programmes
5	Placement rate in VET programmes
6	Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace
	Context Information
7	Unemployment rate according to individual criteria ¹⁷
8	Prevalence of vulnerable groups
9	Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
10	Schemes used to promote better access to VET

There are no mobility instruments for VET students to study in Europe such as in the case of the Erasmus programme which enables students to accumulate and transfer credits from one European Higher Education Institution to another, where the minimum period of cross-border study is three months. However, this is the task which the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is set to accomplish. ECVET and the EQARF were launched in Prague on 20th May 2009.

The LLP caters for VET through the Leonardo Programme which is made up of three categories, one of which is targeted to VET students. The Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) scheme gives the opportunity for VET students to experience Trans-National apprenticeship for a minimum of three weeks and a maximum of one year. The competences gained during this work-based learning are then recognised in the home country. Unlike the Erasmus programme where there is a Charter which ensures an entity's benefit from the grant for a period of six years, for the Leonardo grants there is no such continuity and the VET

institution has to apply for grants on an annual basis.

The other two categories of the Leonardo Programme are People in the Labour Market (PLM) and the Vocational Education and Training Professionals (VETPRO). The objective of both grants is to facilitate lifelong learning and to maintain Quality Assurance as per the 10 Indicators of the CQAF.

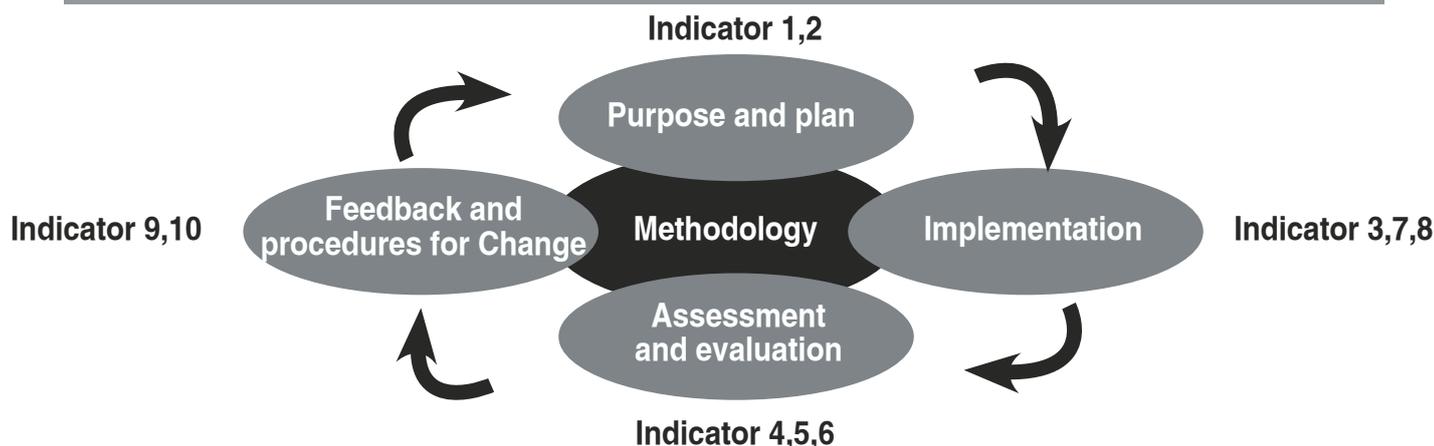
The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) is an improved version of the CQAF and takes into consideration developments in the following European tools¹⁸:

- The implementation of the EQF;
- The design and implementation of the NQFs;
- The quality of the certification of Learning Outcomes qualifications;
- ECVET;
- The design and implementation of Common European Principles for the validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning; and

¹⁷ According to ILO and OECD the unemployed are individuals between 15 and 74 years without work, actively seeking employment and ready to start work.

¹⁸ European Commission, (2008), *Legislative Resolution of 18 December 2008 on the proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training*, COM (2008) 179, p3.

Figure 1: The EQARF¹⁹



- The need to provide demand-driven qualifications and address skills needs. The European Network for Quality Assurance in VET (ENQA-VET) has the mandate to establish dialogue between Member States' qualifications authorities, education policy makers, VET institutions and stakeholders to share experience through peer learning activities, thematic groups, research studies and conferences. The ENQA-VET members aim to maintain and promote quality at VET provider level, enhance the visibility of VET and attract students and lifelong learning adults to quality VET. As counter-part to the ENQA (European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), ENQA-VET should enhance mobility of students by creating the structures needed to facilitate and promote mobility of students. VET students should have the opportunity to benefit from the accumulation and transfer of credits, a system which has been sustained by ERASMUS grants in HE.

The latest revision of the *Copenhagen Process* is the *Bruges Communiqué* (2010) a declaration by Ministers of Education and Training on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training. The Communiqué lists 22 and 37 short-term deliverable for EU Members states and EU agencies respectively between 2011-14. The emphasis in the Belgian Communiqué is raising the quality of VET, increasing mobility and ensuring that education and training leads to employability. A further emphasise is on the creation of credit system (ECVET) which encourages permeability between vocational training and higher education.

1.3 The Objectives of the EQF and the QF-EHEA

The EQF is a neutral translation mechanism for qualifications and national Frameworks based on an 8 level meta-Framework.²⁰ It acts as a guideline for the Member States and for other European and non-European countries on which to model their national qualifications Framework. The EQF is not a one-fits-all Framework; it must be interpreted according to national priorities agreed upon between policy-makers, training providers and key stakeholders including industry.

It is an integrated Framework which includes compulsory education, VET and HE. One of the aims of the EQF is to bridge the gap between VET and HE. Permeability between VET and HE enhances lifelong learning. The EQF builds on the successful policy goals of EHEA, such as the consistency in the design of qualifications and takes it further.

The EQF recognises flexible learning pathways as it includes all forms of learning, formal, informal and non-formal with the focus being on the individual learner with no age restrictions. The ascending levels of difficulty of the EQF provide a benchmark for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. This factor encourages early school leavers to re-train themselves in societies where formal education is predominant. Validation values all learning, motivates the low skilled and promotes an inclusive society.

The key prerequisites for National Qualifications Frameworks include learning outcomes-based qualifications and reference levels. Before enrolling learners have a clear picture what the course is all

¹⁹ Ibid.,

²⁰ Bjornavold J; Deij A, (2009) *The Purpose and the main features of the European Qualifications Framework in an international context*. Paper presented in the European Qualifications Frameworks Linking to a Globalised World Conference, Brussels 29th -30th January 2009 p5.

about and to what occupational standards it leads to, therefore learning outcomes-referenced qualifications are a tool for career guidance. Learners in the work place are encouraged to update the previously acquired learning outcomes and develop new skills that keep pace with change.

The EQF also promotes the harmonization of the level of difficulty of qualifications. Such harmonisation results in mutual trust at national, European and International level which facilitates clear and consistent relationships between Qualifications Frameworks. Transparent qualifications are mechanisms for cross-sector and Trans-National compatibility. They are tools for lifelong learning that facilitate mobility of learners and workers in a globalised labour market. Although mobility increased in recent years, it is expected to gain a boost after 2012, following the Europe-wide referencing of NQFs to the EQF.

1.4 The Shift from Learning Inputs to Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process.²¹ The shift of emphasis is from learning inputs such as taught subjects and hours of instruction to what learners achieve and how. The focus on the user of education - the individual is the key factor which makes this shift an innovative reform process.²² This can be established by an assessment procedure. For a qualification to be given a level and to form part of a Framework of qualifications it has to be assessed by an accredited body. The EQF recommendation defines qualifications as: **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.**²³

Unlike the learning inputs system, learning outcomes are not designed solely by policy makers, but these are shaped by the stakeholders' contribution depending on the qualification(s) reviewed. Stakeholders such

as social partners, education and training providers, sectoral representatives, learners and civil society are now the key actors who define learning outcomes tailor made for industry's needs.²⁴

This shift is considered "as an opportunity to tailor education and training to individual needs, improve links to the labour market and improve the way non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes are recognised."²⁵

The role of learning outcomes in education and training plays an integral part of a lifelong learning strategy to promote:

- National reform;
- Recognition of informal and non-formal learning;
- Award, accumulation and transfer of credit;
- Quality Assurance;
- Flexible learning pathways;
- Key competences; and
- Credibility for training institutions and employers

ECTS, EQF and ECVET based on learning outcomes are the tools for education reform at a national level. The impact of learning outcomes on compulsory education across Europe manifests itself as a modernised schooling system that provides a holistic experience, rather than a 'subject-dominated approach'.²⁶ Greater importance is placed on the acquisition of key competences as studies show that individuals who lack these are low-skilled, lack opportunities for progression and have a higher risk of falling in the poverty trap.²⁷ The recognition of informal and non-formal learning motivates such individuals to value their learning and seek retraining leading to access and progression and better chances of employability.

"The Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" is a project co-financed by the European Commission to facilitate the *Bologna* Process. The rationale behind this project is to assist universities to shift their systems to a learning outcomes approach. It shows that approaches to teaching, learning and assessment have an impact on workload.

21 European Commission, (2006) *Proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council for the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*, Brussels, European Commission 2006, COM (2006) 479 final, p10.

22 CEDEFOP, *The Shift to Learning Outcomes: Policies and Practices in Europe*, (Luxembourg 2009)

23 European Commission, (2006) *Proposal for a recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council for the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*, Brussels, COM (2006) 479 final, p16.

24 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2008), *The Shift to Learning Outcomes: Conceptual, political and practical developments in Europe*, p10.

25 Aviana Bulgarelli, Director of CEDEFOP, Foreword in CEDEFOP, (2008) *The Shift to Learning Outcomes: Conceptual, political and practical developments in Europe*, Luxembourg: Publications Office, p1.

26 *Ibid.*, p33.

27 European Commission, (2007) *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation. Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010 work programme"*, Brussels, 12.11.2007, COM(2007) 703 final, p2.

Table 3: The Tuning Project Generic Learning Outcomes²⁹

Instrumental competences	Interpersonal Competences	Systematic Competences
Capacity for analysis and synthesis	Critical and self-critical abilities	Capacity to apply knowledge in practice
Capacity for organisation and planning	Teamwork	Research skills
Basic general knowledge	Interpersonal skills	Capacity to learn
Oral and written communication	Ability to communicate with experts in other fields	Creativity
Grounding in professional knowledge	Ability to work in an interdisciplinary team	Capacity to adapt to new situations
Knowledge of a second language	Appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism	Leadership
Computing skills	Ability to work in international context	Understanding other cultures
Information management skills	Ethical commitment	Ability to work autonomously
Problem solving		Project design and management
Decision making		Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit
		Concern for quality
		Will to succeed

It identifies the following four step approach for determining student workload:²⁸

1. Introducing modules/course units;
2. Estimating student workload;
3. Checking the estimated workload through student evaluations; and
4. Adjustment of workload and/or educational activities

The following is a table prepared by the Tuning Project to illustrate the connection between instrumental, interpersonal and systematic competences in the context of Higher Education.

Learning Outcomes are widely used in VET, but it remains the biggest challenge for HE where adoption of learning outcomes is slow.³⁰ The challenge is for learning outcomes to be clearly understood, interpreted

The EQF recommendation defines a qualification as 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.

²⁸ Directorate General for Education and Culture, *ECTS Users' Guide, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and the Diploma Supplement*, Brussels, 17th August 2004. http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/ECTS_DS_Users_guide_en.1094119167134.pdf, p9.

²⁹ CEDEFOP, (2008), *The Shift to Learning Outcomes: Conceptual, political and practical developments in Europe*, Luxembourg: Publications Office, p27.

Many policy makers and researchers argue that skills needs assessment should be the product of Governments, employers or individuals; others argue that individuals and firms should identify skills gaps.

Learning Outcomes are widely used in VET, but it remains the biggest challenge for HE where adoption of learning outcomes is slow.³⁰ The challenge is for learning outcomes to be clearly understood, interpreted and implemented by all education providers in Europe and beyond.

The EQF recommendation defines a qualification as 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.

Many policy makers and researchers argue that skills needs assessment should be the product of Governments, employers or individuals; others argue that individuals and firms should identify skills gaps.

1.5 The Spectrum of European Tools

A hidden strength of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning as well the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area is certainly the spectrum of European tools that act as engine rooms of the two frameworks.

The MQF is a credit and qualifications tool based on learning outcomes. Tools for the MQF are those adopted at European level so that Maltese and foreign learners in Malta will benefit from a recognised system across the forty-seven members of the *Bologna* Process and twenty seven Member States of the European Union. This was a deliberate choice made to facilitate learning, recognition, progression and enable training institutions to benchmark their qualifications against other comparable learning programmes across Europe.

The spectrum of European tools adopted in the MQF is as follows:

1. The **EQF and the QF-EHEA** have served as point of reference in the design and implementation of the MQF not so much in their tier structure but as key indicators of qualifications that help the recognition process among different systems of education and training at various levels from primary to adult education.
2. The **credit system** of the European Credit and Transfer System of the *Bologna* Process and the European Credit for Vocational Education and Training adopted through the *Copenhagen* Process.
3. The **quality assurance systems** of the *Bologna* Process (European Standards and Guidelines – ESG) and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) of the *Copenhagen* Process.
4. The **learning outcomes approach** as defined in both the *Bologna* and *Copenhagen* Processes as well as within the context of the European Qualifications Framework.
5. The **ENQA and ENQA-VET networks** that regulate through guidelines and peer learning activities on a voluntary basis, the quality assurance processes within all forms of further, vocational and higher education systems.
6. The **ISCED** (International Standards for the Classification of Education) 1997 and the revised 2011 levels is also an international standard created by UNESCO to measure educational achievements in all countries members of the United Nations. Although it is strictly speaking not an exclusive European tool, yet EUROSTAT uses this measure to benchmark developments in Education across all Member States on issues such as the early school leaving rate. This tool will also play an important role in the European Area of Recognition and in particular in the classification of qualifications and in transnational education. There is a comparability table at the end of the chapter on Awards (5.1) which illustrates how ISCED version of 1997 and

³⁰ *Bologna* Process, Coordination Group for Qualifications Framework, *Report on Qualifications Frameworks* to be submitted by the BFUG in early 2009 third draft September 15, 2008.

It is pertinent to point out that the system of Maltese education retained its traditional character and ethos and was only enriched through a referencing process that linked its many diverse aspects with those at a wider application such as the EQF, the QF-EHEA and the TQF (Transnational Qualifications Framework of Small States of the Commonwealth)

2011 have been pegged to the MQF. The ISCED version of 2011 will come into force in 2014. The alignment process took more than eighteen months of discussions with the National Statistics Authority of Malta to establish a national benchmark in terms of qualifications for measuring early school leavers.

It is pertinent to point out that the system of Maltese education retained its traditional character and ethos and was only enriched through a referencing process that linked its many diverse aspects with those at a wider application such as the EQF, the QF-EHEA and the TQF (Transnational Qualifications Framework of Small States of the Commonwealth). The European tools thus serve to ensure mobility, transparency and recognition of workloads as well as reduce the burden of lengthy processes to evaluate qualifications on the basis of content, workloads and quality assurance.

1.6 Qualifications Frameworks identify Skills Needs

One of the main thrusts of the referencing process is the application of a learning outcomes approach to

describe qualifications. In Malta the learning outcomes approach is gradually, yet steadily, becoming the dominant factor in describing qualifications and in ensuring that the referencing of such qualifications to the level descriptors of the Qualifications Framework is transparent, coherent and understandable. A major characteristic of learning outcomes-based qualifications is the requirement that qualifications are demand-driven. At the end of a learning process the learner should have acquired those learning outcomes that would enable him or her to sustain their position within a changing labour market.

A Council Resolution on new skills for new jobs emphasized the need for investing in human capital to enhance employability, to forecast skills needs and addresses and minimizes skills gaps by matching qualifications with industry's needs.³¹ Such political decisions have an impact on the National, European and International competitiveness and economy, especially in times of economic crisis when investment in re-training and up-skilling is considered as a "long-term" sustainable solution. Even in Malta some companies operating on a four-day week utilised the fifth day for training, an initiative which is supported by the national government. It should be noted that such a public-private partnership should be encouraged on an ongoing basis, not only as a measure in time of crisis.

Many policy makers and researchers argue that skills needs assessment should be the product of Governments, employers or individuals; others argue that individuals and firms should identify skills gaps. The United States and Ireland emphasised that the government and training providers are in the best position to do so.³² In Malta there is consensus for a partnership between education and training providers and industry in identifying and forecasting the skills needed in fifteen to twenty years time.³³ The forecasting results should be reflected in learning outcomes-based qualifications. Thus, learning outcomes must be future-oriented and must be the result of such dialogue between the training providers and stakeholders. A product of such synergy will be the outcomes of two ESF projects co-ordinated by MQC. The VQPACK deals with the visibility of demand-driven VET qualifications and SKILLS+ deals with the design, publication and

31 European Commission, Official Journal of the European Union, *Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 on the new skills for new jobs* (2007/C 290/01), p2.

32 A Future Skills Needs conference held in 2008 in Ireland discussed who should assess the skills needs, CEDEFOP, 21st January 2008, IE_CI 01/2008 Future Skills Needs conference.doc

33 The Skills for the Future Conference, organized by the National Commission for Higher Education was held in Malta on 19th September 2008.

promotion of occupational standards. The level descriptors and the design of occupational standards address one of the flexicurity measures mentioned in the National Reform Programme for Malta 2008-2010 i.e. “Launch occupational standards of competence and define the basis for their accreditation with a view to validating all forms of learning including non-formal and informal learning.” Through these projects MQC implements and abides by Indicator 9 of the EQARF about mechanisms to adapt vocational education and training to changing demands in the labour market.

VQPACK supports the following 2009-2011 CEDEFOP recommendatoin³⁴

1. European VET policies, trends in skills and learning, VET’s impact and visibility;
2. informing European VET policies;
3. Interpreting European trends in and challenges for skills, competences and learning;
4. Assessing VET’s benefits;
5. Raising the profile of VET;

CEDEFOP’s network “*Skillsnet*” has embarked on developing European skills needs forecasting system to guide policy makers in introducing initiatives that motivate the up-skilling of the labour market in identified sectors.³⁵ *Skillsnet* promotes a standard data gathering system which enhances comparability of national results.³⁶ Policymakers can not limit their projections to the needs of their national economy without considering globalisation and the free movement of goods, services, capital and people within the EU’s internal market and beyond.

Macro-economic projections should take into account various factors such as political action, technological changes and demographic trends. The social inclusion of people with disability and migrants should not be underestimated, and these vulnerable groups can contribute to the deficiencies of an aging society.³⁷

Identifying skills needs means also giving priority to certain economic sectors over others, such as the vision of creating a Smart Society in Malta. Different lifelong learning strategies are designed according to the

particular target group, including all the labour force’s education levels: from the unemployed and the low-skilled, to learners engaged in higher education. The Maltese Government has thus introduced incentives for learners to follow courses in ICT. For example the My Potential scheme encourages learners to study ICT at private training institutions and if they are successful, the tuition fees will be refunded through tax refunds. The demand for ICT trained personnel is continuously increasing and the market is expected to increase even more with the coming of Smart Communications in Malta, a major Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). This incentive encouraged learners to register for part-time courses while they work. Such a measure boosted the progression to life long learning. Other initiatives connected to the creation of a smart society are the provision of e-services, monetary incentives for people buying their first computer, free or subsidized internet subscriptions, and a multitude of computer courses at local towns and villages. Although these measures necessitate a greater commitment in investment in education, training and apprenticeships, a smart society is an important element of the infrastructure which businesses consider before locating FDI.

When a sector is given priority over other sectors this may result in a negative impact on other equally important sectors which also form part of the business cycle. Therefore economists, policy makers, industry and the market should find the right balance when making forecasts of skills needs based on a just sustainable education system. The smart city does not only need IT specialists, there needs to be the supporting technical and administrative infrastructure.

Several countries are targeting the unemployed and the low-skilled with the reintroduction or expansion of apprenticeship schemes.³⁸ The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) offers the Level 1 Basic Employment Training Course in Key Competences, apprenticeship schemes and traineeship schemes. New trainee programmes are constantly being introduced according to the employers’ demands. These include the training for new niches on the market such as call centre operatives, pharmaceutical plant operatives, and

34 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2008), CEDEFOP’s Medium-term priorities: Enhancing European cooperation in vocational education through evidence and expertise: continuity, focus and flexibility.

35 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2008) *Future Skills Needs in Europe: Medium Term Forecast, Synthesis Report*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p4. http://www.CEDEFOP.europa.eu/etv/Projects_Networks/skillsnet/

36 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2008), *Future Skills Needs in Europe: Medium Term Forecast, Synthesis Report*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p4.

37 OECD, (2008), *Higher Education in 2030, Vol 1, Demography, Executive Summary* <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/28/15/41788606.pdf>

38 CEDEFOP, (Luxembourg 2007), *Zooming in on 2010: reassessing vocational education and training*, p15.

fire and health and safety instructors.³⁹ Training is given its due importance through the Training Aid Programme through a European Social Fund (ESF) Project co-funded by the European Union. This programme provides financial assistance to companies and self-employed who want to invest in human capital.⁴⁰ The British Government will dedicate an additional GBP10 million for a new national apprenticeship scheme for 16

to 18 year olds to fill existing skills gaps.⁴¹ The OECD considers access to finance and skills development as key measures to deal with the impact of the financial and economic crisis on the global economy.⁴² Qualifications and apprenticeships should be future-oriented geared towards a knowledge-based technological economy and service sector workplace environment.

39 Cutajar J., ETC, The Impact of the NQF on ETC Training Services for the inactive and those in employment, presentation for an MQC organised EQF Information Seminar for Guidance Teachers and Councillors on 3rd December 2008

40 ETC Website, Information on the Training Aid Framework, <http://www.etc.gov.mt/site/page.aspx?pageid=2238>

41 Government launches £10 million apprenticeship expansion, Date of issue: 01/12/08, Press release number: 571 <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-571-expandingapprenticeships-dec08.pdf>

42 OECD Conference, Fostering Entrepreneurship through Proactive Policies, 18th-19th November 2008 http://www.oecd.org/document/8/0,3343,en_34645207_34645590_41760008_1_1_1_1,00.html



PART TWO

The Malta Qualifications Framework



2

Compulsory schooling in Malta starts at the age of five with primary education. Most parents, however, start sending their children to school as from the age of 3. The government provides nursery schooling for free and is normally housed within primary schools. Following pre-primary education, primary school consists of six years of education. This is followed by lower secondary education up to age 16. During 2011 a New Curriculum Framework was presented for consultation and will be implemented during Q4 of 2012. Compulsory education has seen significant developments during these last few years particularly with the introduction of a robust quality assurance system, new technologies such as computer-based learning, electronic white-board and now a new eLearning platform which will facilitate learning and transform content into eContent.

2.1 Overview of the Maltese Education and Training System

2.1.1 Educational Pathways in Malta

Compulsory schooling in Malta starts at the age of five with primary education. Most parents, however, start sending their children to school as from the age of 3. The government provides nursery schooling for free and is housed within primary schools. Following pre-primary education, primary school consists of six years of education. Primary education is divided administratively into two cycles of three years each. Secondary education follows and involves a further five years of education. The end of secondary school marks also the end of compulsory schooling. Students then have the opportunity to either take the general education or vocational track at post-secondary level.

General post-secondary education consists of a two-year course leading to a qualification which serves as an entry point into the University of Malta. Normally attendance to an upper secondary school is two years full-time. However, there are no restrictions as to when someone sits for the Matriculation Certificate Examination. Entry to this two-year course in the public institution called Junior College or in any of the private post-secondary institutions requires a minimum of six passes at grades 1 to 5 of the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC), which is equivalent to Level 3 of the Malta Qualifications Framework. Registration for the SEC is restricted to students in their final year of compulsory schooling and other students over sixteen years of age. Its objective is to provide an opportunity

for all students finishing secondary school education and obtain external certificates for the subjects studied at school.⁴³

Vocational courses vary in length and range from two years to a number of years. Vocational education in Malta is provided by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), by the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) and the Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH) of Heritage Malta. MCAST in particular, is an umbrella institution which houses all the state vocational institutes and consequently vocational training in Malta.

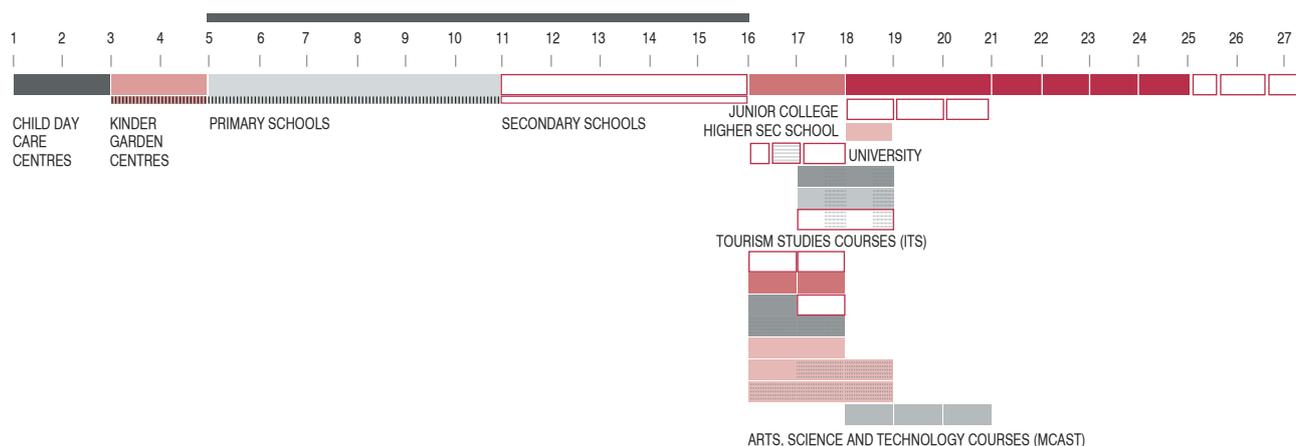
Students go through a number of defining moments in choosing their career path through their study choices. These are the following:

- end of second year in secondary school: This is when students are asked to make a subject choice as part of their specialisation. This choice will influence the range of career opportunities available to students at a later stage;
- end of secondary education: Students at this point need to decide whether they are to continue with their studies or to look for work. In addition, those who decide to stay on at school have to decide whether to take the general or vocational track and which course to follow;
- thus vocational training in Malta is at post-secondary level and is beyond compulsory schooling age.

⁴³ The following subjects are offered for examination: Accounting; Arabic; Art; Biology; Business Studies; Classical Culture and Civilisation; Chemistry; Commerce; Computer Studies; Economics; English Language; English Literature; European Studies; Environmental Studies; French; Geography; German; Greek; History; Home Economics; Italian; Latin; Maltese; Mathematics; Physics; Physical Education; Religious Knowledge; Russian; Social Studies; Spanish; Technical Design (Graphical Communication or Technology) and Textiles and Design; University of Malta MATSEC Examinations Board, SEC Examinations Statistical Report 2007, (2008) p3.

Figure 2: Stages of Compulsory Education and Other Levels of Tertiary and Vocational Education Levels

Organisation of the education system in Malta, 2006/07



- Pre-primary education - ISCED 0 (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)
- Pre-primary education - ISCED 0 (for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)
- Primary education - ISCED 1
- Single structure education: integrated primary and lower secondary - ISCED 1+2
- Higher education - ISCED 5A
- General lower secondary education - ISCED 2
- General Upper Secondary Education - ISCED 3
- Post-secondary non-tertiary education - ISCED 4
- Vocation lower secondary education - ISCED 2
- Vocation upper secondary education - ISCED 3

- Compulsory full-time education
- Compulsory part-time education
- Compulsory work experience + its duration
- Additional year
- Study Abroad
- Part-time combined school and workplace courses

Source: Eurydice⁴⁴

2.1.2 Description of “formal” pathways from VET to HE

Students in Malta have to decide on whether they want to follow the general education track leading to tertiary education or the vocational track at the end of compulsory education at age 16. Thus, the decision on whether to continue studying is linked to a decision on the type of post-secondary education track preferred. Those students wishing to eventually follow tertiary education go to Junior College or Sixth Form colleges at upper-secondary level, where they study two academic subjects at Advanced level and another three subjects at Intermediate level. The choice of subjects is such that all students study one science and one language at this level. The end of these two years of study lead students to sit for the Matriculation Certificate examination run by the University of Malta and which, on successful completion leads to entry into tertiary courses at the University of Malta.

Students can also choose to opt for vocational courses. These are mainly offered within the Malta College for Arts Science and Technology (MCAST). MCAST houses nine Institutes:

Agribusiness⁴⁵: This institute offers courses related to agriculture and animal husbandry. It offers courses at Foundation level, BTEC-First Diploma and BTEC-National Certificate and BTEC Higher National Diploma. There are currently 6 courses offered;

Art and Design⁴⁶: This institute offers training in art and design, offering courses from basic level at certificate level or MCAST Foundation Certificate which provide access to other courses at higher level within the same institute. Courses offered range from a Foundation Certificate in Art and Design to Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Graphic Design and Interactive Media and Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in 3D and Interiors. There are currently 14 courses offered;

44 http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/eurybase/pdf_images/MT_EN_dia.pdf

45 http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_agribusiness.asp

46 http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_artanddesign.asp

Building and Construction Engineering⁴⁷: This institute offers training in trades related to the construction industry. Courses are offered in skills areas such as painting and decorating, plastering, tile laying, air-conditioning, masonry, and stone construction. These are offered at different levels ranging from Foundation courses which require no qualifications, to Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma, National Diploma and Higher National Diploma. There are currently 20 courses being offered;

Business and Commerce⁴⁸: This institute offers courses in areas related to business such as insurance, retail, administrative and secretarial studies, as well as applied science. Courses are also offered at different levels, ranging from the MCAST Foundation Certificate to BTEC National Certificate, National Diploma, Higher National Diploma and Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business Enterprise. There are currently 12 courses being offered;

Community Services⁴⁹: This institute offers training in the service related sector. Courses offered are mainly in hairdressing and beauty sector, child-care services, as well as sport and leisure. Courses are offered at different levels ranging from BTEC and ITEC Foundation Certificate and First Diploma to National Diploma in the different areas of study. There are currently 20 courses being offered;

Electrical and Electronic Engineering⁵⁰: This institute offers courses related to electronics, ranging from electrical installations, industrial electronics, computer engineering to electronic engineering. These courses are offered at different levels from Foundation Course, MCAST Certificate and Diploma, to MCAST BTEC National Diploma, BTEC Higher National Diploma and Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Electronics Engineering and Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Electronics and Control Engineering. There are currently 13 courses being offered;

Mechanical Engineering⁵¹: This institute offers training in the area of mechanical engineering, motor vehicle engineering, aerospace as well as motor vehicle repairs. Most of the Certification offered is at City and Guilds, but there are also other courses

at Certificate level leading to an MCAST Certificate. There are currently 17 courses offered;

Information and Communication Technology⁵²: This institute offers training in the area of ICT. Courses are offered from a very basic level such as Foundation Certificate to higher levels like MCAST-BTEC First Diploma, National Diploma and Higher National Diploma in software development, ICT systems support and Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Software Development and Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Computer Networks. There are currently 9 courses being offered;

Maritime Institute⁵³: This institute offers training to those who are interested in taking up a career in the maritime sector, whether within the Armed forces or as an officer sailing ships. The institute offers courses in Navigational Watch, Engineering Watch, Chief Mate, Second Engineer, Master Mariner, Chief Engineer as well as Probationary Cadet. There are currently overall 4 courses offered. Certification is issued by the institution and one can proceed from one course to another.

The Institute of Applied Sciences MCAST Prospectus for 2011-2012 lists ten Institutes and the Gozo Centre, among which there is the new Institute of Applied Sciences (pp. 46-49).

The Institute of Applied Sciences is offering three courses at Level 4. The MCAST Diploma for Pharmacy Technicians; the MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Applied Science (Laboratory and Industrial Science); and the MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care (Health Studies). These courses were previously offered by the Institute of Community Services.

The overarching goal of the Institute of Applied Sciences is to offer courses which are more attuned to the needs of both private and state sectors, which need well-trained graduates. Experience has so far shown that there is a growing interest in the potential of MCAST students within this sector, while discussions with local industry have already kicked-off for such purpose. Indeed, this new Institute – in line with MCAST’s mission statement – can truly *“provide universally vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy (in the Applied Science sector).*

47 http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_buildingandconstructionengineering.asp
48 http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_businessandcommerce.asp
49 http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_communityservices.asp
50 http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_electricalandelectronicsengineering.asp
51 http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_mechanicalengineering.asp
52 http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_informationandcommunicationtechnology.asp
53 http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_maritimeinstitute.asp

MCAST also has its Gozo Centre⁵⁴ where it offers a range of courses. It offers some of the courses that are also provided by the mainland institutes, thus eliminating the need for students from Gozo to travel to Malta for their studies. This year⁵⁵, the Gozo centre is offering 16 courses in total. Four courses are at Foundation Certificate level, one that is general and the other three in business, computing and care. Six courses are at level 2: MCAST Certificate in electro-technical technology; MCAST-BTEC First Diploma level for I.T. practitioners; City and Guilds in mechanical engineering; and MCAST-BTEC First Diploma in electronics, care and construction. There is also one MCAST Certificate in administrative and Secretarial Studies at level 3, an MCAST-BTEC National Diploma also at level 3. At level 4 the courses offered include the AAT Diploma in Accountancy and a Diploma in banking and financial services.

Vocational Courses are also offered by the Institute of Tourism Studies which offers courses in the area of Hospitality and Tourism. One of its courses, a Higher Diploma in Hospitality Management, leads to a University of Malta degree in Tourism Studies. The University of Malta also offers some vocational courses in the area of Healthcare.

In the case of vocational qualifications, entry requirements would be in terms of a number of passes in the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC). The preferred subjects and grade vary according to the courses offered. In the case of vocational education, students can move from one level of qualification to a higher level course within the same vocational area without any problems.

Mobility from vocational education to tertiary education is limited. This is mainly due to the official entry requirements for entry to tertiary courses at the University of Malta requiring the Matriculation Certificate. However, there are cases where vocational qualifications are being recognised and considered as alternative entry requirements in some particular courses, mainly in the area of engineering. As from the academic year 2009-2010 MCAST introduced four top-up degrees for BTEC Higher National Diploma students. These are in Art & Design, Business and Commerce, Electrical and Electronics Engineering and Information Technology.

In addition, the University of Malta and MCAST have a maturity clause which allows any adult of age 23 years or older to apply to follow courses at tertiary level without necessarily having the usually official entry requirements. In such cases, applicants are considered on an individual basis and their prior qualifications and experiences are considered by an interviewing board. In such circumstances, value tends to be given to applicants from the vocational sector by the interviewing board in deciding whether to accept the applicant to follow the course or not.

2.1.3 The Structure of the University of Malta

The University of Malta traces its origins to the founding of the Collegium Melitense by the Jesuits in 1592.

Situated in Msida, the University of Malta is the highest teaching institution of the State. The supreme governing bodies of the University are the Council and the Senate. There are some 10,000 students, including over 750 international students from some 80 different countries, following full-time and part-time degree and diploma courses referenced at MQF and EQF levels 5 to 7, many of them run on a modular and ECTS credit system. The University also offers doctorate degrees at MQF/EQF Level 8.

The University is geared towards the infrastructural, industrial and cultural needs of the country so as to provide expertise in crucial fields. Over 2,500 students graduate in various disciplines annually. The degree courses at the University are designed to produce highly qualified professionals with experience of research, who will play key roles in industry, commerce and public affairs in general.

The University comprises eleven faculties and a number of institutes and centres. International Master's degree programmes are also offered on a Joint or Double Degree basis, with each Masters being accredited by the University of Malta and at least another leading North American or European University.

There are a number of fields which the University has identified as priority areas. These include Information and Communication Technology and Engineering. Enhanced relations with industry continue to be a priority, as does the University's contribution to the improvement of primary and secondary education and the forging of inter-university links to stimulate international student and staff exchanges.

54 http://www.mcast.edu.mt/institutes_gozocentre.asp%22

55 MCAST, (2009), MCAST Prospectus 2009/10.

The Malta University Holding Company Ltd (MUHC) embodies the commercial interests of the University of Malta. Its subsidiary companies serve as the interface between the University and the business community, brokering the resources and assets of the University to provide added value through commercial activity. MUHC is located in the original university building in Valletta, which incorporates the Aula Magna and dates back to the founding of the Collegium Melitense. The building also serves as a prestigious setting for the hosting of international conferences, seminars, short courses and summer schools. It is also the venue for the University's International Masters Programmes.

2.1.4 The Awarding Bodies

All the public education and training institutions in Malta except the Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH) act as the awarding bodies of their locally designed qualifications often referred to as the **home-grown qualifications**⁵⁶. These local awarding bodies are the University of Malta (UOM); the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST), the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC). MQC examines the workload and methods of assessment of each qualification provided by the above awarding bodies and in agreement with each individual education and training institution designate the level of difficulty corresponding to the Malta Qualifications Framework.

MCAST offers a number of qualifications which are designed by foreign awarding bodies but adapted to fit Malta's needs. These include:

- City and Guilds;
- Edexcel;
- Association of Accounting Technician (AAT);
- International Maritime Organisation (IMO);
- Chartered Insurance Institute (CII); and
- ITEC

Following a number of discussions on standards the qualifications awarded by local and foreign awarding bodies form part of the Malta Qualifications Framework. This process is then sealed with a formal agreement (Protocol) between the two parties.

⁵⁶ Many private training institutions provide post-secondary and degree level courses of foreign origin normally accredited and recognised bodies.

List of Faculties, Institutes and Centres within the University of Malta

Faculties	Institutes	Centres
1. Faculty of Arts	1. Institute of Anglo-Italian Studies	1. Centre for Family Studies
2. Faculty for the Built Environment	2. International Institute for Baroque Studies	2. Centre for Environmental Education & Research
3. Faculty of Dental Surgery	3. Institute of Criminology	3. Centre for Labour Studies
4. Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy	4. The Edward De Bono Institute for the Design & Development of Thinking	4. Centre for Literacy
5. Faculty of Education	5. Institute for Energy Technology	5. Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research
6. Faculty of Engineering	6. Islands & Small States Institute	6. European Centre for Educational Resilience & Socio-Emotional Health
7. Faculty of Information & Communication Technology	7. Institute of Linguistics	7. European Centre for Gerontology
8. Faculty of Laws	8. Institute for Maltese Studies	8. Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Insular Coastal Dynamics
9. Faculty of Medicine & Surgery	9. Mediterranean Institute	9. Centre for Biomedical Cybernetics
10. Faculty of Science	10. Institute of Physical Education & Sport	10. International Ocean Institute - Malta Operational Centre
11. Faculty of Theology	11. Institute of Public Administration & Management	
12. Faculty of Health Sciences	12. Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies	
13. Faculty of Media and Knowledge Services	13. Confucius Institute	
	14. Institute of Earth Science	
	15. Institute of European Studies	
	16. Institute of Sustainable Development	
	17. Institute of Tourism, Travel & Culture	

Table updated in March 2012

2.2 The Development of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF)

The Malta Qualifications Framework is an eight-level system which reflects the education tradition of an island under British rule for over a hundred and sixty-four years. The level descriptors of this framework reflect the various stages of the educational process from compulsory to lifelong learning. This includes the *Bologna* and *Copenhagen* paradigms. Since the promulgation of the level descriptors in Legal Notice 347 in 2005 two institutions (Directorate of Quality and Standards in Education – DQSE, and National Commission for Higher Education – NCHE) were set up to complement the MQC and cover the whole spectrum of education in terms of standards and quality assurance. Malta's active participation in European fora particularly those organised by the Commission led the Maltese authorities to synergise the already existing qualifications framework to the type of framework created on the EQF typology. As documented in other parts of this report, the Malta Qualifications Framework is thoroughly described in four Policy Documents making up the *Valuing All Learning* Series.

Another process was the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) so that qualifications become comparable and transparent, as these need to be referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Malta is one of the 47 members of the *Bologna* process which embarked on a project to harmonize qualifications in Higher Education. This necessitated

Another process was the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) so that qualifications become comparable and transparent, as these need to be referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

the introduction of ECTS at the University of Malta in 2000, and by 2005 ECTS had been fully implemented in all Faculties with the exception of Medicine and Dental Surgery.

Another process was the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) so that qualifications become comparable and transparent, as these need to be referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) by 2010. Malta launched the MQF in June 2007. It is one of the first European countries to reference its framework to the EQF. Besides the political commitment towards both processes, qualifications are shaped by stakeholders as more industry-driven qualifications are based on a Learning Outcomes-approach. Qualifications are increasingly becoming demand-led.

The MQF captures all levels of education from compulsory to post doctoral degrees, continuous professional development and adult education and is in referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA). Thus the three pillars on which the MQF is founded are:

1. Qualification Levels;
2. Qualification Types; and
3. Quality Assurance Criteria.

A National Qualifications Framework is an evolving process; the dynamic nature of qualifications makes the NQF work-in-progress.⁵⁷ NQFs have to be continuously maintained and must meet the challenges of the knowledge society. Thus in June 2008 MQC launched a policy document on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal learning. Following a consultation process amendments to the Education Act as well as three legal notices to legalise the MQF, an accreditation and quality assurance system and the validation of informal and non-formal learning were presented in Parliament in 2012. The referencing process has now a new lease of life.

MQC is level-rating current and new qualifications by referencing such qualifications to the MQF and the EQF. It is currently consulting with stakeholders on the design of sectoral qualifications frameworks. Eventually as one of the deliverables of an ESF project entitled Skills+ MQC, published and promoted occupational standards of nine key sectors of economic development.

⁵⁷ Shirley Walters et al., National Qualifications Frameworks: Insights from South Africa, European Qualifications Frameworks Linking to a Globalised World Conference, Brussels 29-30 January 2009, p1, http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/events/2009/eqf_paper.pdf

Table 4: The Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning**

8	Doctoral Degree			8	
7	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate			7	
6	Bachelor's Degree			6	
5	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate Higher Education Certificate		VET Higher Diploma	vi	5
4	Matriculation Certificate Advanced Level Intermediate Level		VET Diploma	v	4
3	General Education Level 3 SEC Grade 1-5		VET Level 3	iv	3
2	General Education Level 2 SEC Grade 6-7 Secondary School Certificate and Profile (B)		VET Level 2	iii	2
1	General Education Level 1 Secondary School Certificate and Profile (A)		*VET Level 1	ii i	1

* VET stands for Vocational Education and Training

Annotations:

** The National Qualifications Framework is designed in such a way as to be able to include diverse forms of qualifications not as yet covered by this Framework.

- (i) Attainment of the Basic Employment Passport together with either the Adult Skills Certificate or the MQC 8 Key Competences at level 1 are also considered as a Full VET Level 1 qualification.
- (ii) The MQC recommends that a Full VET Level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a Full Secondary School Certificate and Profile (A).
- (iii) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 4 General Education Level 2 subjects or a Secondary School Certificate and Profile (B) at the MQF Level 2 at Grade 6 and 7.
- (iv) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 3 Qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 6 General Level subjects at Grades 1 to 5.
- (v) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 3 Advanced Level subjects.
- (vi) The University of Malta awards the Higher Education Certificate to students who do not complete a degree programme but have a minimum of 60 ECTS.

2.3 Qualifications Frameworks establish Quality Assurance

Qualifications Frameworks are first and foremost tools for Quality Assurance. With adequate investment, a qualifications framework translates quality in education into cost-effectiveness and competitiveness.

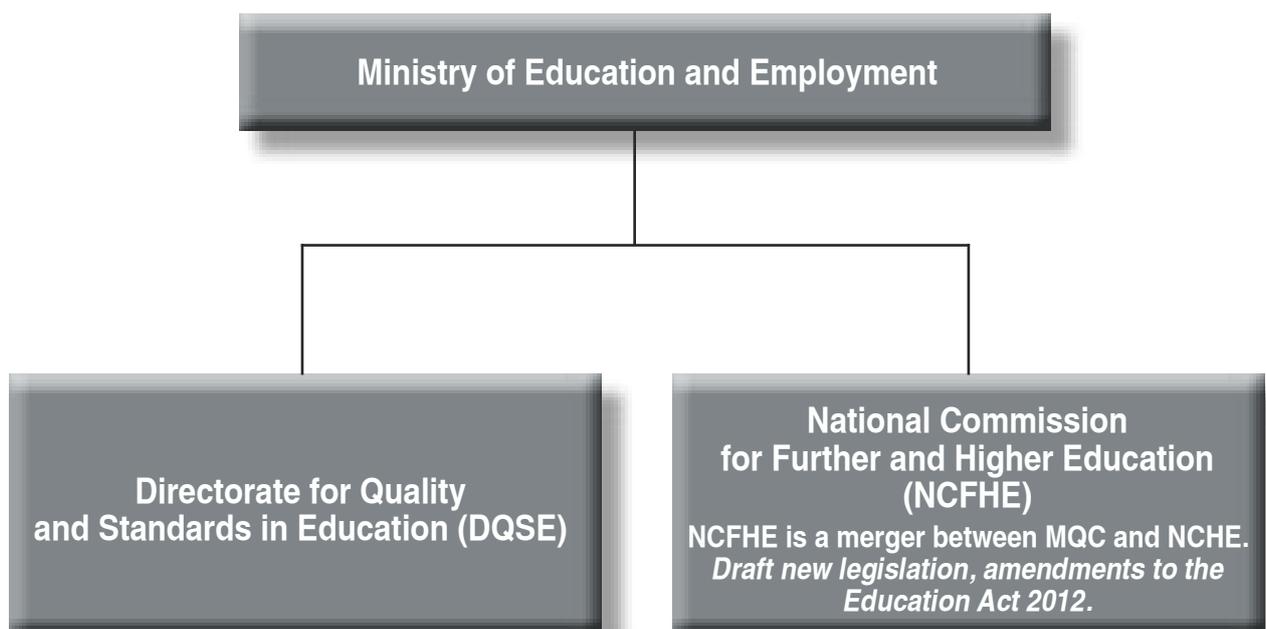
Of particular importance to this referencing process is the development of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) which regulates, establishes, monitors and assures standards and quality in the programmes and educational services provided by all private, public and church schools. DQSE regulates, guides, evaluates, verifies, research and reports on the various elements and results of the compulsory education system (MQF Levels 1 to 3). A further objective is to assure quality education for all and promote good practices in all activities related to such education in a national curricular framework of lifelong learning.⁵⁸ The Malta Qualifications Council works closely with DQSE to implement the first three levels of the MQF and to ensure that all formal education activities match the level descriptors in the framework.

In this scenario one is obliged to define a quality assurance policy for Malta which is based on the

referencing process of the MQF and on the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area (EQAR)* and on the *European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF)* for Vocational Training. QA is a broad term which, when applied to vocational training and to higher education (including vocational higher education) must be contextualised, otherwise, it will lose its impact on its targets which are to ensure quality education and credibility of qualifications. Programmes of studies for example differ even at the same level of qualification; the same can be said for the use of equipment and the infrastructure, the learning outcomes, the assessment procedure, the credit system, qualifications of teachers and links with the labour market and with the professional sectors.

The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) is responsible for the quality and standards in compulsory education, from age 5 to 16. The Malta Qualifications Council and the National Commission for Higher Education (since 2012 the NCFHE) are responsible for the quality assurance of further and

Figure 3: The evolving Qualifications, Quality Assurance Structure in Malta 2011



58 Chapter 327 Education Act, Part II Articles 8-10.

higher education. All these three quality assurance institutions constitute one quality assurance regime which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Employment.

Designing an overarching QA system for further and higher education is an excellent initiative if the two sectors (HE and HE/VET) work interdependently as they do with QA systems in compulsory education. The unifying factor between the three sectors is the Malta Qualifications Framework which sets standards by putting in place visible, predictable and coherent national systems for defining qualifications on the basis of established quality standards, for assessing learning outcomes and for awarding qualifications including the final transcript and qualification document. A system that maintains a qualifications Framework ensures that the life-cycle of a qualification starts from visibility to accessibility and ends in mobility, career progression and self-actualisation.

For this purpose, a Qualifications Framework establishes quality assurance by:

- clarifying learning pathways and progression through level-rating;
- acting as a focal point for stakeholders to own quality in learning environments; and by
- creating greater coherence of national reform policies and by establishing a stronger basis for international co-operation, understanding and comparison.

Above all a qualifications framework is an added value to individual learners (and particularly parents of younger children) in terms of increased consistency, transparency, currency and portability. It is however the stakeholders such as career/school counsellors, trainers, recruitment agencies (including and in particular public recruitment units), teachers that ultimately sustain the benefits of quality that a qualifications Framework offers to prospective learners.

Qualifications Frameworks are tools that encourage the proliferation of private and public training provision by establishing clear level-playing-field competition through agreed standards and quality assurance procedures. Learners will subsequently benefit from an open and transparent sector in which, information based on an accreditation system of each qualification, determine their value.

Greater emphasis is placed on Quality Assurance. NCFHE is an active member in the European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ENQA-VET). Quality assurance shall be monitored through an accreditation process, whereby all courses and all education and training institutions shall be accredited by public entities such as MQC, following the fulfilment of a set of agreed standards and criteria. Eventually all accredited institutions and formal qualifications shall be available on an online database.

2.3.1 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Education and training institutions in Malta have an internal quality assurance system which compliments that of the external quality assurance verifiers as described above. As part of the internal quality assurance the examinations and assessments are assessed by external examiners.

The Education Directorate introduced a quality assurance system in 2005 based on internal auditing of all public, private and church schools whereby the Principal Education Officer together with five or six Education Officers spent a week in the schools to be audited to get feedback on quality assurance issues from employees, students, teachers and parents. In 2007 there was a shift of emphasis from inspection previously conducted by the team of Education Officers led by the Principal Education Officer to self-evaluation made by the schools themselves. The audits that followed utilised the self-evaluation documents as presented by the schools themselves. Since then there was the setting up of two Directorate Generals, one for Educational Services (DES) and the other for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE). The Quality Assurance Department within the DQSE worked on publishing booklets, samples of action plans for School Development Planning and power points as tools for the schools to implement quality assurance self-evaluation and to use the power points to involve teachers, students and parents. This self-evaluative process included all school staff, students and parents who identified strengths and weaknesses and produced a plan to tackle all these weaknesses. The schools, state and non-state are constantly encouraged to draw up a School Development Plan and communicate this with the DQSE, teachers, students and parents.

The self-evaluation is made by the players involved such as all staff, students and parents. The role of the Principal Education Officer changed to monitoring and implementation aspects. This officer is responsible to draw a report on the self-evaluation and its effectiveness while identifying gaps. Following the report, this officer verifies that the recommendations are put in place.

The VET institutes have an internal quality assurance policy which is reviewed by external verifiers and they follow MQC's third policy document on Quality Assurance. Furthermore the foreign awarding bodies monitor that this quality assurance policy is consistent with the policy that they adhere to in the qualifications' country of origin.

In 2007 the University of Malta established the Academic Programmes Quality and Resources Unit (APQRU) to provide support for academic staff to design new or existing programmes based on quality and standards.⁵⁹ The APQRU provides administrative support to the Programme Validation Committee provides quality assurance mechanisms for internal and external verification and ensures the standards and validity of all programmes of study while at the same time maximising the use of available resources. The student is the focal point of this quality assurance dimension of qualifications. He or she has the facility to submit an online student feedback form in confidence and comment on the content, methodology and assessment of the study units or any other issues. The students' data is analysed and taken into consideration for improvement.

2.4 Policy Context

Education is one of the sectors which is given priority in the National Reform Programme, and it is a sector in which the government aims to achieve excellence by 2015, as part of the Vision 2015 Policy. One of the tasks towards achieving this goal was the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC).⁶⁰ The Council's primary role is to steer the development of the MQF and to oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies.

A reform in education is a prerequisite for a functioning NQF. A shift from a learning input to a learning outcomes approach is gradually being implemented at

all levels of education, but with a faster pace in VET. VQPACK, an ESF project co-ordinated by MQC shall monitor VET qualifications to ensure that these are learning outcomes-based and demand-driven, and shall publicise this as a career guidance tool for all learners.

The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) is steering the reform in compulsory education. Learning is now considered as a holistic experience, including informal and non-formal education. Greater emphasis is placed on continuous assessment rather than on examinations. The 11+ examination which puts enormous pressure on students and parents was phased out, and learning is projected as something positive and enriching. Streaming is replaced by classes with learners of mixed ability. One of the projected results includes a lower percentage of early school leavers; and a higher percentage of life long learners.

More national and EU funding is being invested in the training and up-skilling of the unemployed and the low-skilled through Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) schemes. It offers apprenticeship schemes to VET students, and industry-led courses to the unemployed and to lifelong learners. Other courses it offers are specifically designed for vulnerable target groups. In 2011 it offered over 162 scholarships in further and higher education in two sectors: financial services and digital media.

The MQF shows that one can have access and progression through different learning pathways. Early school leavers can access formal education through the VET route by first achieving the basic key competences. Malta has already experienced an increase in the availability of short courses; such a factor enhances lifelong learning. In 2011 the Directorate for Lifelong Learning doubled its learners from in 2012 to 13, in 2011.

In 2006, the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) launched the National Strategy for Research and Innovation (2007-2010) entitled 'Building and Sustaining the Research and Innovation (R&I) Enabling Framework'. This strategy sought to promote competitiveness through research and innovation to encourage economic growth just as the ICT and the financial services sectors did in Malta.

⁵⁹ Full details of the objectives of APQRU are available on: <http://www.um.edu.mt/apqru/about>

⁶⁰ More details about MQC are found in Annex 8.

⁶¹ The Early School Leavers in Malta has decreased from 2000 to 36.9 in 2010.

The MCST National R&I Strategy underpins the following principles:⁶²

- 1 Addressing National Issues
- 2 Focusing on Selected Areas of Economic Performance
- 3 Enabling SMEs to Innovate
- 4 Exporting Locally Generated R&I
- 5 Expanding Malta's Science, Engineering and Technology Human Capital Base
- 6 Establishing the Nexus between the Knowledge Institutions and Business
- 7 Developing a National Pro-Innovation Culture Supportive of Invention, Risk-Taking and Entrepreneurship

The knowledge society entails sustained investments in lifelong learning and skills development for innovation-driven growth that would attract a long-term economic investment through, foreign direct investment, motivated labour market and economic growth. This commitment to sustained investments in a quality education system for all is an underlying theme within the NCHE Strategic Priorities of 2009.

The National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) identified a set of Strategic Priorities following a consultation process with all stakeholders on the Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020.⁶³ This policy initiative fits within the general European framework and the formal adoption on 12th May 2009 of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training the ET2020.

The list of NCHE Strategic Priorities includes the following:

- 1 Attract more students to continue their studies after compulsory education into post secondary and university studies;
- 2 Encourage students to undertake studies in areas relevant to Malta's economic and social development;
- 3 Attract foreign fee paying students to study in Malta in various fields of study and research;
- 4 Adapt systems for adults seeking Lifelong Learning opportunities;
- 5 Secure fair and equitable access to further and higher education with particular focus on vulnerable groups;
- 6 Assure quality provision across all institutions and their programmes;
- 7 Develop Malta's Qualifications Framework and qualification recognition services;
- 8 Increase the University of Malta's research capacity;
- 9 Facilitate and promote student and teacher mobility;
- 10 Ensure responsive systems through adequate governance and funding policies;
- 11 Maintain active participation and co-operation within Europe and Internationally; and
- 12 Develop and implement a long-term Investment Plan.

62 Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST), The National Strategy for Research and Innovation (2007-2010): Building and Sustaining the Research and Innovation (R&I) Enabling Framework, <http://www.mcst.gov.mt/files/uploaded/R&Istrategy.pdf>

63 NCHE, (April 2009), Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020: Recommendations of the National Commission for Higher Education.

All the strategies have a positive impact on education in Malta and they are all directly or indirectly related to MQC. MQC was responsible for Strategy number 7 on the development of the MQF and the qualification recognition services. MQC hosts the Malta Qualification Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) which forms part of the NARIC-ENIC Network. The role of MQRIC is to verify the value and establish the comparability of local and foreign qualifications. The number of MQRIC requests for 2008 was around 2300. During the first six months of 2009 MQRIC received more than 2050 requests. The projected figure for 2009 will be in the region of 4000 requests. This illustrates that the demand for this service is actually increasing as all posts issued by all public entities and the Public Service Commission require that qualifications are recognised and validated by MQRIC. The role of the centre is publicised so that learners verify the value of a qualification before enrolling in a course of studies in Higher Education.

2.5 Description of Learning Outcomes: Knowledge, Skills and Competences

Learning Outcomes are statements that describe what a qualification represents in terms of the application of its components, namely knowledge, skills and competences. According to the definition of a NQF a learning outcome is what a learner understands and is capable of doing at the end of a learning process. Therefore learning outcomes prepare individuals for both employment and for further education and training. One way of measuring the learning outcomes of VET is through apprenticeship and of HE by course entry requirements. The Learning Outcomes system is inclusive as it integrates all learning with flexible learning pathways including informal and non-formal learning and is not bound by time limits.

Key competences such as communication especially in fluent written and spoken English are what employers look for, but they must be complemented by personal qualities such as self-presentation and team work, which more often than not are the result of informal (experiential) learning and not necessarily acquired from school. The issue of self-presentation applies to all sectors as the image is a key factor for employability. It is a prerequisite for all those working in particular sectors such as the tourism sector especially the catering industry which implies issues of hygiene. These qualities together with the key competences

are important for every level of education but are even more necessary for individuals at Level 1 of the MQF to become employable. One of the key challenges today is to continue being employable and to face this one must be flexible and adapt to the fast business cycle and participate in the re-skill, re-educate and re-structure cycle.⁶⁴ The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) acknowledged the value of key competences, personal qualities and informal and non-formal learning. Thus MQC had a consultative role in the process of recognizing such learning by certifying it in the newly re-designed School Leaving Certificate, which since 2010 forms part of the national reform in the education system in Malta.

Knowledge involves the understanding of basic, factual and theoretical information and is normally associated with formal learning and therefore with text books, with contact learning hours and as one progresses along the learning pathway one can engage in research, and participate in seminars and conferences. However, knowledge can also be obtained from informal and non-formal settings.

Skills involve the application of the acquired knowledge and understanding in different contexts. A skill may not necessarily be the result of formal learning and knowledge as described above. It may be the result of repetitive work in an informal setup.

Competences involve concepts such as whether one is competent to exercise the skills with or without supervision, with or without autonomy and with or without responsibility. At the end of 100 months of compulsory education one is expected to achieve the basic key competences which are fundamental for pursuing studies at a post-secondary level and for employability in low-skilled basic jobs. The fact that an individual has a successful achievement in these key competences has an impact on the individual's performance, on the overall service at the work place, on one's employability and finally on the national economy. Thus there are supplementary courses such as the *Merħba* course provided by the Malta Tourism Authority which gives basic knowledge, such as basic Maltese history and communication skills to people who provide a service in the tourism sector. Such short courses and other similar initiatives give basic knowledge to people who are generally experienced and have skills and competences, foster the continuous professional development, and promote lifelong learning.

64 Ellul H., President, Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI) Presentation for the NCHE Conference, Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020, 3rd April 2009.

Defining Key Competences:⁶⁵

1. Communication in the mother tongue

Definition: Communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate way in the full range of societal and cultural contexts — education and training, work, home and leisure.

2. Communication in foreign languages

Definition: Communication in foreign languages broadly shares the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of societal contexts — work, home, leisure, education and training — according to one's wants or needs. Communication in foreign languages also calls for skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding. An individual's level of proficiency will vary between the four dimensions, different languages and according to their background, environment and needs/interests.

3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology

Definition:

- A. Mathematical competence is the ability to use addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and ratios in mental and written computation to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. The emphasis is on process and activity, as well as knowledge. Mathematical competence involves - to different degrees - the ability and willingness to use mathematical modes of thought (logical and spatial thinking) and presentation (formulas, models, constructs, graphs/charts).
- B. Scientific competence refers to the ability and willingness to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to explain the natural world, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions. Competence in technology is viewed as the application of that knowledge and methodology in response to perceived human wants or needs. Both areas of this competence involve an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and responsibility as an individual citizen.

4. Digital competence

Definition: Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.

5. Learning to learn

Definition: 'Learning to learn' is the ability to pursue and persist in learning. Individuals should be able to organise their own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. Competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to handle obstacles in order to learn successfully. It means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts – at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence.

6. Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, civic competence

Definition: These competences cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation.

7. Entrepreneurship

Definition: Entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports everyone in day to day life at home and in society, employees in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by entrepreneurs establishing social or

⁶⁵ European Commission, (Brussels 2005), Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Key Competences for lifelong learning (presented by the Commission), COM (2005) 548 final.

commercial activity. The business community in Malta believes that this must be given a boost and should be fostered at the early stages of education.⁶⁶

8. Cultural expression

Definition: Appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts.

The Key Competences will play a pivotal role in the post-referencing process of the MQF to the EQF. As a matter of procedure MQC established that from MQF Levels 1 to 5 key competences will carry a considerable weight at the lower ends of the Framework and decreases at higher levels particularly after Level 5. The table below illustrates the percentage of workload established by MQC and which will help learners acquire key competences at the early stages of Lifelong Learning and simultaneously carry within their education and training additional competences in Sectoral Skills and Underpinning Knowledge (theory). Thus, the knowledge, skills, competence paradigm covers the whole learning process within Malta's Qualifications

Framework and fits within the EQF paradigm in relation to the acquisition of the eight key competences.

2.6 The credit system to validate all learning

Malta's Qualifications Framework captures all levels and sectors in education. This referencing process consolidates the already existing credit system for HE that helps mapping existing and new qualifications to the Framework.

Credit is a feature that measures the volume and the workload of learning and gives currency to qualifications. Assessment of learning outcomes entitles the learner to credit and therefore to a qualification recognised by the MQF. Credits are awarded for the assessment of outcomes achieved. MQC shall accredit full qualifications offered by accredited institutions.

Credits must be considered as the building blocks of qualifications and they can be accumulated and transferred. However, one must point out that transfer of credits depends on the mutual recognition of qualifications of the sending and the receiving

Table 5: The Distribution of Knowledge, Skills and Competences

Level of Qualification	Distribution of KC, SS & UK for each Qualification		
Level 5	KC 10%	SS 45%	UK 45%
Level 4	KC 20%	SS 40%	UK 40%
Level 3	KC 40%	SS 30%	UK 30%
Level 2	KC 60%		SS 20% UK 20%
Level 1	KC 70%		SS 15% UK 15%

Percentages are indicative of the distribution of contact and study hours.

■ KC – Key Competences ■ SS - Sectoral Skills ■ UK – Underpinning Knowledge

⁶⁵ Ellul H., President, Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI) Presentation for the NCHE Conference, Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020, 3rd April 2009.

institutions to be established through the signing of a bi-lateral memorandum of understanding. The MQF does not prescribe transfer of credits, as it deals with exit points as access is at the discretion of the institution concerned which is regulated by its policies; however the MQF facilitates transfer of credits.⁶⁷

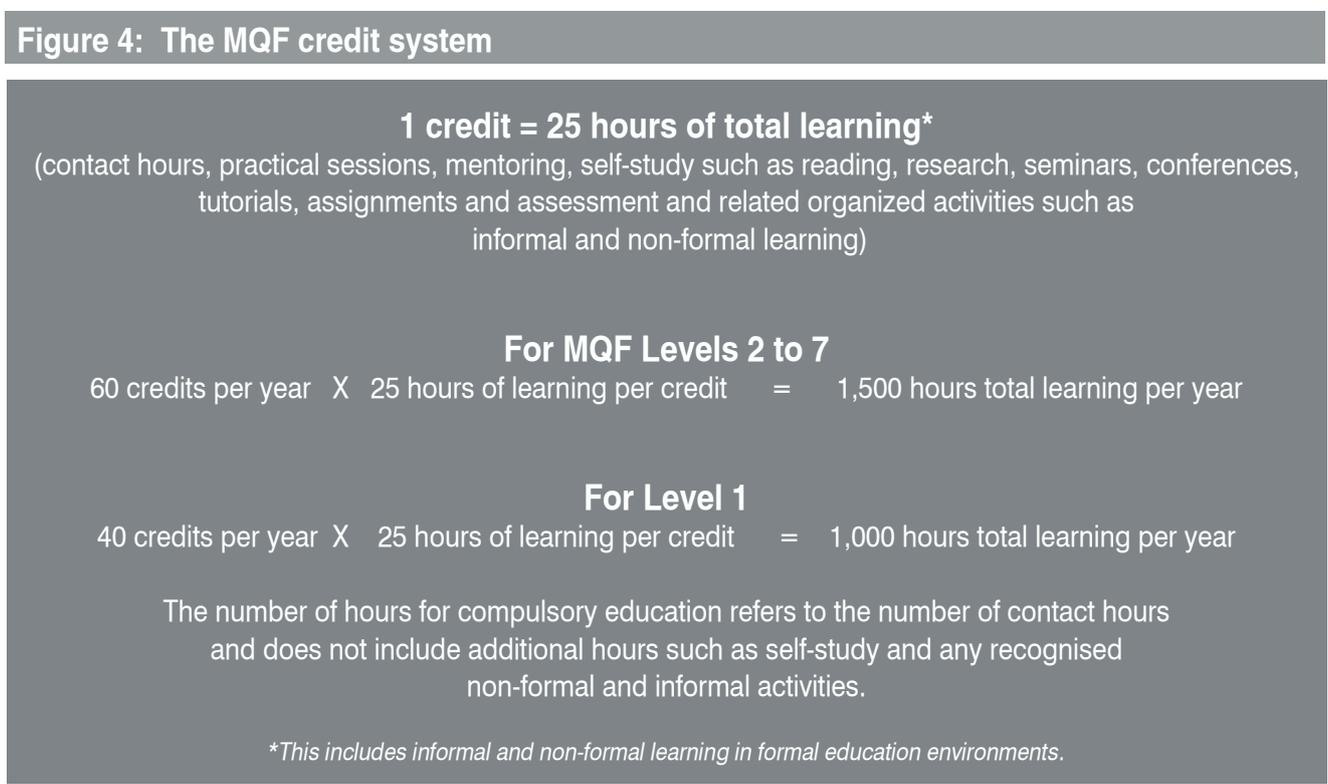
One of the weaknesses of the QCA's first generation Framework way back in 1997 was that it lacked the feature of credit accumulation and transfer, thus there were many dead-end qualifications which discouraged lifelong learning.⁶⁸ Experience in the UK showed that employers are after the units of learning and not after full qualifications, as units are more flexible and meet industry's needs. The modern labour market seeks soft or transferable skills and specialist knowledge and skills.

The value of credits for the MQF is based on the ECTS model so that credits are harmonised and compatible with other international education systems. 1 ECTS requires 25 hours of total learning and this has been agreed in the *Bologna* Process by the 47 participating countries. As a benchmarking device MQC is using this ECTS value of 25 total learning hours across all

levels of the framework. This single credit system is easy to use and facilitates permeability between VET and HE. From levels 2 to 7 learners are expected to undertake 60 credits of learning per year to achieve full certification at a given level.

The value of 1 credit is equivalent to 25 hours of study of which, according to the *Bologna* Process 6.25 hours are contact hours and 18.75 hours is the time allocated to self-study such as reading, research, seminars, conferences, tutorials, assignments, tests and related organized activities including informal and non-formal learning. This is calculated on the assumption that a learner follows 40 hours of full-time learning per week for 37.5 weeks per year, which is equivalent to a total of 1500 learning hours⁶⁹.

Anything less than 40 credits per year for level 1 and 60 credits per year for levels 2 to 7 does not lead to full certification, and therefore partial certification does not give access to the next level. The only value of a partial qualification is to enable learners to move to higher levels of achievements and to employers to assess a person's level of specific and particular skills and competences.



67 TQF Management Committee, (October 2008), Trans-National Qualifications Framework Consultation Document for Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth.
 68 Coles Mike, Recognition of Learning Outcomes Cluster Peer Learning Activity, The Added Value of National Qualifications Frameworks, London, 20th and 21st October 2008.

Table 6: The minimum number of hours and credits per year

Minimum number of hours per year	Qualification	Level	Qualification	Minimum number of hours per year	Minimum number of credits per year ****
Not Applicable	Doctoral Degree	8	Doctoral Degree	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
1500	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate	7	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate	1500	60 ⁶⁹
1500	Bachelor's Degree	6	Bachelor's Degree	1500	60
1500	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate	5	VET Higher Diploma	1500	60
1500	Matriculation Certificate Advanced Level Intermediate Level	4	VET Diploma	1500 ^{***}	60
940*	General Education Level 3 SEC Grade 1-5	3	VET Level 3	1500	60
940*	General Education Level 2 SEC Grade 6-7	2	VET Level 2	1500	60
940*	General Education Level 1 School Leaving Certificate	1	VET Level 1	1000 ^{**}	40

* The number of hours for compulsory education refers to the number of contact hours and does not include additional hours such as self-study and any recognised non-formal and informal activities.⁷⁰

** VET Level 1 courses require 1000 hours which include contact hours, self-study and any recognised non-formal and informal activities.

*** Contact and self-study hours are based on one academic year from October to June of the following year.

**** The number of credits determine the status of a Full certification.

69 According to the QF/EHEA the second cycle of the *Bologna* Process includes 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle.

70 Refer to Annex 5 for a sample of a compulsory education timetable.

Table 7: Guidelines on the distribution of credits for the different vocational qualifications and the minimum number of hours per year

Levels	VET Qualifications	Number of credits and minimum number of hours per year		
Level 5	VET Higher Diploma	KC 6 Credits 150 hrs	SS 27 Credits 675 hrs	UK 27 Credits 675 hrs
Level 4	VET Diploma	KC 12 Credits 300 hrs	SS 24 Credits 600 hrs	UK 24 Credits 600 hrs
Level 3	VET Level 3	KC 24 Credits 600 hrs	SS 18 Credits 450 hrs	UK 18 Credits 450 hrs
Level 2	VET Level 2	KC 36 Credits 900 hrs	SS 12 Credits 300 hrs	UK 12 Credits 300 hrs
Level 1	VET Level 1	KC 28 Credits 700 hrs	SS 6 Credits 150 hrs	UK 6 Credits 150 hrs

KC - KEY COMPETENCES
 SS - SECTORAL SKILLS
 UK - UNDERPINNING KNOWLEDGE

The number of credits and the minimum number of hours varies according to the percentage of Key Competences, such that Level 1 has 70% of the established credits i.e. 70% of 40 credits which is 28 credits. Similarly the allocated time is also estimated as 70% of the total number of learning hours, which for Level 1 is 1000 hours. A learner requires 700 of learning hours to get the Key Competences at Level 1. This principle applies also to all levels and to the Sectoral Skills and Underpinning Knowledge aspects of the course.

To find the number of credits for each competence, the total established credits for each level is divided by 8, which is the number of Key Competences. One of the components of the Key Competences at VET Level 1 is 3.5 credits (28 credits divided by 8). The same applies for all the 5 VET levels up to the VET Higher Diploma and for Certificates Levels 1 to 3.

Trainers and teachers are encouraged to adopt a system whereby taking into account that Key Competences are divided between those which are

content-based and those which are transversal, credits can be distributed according to the level of Knowledge, Skills and Competences required by a particular group of learners. The distribution being suggested in the Report remains, but teachers and trainers should consider these guidelines as a flexible approach to ensuring that all learners achieve Key Competences during their course of studies. Key Competences should be considered as separate and unifying units at the same time, and therefore a mix and match of Key Competences would be desirable such as second language + cultural awareness; entrepreneurship + learning to learn; science and technology + digital competence.

VET Level 1 Certificate

This qualification is different from the Level 1 Certificate in that it contains elements of both sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. The balance of credits between these three aspects has been established by MQC at 70% key competences, and 15% in each of sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. This amounts to a ratio of 28 credits in key competences, 6 credits in sectoral skills as well as 6 credits in underpinning knowledge. All those jobs (mainly operative) that have been identified by employers require that the level 1 qualification should include this ratio of training. Ex: The Basic Employment Training Certificate provided by ETC.

The number of credits and the minimum number of hours varies according to the percentage of Key Competences, such that Level 1 has 70% of the established credits i.e. 70% of 40 credits which is 28 credits. Similarly the allocated time is also estimated at 70% of the total number of learning hours, which for Level 1 is 1000 hours.

The number of credits and the minimum number of hours varies according to the percentage of Key Competences, such that Level 1 has 70% of the established credits i.e. 70% of 40 credits which is 28 credits. Similarly the allocated time is also estimated at 70% of the total number of learning hours, which for Level 1 is 1000 hours.

VET Level 2 Certificate

The ratio between key competences, sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge at MQF Level 2 is that of 60% to 20% to 20% respectively. This would amount to having 36 credits in key competences and 12 in each of sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. Those jobs, mainly operative but which require higher level competences than those within MQF Level 1 are at MQF Level 2 and consequently should have this balance of competences. Learners can start their learning pathway at any MCAST Institute progressing from the foundation course at this level to the higher VET levels. Ex: ITS offers courses at this level of difficulty, for example the Food Service Restaurant Operations.

VET Level 3 Certificate

This certificate is at MQF Level 3 which is the target at which an individual can be considered to have reached the minimum level in key competences to enable the individual to progress in higher learning pathways and also be able to live as a full active citizen. This level also exemplifies those jobs that are technical or administrative and so require higher order competences than those at lower levels. The ratio of the key competences to the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge now becomes 40% to 30% to 30%. This refers to 24 credits in key competences and 18 credits in each of the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. Ex: the MCAST Certificate in Masonry Heritage Skills (*Sewwej*) which is offered in conjunction with the Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH).

VET Diploma

The focus on key competences now goes down to only one fifth of the qualification with most of the credits focusing on sectoral skills as well as underpinning knowledge. This also reflects complex tasks which require more specific and technical competences which can only be acquired if an individual already possesses the basic key competences. With a ratio of 20% key competences, and 40% for each of the

sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge, the number of credits in each of the sectors will be that of 12 credits in key competences, and 24 credits in each of the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. This diploma has the same parity of esteem as the full matriculation certificate which normally gives access to courses offered by the University of Malta that is 2 Advanced Levels, 3 Intermediate Levels and the Systems of Knowledge as a compulsory element. Ex: The MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development.

VET Higher Diploma

The ratio now goes down to 10% key competences and up to 45% in each of the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. These would amount to a total of 6 credits in key competences, and 27 credits in each of the sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. The main emphasis now is on training in skills specific to the job sector, mastery of such skills enable oneself to be efficient, to make judgements, develop problem solving skills and to be responsible for self and others

The differences between the levels will not only be in the distribution of credits across the three aspects – key competences, sectoral skills or underpinning

knowledge, but also and most importantly, in the level of difficulty between one level and another in an ascending order. There are also differences envisaged in the level of competences required at each level. In order to avoid confusion in understanding credits and to promote mutual recognition and transparency of credits gained. The first number of the coding used for the different credits will indicate the level at which the credits is being provided. This means that a number of credits starting with a code 2 will indicate that the credit covers learning outcomes considered to be at Level 2 of competence. The implementation of such system in national vocational institutions implies the reorganisation of course make up, the method of describing courses, credit value as well as credit coding. The VET Higher Diploma is level rated with the Undergraduate Certificate and the Undergraduate Diploma offered by the University of Malta. On completion of this qualification one is considered to have completed the short cycle of the first cycle of academic and vocational and professional degrees. Ex: MCAST-BTEC Higher National Diploma in Electrical/ Electronics Engineering.

Table 8: Guidelines on the number of credits and the minimum number of hours per year for qualifications in key competences only

Levels	Qualification	Number of credits and minimum number of hours per year
Level 3	Level Three Certificate	KC 60 credits 1000-1500hrs
Level 2	Level Two Certificate	KC 60 credits 1000-1500hrs
Level 1	Level One Certificate	KC 40 credits 700-1000hrs

Level 1 Certificate

This qualification is to reflect the achievement of 40 credits in the areas of key competences⁷¹ only and does not include sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. It is aimed for those who concluded their compulsory education but did not achieve full Level 1 certification. Through these 40 credits, the individual can be considered to have achieved an MQF Level 1. A learner can successfully complete compulsory education and can be awarded pass, merit or distinction in the School Leaving Certificate which is considered to be as an MQF level 1 qualification. The reform in compulsory education incorporates a holistic type of education valuing all formal, informal and non-formal learning acquired throughout the compulsory education from the age of 5 to the age of 16. Those learners who will not have successful completion of their general education will not be entitled for a Full or Partial MQF level 1 certification, they will be given a certificate indicating that the learners have satisfied the legal requirement of obligatory education. Ex: The Adult Education Section of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) offer courses in Key Competences to adult learners who do not have a School Leaving Certificate. For every Key Competence there will be separate partial certificates indicating the number of credits according to the principle of accumulation and transfer of credit. This shall be formalised in a protocol shortly.

Level 2 Certificate

This certificate shows achievement of 60 credits in the areas of key competences only and does not include sectoral skills and underpinning knowledge. Through these 60 credits, the individual can be considered to have achieved an MQF Level 2. This qualification has the same parity of esteem as 4 passes at Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) grades 6 and 7. Ex: ETC is designing a course in Key Competences starting from Level 1 and progression is planned up to Level 3.

Level 3 Certificate

Key competences offered at MQF Level 3 have a higher level of difficulty than the two previous levels and learners gain full certification following assessment of achievement based on 60 credits. The learner with full MQF level 3 certification should have the key competences in place which enables oneself to proceed to further learning. This certificate has the same parity of esteem as a full MQF level 3 certificate

whereby the individual achieves 6 SEC passes between grades 1 and 5. Ex: ETC is designing a course in Key Competences starting from Level 1 and progression is planned up to Level 3.

Bachelor's Degree

At the end of the course the learner will achieve full MQF level 6 qualification which is comparable to the same level of difficulty as the EQF level 6. To obtain a qualification at this level, which is the first *Bologna* cycle the learner is expected to have successfully completed a minimum of 180 ECTS credits, at 60 ECTS credits per year of full time study. The MQC is in the process of finalising a protocol with the University of Malta, in which the latter binds itself that all qualifications it offers are all learning outcomes-based. The MQF is responsible for exit points of qualifications and access is designed at the discretion of public and private education and training providers. There are a number of possible entries to this level:

- (a) the learner has achieved a full Matriculation Certificate which is composed of 2 Advanced Matriculation Level Certificates, 3 Intermediate Level Certificates and the Systems of Knowledge which is a core subject;
- (b) an undergraduate diploma or an undergraduate certificate at MQF/EQF level 5.
- (c) the maturity clause which gives the possibility to adult learners who are 23 years and over to pursue their studies in a lifelong learning context. A number of conditions related to the specific entry requirements for specific courses apply and there will be an assessment and an interview before a candidate is accepted to follow a course;
- (d) permeability between VET and HE as a result of a formal agreement between specific institutions with respect to specific courses. Such agreements include for example the Hospitality and Tourism Management course offered by ITS at MQF level 5 gives access to the 2nd year of the Hospitality and Tourism Management course at MQF Level 6 at the University of Malta. Similarly the MQF level 5 course offered by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering gives access to a qualification at MQF level 6 at the University of Malta. Some B.Ed courses also accept VET qualifications for entry into their courses. Agreements in other sectors can also be achieved.
- (e) During the academic year 2009-2010 MCAST

71 MQC, (2007) Descriptors of Key Competences in the National Qualifications Framework Levels 1 to 3.

offered top-up professional degrees to students who have successfully achieved the BTEC Higher National Diploma in Art & Design, Information Technology, Electrical and Electronics Engineering and Business and Commerce. The access to these courses is from the VET MQC level 5, normally associated with a Higher National Diploma offered by MCAST.

Moreover the flourishing industry of courses offered by foreign awarding bodies represented in Malta has further enhanced lifelong learning. Many adult learners are given the opportunity to follow part-time courses in every MQF level including HE while being employed full-time. Before registering for a qualification individuals are encouraged to check with the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) which also falls within MQC's remit, to verify whether such qualification is recognised by the state where the qualification originates from. The public service and private course providers and employers request official statements issued by MQRIC indicating whether a qualification is recognised or not.

Master's Degree / Postgraduate Diploma / Postgraduate Certificate

Any one of these qualifications is at MQF/EQF level 7 and its workload agreed by the *Bologna* process is represented by a minimum of 60 ECTS credits per year of full time study. At a public education level MQF level 7 is offered by the University of Malta. In principle access to this level normally requires that the learner has achieved full MQF/EQF Level 6 certification in the specialised field of study. The level of difficulty at this level represents the second *Bologna* cycle.

Doctoral Degree

This qualification is awarded to an individual who has successfully achieved a level of difficulty as described in the MQF learning outcomes which are based on the EQF and the QF EHEA. The doctoral degree is valued as MQF/EQF level 8 and it represents the third cycle of the *Bologna* Process. Although MQC and the MQF are not responsible for the entry point of any qualification, access to this level is granted by education institutions to those who have successfully achieved a high level of formal learning in the first cycle and the second cycle of the *Bologna* pathway. Formal learning may be complemented by informal and non-formal learning but not replaced by informal and non-formal learning.

Although the MQF is holistic and MQC shall shortly implement the policy for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, the high level of expertise at this level requires a solid formal education that cannot be replaced by other forms of learning.

2.7 The Alignment Process and the Use of Protocols

As a result of the referencing process an issue emerged in distinguishing between two processes:

- (i) the alignment or inclusion of individual qualifications in the MQF; and
- (ii) the referencing of the MQF and the qualifications within it to the EQF.

Individual qualifications have been aligned on the basis of learning outcomes, assessment criteria, quality assurance procedures and in vocational training, on available occupational standards. The level descriptors of the EQF, the level descriptors of the MQF and the set of criteria and procedures for referencing NQFs to the EQF have helped in no small measure to include individual qualifications at the appropriate level of the MQF. A pilot project with the Institute of Tourism Studies as well as an EQF Leonardo da Vinci project entitled EQF-FRAME facilitated the alignment of qualifications at a national level as well as at a European level with five other partner countries namely Austria, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Spain. Having an eight-level qualifications framework enhanced this process as level descriptors responded both to the European dimension of qualifications and to the traditional educational system of qualifications in Malta.

The referencing of the MQF to the EQF is a completely different process which engaged key players from public and private education and training institutions, employers' and unions' associations, students' organisations, policy-makers, political parties and many other key players in a dialogue on how level descriptors in the Maltese education system best fit the EQF and the QF/EHEA paradigms.

MQC adopts a specific approach in the referencing process that is the requirement that public and private education and training institutions sign a Protocol agreeing on MQC qualifications standards. Whether the qualification originates from Malta or overseas,

the principles of transparency and transferability of qualifications feature in the protocols. The education and training providers commit themselves to the inclusion of the MQF/EQF level on all course descriptions such as prospectuses, transcripts, diploma supplements and certificates.

A Protocol is an expression of statements leading to an agreement on the level-rating of qualifications based on agreed Quality Assurance standards and criteria. A Protocol contains profiles of the agreeing parties as well as a list of all qualifications level-rated to the MQF.⁷² Normally such protocols are signed by the Heads of the institutions entering into an agreement on the levels of the qualifications. Protocols are updated on a regular basis or within twelve calendar months. Following the re-design of the website of the Malta Qualifications Council the protocols shall be available online.

One of MQC's priorities is to align existing qualifications with the MQF and the EQF. Thus all courses are reviewed and given a level referenced to the MQF and the EQF. It is within MQC's remit to maintain and implement the MQF, thus all qualifications which are not in the established MQF, must have the same parity of esteem as the qualifications in each level of the Framework.

Locally designed qualifications are compared with the qualifications in the MQF. MQC discusses with the education and training provider the qualification standards such as the level of difficulty; learning outcomes; the workload in terms of contact and learning hours and MQC's credit system; the internal and external quality assurance mechanisms and the assessment methods. The Designated Authority of the specific sector shall examine these qualification standards and discusses with MQC whether it agrees with these standards and the level of difficulty, and where applicable it makes recommendations to the level-rating of such qualifications. It is the Designated Authority which together with the MQC will have the final say on technical aspects of the qualification as it represents quality assurance in the sector. The training providers and MQC agree on these key elements of quality assured qualifications which are then integrated in a Protocol signed by the representatives of both parties.⁷³

There is a different process to be followed when it comes to the alignment of courses accredited by foreign awarding bodies and offered by local education and training institutions. The procedure is as follows:

Figure 5: Level Rating of Foreign Qualifications offered in Malta

(See Part Five of this document)

Education and Training Provider submits a list of course titles and the name of awarding body.

MQC checks the full details of each qualification and looks for the level of difficulty and the NQF level of its country of origin.

MQC checks the referencing of the NQF of the country of origin to the EQF, and establishes the MQF Level of each qualification.

MQC and the education and training provider discuss the results of the level rating process and sign a protocol.

72 A sample of a protocol can be viewed in Annex 4.

73 *Bologna Process*: Coordination Group for Qualifications Framework, Report on Qualifications Frameworks to be submitted to the BFUG in early 2009, third draft, 15th September 2008.

Example:

- The local education and training provider submits a list of such courses to MQC including details such as the course code; course title and the awarding body;
- MQC checks the full details of that particular course such as for example BTEC or City and Guilds, generally available in a national database of formal qualifications;
- MQC checks what is the level of difficulty according to the Framework from where the qualification originated, for example in the BTEC and City and Guilds, the applicable Framework is the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) of England, Wales and Northern Ireland;
- Then MQC checks the referencing of the qualification in its country of origin's NQF to the EQF which is comparable to the MQF. From levels 5 to 8 the levels of the QCF and the EQF have the same value. Due to the QCF's entry level the first 3 levels of the QCF differ from the EQF and therefore from the MQF as QCF level 1 is EQF/MQF level 2; QCF level 2 is EQF/MQF level 3; and QCF level 3 is EQF/MQF level 4. The difficulty arises when it comes to level-rating QCF level 4 courses as these may either be level 4 or level 5. In such cases MQC looks into each programme of studies and matches such programme to the level descriptors of the MQF and the EQF including where applicable the QF/EHEA if the qualification falls within the short cycle of the first cycle of the *Bologna* Process.
- This level-rating exercise is discussed with the parties concerned and formalised in a Protocol.

MQC has set up an online database listing information on formal qualifications provided by public institutions and eventually by private institutions. This information shall include the following details:

- the accredited formal qualifications available in Malta;
- the awarding body;
- the duration;
- the MQF level;
- the value in credits;
- the learning outcomes; and where applicable,
- the occupational standards they lead to.

Such a register will serve as a tool for learners enabling them to check about particular courses, their value and the accredited institutions before committing

themselves to a programme. It also gives publicity to accredited institutions which benefit from the database by demonstrating that they abide with established quality assurance standards either referred to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area or the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF).

MQC has published four policy documents which are part of the **Valuing All Learning** Series which has been the result of consultation with stakeholders and published for stakeholders as guidelines. The first document introduces the MQF and other European and international Qualifications Frameworks. The second focuses on Vocational Education and Training; the third on Quality Assurance and the fourth on the Validation of Informal and Non-formal Learning.

The following table is found in the second volume of the series and has the objective of guiding training providers to approach MQC with the information needed on home-grown qualifications to be designed on or aligned to the MQF.⁷⁴

An MQC Protocol is an expression of statements leading to an agreement on the level-rating of qualifications based on agreed Quality Assurance standards and criteria and level descriptors. An MQC Protocol contains profiles of the agreeing parties as well as a list of all qualifications level-rated to the MQF.

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74 MQC, Volume 2 p50.

Table 9: Guidelines for the harmonisation of current or new courses leading to MQC Level-rating.

Step	Action
1	Decide the MQF Level of Qualification (1-5) of your course based on MQF level descriptors;
2	Review existing course to identify areas of Key competences, Sectoral Skills and Underpinning knowledge;
3	Divide existing course in number of credits, each with course title
4	Identify excess/under-represented credit in each of the Key Competences, Sectoral Skills and Underpinning Knowledge;
5	Draw up curriculum plan indicating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title of qualification; • Level of Qualification; • Institution issuing certification; • Sector and career area of qualification; • Duration of course; • Entry requirement; • Distribution of learning modes (work/direct teaching etc.); • Main modes of Assessment; • Titles of and number of credits for each of Key Competences, Sectoral Skills and Underpinning knowledge; • Distribution of credits within institution's semesters/terms.
6	Draw up course descriptions in terms of learning outcomes. Course descriptions are to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title of Course; • Institution Issuing credits; • Level of credits; • Sectoral Field; • Career Area; • Mode of Study; • Competences achieved; • Mode of Assessment; • Reading List; • Academic/experience background of tutors.
7	Course needs to go through the internal quality assurance structures within the institution. This involves ensuring that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remit of study is within institution's field of training; • course content is adequate by having it reviewed by a number of experts in the field within institution; • ensuring that course obtains formal approval within institution; • ensuring that course is in line with MQC guidelines; • external quality assurance of course is planned; • space/administrative/academic capacity to deliver course exists; • course reviewed possibly by employers for validity of training programme.
8	Course is submitted to MQC with all details for recognition. Information to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • title of course, level, sectoral field and career area. • course description; • individual credit descriptions; • Description of Quality Assurance standards to be used
9	MQC evaluates the application and if successful level rates the course.

Following the establishment of the proposed legal Framework which will replace the Legal Notice 347/2005 MQC will accredit all qualifications based on

learning outcomes that demonstrate that they lead to the particular competences at a particular level.

2.8 Sectoral Approaches

All aligned formal, non-formal and informal qualifications must either form part of the MQF or of one of the sectoral frameworks. The Sectoral Frameworks must also be aligned to the Malta Qualifications Framework which will act as the over-arching framework of qualifications at national level.

The MQF as launched in June 2007 includes qualifications which follow the general education, VET or Higher Education pathways. All other formal, informal and non-formal qualifications must be part of a sectoral framework such as for example a framework for qualifications in personal services and activities such as artistic qualifications and sports. Examples of hair and beauty qualifications would include hairdressing, pedicure, manicure, nail art, massaging and others. Artistic qualifications include theatre, dance, art, and music etc.

The EQF-FRAME Project involved the exercise of aligning tourism qualifications of six member states represented in the consortium co-ordinated by MQC to the EQF.⁷⁵ In the case of Malta this involved qualifications offered by the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) which have been level-rated by MQC through its first Protocol signed by both parties in November 2007. Moreover a Sector Skills Unit with representatives of the tourism sector such as the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), ITS, the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA) and MQC meet regularly to discuss and design occupational standards which are pegged with courses offered by ITS.

Initiatives which facilitate the design of sectoral frameworks in Malta include the ongoing consultation with stakeholders. Stakeholders are also involved in the two European Social Fund (ESF) Projects co-funded by the European Commission. The VQPACK Project assessed the learning outcomes of qualifications offered by the public VET institutions in Malta, that is by the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST); ITS and the Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH). This project (completed in 2011) identified competences required by the labour market in specific sectors, published in a manual. An information pack was produced for guidance teachers, principals, students and adult learners. The ESF Project *Skills+* designed,

developed and published the occupational standards of nine sectors namely:

1. Art & Design;
2. Community Services;
3. Agribusiness;
4. Building & Construction Engineering;
5. Business & Commerce;
6. Electrical & Electronics Engineering;
7. Mechanical Engineering;
8. Tourism Studies; and
9. Heritage Studies

MQC and ETC agreed that there will be a single set of national occupational standards. The other sectors which were not identified by MQC will be designed by ETC and endorsed by MQC. These occupational standards shall form the basis of the revised Trade Testing process of ETC, as the assessors will be testing individuals according to the established standards.

All learners should be engaged by the fact that following an assessment of their learning outcomes their qualifications will have a transparent value, with a currency at national and European level and beyond. Qualifications can be seen as the building blocks of Sectoral Frameworks, with incremental qualifications, whereby each level of difficulty leads to another advanced level. Thus the objective of Sectoral Frameworks is to encourage lifelong learning and further investment in human capital. (see also Part V, 5.5)

2.9 Trans-National Qualifications Framework (TQF)

Ministers of Education of 32 small countries in the Commonwealth have agreed to set up the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Malta is one of the participants in this initiative. The VUSSC countries agreed to “create mechanisms to support the accreditation of qualifications and transfer of credits between countries.” This brought about the idea of a Trans-National Qualifications Framework which is an international framework that not only does not replace other frameworks, aims to harmonise qualifications frameworks. The objective of the TQF is to have a translation device which facilitates credit transfer in a global setting and promotes accreditation

⁷⁵ MQC, (2008), The European Qualifications Framework and Tourism Studies: A Comparative Analysis of Tourism Systems of Qualifications – Austria, Greece, Italy, Malta, Slovenia and Spain.

Table 10: The MQF referenced to the TQF

TQF Level	Qualification Titles	Minimum Credits of TQF	Hrs of TQF	EQF/MQF Level
10	Doctoral Degree	360	3600	8
9	Masters Degree	240	2400	7
8	Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma	120	1200	
7	Bachelor's Degree with Honours Bachelor's Degree Graduate Certificate and Diploma	360	3600	6
6	Advanced / Higher Diploma Associate Degree / Foundation Degree	240	2400	5
5	Diploma	240	2400	4
4	Advanced Certificate	120	1200	3
3	Certificate III	40	400	2
2	Certificate II	40	400	
1	Certificate I	40	400	1

mechanisms based on an agreed set of Quality Assurance criteria.

The underlying principles of this framework are:

When referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework, the architecture of the level descriptors of the TQF is very broad like the structure of the EQF as both frameworks allow flexibility so that other NQFs will be aligned to them.

- E-learning qualifications which by nature are international and are expected to increase;
- English is the language used for learning; and
- The members of the VUSSC network located across the globe all share the challenges of globalisation and the increased mobility of highly skilled professionals;

The TQF has 10 levels which will be referenced to the NQFs of a number of VUSSC members. The levels in Higher Education normally associated with the *Bologna* process range from level 7 to level 10.

1 TQF credit = 10 hours of notional learning

Notional learning includes all forms of learning including traditional learning, e-learning, distance learning or blended learning. This is based on the British credit system and for both systems to be transparent they

should be related and given a value that relates to the ECTS system where 1 ECTS credit consists of 25 hours of total learning. For example 360 TQF credits at TQF Level 7 are equivalent to 180 ECTS credits at EQF Level 6 based on a comparable value of 360 TQF credits and 180 ECTS credits.

The TQF level descriptors⁷⁶ which have been shaped by the descriptors of a number of qualifications agencies particularly the Qualifications and Credit Authority (QCA), the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), Malaysia Qualifications Authority (MQA), Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) are very flexible and easy to adopt in an NQF context. Qualifications Agencies and other organisations responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of the NQF are encouraged to reference their NQF to the TQF. Alignment to this Trans-National framework can bring further benefits associated with the transparency of qualifications of individual learners and workers in a globalised world characterised by mobility.

When referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework, the architecture of the level descriptors of the TQF is very broad like the architecture of the EQF as both frameworks allow the flexibility so that other NQFs will be aligned to them. The level descriptors of the TQF are not based on the knowledge, skills and competences paradigm like those of the EQF, but they incorporate the same principles of the QF/EHEA for Levels 5 to 8.

The referencing of the MQF to the TQF can also be viewed in Part 3 under 3.5. The TQF was launched in the Seychelles in March 2012. Malta was one of the small States invited to participate in the Implementation Meeting and Launch Conference.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ The VUSSC's TQF Level Descriptors are found in Annex 7.

⁷⁷ Dr James Calleja was one of the keynote speakers of the TQF Launch Conference in the Seychelles, March 2012.

PART THREE

Referencing the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA





3

Although Malta's obligation is to reference the MQF to the EQF, this document also aims at cross-referencing the MQF to both the EQF and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) since the level descriptors of Higher Education in Malta reflect the level descriptors of both Frameworks.

3. Cross-Referencing the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA

The political decision on cross-referencing the NQFs to the EQF was that according to the subsidiarity principle Member States shall set up a National Qualifications Framework which best fits the national education system. Although Malta modelled its MQF on the EQF⁷⁹, Member States can opt to have a Framework with more or with fewer levels than eight. In fact Ireland's NQF has 10 levels; Scotland's 12; England, Wales and Northern Ireland has 9 levels. However, by 2010 Member States should reference their qualifications to the EQF so that qualifications are transparent and have a clear value.

By 2012 all new certificates issued in all EU Member States should show the value of the qualification according to the NQF and its corresponding EQF level. In principle this is a voluntary process, however it is the responsibility of Member States to provide their citizens with easily readable and transferable qualifications.

3.1 The Referencing Criteria

The EQF Advisory Group agreed on a set of criteria which facilitate the referencing process. Although these criteria are not cast in stone, their objective is to guide Member States to align their qualifications to the EQF. The benefits of the EQF can only be perceived

if national qualifications are related to the EQF, thus giving them the values of transparency, comparability and equivalence as well as currency for transferability.

3.1.1. Legal Notice 347/2005 which established the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) established that MQC is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Malta Qualifications Framework; to promote and facilitate life-long learning access, transfer and progression; and to foster the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta.⁸⁰ This legal notice will be replaced and superseded by the Further and Higher Education Act which will revise MQC's mandate.

The Malta Qualifications Council is an entity entrusted by Government with the linkage between the various sectors of public and private education such as schools, vocational and higher education as well as training institutions for adults and the Malta Qualifications Framework. MQC acts as the broker between the making of a qualification, the delivery of the learning experience/s and the final certification process normally expressed in a transcript.

79 Other countries which are developing an eight-level Framework include: Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Spain and Turkey.

80 LN347/2005, Employment and Training Services Act, (CAP.343), Malta Qualifications Council Regulations, 2005, B4949

Over the last few months MQC has acted as a promoter for the introduction of the Diploma Supplement for qualifications at MQF levels 5 to 8 and is working closely with VET institutions to introduce the Certificate Supplement for qualifications at levels 2 to 4 of the MQF⁸¹. Furthermore MQC level rates all qualifications and aligns such qualifications to the MQF and assists all training providers (including HE institutions) to re-design the course descriptions based on learning outcomes.

3.1.2. One of the pre-requisites for the referencing of the MQF to the EQF is that there must be a clear link between both Frameworks, in terms of progression of the levels of difficulty demonstrated through the level descriptors. The link between the MQF and the EQF is demonstrated in the following section of this report.

3.1.3. MQC has established standards on which education and training institutions agree upon when both parties sign Protocols and to which they are obliged to adhere to. These standards include aligning qualifications to one of the levels of the MQF, to provide Learning Outcomes and credit based qualifications, clear assessment procedures and eventually the recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

3.1.4. These standards are transparent and define the workload, method of assessment and internal and external Quality Assurance (a full list of the standards which all education and training providers must meet is available in table 8). These are easily available from the website of the Malta Qualifications Council and discussed on a one-to-one basis during meetings with education and training institutions.⁸²

3.1.5. The Malta Qualifications Council is the body responsible for the National Qualifications Framework and hence it will also assume the responsibility to quality assure those qualifications that fall within the Framework and which correspond to the level-descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. It will be MQC's responsibility to quality assure vocational training and learning experiences which fall within informal and non-formal education as well as continuous professional development qualifications.⁸³

3.1.6. The Further and Higher Education Act which will be published later in 2009 will establish the criteria on which accrediting bodies will be established in Malta. It is expected that a Quality Assurance Agency will be responsible for all further and higher education qualifications and that such agency will tap the already existing resources available within the National Commission for Higher Education and the Malta Qualifications Council. Once this process is set in motion, one cannot exclude the setting up of private Quality Assurance Agencies in Malta.

3.1.7. Experts for Member States were called upon to peer review Malta's referencing process at all levels of the MQF. These experts were selected on the basis of experience and expertise in undertaking similar processes in their country of origin. The international experts were Mr Tom Bain Former Assistant Director of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Dr James Keevy Director Research South African Qualifications Authority, Mr Vincent McBride Senior Specialist Planning Monitoring Evaluation European Training Foundation and Dr Jim Murray, Executive Chairman National Qualifications Authority Ireland. The national experts consulted were Mr Felix Borg General Manager Malta Employment and Training Corporation, Dr Jennifer Cassingena Harper Commissioner National Commission for Higher Education, Dr Suzanne Gatt Senior Lecturer Faculty of Education University of Malta and Mr Emmanuel Zahra, Director Institute of Mechanical Engineering (MCAST). They reviewed the document in their personal capacity and not as representatives of the institutions they are employed with.

3.1.8. It is the objective of this report to define the underlying principles behind the referencing process, its development and implementation, and the impact it will have on stakeholders. The report is further published and presented to the stakeholders for consultation.

3.1.9. There will be a Register at EU Level listing the Member States which have completed the referencing process. The Malta Qualifications Council shall inform the European Commission following finalisation of this report and approval by stakeholders through consultation. The Commission will then provide a virtual link to this report.

81 Refer to Annex 4 for a specimen of the Diploma Supplement used by the University of Malta and a specimen of the Certificate Supplement.

82 MQC, Valuing All Learning Series, Volume 2, Guidelines for a Vocational Education and Training System for Malta's National Qualifications Framework, p50.

83 The MQC Quality Assurance Policy for VET is provided with full details in MQC, Valuing All Learning Series, (2007) Volume 3, A Quality Assurance Policy for Vocational Education and Training.

3.1.10. Level-rating of courses provided by public education and training institutions has been agreed upon between these institutions and MQC, and formalised in Protocols which bind these institutions to indicate the level of the MQF and EQF on all new transcripts and certificates issued by them. This procedure will follow with private education and training providers who shall also follow the same process

as the public institutions and re-shape their courses on the learning outcomes model, assign credit to all learning, sign a Protocol with MQC and show the MQF and EQF level-rating on all information on courses and transcripts and certificates. This process has started with a number of providers and will be consolidated during 2012-2014 as recommended by the European Commission.

Table 11: EQF Indicators for Referencing

see also pgs 28-32

Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF	
1.	The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.
2.	There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications Framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.
3.	The national Framework or qualifications system and its qualifications are based on [the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.
4.	The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications Framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.
5.	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 3 of the Recommendation).
6.	The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.
7.	The referencing process shall involve international experts.
8.	The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national Framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately each of the criteria.
9.	The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.
10.	Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.

Table 12: QF/EHEA Criteria and Procedures for Self-Certification

Criteria for verifying that national frameworks are compatible with the <i>Bologna</i> Framework:	
1.	The national framework for Higher Education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for Higher Education.
2.	There is a clear demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the European framework.
3.	The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits.
4.	The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent.
5.	The national quality assurance system for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the <i>Bologna</i> Process.
6.	The national framework, and any alignment with the European framework, is referenced in all Diploma Supplements.
7.	The responsibilities of the domestic parties to the national framework are clearly determined and published.

The referencing process undertaken by the MQC took into account both sets of criteria particularly in the analysis of the level descriptors for the MQF. From a thorough study of both criteria it clearly transpires that an amount of overlap between the two sets is evident as can be demonstrated in the following table. In the MQF referencing process particular attention was given to the synergy between the two sets of criteria and how they impinge on the principles governing the referencing of the MQF to the two frameworks.

In our analysis of the two sets of criteria the following observations were made:

1. The first criterion and the seventh criterion of the QF/EHEA correspond to the first criteria of the

EQF in that the base for both criteria is the legal competence that should govern the designated authority involved in the referencing process.

2. Both criteria illustrate the importance of having “clear and demonstrable links” between the National Qualifications Framework and the overarching frameworks of the EQF and the QF/EHEA.
3. The third criterion in both sets focus on the importance of establishing a clear and measurable means to value qualifications such as a credit system and the learning outcomes approach. However, the EQF related criteria places also reasonable links with arrangements for the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

Table 13: A comparative overview of the criteria of the EQF and QF/EHEA

Mapping of the two sets of criteria and procedures governing the EQF and the QF/EHEA	
EQF	QF/EHEA
1. Legal Competence governing the referencing process	1. Legal Competence governing the national framework for HE qualifications
2. Demonstrable link between Qualifications and level descriptors.	2. Demonstrable link between Qualifications and cycle descriptors
3. Learning Outcomes, VINFL and credit system	3. Learning Outcomes, ECTS or compatible credits
4. Transparency	4. Transparency
5. National Quality Assurance System consistent with EQARF	5. National Quality Assurance System consistent with <i>Bologna</i> Communiqués
6. The referencing process should be endorsed by QA institutions	6. The referencing process should be reflected in the Diploma Supplement
7. The referencing process to be reviewed by international experts	7. The key players to the national framework are determined and published
8. The official endorsement and publication of the Referencing Report	
9. EQF platform to maintain Referencing Report Register	
10. The referencing process should be visible on all certificates, diplomas and degrees	

4. Transparency is the common denominator between the two sets of criteria and procedures as a tool for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualifications system.
5. The fifth criterion brings out the importance of the European dimension in this referencing process indicating that both the political mandates (*Bologna* Communiqués and the EQARF tool).
6. The tenth criterion of the EQF can be matched to the sixth criterion of the QF/EHEA. Both indicators focus on the necessary mechanisms to certify any learning process in a standard and easily verified manner.
7. Criteria 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the EQF are not directly linked to the seven-tier set of criteria of the QF/EHEA. The sixth criterion of the EQF is about the

endorsement of the referencing process by quality assurance entities, while the eighth criterion is about the official endorsement and publication of the referencing report. The criteria for the QF/EHEA do not consider the need for international expertise in the verification of the national framework to the *Bologna* Framework. On the other hand, the EQF seventh criterion values the consultation of advisors experienced in the referencing process of national qualifications frameworks. The EQF ninth criterion considers it necessary to have a visible European referencing process as a Register of Referencing Reports facilitates the referencing process as a mutual learning exercise for those European countries which are in the process of designing their NQF and its referencing to the EQF. Another objective of this register is that it is a tool for transparency and mobility.

3.2 Setting Common Standards through Level Descriptors

As a pre-requisite for the referencing of qualifications to the MQF and to the EQF the qualifications must be learning outcomes-based. Learning Outcomes are statements that describe what a learner knows and is able to do at the end of a learning process. They are a combination of Knowledge, Skills and Competences. Knowledge is described as theoretical or factual. Skills are the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. Competences are associated with autonomy and responsibility.

The nature of the level descriptors is generic as a neutral reference point so that they can be applied to all forms of qualifications whether formal, informal and non-formal as well as to all sectoral qualifications. They have the objective to set standards describing the progressing level of difficulty. The level descriptors of the MQF are more detailed than those of the EQF. This aspect provides further clarification and makes them more user-friendly and easy to use. Another feature of the MQF's level descriptors is that they are focused on the individual, the verb in singular form shows that the level descriptors are designed with the individual in mind and not with a group of individuals with different abilities and interests. The level descriptors can be equated to qualifications criteria that measure complexity, volume and the level of learning expected for the particular qualification.⁸⁴ They give a broad profile of what an individual should know and do with varying degrees of autonomy and responsibility.

The MQF level descriptors are presented side by side to the EQF to facilitate a comparative understanding of both systems. Malta's level-descriptors were built upon those published by the Government of Malta in Legal Notice 347 of 2005 when a first attempt to create a National Qualifications Framework was undertaken at that time. Malta's Qualifications Framework has been influenced by the eight-level classification of the EQF but it responds directly to a long-standing system of a Maltese qualifications system. As a matter of fact the original level descriptors of the MQF were approved in June 2007 when the official National Qualifications Framework was launched by the Minister of Education. Assessment of progression is facilitated by the numbering of each component within the knowledge, skills, competences and learning outcomes fields which enhances comparison between levels.

However, the level descriptors of the MQF are distinguished from those of the EQF because they include a list of learning outcomes which summaries the knowledge, skills and competences and which points out specific skills such as communications skills, judgmental skills and learning skills which progress throughout the framework as tabled in table 24 which shows the progression within the MQF. Progression in the MQF is not recorded in terms of knowledge, skills and competences but in terms of knowledge and understanding; applying knowledge and understanding; communication skills; judgmental skills; learning skills and autonomy and responsibility.

Learning outcomes in all the following MQF Level descriptors are stated in the following order:

1. Knowledge and Understanding;
2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding;
3. Communication Skills;
4. Judgmental Skills;
5. Learning Skills; and
6. Autonomy and Responsibility

The following tables illustrate (in the highlighted text) a comparison between the Malta Qualifications Framework level descriptors and those of the European Qualifications Framework. It is important to underline that the Maltese level descriptors reflect the education system and culture of Malta but can be substantially referenced to the EQF Level descriptors. In comparing the two sets of level descriptors, note has been taken of the Maltese longer version of describing the level of difficulty expected at each of the eight levels of qualifications. The style of writing level descriptors is typical of a system of education which lays particular emphasis on the explicit written context of describing qualifications.

⁸⁴ TQF Management Committee, (October 2008), Trans-National Qualifications Framework Consultation Document for Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth, p15.

Table 14: The MQF Level Descriptors for Level 1

EQF MQF

Level Knowledge	Level 1 EQF Basic general knowledge;	Level 1 MQF 1. acquires basic general knowledge related to the immediate environment and expressed through a variety of simple tools and contexts as an entry point to lifelong learning; 2. knows and understands the steps needed to complete simple tasks and activities in familiar environments; 3. is aware and understands basic tasks and instructions; 4. understands basic textbooks.
Skills	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks;	1. has the ability to apply basic knowledge and carry out a limited range of simple tasks; 2. has basic repetitive communication skills to complete well defined routine tasks and identifies whether actions have been accomplished; 3. follows instructions and be aware of consequences of basic actions for self and others.
Competences	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context;	1. applies basic knowledge and skills to do simple repetitive and familiar tasks; 2. participates in and takes basic responsibility for the action of simple tasks; 3. activities are carried out under guidance and within simple defined timeframes; 4. acquires and applies basic key competences at this level.
Learning Outcomes	1. Knowledge and Understanding; 2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding; 3. Communication Skills; 4. Judgmental Skills; 5. Learning Skills; and 6. Autonomy and Responsibility	1. has basic knowledge and understanding of textbooks and simple tasks while relating to the immediate environment 2. follows instructions and completes repetitive simple tasks in familiar contexts and under a quality controlled system; 3. communicates basic information in familiar repetitive contexts; 4. assesses and ensures that assigned tasks have been completed effectively; 5. acquires and applies key competences to defined actions; 6. takes some responsibility for completing simple tasks and exercises limited autonomy.

The underlying principle behind the MQF and the EQF level 1 qualification is that the learner is expected to have basic learning outcomes. The term basic is defined as elementary⁸⁵ yet fundamental and which serves as a starting point.⁸⁶ One should possess basic knowledge from one's immediate environment or from basic textbooks, and apply this knowledge to

complete a limited range of simple routine tasks and to follow instructions. Both communication and key competences at this level are also basic. The tasks are accomplished following step by step guidance, and therefore one will not have full responsibility for one's actions. The responsibility will be shared with the person guiding the tasks.

85 <http://thesaurus.com>

86 <http://dictionary.com>

Table 15: The MQF Level Descriptors for Level 2

EQF MQF

Level Knowledge	Level 2 EQF Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study;	Level 2 MQF 1. possess good knowledge of a field of work or study; 2. is aware of and interprets types of information and ideas; 3. understands facts and procedures in the application of basic tasks and instructions; 4. selects and uses relevant knowledge to accomplish specific actions for self and others.
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;	1. has the ability to demonstrate a range of skills by carrying out a range of complex tasks within a specified field of work or study; 2. communicates basic information; 3. ensures tasks are carried out effectively.
Competences	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy;	1. applies factual knowledge and practical skills to do some structured tasks; 2. ensures one acts pro-actively; 3. carries out activities under limited supervision and with limited responsibility in a quality controlled context; 4. acquires and applies basic key competences at this level.
Learning Outcomes	1. Knowledge and Understanding; 2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding; 3. Communication Skills; 4. Judgmental Skills; 5. Learning Skills; and 6. Autonomy and Responsibility	1. understands and uses good knowledge for tasks, procedures or a field of work or study; 2. follows instructions and completes a range of well-defined tasks; 3. communicates basic information in unfamiliar contexts; 4. selects and uses information for specified tasks and be pro-active; 5. acquires and applies key competences to a range of actions; 6. takes responsibility and exercises autonomy in well-defined tasks under a quality controlled system.

Level 2 of both Frameworks shows the gradual increase in the level of difficulty. The learner is expected to have a good knowledge rather than a basic general knowledge. One should be able to evaluate, select and interpret information accordingly. Then this factual information is used to demonstrate a range of complex skills, including a more advanced level of communication skills and key competences. Unlike level 1 the learner is competent without necessarily being in a familiar environment and the tasks are not simple and repetitive. The element of pro-activity is introduced at this level. The fact that the

learner is expected to carry out well-defined tasks gives certain though very limited degree of specialisation. Therefore he/she is supervised and monitored in the whole process but not given the direction needed in level 1. This is where a limited amount of autonomy is given to the learner, who is responsible for completing well-defined tasks. However, the learner is not responsible for the quality assurance aspects of the tasks he/she is assigned to. This would be the responsibility of the person with a supervisory role and who has a higher level of competence.

Table 16: The MQF Level Descriptors for Level 3

■ EQF ■ MQF

<p>Level Knowledge</p>	<p>Level 3 EQF Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study;</p>	<p>Level 3 MQF</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. understands the relevancy of theoretical knowledge and information related to one field of work or study; 2. assesses, evaluates and interprets facts establishing basic principles and concepts in a particular field of work or study; 3. understands facts and procedures in the application of more complex tasks and instructions; 4. selects and uses relevant knowledge acquired on one's own initiative to accomplish specific actions for self and others.
<p>Skills</p>	<p>A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. demonstrates a range of developed skills to carry out more than one complex task effectively and in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts; 2. communicates more complex information; 3. solves basic problems by applying basic methods, tools, materials and information given in a restricted learning environment.
<p>Competences</p>	<p>Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. applies knowledge and skills to do some tasks systematically; 2. adapts own behavior to circumstances in solving problems by participating pro-actively in structured learning environments; 3. uses own initiative with established responsibility and autonomy, but supervised in quality controlled learning environments normally within a craftsmanship environment; 4. acquires key competences at this level as a basis for lifelong learning.
<p>Learning Outcomes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge and Understanding; 2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding; 3. Communication Skills; 4. Judgmental Skills; 5. Learning Skills; and 6. Autonomy and Responsibility 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. understands theoretical knowledge and information related to complex procedures in a field of work or study; 2. follows instructions and carries out complex tasks systematically and in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts; 3. communicates complex information in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts; 4. assesses, evaluates and interprets facts related to a field of work or study and applies basic problem solving techniques; 5. acquires and applies key competences as a basis for lifelong learning; 6. takes agreed responsibility for completing complex tasks, and interacts with the immediate environment and in defined actions at one's own initiative.

Although levels 1 and 2 are also associated with the completion of compulsory education, full MQF level 3 certification gives access to further education, therefore the key competences have a higher level of difficulty when compared to the previous levels. The key competences at this level must have the same parity of esteem as six Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) passes grades 1 to 5. Therefore this level introduces problem solving skills, the systematic carrying out of procedures and the demonstration of learning outcomes following personal initiative. The learner is able to understand complicated instructions and carry out a range of tasks which require a range of developed skills. At this level the learner is able to communicate information which is more complex than the previous level. Whereas in the previous level pro-activity was supervised, it is now manifested out of own initiative and requires the learner to be responsive to problems which need urgent action. Some tasks are now carried with responsibility and autonomy.

Level 4 is characterised by an advanced level of key competences which gives access to the short cycle of the first *Bologna* cycle, if one follows the academic route, which has the same parity of esteem as a national diploma. Theoretical knowledge at this MQF level has become broad, and the learner is expected to analyse the knowledge and come up with principles and the application of procedures in broad contexts. Selection, evaluation and analysis are all in broad contexts and not limited to specific contexts as in the previous level. Progression to this level is distinguished by expertise in and application of a range of technical or academic skills, the introduction of qualitative and quantitative

concepts of work, and the changing role of the learner to that of a supervisor. Whereas in the previous level he/she was autonomous and responsible for a limited number of one's actions, this level introduces responsibility for a wide range of competences of self and others, and the provision of solutions. The learner is responsible for carrying out his/her tasks effectively, monitors the work of others and implements quality assurance mechanisms.

Although at first sight there seems to be a sudden shift from the descriptors of level 4 to those of level 5, the progression is gradual and the changes in the learning outcomes build upon the previous levels. This can be attributed to the higher level of difficulty required for completing this short cycle of the first *Bologna* cycle of the QF/EHEA.⁸⁷ MQF level 5 introduces aspects such as further learning and basic research, personal academic development, judgements on social and ethical issues, personal social responsibility, and the effective and efficient management of projects and colleagues. The MQF level 5 descriptors emphasise the demonstration of technical and practical knowledge, even when communicating with people from different backgrounds. They also highlight the present level of achievement and the self-assessment of prospects for career progression through access to higher education. There is a developed degree of autonomy and responsibility, and whereas in the previous level the learner had a supervisory role, now the role shifted to include aspects of management. This involves team building and training, and mastering of unpredictable problems.

87 Report on Qualifications Frameworks – submitted to the BFUG (12th -13th February 2009) *Bologna* Process Coordination Group for Qualifications Framework.

Table 17: The MQF Level Descriptors for Level 4

■ EQF ■ MQF

Level Knowledge	Level 4 EQF Factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study;	Level 4 MQF 1. understands broad theoretical knowledge and analysis of information related to a field of work or study; 2. understands facts and establishes basic principles in broad contexts within a field of work or study; 3. applies facts and procedures in broad contexts within a defined field of work or study; 4. selects and analysis theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a specific 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;	1. demonstrates acquired knowledge and the ability to apply a range of technical or academic skills to carry out multiple complex tasks; 2. communicates theoretical and technical information in a work or learning environment; 3. generates solutions to specific problems within a field of work or study.
Competences	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, take some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities;	1. applies knowledge and skills to perform qualitative and quantitative tasks that require technical capacity normally associated with a technician's competence; 2. supervises the quality and quantity of work of self and others' under quality assured structures, with responsibility and autonomy; 3. demonstrates an advanced level of key competences at this level as a basis for higher education.
Learning Outcomes in the MQF	1. Knowledge and Understanding; 2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding; 3. Communication Skills; 4. Judgmental Skills; 5. Learning Skills; and 6. Autonomy and Responsibility	1. understands and analyses broad theoretical, practical and technical knowledge related to a field of work or study; 2. follows instructions and carries out defined theoretical, complex and technical tasks; 3. communicates theoretical and technical information in a work or learning context; 4. interacts with and generates solutions to problems within the immediate environment of a given field of work or study; 5. applies key competences to defined actions and to a technical or academic field of work or learning context; 6. exercises autonomy and takes responsibility for defined qualitative and quantitative tasks of self and others by completing complex tasks in a broad context under quality assured mechanisms.

Table 18: The MQF Level Descriptors for Level 5

EQF MQF

Level Knowledge	<p>Level 5 EQF Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundary of that knowledge;</p>	<p>Level 5 MQF</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. understands knowledge in a field of study that builds upon advanced general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks leading to further studies to complete the first cycle; 2. develops strategic and creative responses in researching solutions to well defined concrete and abstract problems; 3. makes judgements based on knowledge of relevant social and ethical issues.
Skills	<p>A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. demonstrates transfer of theoretical and practical knowledge, in creating solutions to problems; 2. conveys ideas, in a well structured and coherent way to peers, supervisors and clients using qualitative and quantitative information; 3. has the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems; 4. evaluates own learning and identifies learning needs necessary to undertake further learning.
Competences	<p>Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change;</p> <p>Review and develop performance of self and others;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. manages projects independently that require problem solving techniques where there are many factors, some of which interact and lead to unpredictable outcomes; 2. shows creativity in managing projects, manages people and reviews performance of self and others; train others and develop team performance; 3. expresses a comprehensive internalized personal world view reflecting engagement of solidarity with others; 4. has the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy.
Learning Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge and Understanding; 2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding; 3. Communication Skills; 4. Judgmental Skills; 5. Learning Skills; and 6. Autonomy and Responsibility 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. understands advanced textbooks which may lead to further academic or vocational learning and, researches solutions to abstract problems; 2. demonstrates operational capacity and management skills using creativity; 3. interacts with others to convey abstract and concrete solutions to problems in a field of work or study; 4. formulates practical and theoretical responses to abstract and concrete problems and makes judgements on social and ethical issues; 5. evaluates own learning and can improve key competences for further learning, and promotes team training; 6. is responsible for the effective and efficient management of projects and people within agreed timeframes.

Table 19: The MQF Level Descriptors for Level 6

<p>Level Knowledge</p>	<p>Level 6 EQF Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study involving a critical understanding of theories and principles;</p>	<p>Level 6 MQF</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. understands knowledge that builds upon advanced general education and typically includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study; 2. uses detailed theoretical and practical knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of study and involves critical understanding of theories and principles; 3. understands methods and tools in a complex and specialised field of work or study and innovation in terms of methods used; 4. makes judgements based on relevant social and ethical issues that arise in a field of work or study.
<p>Skills</p>	<p>Advanced skills demonstrating mastery and innovation required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. applies knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to work or study; 2. communicates ideas, problems, and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences using a range of techniques involving qualitative and quantitative information; 3. has 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; 4. devises and sustains arguments to solve problems; 5. consistently evaluates own learning and identify learning needs.
<p>Competences</p>	<p>Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts;</p> <p>Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups;</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. demonstrates administrative design, resource and team management and is responsible for work or study contexts that are unpredictable and require that complex problems are solved; 2. shows creativity and initiative in developing projects in management processes, manage and train people to develop team performance; 3. has developed those learning skills that are necessary to continue to undertake further studies with a high degree of autonomy.
<p>Learning Outcomes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge and Understanding; 2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding; 3. Communication Skills; 4. Judgmental Skills; 5. Learning Skills; and 6. Autonomy and Responsibility 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. understands professional theoretical and practical knowledge in a specialised field of work or study; 2. demonstrates innovative theoretical and practical responses to work or study contexts; 3. communicates ideas, problems, and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences using a range of techniques involving qualitative and quantitative information to sustain arguments; 4. makes professional judgements on social and ethical issues within the area of specialisation, masters problem solving skills, and evaluates the management of projects and people; 5. assesses own learning and can specialize in one or more key competences for further learning; 6. is responsible for the management of creative and innovative projects and the team's performance.

Full Level 6 certification of the MQF means completion of the first cycle of the *Bologna* process, formally known as the first degree. Unlike all the previous levels this level is characterised by specialisation in a particular area of study. Specialisation in a given discipline is subject specific competence and generic non-specific competences include the key competences which contribute to the specialisation in a field of study.⁸⁸ This specialisation entails innovation and consistent professional development. Communication takes another dimension at this level, that of sharing expertise with specialist and non-specialist audiences. Even the personal social responsibility is directed towards the area of specialisation. Whereas learning and study in level 5 was carried out with some autonomy, the learning skills at this level are developed such that learning, study and working can be done with a high degree of autonomy and responsibility. In a work context autonomy and responsibility is also demonstrated through decision making in terms of the administration of resources, the co-ordination of multiple complex factors, creativity and innovation. The learner assesses the situation and acts with responsibility for self, others and the organisation.

Knowledge at Level 7 of the MQF may be specialised or multi-disciplinary as defined by the level descriptors of the QF/EHEA associated with this level. A characteristic feature of this level is that it introduces original research which has an impact on the need for knowledge, the skills to get the knowledge, evaluate and analyse the competences to produce original writing with responsibility and autonomy. The individual has developed a mastery of the knowledge and skills and is capable to adapt to new technological, economical and social challenges.

Communication and problem solving skills are also shaped by the degree of specialisation, by original research and experience. The judgmental response at this level is done through critical evaluation and with limited and incomplete information. Whereas the learner at level 6 could choose to specialise in one of more fields of study, professional expertise at this level requires specialisation in a single area of study only. Compared to the responsibilities of the previous level which are restricted to the management of projects and people, the individual at level 7 has more and wider responsibilities. These include responsibilities coming from the impact of the production of original research, for one's operations within society and the organisation, and for adapting to the changing needs of the work or study environment.

Progression to level 8 is characterised by an advanced level of expertise in the area of specialisation and knowledge is focussed on the area of specialisation and does not include multi-disciplinary knowledge. Whereas in level 7 an individual demonstrates capability to adapt to the changing needs of the environment, at level 8 an individual reaches a level characterised by leadership and innovation in mastering research in work and study contexts. Thus level 8 is distinguished by a higher degree of expertise and authority in a specialised field, which brings with it the responsibility for a number of projects related to the field. An individual with a doctorate or a more advanced qualification has the social responsibility to keep abreast of the technological, social and cultural challenges and to provide forecast and innovative ideas for future developments. This can only be achieved through continuous professional development at this level.

88 Bergan Sjur, p48.

Table 20: The MQF Level Descriptors for Level 7

EQF MQF

<p>Level Knowledge</p>	<p>Level 7 EQF Highly specialised 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;</p>	<p>Level 7 MQF 1. has comprehensive knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that knowledge typically associated with Bachelor's level; 2. uses specialised or multi-disciplinary theoretical and practical knowledge some of which is at the forefront of a field of study. This knowledge forms the basis of originality in developing and/or applying ideas.</p>
<p>Skills</p>	<p>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;</p>	<p>1. demonstrates specialised or multi-disciplinary knowledge that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of one's knowledge and judgements; 2. can communicate to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously work or study related conclusions and knowledge which may be the outcome of research, self-study or experience; 3. performs critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments, and to produce original research; 4. develops new skills in response to emerging knowledge and techniques and demonstrates leadership skills and innovation in complex and unpredictable work and study contexts.</p>
<p>Competences</p>	<p>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;</p>	<p>1. creates a research-based diagnosis to problems by integrating knowledge from new or interdisciplinary fields and makes judgements with incomplete or limited information; 2. manages people and projects and demonstrates the ability to respond to the fast changing business environment; 3. demonstrates autonomy in the direction of learning and a high level of understanding of learning processes; 4. has the learning skills to allow continuation to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.</p>
<p>Learning Outcomes</p>	<p>1. Knowledge and Understanding; 2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding; 3. Communication Skills; 4. Judgmental Skills; 5. Learning Skills; and 6. Autonomy and Responsibility</p>	<p>1. has comprehensive specialised or multi-disciplinary theoretical and practical knowledge which forms the basis of original research, which may contribute to social and ethical issues; 2. demonstrates capability in using knowledge and skills, to adapt to the fast changing business environment and to manage people and projects efficiently; 3. communicates with specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously conclusions and knowledge which may be the outcome of original research, self-study or experience; 4. performs critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar contexts, and to produce original research; 5. makes assessments of personal continuous professional development, takes initiative to undertake self-directed study and may proceed to further specialisation; 6. is accountable and responsible for the original research within a personal social responsibility and/or business context, for one's operations and for adapting the management of people and projects reflecting the dynamic nature of the environment in which one operates.</p>

Table 21: The MQF Level Descriptors for Level 8

■ EQF ■ MQF

Level Knowledge	Level 8 EQF Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields;	Level 8 MQF 1. has a systematic understanding of a highly specialised field of study which builds upon a specialised or multi-disciplinary knowledge and understanding; 2. extends or redefines existing knowledge and/or professional practice.
Skills	The ability to apply the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques including synthesis and evaluation to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice;	1. demonstrates mastery in skills such as the selection and analysis of research, writing, design, development and sustainability of the argument manifested in innovative scholarly research; 2. responds to technological, social and cultural issues and addresses the needs of a knowledge-based society; 3. communicates expertise to a wide audience including peers and the general public using different methods including national and international publications, and participates in specialist fora; 4. demonstrates expertise in critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments, and to produce original research.
Competences	Competence at the forefront in work or study including research contexts demonstrating substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly or professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes;	1. demonstrates authority in a specialised field of work or study and makes judgements involving a multitude of interacting factors; 2. promotes social, scientific and ethical advancement through actions; 3. has a sustained commitment in the development of new ideas.
Learning Outcomes	1. Knowledge and Understanding; 2. Applying Knowledge and Understanding; 3. Communication Skills; 4. Judgmental Skills; 5. Learning Skills; and 6. Autonomy and Responsibility	1. has theoretical and practical expertise in a specialised field of knowledge which may contribute to social and ethical issues in a national and international dimension; 2. demonstrates leadership and innovation in mastering research in work and study contexts; 3. communicates expertise to a wide audience including peers and the general public using different methods including national and international publications, and participates in specialist fora; 4. demonstrates expertise in critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments, and to produce original research; 5. has a sustained commitment to generate new ideas and innovative projects related to technological, cultural and social development; 6. is responsible for the leadership of a number of specialised projects and an authority in a specialised field of work or study.

3.3 Mapping Qualifications to MQF Levels: Some Practical Examples

This section provides some practical examples of mapping qualifications to the MQF. These learning outcomes-based units demonstrate that the MQF level descriptors inspired by the EQF and of the QF/EHEA paradigms are practical and easy to read and use.

The first section represents a unit which makes up part of a qualification offered by the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), which is a VET institute which offers courses from MQF levels 2 to 5 to post-secondary students and adult learners. The entry level to one of the courses offered by the institute is level 1 normally associated with a compulsory education school leaving certificate. The MQF level 5 qualification in Hospitality and Tourism Management gives access to the second year of the MQF level 6 course in tourism management offered by the University of Malta.

Another example of Learning outcomes-based VET qualification is one of the units which constitutes the MCAST-BTEC National Certificate in Agriculture which is offered by the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology was is composed of 9 VET institutes which offer courses designed by foreign awarding bodies and others designed locally and which currently range from MQF level 2 to MQF level 5. However as from the academic year 2009-2010 MCAST shall introduce professional degrees at MQF level 6 in four key sectoral areas.

The third section represents an example of a learning outcomes-based unit in MQF level 6 offered by the University of Malta which offers academic qualifications from MQF levels 5 to 8 and which is responsible for the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examinations with 6 passes at grades 1 to 5 being equivalent to MQF level 3 and 4 passes at grades 6 to 7 equivalent to MQF level 2.

The methodology of the following tables illustrates the shift from learning inputs to learning outcomes. Whereas until recently all the courses were described in terms of knowledge, the current trend is to describe every aspect of the qualification including a range of skills and competences. MQC promotes learning

outcomes qualifications as it is one of the principles of MQC protocols and the referencing to the EQF. ITS and MQC signed the first such protocol and a number of institutions are in the final process of signing this protocol in 2009. MQC is in the process of finalising the protocol with MCAST, the University of Malta, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education and the Employment and Training Corporation as well as with a number of private training providers.

3.3.1 A Learning outcomes-based unit offered by the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS)

Table 21 shows the knowledge, skills and competences acquired when the individual follows the unit on **Cold Food Preparation** offered by ITS as part of the **Craft Certificate in Food Preparation and Production**. The level of difficulty and the workload associated with this course value it as level 2 of the MQF. ITS has no credit system but it is planned that it will be introduced shortly. Each statement shows what an individual is supposed to know and understand is complemented by two accompanying statements describing the skills and competences which that knowledge leads to. For example the sixth statement which describes knowledge and understanding related to the storage and service of cold preparations is followed horizontally by the judgmental skill to evaluate quick service and healthy food, and the competences introduce the responsibility to ensure quality control. The fourth column listing the learning outcomes summarizes the key elements of the other three columns and distinguishes between knowledge and understanding; applying knowledge and understanding; communication skills; making judgements and taking responsibility; and learning skills. Although not in the same order, these are all the domains of the learning outcomes as listed in the MQF level descriptors. They do not have to be in the same order, otherwise the process of level rating and writing learning outcomes-based qualifications becomes rigid and loses its practicality. In fact there are two statements that demonstrate the application of knowledge and understanding, the minimum is one but there can be several statements describing each domain.

Table 22: The learning outcomes of a unit at MQF Level 2: Cold Food Preparation is Part of the Craft Certificate in Food Preparation and Production

KNOWLEDGE At the end of the course the learner will be exposed to the following knowledge and understanding of:	SKILLS At the end of the course the learner will have mastered the following skills:	COMPETENCE At the end of the course the learner will have acquired the responsibility and autonomy to:	LEARNING OUTCOMES At the end of the course the learner will be able to:
1. a variety of commodities to produce healthy and well presented cold dishes.	produces a variety of cold dishes which involves the use of commodities either raw pre-prepared, or pre-cooked and cooled items into required styles of presentation.	combine and / or mix commodities with regards to flavour and texture balance.	have knowledge and understanding of how to prepare cold dishes into required styles of presentation.
2. a range of cold preparation methods and techniques. 3. the importance of temperature and timing in cold preparations. 4. the appropriate food suitable for cold preparations.	demonstrates the various methods and techniques of preparation. evaluates the right temperatures during preparation as appropriate. seasons, garnishes and marinades foods.	indicate the correct use of equipment and utensils carry out tests using the temperature probe, following the appropriate procedures	apply knowledge and understanding to produce and serve the types of food suitable for cold preparations: (a) Snacks, salads, cold buffet items and sandwiches. (b) Fresh, frozen, cooked, pre-cooked, canned processed, convenience. (c) Meat, fish, shellfish, vegetables, fruits, salads communicate basic information on the types of food suitable for cold preparations
5. the importance of suitable equipment and utensils used in cold preparation process.	complies with all preparation procedures to eliminate the risk of contamination.	ensure that all areas, utensils and equipment to be used are in a fit state of cleanliness and repair.	apply knowledge and understanding to operate large and small equipment suitable for process such as refrigerators, counters, food processors
6. the preparation, storage and service of cold preparations.	identifies the main advantages: (a) quick service (b) healthy eating and higher retention of nutrients in uncooked food.	maintain quality and avoid factors that may cause food deterioration.	make judgements by and takes responsibility for assessing and ensuring dish presentations are fit for purpose exercise learning skills and consider progression to the next level

3.3.2 A learning outcomes-based unit offered by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)

Table 23: The learning outcomes of a unit at MQF Level 4: Agricultural Organic Production as part of the MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Agriculture

KNOWLEDGE At the end of the course the learner will be exposed to the following knowledge and understanding of:	SKILLS At the end of the course the learner will have mastered the following skills:	COMPETENCES At the end of the course the learner will have acquired the responsibility and autonomy to:	LEARNING OUTCOMES At the end of the course the learner will be able to:
Understands the principles of organic farming and the role of regulatory and advisory organisations	Follows the principles of organic farming in farming processes	be responsible for abiding with the regulatory and advisory frameworks	Know and understand about the production of agricultural products which adhere to organic farming principles and regulatory and advisory frameworks
Understands the importance of maintaining a healthy soil as the basis of organic production	Demonstrates knowledge of the importance of the impact of organic practices on soil, animals, the environment, countryside and the consumer	Supervise the quality of one's work and others ensuring maintenance of soil fertility	Communicate to peers and consumers the importance of maintaining a healthy soil as the basis of organic production
Understands the process of converting soil degradation	Applies judgmental skills to quantify the damage of the soil and demonstrate the ability of restoring the soil;	Make sure that the quality of the soil is restored	Apply judgmental skills to assess the degraded soil and uses qualitative and quantitative measures to restore it
Knows and understands the principles of organic crop production	Applies methods of organic production that concentrate on controlling weeds, pests and diseases of crops	Ensure that crop production is maintained through the application of organic farming methods	Produces organic crops according to a quality controlled and productive mechanism
Knows and understands the principles of organic livestock production	Applies methods of organic production that concentrate on controlling weeds, pests and diseases of livestock	Ensure that livestock production is maintained through the application of organic farming methods	Produces organic livestock according to a quality controlled and productive mechanism
			Is responsible for the production of crops and livestock, and the maintenance and restoration of degraded soil according to the principles of organic farming and regulatory and advisory frameworks
			Make a personal assessment of whether one shall proceed to further learning

Table 22 shows the learning outcomes acquired on completion of the unit entitled **Agricultural Organic Production** as part of the **MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Agriculture** offered by the Institute of Agribusiness which is one of the nine institutes which compose MCAST. MCAST does not have a credit system yet, but it is planned that an ECVET-based system in which every credit translates itself into 25 points will be introduced in due course. Such a credit system further facilitates permeability between VET and HE.

The underlying principle behind the methodology of learning outcomes-based qualifications as demonstrated above is that the learner acquires knowledge and understanding and applies it. So the learners can apply the principles of organic farming in practice and is responsible for abiding with the regulatory and advisory frameworks which safeguard the principles of organic farming. The individual is expected to know and understand and demonstrate such learning and understanding through the application of judgmental skills so the learner can assess soil degradation and determine the methods to deal with it. Another skill is the communication of the knowledge and understanding as the learner is aware of the principles guiding one's actions. At this level the individual is autonomous and responsible for one's own actions and those of others. Through the achievement of the above learning outcomes the learner has the technical know-how which when applied results in the production of organic agricultural produce.

3.3.3 A learning outcomes-based unit offered by the University of Malta (UoM)

The Academic Programmes Quality & Resources Unit (APQRU) within the University of Malta established a set of *Guidelines for the writing of effective learning outcomes*⁸⁹ so that new study units or programmes and others which are renewed follow the same standards.

MQC met APQRU and following a discussion on the link that these guidelines have with the MQF and the EQF, the two parties agreed that these guidelines should be adopted as a model for the writing of learning outcomes for all higher education degree awarded by the University of Malta. Thus there is coherence between the model presented hereunder by MQC (related to an undergraduate course in Conflict Resolution) and APQRU's paradigm.

The study unit **Conflict Resolution and International Relations** forms part of the course leading to a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations. It has a workload of 100 hours of which 25 are contact hours 2 hours for test and 2 hours hrs for tutorials and the remaining 70 hours are dedicated to reading and study work. Its value is 4 ECTS credits and the level of difficulty is MQF/EQF level 6. This unit explores peace and conflict theories in the context of international relations. Various methodological approaches to conflict transformation are explored in particular dialogue, negotiation, arbitration and mediation as tools for conflict resolution and transformation. These positions are challenged against current problems fuelling conflicts such as cultural and national identity, abuse of power, terrorism, intolerance towards diversity, underdevelopment, military capabilities and social and racial injustice.

This study unit also attempts to critically answer the questions: What is our understanding of conflict resolution in relation to international relations? Will it help to accommodate *differences* to resolve conflicts? What is the role of international mediators in conflict resolution? Can mediators truly be neutral when they have their own cultural values and biases?

The lectures and seminars examine how political and cultural contexts affect conflict resolution at the individual, group and organisational level. The emphasis is on contexts such as class, religion, culture and race.

Self-study includes reading, research, preparation of presentations, following documentaries and attendance to conferences and seminars.

89 APQRU University of Malta, (2009) , Guidelines for the writing of effective learning outcomes, http://www.um.edu.mt/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/66219/LO-LV.pdf

Table 24: The learning outcomes of a unit at MQF Level 6: Conflict Resolution and International Relations forms part of the B.A. International Relations

KNOWLEDGE At the end of the course the learner will be exposed to the following specialised knowledge and understanding of:	SKILLS At the end of the course the learner will have mastered the following skills:	COMPETENCES At the end of the course the learner will have acquired the responsibility and autonomy to:	LEARNING OUTCOMES At the end of the course the learner will be able to:
Conflict as an applied concept	shows an understanding of conflict as a means to resolve incompatibilities at individual, community, national and international levels	Discuss and critically review conflict theories in the context of individual, community, national and international levels.	Write and speak about contemporary conflict theories particularly those developed by Johan Galtung and Peter Wallenstein.
Violence and its international manifestation in arms trade	Demonstrates an insight into violence seen from a direct, structural and cultural dimension	Critically construct a conceptual framework for the study of violence in its various manifestations in society and within the international community particularly the issues of terrorism and civil unrest.	Demonstrate an own conceptual framework of the manifestations and the impact of violence on decision-making and on the quality of life of individuals in civil society.
Conflict Formation; Intervention and Transformation.	manifests an understanding of how conflict are formed and deformed through intervention and transformation processes	Communicate and alert effectively on the roots and symptoms of conflict formation and the techniques used to defuse conflict	Deploy a range of schools of thought on conflict formation, intervention and transformation particularly within the context of intercultural and international relations.
Conflict life-cycle	Demonstrates an understanding of the conflict cycle and how it impacts on development	Discuss and critically review aspects of a conflict cycle within the framework of IR theories.	Develop a critical understanding of how conflicts develop, manifest, destroy and re-build relations
Non-violent conflict transformation	Demonstrates an understanding of how communication, cooperation and confidence-building are at the basis of non-violent conflict transformation	Discuss and critically review aspects of conflict resolution using information and communication technology, development and preventive diplomacy as tools for conflict resolution.	Demonstrate an ability to produce policies based on effective inter-cultural communication, sector-based cooperation and confidence-building measures.
Transcending conflict and conflict resolution in the State system	Has the predictive capacity to visualise the roots of conflict in IR and the benefits of the core values of democracy: security, freedom, well-being and identity.	Critically deploy classical and contemporary theories of IR to illustrate how such core values of the State in contrast with aspects of aggression and violence as documented in history.	Demonstrate an ability to analyse aspects of aggression and security as determining the structure and function (internally and externally) of States.
The institutionalisation of peace – litigation, arbitration and mediation	assesses how litigation, arbitration and mediation are institutions of negative and positive peace.	Discuss and critically review a number of case studies in which mediation plays a pivotal role in conflict transformation.	Develop the capacity to consolidate, expand and integrate conflict resolution theories into training in mediation techniques. .
/Mediation as an alternative dispute resolution technique.	Demonstrates an understanding of the role mediators play in conflict resolution particularly in aspects of mediation related to international conflicts.	Provide insights to the role of mediators and the factors influencing their impact on the resolution of conflict through peace settlements or plans and their execution and monitoring.	Deploy, participate and take initiatives within civil society to highlight conflict issues in IR particularly those related to international terrorism, gender, the environment, self-determination, State recognition and arms trade.

The resolution of conflicts between States	Builds a case study in Inter-State conflict by analysing its roots, its manifestation and its economic, cultural, social and political impacts.	Analyse the conflict complexes of actual or potential rivalry between actors involved and produce insights into the solution of such conflict.	Produce a mapping of conflict resolution from an economic, political, social and cultural perspective.
The International community and conflict resolution	communicates knowledge of the role of the United Nations in conflict resolution by drawing on the various peace missions across the world.	Analyse the effective and ineffective impacts of the United Nations on war-torn countries.	Take an active role in analysing conflict situations and in providing a creative approach to its resolution.

The individual learner studying this unit acquires **knowledge and understanding** of a range of schools of thought on conflict formation, intervention and transformation particularly within the context of intercultural and international relations. One is able to **communicate** the knowledge and understanding through writing and speaking about contemporary conflict theories and the personal conceptual framework of the manifestations and the impact of violence on decision-making and on the quality of life of individuals in civil society. At MQF/EQF level 6 the learner is expected to master **judgmental skills**. A learner following this unit develops a critical understanding of how conflicts develop, manifest, destroy and re-build relations, demonstrates an ability to analyse aspects of aggression and security and takes an active role in analysing conflict situations. At the end of the learning process the individual is expected to be **responsible** for demonstrating an ability to produce policies based on effective intercultural communication, sector based cooperation and confidence-building measures. The learners **applies knowledge and understanding** by deploying, participating and taking initiatives within civil society to highlight conflict issues in international relations, produces a mapping of conflict resolution from an economic, political, social and cultural perspective. Moreover, the individual is expected to have the **learning skills** to develop the capacity to consolidate, expand and integrate conflict resolution theories into training in mediation techniques.

Thus what the learner is supposed to know is in principle the recommendation of the EQF, and at this level the QF/EHEA which gives more importance to learning skills than the EQF, the reason could be that the EQF is implicitly a framework for lifelong learning.

3.4 The EQF and MQF: A Comparative Analysis

The progression of the level descriptors of the MQF is influenced by the consultation with stakeholders who in turn had the national and the European contexts as constant points of reference. This process has helped in aligning the MQF to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF EHEA).

The domains of the EQF are the Knowledge, Skills and Competences. This can be verified as very generic and flexible; however it is the objective of every NQF to adopt the national level descriptors according to the *best fit* principle. A key element in all the levels of the MQF is the provision of detail which makes it more user-friendly, easier to understand and to relate with. There are some particular skills and competences in the MQF which feature in every level and their progression can be monitored and distinguished from more general skills and competences which may not be consistently found throughout the level descriptors. The **Knowledge and Understanding** of the MQF includes information about what a learner is supposed to know and understand, this section in the EQF is termed as Knowledge. The Skills section of the EQF is further developed in the MQF where specific domains which highlight progression within different aspects of skills are introduced. These include **Applying Knowledge and Understanding, Communication Skills, Judgmental Skills and Learning Skills**. Instead of Competences the MQF introduces **Autonomy and Responsibility** indicating that the competences achieved at every level are accountable and measured with autonomy and responsibility. The domains of the MQF correspond to those of the QF/EHEA with the exception, that the latter does not include autonomy and responsibility.

Table 25: Progression within the MQF

Learning Outcomes	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
Knowledge and Understanding	basic knowledge and understanding of textbooks and simple tasks while relating to the immediate environment;	understands and uses good knowledge for tasks, procedures or a field of work or study;	understands theoretical knowledge and information related to complex procedures in a field of work or study;	understands and analyses broad theoretical, practical and technical knowledge related to a field of work or study;	understands advanced textbooks which may lead to further academic or vocational learning and, researches solutions to abstract problems;	understands professional theoretical and practical knowledge in a specialised field of work or study;	has comprehensive specialised or multi-disciplinary theoretical and practical knowledge which forms the basis of original research, which may contribute to social and ethical issues;	has theoretical and practical expertise in a specialised field of knowledge which may contribute to social and ethical issues in a national and international dimension;
Applying Knowledge and Understanding	follows instructions and completes repetitive simple tasks in familiar contexts and under a quality controlled system;	follows instructions and completes a range of well-defined tasks;	follows instructions and carries out complex tasks systematically and in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts;	follows instructions and carries out defined theoretical, complex and technical tasks;	demonstrates operational capacity and management skills using creativity;	demonstrates innovative theoretical and practical responses to work or study contexts;	demonstrates mastery of knowledge and skills, adapts to the fast changing business environment and manages people and projects efficiently;	demonstrates leadership and innovation in mastering research, work and study contexts;
Communication Skills	communicates basic information in familiar repetitive contexts;	communicates basic information in unfamiliar contexts;	communicates complex information in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts;	communicates theoretical and technical information in a work or learning context;	interacts with others to convey abstract and concrete solutions to problems in a field of work or study;	communicates ideas, problems, and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences using a range of techniques involving qualitative and quantitative information to sustain arguments;	communicates with specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously conclusions and knowledge which may be the outcome of original research, self-study or experience;	communicates expertise to a wide audience including peers and the general public using different methods including national and international publications, and participates in specialist fora;
Judgmental Skills	assesses and ensures that assigned tasks have been completed effectively;	selects and uses information for specified tasks and be proactive;	assesses, evaluates and interprets facts related to a field of work or study and applies basic problem solving techniques;	interacts with and generates solutions to problems within the immediate environment of a given field of work or study;	formulates practical and theoretical responses to abstract and concrete problems and makes judgements on social and ethical issues;	makes professional judgements on social and ethical issues within the area of specialisation, masters problem solving skills, and evaluates the management of projects and people;	performs critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar contexts, and to produce original research;	demonstrates expertise in critical evaluations and analysis with incomplete or limited information to solve problems in new or unfamiliar environments, and to produce original research;
Learning Skills	acquires and applies key competences to defined actions;	acquires and applies key competences to a range of actions;	acquires and applies key competences as a basis for lifelong learning;	applies key competences to defined actions and to a technical or academic field of work or learning; context;	evaluates own learning and can improve key competences for further learning, and promotes team training;	assesses own learning and can specialize in one or more key competences for further learning;	makes assessments of personal continuous professional development, takes initiative to undertake self-directed study and may proceed to further specialisation;	has a sustained commitment to generate new ideas and innovative projects related to technological, cultural and social development;

Autonomy and Responsibility	takes some responsibility for completing simple tasks and exercise limited autonomy;	takes responsibility and exercises autonomy in well-defined tasks under a quality controlled system;	takes agreed responsibility for completing complex tasks, and interacts with the immediate environment and in defined actions at one's own initiative;	exercises autonomy and takes responsibility for defined qualitative and quantitative tasks of self and others by completing complex tasks in a broad context under quality assured mechanisms;	is responsible for the effective and efficient management of projects and people within agreed timeframes;	is responsible for the management of creative and innovative projects and the team's performance;	is accountable and responsible for the original research within a personal social responsibility and/or business context, for one's operations and for adapting the management of people and projects reflecting the dynamic nature of the environment in which one operates;	is responsible for the leadership of a number of specialised projects and an authority in a specialised field of work or study;
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Table 26: Progression within the EQF

Learning Outcomes	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8
Knowledge	Basic general knowledge;	Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study;	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study;	Factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study;	Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundary of that knowledge;	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study involving a critical understanding of theories and principles;	Highly specialised 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 at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields;
Skills	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks;	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;	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information;	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study;	A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems;	Advanced skills demonstrating mastery and innovation required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study;	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;	The ability to apply the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques including synthesis and evaluation to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice;
Competences	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context;	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy;	Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems;	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, take some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities;	Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; Review and develop performance of self and others;	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;	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;	Competence at the forefront in work or study including research contexts demonstrating substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly or professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes;

Level 1

Knowledge and understanding of the MQF differs from the knowledge of Level 1 of the EQF as besides basic general knowledge, it adds the possibility of entry into lifelong learning and includes knowledge and understanding about the use of simple tools, about basic tasks and instructions, and about steps for familiar activities. Whereas the EQF equates skills with the carrying out of simple tasks, the MQF goes further and distinguishes between the application of skills, communication skills and judgmental skills. The MQF restricts the application of skills to a limited range of skills. It includes basic repetitive communication skills, and the fact that the individual is aware of consequences assumes that the individual exercises judgement during work or study. The Competence domain of the EQF focuses on work or study under direct supervision in a structured context, whereas the MQF includes basic responsibility for simple routine and repetitive tasks and shared responsibility for those tasks which are carried out under guidance.

Level 2

The EQF defines knowledge at Level 2 as basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study. The MQF goes beyond this and considers knowledge in a field of work or study as good knowledge not just basic, and adds the understanding of facts and procedures in the application of basic tasks and instructions. Judgmental skills are used in selecting, using and interpreting knowledge related to the specific assigned tasks. The EQF skills are focused on practical skills in a routine environment and using simple rules and tools, whereas the MQF indicate demonstration of a range of skills in carrying out complex tasks. The MQF also adds the communication of basic information and the judgement that an individual checks that the tasks are carried out effectively. The MQF and the EQF agree that the individual must complete tasks with limited supervision and autonomy at this level. However, the MQF gives judgmental value and adds pro-activity in one's actions. It also includes the learning skills to acquire and apply key competences at this level.

Level 3

Both the EQF and the MQF agree on the importance of knowledge and understanding of facts and procedures in a field of work or study. However, the MQF introduces the element of personal initiative and, acknowledges the importance of theoretical knowledge

at this level. It also introduces judgmental skills such as the assessment, evaluation and interpretation of facts establishing basic principles and concepts in a field of work or study. Both frameworks agree on the range of developed skills and the basic problem solving skills. However, the MQF also includes also that the individual is capable of demonstrating the range of skills in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts. Furthermore the individual is capable of communicating more complex information. Both frameworks agree on autonomy and responsibility. The MQF also adds personal initiative and quality assured contexts, and assumes that the individual is working in a craftsmanship environment. Like the previous levels and the levels to follow the MQF considers the individual as possessing learning skills to be further developed in a lifelong learning context.

Level 4

The EQF and the MQF agree on the principle that the learner should possess factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study, but where they differ is that the MQF introduces also the term of broad theoretical knowledge and in broad contexts. It also includes judgmental aspects such as the selection and analysis of theoretical knowledge and information. Both frameworks agree on the autonomy and supervision of others associated with this level. The MQF introduces qualitative and quantitative aspects and the fact that the technical capacity is normally associated with a technician's competence. A feature which is common in all MQF levels is that the individual is expected to have the learning skills which will enable one to proceed to further learning and at this level to the short cycle of the first cycle of higher education.

Level 5

The knowledge at MQF level 5 is expected to be based on advanced general secondary education at post-secondary level which is indeed as the EQF recommends comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical. Moreover, the MQF introduces researching solutions and problem solving skills. At MQF level 5 the individual is also expected to make judgements on knowledge of relevant and social issues. Both frameworks agree on the demonstration of a range of skills which lead to creative solutions to problems. The learner demonstrates communication skill by conveying structured and coherent ideas to peers, supervisors and clients using judgmental skills and communicates information which is both quantitative

and qualitative. The learning skills statement shows that by MQF level 5 the learner should be ready to proceed to higher education. The competences in both frameworks focus on the management supervision

and development of team players in an environment characterised by unpredictable change. The MQF applies the term “some autonomy” to further studies to higher education.

Table 27: Progression within the QF/EHEA⁹⁰

Learning Outcomes	Level 6 1st cycle	Level 7 2nd cycle	Level 8 3rd cycle
Knowledge and Understanding	[is] supported by advanced text books [with] some aspects informed by knowledge at the forefront of their field of study.	provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing or applying ideas often in a research context.	[includes] a systematic understanding of their field of study and mastery of the methods of research associated with that field.
Applying Knowledge and Understanding	[through] devising and sustaining arguments.	through problem solving abilities [applied] in new unfamiliar environments within broader [or multidisciplinary] context.	[is demonstrated by the] ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt substantial process of research with scholarly integrity. [is in the context of] a contribution that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work some of which merits national or international refereed publication.
Making Judgements	involves gathering and interpreting relevant data.	[demonstrates] the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete data.	[requires being] capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas.
Communication	[of] information, ideas, problems and solutions	[of] their conclusions and the underpinning knowledge and rationale (restricted scope) to specialist and non-specialist audiences (monologue)	with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general (dialogue) about their areas of expertise (broad scope)
Learning Skills	have developed those skills needed to study further with a high level of autonomy.	study in a manner that may be largely self directed or autonomous.	expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts technological, social or cultural advancement.

⁹⁰ The Dublin Descriptors for the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area is found in Annex 7.

Level 6

There is a consensus among the EQF, QF/EHEA and the MQF that this level is characterised by an advanced level of knowledge and skills particularly judgmental skills. There are some aspects which the MQF adopted from the EQF and others from the QF/EHEA. The EQF and the MQF agree on the production of innovative work. Similarly to the QF/EHEA the MQF includes skills such as the gathering and interpreting of information and the communication of ideas, problems and solutions based on sustained and well-researched arguments. The EQF does not go into these details but includes critical understanding and the demonstration of mastery and innovation in solving complex and unpredictable problems. The EQF's judgmental skills are more problem-oriented and the QF/EHEA's and the MQF's are more research-oriented. The QF/EHEA includes autonomy and responsibility as part of learning skills and it does not include statements that show managerial responsibility. However this is not the case in the EQF and the MQF as they both take into consideration the management of people and projects. The MQF like the QF/EHEA expect the learner to demonstrate learning skills with a high level of autonomy. The two distinct features that are not found in the EQF and the QF/EHEA are linked to personal competences such as when an individual makes judgements on social and ethical issues, and that one is competent and uses one's initiative. Although the QF/EHEA includes the communication of ideas, problems and solutions they do not go into the details about the audience and the methodology of delivery as the MQF does. The MQF is more detailed than the QF/EHEA and the EQF because it is a national framework and therefore does not have to be as general and flexible as the other two frameworks. The MQF level descriptors are more comprehensive for the sake of clarity, but they do not ask for more than the EQF is asking for.

Level 7

All the frameworks with which the MQF is aligned, that is the EQF and the QF/EHEA emphasise the importance of original research at level 7. These also agree on the review of personal development. The MQF and the QF/EHEA consider knowledge at this level to be of a specialised or a multi-disciplinary nature, however this is not the case in the EQF which concentrates on the

specialised type of knowledge. This does not imply that the MQF requires more and higher level skills, but it provides a more detailed description. The statement dealing with critical evaluation is found in Level 7 of the MQF, and in Level 8 of the EQF and the QF/EHEA. Communication is excluded from all levels of the EQF. However, this is present in the QF/EHEA and the MQF. However, the MQF's statement describes in more detail and includes the fact that the communicated information may be the outcome of research, self-study or experience, thus recognising informal and non-formal learning. The MQF and the EQF are more business-oriented than the academic-oriented QF/EHEA. The latter does not include statements about individuals in the work environment where they will be responsible for projects and for the quantitative and qualitative work as well as the personal development of subordinates.

Level 8

The three frameworks agree that at this level the individual should have reached a high level of expertise in a specialised area of study or profession. All the frameworks give the same importance to the mastering of critical assessment and evaluation related to the research and other material related to the specialised field of study. The individual has a certain authority in the field which has to be sustained by continuous professional development. All frameworks agree that at this level one has a personal social responsibility to promote technological, social and economic development through researching, testing and communicating innovative ideas. The QF/EHEA and the MQF include a statement about communicating the expertise to scholars and the general public and the MQF goes further by indicating how the methodology of communicating the specialised expertise including publication and participation in specialist fora. The MQF is distinguished from the other frameworks as it also includes managerial aspects in terms of responsibility for the leadership of specialised projects. This enhances the character of level 8 as a professional level and not a level strictly restricted to academic fields. Unlike the managerial role associated with the previous level, at Level 8 the individual is responsible for projects which are specialised, thus using the expertise acquired in the field of specialisation.

3.5 The MQF in a European and Interregional Context

The concept of qualification frameworks was introduced in the United Kingdom. The idea of the European Qualifications Framework is only recent following the greater need for transparency of qualifications in a globalised labour market and economy.

The above table shows the value of the levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework when compared to European and International Frameworks as well as the EQF and the QF/EHEA. It shows that the EQF, MQF

and the South African NQF (SA NQF) have the same number of levels of the same value.

The table illustrates three 10-level frameworks namely the New Zealand NQF (NZ NQF), the Trans-National Qualifications Framework (TQF) and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (INFQ). The levels 8 and 9 of the NZ NQF and the TQF, and level 9 of the INFQ have the same level of difficulty as level 7 of the EQF, the MQF and the SA NQF which corresponds to the second cycle of the *Bologna* Process. The first *Bologna* cycle, level 6 of the EQF, MQF and SA NQF is comparable to level 7 of the

Table 28: The MQF compared to current European and International Qualifications Frameworks

EQF Levels	MQF Levels	QF/EHEA Levels	SCQF Levels ⁹¹	QCF Levels ⁹²	INFQ Levels ⁹³	TQF Levels	NZ NQF Levels	SA NQF Levels	FQF Levels	DQF Levels
8	8	3 rd cycle	12	8	10	10	10	8	1 CDN (doctorates)	8
7	7	2 nd cycle	11	7	9	9 8	9 8	7	1 CDN (Masters)	7
6	6	1 st cycle	10 9	6	8 7	7	7	6	2 CDN	6
5	5	short cycle	8 7	5 4	6	6	6 5	5	3 CDN	5
4	4		6	3	5	5	4	4	4 CDN	4
3	3		5	2	4	4	3	3	5 CDN	3
2	2		4	1	3	3 2	2	2	no EQF Levels	2 1
1	1		3	E3	2 1	1	1	1		no EQF Levels
			2							
			1							

- CDN: Certification de niveau;
- DQF: The Danish Qualifications Framework;
- EQF: European Qualifications Framework;
- FQF: The French Qualifications Framework;
- MQF: Malta Qualifications Framework;
- QF/EHEA: Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area;
- SCQF: Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework;
- QCA: Qualifications and Credit Framework;
- INFQ: Irish National Framework of Qualifications;
- TQF: Trans-National Qualifications Framework;
- NZ NQF: New Zealand National Qualifications Framework; and the
- SA NQF: South African National Qualifications Framework

91 John Hart, for SCQF, (30th May 2008), Report on the Referencing of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), p14.
 92 Stan Lester Developments for QCA and CCEA (23rd October 2008), Linking the Qualifications and Credit Framework Levels to the European Qualifications Framework: Final Report to the England & Northern Ireland Referencing Group, p11
 93 National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, (9th April 2009) Referencing of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (INFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF), p3-4

TQF and the NZ NQF and to levels 7 and 8 of the INFQ.

Level 6 of the INFQ and TQF and levels 5 and 6 of the NZ NQF correspond to the short cycle of the *Bologna* Process and to level 5 of the EQF, MQF and the SA NQF. The first 4 levels of the NZ NQF have the same level of difficulty as the first 4 levels of the EQF, MQF and the SA NQF. The INFQ's and the TQF's level 5 has the same value as level 4 of the MQF and INFQ's and the TQF's level 4 carries the comparable learning outcomes as level 3 of the MQF. The first 2 levels of these two frameworks differ when compared to the 8-level frameworks because the INFQ's level 3 is equivalent to the MQF's level 2, and the TQF's levels 2 and 3 have the same value as MQF level 2. Similarly level 1 of the MQF is comparable to levels 1 and 2 of the INFQ and to level 1 of the TQF.

The QCF of England, Wales and Northern Ireland differs from the MQF, EQF and the SA NQF because it introduces an entry level the E3 which has the same level of difficulty of the EQF level 1 at an entry point, and the qualifications at levels 3 and 4 of the QCF are referenced to level 4 of the MQF, EQF and the SA NQF. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) has 12 levels and the learning outcomes of its level 3 are comparable to those of the EQF level 1. The SCQF's levels 7 and 8 are referenced to level 5 of the MQF, and the SCQF's levels 9 and 10 are referenced to level 6 of the MQF. Level 11 of the SCQF has the same value as level 7 of the MQF, and MQF's level 8 normally associated with the completion of the third *Bologna* cycle (doctoral degree) has the same value of the SCQF level 12.

Referencing between frameworks is a very important exercise which increases transparency of qualifications across national and international and interregional borders and institutions. However, this report illustrates that it is not the establishment of frameworks that gives value and meaning to qualifications but their referencing to other qualifications frameworks, in the form of accumulation and transfer of credits, learning outcomes and levels of difficulty enabling learners to achieve a higher level of mobility.

This report aims at guiding the individual, whether a young student at school leaving age or an adult learner, as well as all stakeholders to understand and appreciate the factors determining the levels of qualifications making up the MQF and their value on the European and international education environments and the global labour market.

The level descriptors demonstrate that the programme of studies at every level of difficulty should provide opportunities for students to know and understand subject-specific knowledge, learn how to apply in concrete situations knowledge and understanding, possess communication skills relative to the level of qualification, acquire judgmental and learning skills and be responsible and autonomous in one's own actions.

According to the standards based on learning outcomes as described above, at the end of a learning process whether formal, informal or non-formal the individual should benefit from personal development as well as increase the capacity for employability and sustained employment.

Referencing between frameworks is a very important exercise which increases transparency of qualifications across national, international and interregional borders and institutions. It reduces bureaucracy in the recognition of qualifications

Referencing between frameworks is a very important exercise which increases transparency of qualifications across national, international and interregional borders and institutions and drastically reduces bureaucracy in the recognition and comparability of qualifications.





PART FOUR

Beyond Referencing



4

The role of stakeholders in setting up and implementing a qualifications framework is instrumental in ensuring success, sustainability, application and employability. Referencing the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA is a key element of the implementation phase of the MQF. It improves the transparency and understanding of qualifications and facilitates more consistency and coherency between European and Trans-National qualifications. Any National Qualifications Framework that is aligned or referenced to other frameworks, particularly the EQF and the QF/EHEA benefits from this added value.

4. The Added Value of the MQF referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA

The added value is manifested by the following mechanisms:

- transparency and understanding of qualifications;
- consistency and coherence between different qualifications frameworks;
- increased currency of single qualifications;
- the creation of national level descriptors as standards used for comparability;
- the enhancing of access and progression;
- a credit system and units as building blocks of qualifications;
- accumulation and transfer of credits;
- mobility;
- learning outcomes-based qualifications;
- greater stakeholders' involvement;
- national reform; and
- European, international and Trans-National cooperation.

The above mechanisms require a co-ordinated effort, as the successful implementation of the MQF necessitates commitment and depends on the stakeholders' direct

involvement and ownership of the framework. Such a commitment strengthens the coherence between the role of the MQF as a translation device and the quality assurance mechanism. This part of the report seeks to address the issue of stakeholders' involvement and their contribution to the design, establishment and implementation of the MQF.

4.1 The Role of Stakeholders in the MQF and beyond

One must here distinguish between two important terms: stakeholders and social partners. The stakeholders group is more extensive and refers to individuals or organisations who will be effected by a given measure or policy (see reports of meetings with stakeholders on pg 26). Therefore the term stakeholders is an umbrella term that includes all members of civil society that may or may not belong to an organisation. Social partners are also stakeholders. The term social partners refers to representative organisations such as unions, employers associations, chambers of commerce, and federations of industry. Their task is to represent the interests of their members at a national and European level. MQC seeks to involve both social partners and stakeholders in

the development of the MQF. Important stakeholders in this process include the individual learners, the education and training providers and social partners.

MQC is an independent reference point that functions as an integrating force between stakeholders representing education and industry, and the three main education pathways namely compulsory education, VET and HE. In fact the MQC Governing Board which has a policy and decision making role is chaired by an individual with established expertise in the sector and independent judgmental qualities. The board members are government policymakers in economics and quality assurance in education, representatives of the University of Malta and MCAST and representatives of two social partners namely the Malta Employers' Association (MEA) and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC). The Malta Council for Social and Economic Development is also represented on the Council. The Board decides on issues related to the MQF including quality assurance and the recognition of foreign qualifications. This is one of the instances where stakeholders including social partners are directly involved.

The MQF's first draft was designed by the MQC board; however it was only finalized following a number of consultation meetings with individual stakeholders including student bodies, education and training providers and social partners. The establishment of the Framework led to look into ways to implement it, and this also necessitated the stakeholders' direct contribution. MQC managed to reach out to the stakeholders by publishing four policy documents in a series of books entitled *Valuing All Learning* on the MQF, on VET, on Quality Assurance and on the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

There are four different dimensions to the MQC – stakeholder co-operation:

1. one-to-one consultation meetings;
2. seminars and conferences related to the MQF;
3. sector skills units; and
4. EQF information seminars for stakeholders

One-to-one consultation meetings with stakeholders is very time consuming, but very productive. It helps to establish a *rapport* between organisations and individuals, and MQC. The topic of these meetings depends on the development of the MQF, such that

There are three kinds of seminars and conferences organised by MQC, namely those related to the EU projects, peer learning activities such as those co-ordinated by ENQA VET, and consultation events. Stakeholders and social partners are also project partners and national associates in projects co-financed by the European Commission where MQC is either the co-ordinator or a partner.

at the initial stages of the setting up of MQC the topic was the design of the MQF, now that the MQF is at its implementation phase the discussion is about the level rating of qualifications, sectoral frameworks, the level descriptors and the referencing process. Generally, the stakeholders themselves identify the need to approach MQC and education and training providers seek guidance on how a course can be designed to follow the quality assurance criteria and the principles of the Framework, so that this process would lead to the signing of a Protocol between the two institutions.

There are three kinds of seminars and conferences organised by MQC, namely those related to the EU projects, peer learning activities such as those co-ordinated by ENQA VET, and consultation events. Stakeholders and social partners are also project partners and national associates in projects co-financed by the European Commission where MQC is either the co-ordinator or a partner. The Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) contributed to the results of the EQF-FRAME, a Leonardo da Vinci project which had the objective to align the tourism qualifications of the consortium partners. ITS, the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage (ICMCH) are vocational education and training (VET) providers directly involved in the two ESF Projects awarded to MQC.

Social partners also contribute through their guidance on the necessary learning outcomes relevant to the future needs of industry. A number of social partners also support the EQF InLearning project which had the objective to pilot a Lifepass portfolio of individuals' informal and non-formal learning. These included employees' and employers' unions, the Malta Chamber of Commerce Enterprise and Industry (MCCEI), the printing industry association, ETC and MCAST. Irrespective of whether the stakeholders or social partners are actively involved in the projects, they are nevertheless invited for seminars and conferences related to the MQF so that MQC keeps them informed of developments through communication. Consultation events in 2008 and 2009 focused on the referencing process and to a lesser extent the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

Skills+ was one of the ESF projects aimed at designing, publishing and promoting the occupational standards in nine sectors followed by the setting up of sectoral skills units with representatives of industry and education. A pilot project in 2010 - 2011 between the MTA and ITS representatives produced occupational standards in collaboration with MQC. Such stakeholder involvement is vital as they contribute through sector specialisation, as MQC cannot have specialisation in every sector. In doing so, the MQF has been at the centre of our discussions particularly in establishing a closer relationship with the EQF and other Frameworks of Qualifications.

Stakeholders are also involved through information sessions about the EQF and the MQF. In 2008, MQC organised four information seminars for Guidance Teachers and Counsellors, gave talks to teachers as part of their in-service training, to students when invited by particular schools and eight seminars specifically for identified target groups.

The target groups were:

1. College Coordinators and Heads of Schools;
2. NGOs;
3. Directors of Public and Private Training Institutions;
4. Human Resources Managers;
5. Parents' Associations Representatives;
6. Employers and Trade Union Activists;
7. Students' organisations; and
8. Teachers and lecturers

This initiative was very well received, there was interest, the seminars were very well attended. MQC keeps on organising similar meetings. MQC also participates in educational media programmes to disseminate information to civil society about what is the role of MQC and the MQF and its wider perspective and referencing to the EQF and the QF/EHEA.

There are positive results coming out of co-operation between stakeholders such as the partnership between MCCEI and MCAST, and which also contributes to the implementation of the MQF. These include student visits to industry; promotion of work-based learning; presentations in industry to MCAST students, the upskilling course on manufacturing excellence offered jointly to individuals who work in industry, and the ongoing discussion of qualifications to ensure that these are demand driven.

The shift to learning outcomes led to an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, particularly so that the MQF will have demand-driven qualifications which have their programmes constantly maintained. Learning outcomes are also a guidance tool for stakeholders especially learners, so it is in MQC's interest to ensure that these are in place. The *rapport* which has been created with stakeholders shall be strengthened with further collaboration, as it is based on mutual trust and the stakeholders' ownership of the MQF.

Skills+ was one of MQC's ESF projects (completed in 2011) at designing, publishing and promoting the occupational standards in nine sectors following the setting up of sectoral skills units with representatives of industry and education. A pilot project is already ongoing and unions, the MTA and ITS representatives have designed occupational standards in collaboration with MQC.

4.2 The Impact of the MQF and the Referencing Process on Stakeholders

The design of learning outcomes-based qualifications, level-rating of existing compulsory, VET and HE qualifications and of sectoral qualifications necessitate the collaboration with a number of stakeholders' networks. Such a dialogue encourages stakeholder ownership of the MQF and promotes mutual trust. It is in the stakeholders' interest to shape learning outcomes, occupational standards, qualifications, the Framework and reform. Discussions on the development of occupational standards involve industry and identify and address skills gaps and future skills needs.

All stakeholders whether an individual or an organisation benefit from a framework referenced to the EQF and QF/EHEA. One of the key benefits of the MQF is the added-value of a qualification referenced to the MQF and the EQF. From an education and training providers' perspective there is a shift in the potential market of aligned qualifications from a local base to a European and international one. On the other hand this aspect has an advantage for all learners as their qualification has a clear value, and qualifications can cross borders efficiently without the need for unnecessary delay resulting from qualifications which require recognition. Besides mobility, the individual learner has the opportunity to know before enrolling to a course the validity of the qualifications in Malta and in a European and interregional context. Career guidance was further enhanced with the publication of the occupational standards in 2011 which complemented

All stakeholders whether an individual or an organisation benefit from a framework referenced to the EQF and QF/EHEA. One of the key benefits of the MQF is the added-value of a qualification referenced to the MQF and the EQF.

the referenced framework, whereby an individual has now an indication of job opportunities and career prospects related to a particular qualification at a given MQF level. Membership to professional organisations is made easier as with a referenced framework comparability of qualifications is easier for the individual to understand and does not require a bureaucratic process of recognition. Employers also benefit from a referenced framework as they would know the value of local and foreign qualifications and it would facilitate the selection process.

A National Qualifications Framework referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA is also user-friendly. This factor promotes efficiency and therefore contributes to competitiveness. It also encourages lifelong learning and mobility of learners and workers and an education system based on greater integration and harmonisation. A stakeholder still benefits from a national best fit system which is tailor-made for the needs of the local market but in an integrated context with a relationship and alignment with other national frameworks.

4.3 Application of the Referencing Process

The next phase of this project is to apply this referencing process to qualifications across all the levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework. In reality this procedure has already started. Stakeholders approaching MQF on level-rating of qualifications have been continuously exposed to the three overarching Frameworks (MQF, EQF, QF/EHEA) in one consolidated context so that a new *culture* in establishing levels of qualifications is gradually inculcated at an early stage of the process.

Results have been very satisfactory. The Maltese adapt to change very fast and in many cases are fast learners as well. Public and private institutions have immersed into such a new paradigm without hesitation but with a critical and constructive approach. On the one hand, this attitude consolidates the already accomplished experience with our traditional system of qualifications and on the other hand it injects into such a long-standing successful system, elements of innovation that facilitate learning and mobility.

Through the publication of this Report it is expected that further changes will be made by many stakeholders to the referencing process itself so that it is further

fine-tuned to the EQF and the QF/EHEA. MQC looks forward to this learning experience which, from our constant contacts with training institutions and industry (employers) has established a constructive dialogue which was systematically fed into the research, preparation and writing of this Report.

This Referencing Process has already established many supporters. It is expected that an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders on such a process will lead to more learning experiences from which individuals and the Maltese Nation at large can greatly benefit from.

The next chapters show a number of examples of how a national qualifications framework serves as a catalyst for innovation such as the creation of an Awards system referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework or through the introduction of a Secondary School Leaving Certificate and Profile capturing formal, informal and non-formal learning in compulsory education.

The Malta Qualifications Framework referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA is user-friendly. This factor promotes transparency and therefore contributes to competitiveness.

A National Qualifications Framework referenced to the EQF and the QF/EHEA is user-friendly. This factor promotes efficiency and therefore contributes to competitiveness.





PART FIVE

Implementing the Referencing Process



5

Two major developments in 2010-2011 of the referencing process have been the design of an awards policy referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework and the launching of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile. Ensuring quality and standards is one of the key challenges that Malta's system of education faces today. The other challenges are to create home-grown qualifications that can match international standards and criteria, attract more learners to lifelong learning and foreign students to Malta's further and higher education public and private institutions and establish a national examination system for access into post-secondary education endorsed by all key stakeholders.

This chapter is written to address these objectives by implementing an awards system that best fits the Malta Qualifications Framework, help training providers design qualifications that respond to the needs of individuals, employers and the labour market and provide young learners with a holistic form of education.

The MQF awards system aims at giving every individual who embarks on a formal learning experience the tools to upgrade, adapt and widen his or her knowledge, skills and competences. In its concluding message the EC document *New Skills for New Jobs* states that "increasingly there is nowhere to hide for low-skilled communities, low-skilled workers or low skilled companies. And the EU is not yet highly-skilled enough to guarantee its future success. 'Business as usual' is not an option!"

The main message of this chapter is to grow - from dependency on external standards to interdependency on quality and standards in education and training which are essentially endogenous. MQC's vision is to see more citizens with recognised skills and competences and more training providers building their own capacity as a means to provide education at the highest levels. In achieving these goals this chapter proposes the following messages:

- 1 that eight different awards be used to capture the widest possible awards system that best fits the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning;
- 2 that every formal, non-formal and informal learning experience is classified under one or more of these awards;
- 3 that the transparency and value of short courses, create a culture in which these courses will be considered as building blocks of qualifications promoting and facilitating lifelong learning and employability;
- 4 that the different profiles of qualifications will require constant updating in the classification and level-rating of knowledge, skills and competences;
- 5 that the European tools (ECTS/ECVET/ESG/EQARF) and processes (*Bologna/Copenhagen*) will serve as constant benchmarks for Malta's "quality control" in all education and training programmes;
- 6 that the Malta Qualifications Council/National Commission for Higher Education is authorised to define and classify qualifications in consultation with competent and designated authorities, public training providers and authorities as well as with sector skills councils when these are set up to represent the different economic sectors of our economy;
- 7 that in vocational education and training the model adopted by our public VET institutions will serve

- as an indicator against which all vocational and professional qualifications will be classified;
- 8 that all international qualifications and outreach programmes awarded locally would also be governed by a credit system comparable to that used in Malta and that final transcripts be in line with the Diploma and Certificate Supplement where applicable;
 - 9 that qualifications will continue to be measured and quality assured by their exit point;
 - 10 the entry criteria that is access points for higher education 'outreach' programmes aiming at learners aged 17 to 23 would be comparable to entry criteria of public further and higher education institutions;
 - 11 that the classification of qualifications and awards would be an ongoing process to facilitate the recognition, accreditation and quality assurance of every learning experience in order to upgrade skills and chances of professional development or employability.

This chapter should serve not only to share our understanding of the complex context of education and training but also to transform these strategic indicators into policies on a national level and establish a fair playing field for all.

5. Classifying Qualifications

5.1 Introduction

France, Ireland and the UK (in Europe) Australia, South Africa and New Zealand (to mention a few others) have been working on NQFs for the last decade or so and claim to have reached an advanced stage of implementation. Malta launched its first attempt at setting up a qualifications framework in October 2005 through Legal Notice 347. At that time very few people spoke about a qualifications framework. Many were unaware that such frameworks exist. Others were uncertain about their function and value within an education and training system as well as their relevance to the labour market. .

Today, practically all public and private training providers and several stakeholders talk about Malta's framework of qualifications, level descriptors, learning outcomes, accreditation and recognition processes as well as the importance of quality assurance. More and more customers approach the Malta Qualifications Council requesting a level for their qualification.

It is on the strength of this *culture change* in defining and understanding qualifications that this set has been taken in early 2011.

These past five years have been a learning experience not only for those directly engaged within the Malta Qualifications Council but also for those who have been in touch with this agency. The international links established since 2005 have helped us design a framework of qualifications which best fits our system of education, synergises the vocational and the academic strands and recognises all learning including that acquired in informal and non-formal contexts.

In June 2007 the Malta Qualifications Framework was launched after almost two years of discussions, consultations and international reviews. In September 2009, MQC presented its referencing report to the EQF Advisory Group and it was endorsed by all Member States. Three months later, the Commission took an active part in the launching of the *Referencing Report at Europe House* – the new offices of the *European Commission* and of the *European Parliament* in Valletta. With respect to the recognition of our national qualifications framework, the activity at *Europe House* sealed Malta's favourable position vis-à-vis the rest of the other Member States. Malta was the second country (after Ireland) to have referenced its national framework of qualifications to that of the European Qualifications Framework and the first to reference its framework also to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. Other Member States are following on Malta's footsteps and referencing the two European Frameworks to their comprehensive national qualifications framework.

This document is another in the series of documents aimed at implementing the Malta Qualifications Framework. It focuses on the final product of a learning process – the award. An award is in itself a judgement that an authority makes on the successful completion of a task or a performance. In the context of qualifications, awards are definitions of an achievement at a level of competence declared by an authority or an autonomous, self-regulated, recognised and accredited education and training institution. Therefore the purpose of this document is to define the different awards that best fit the Malta Qualifications Framework so that training providers, learners, teachers, employers, trade union activists, parents and other stakeholders share a common language and recognisable standards.

Eight different awards have been set up to express the widest possible awards system in Malta's qualifications framework. These awards have been expressed within Malta's obligation as signatory of the *Bologna Process* (1999) and the *Copenhagen Process* (2002) as well as full Member of the European Union. The eight awards are:

1. Academic Higher Education Awards
Higher Vocational Education and Training (VET) Awards
2. Vocational Education and Training Awards
3. Continuous Professional Development Awards
4. Customised Awards
5. Work-Based Awards
6. School Awards
7. Higher and General Education Legacy Awards
8. VET Legacy Awards

It is expected therefore that all formal, informal and non-formal learning falls within one or more of these categories. The *Higher Education Awards* could be of an academic/research or vocational nature (*Higher VET Awards*) respecting the three *Bologna* cycles of Bachelor, Master's and Doctorate qualifications or the EQF level descriptors at levels 5 to 8. These levels when applied within Universities must reflect research and a wide knowledge-base within the sector whereas when offered within colleges must seek a balance between knowledge, skills and competences acquired through formal learning and work experiences. Each of these levels has been assigned specific workloads which must be successfully completed in order to claim such award.

At a later stage, when the accreditation, quality assurance and licensing process starts, workloads would have to be visible and verifiable. This would apply for both home-grown and foreign qualifications.

Vocational Education and Training Awards (VET) respond to the *Copenhagen Process*. These awards are based within vocational colleges and respond to a set of standards and criteria that match theory with practice. Normally VET qualifications are provided in colleges, in workplaces, in employment and training institutions and in specialised agencies that prepare young and older persons to become employable in the shortest time possible.

Continuous Professional Development Awards reflect an added training or research learning base which updates an already advanced level of knowledge, skills

or competences acquired through an undergraduate or a post-graduate degree. These awards are normally designed for professional development in regulated professions as well as to broaden and extend skills.

Customised Awards are already widely used by many employers and training organisations to upgrade the knowledge, skills and competences of their workforce. Unlike CPDs, customised awards are focused on occupational areas and are tailor-made training and qualification packages for individual organisations. Most customised awards are work-based vocational qualifications. Employers often use these awards to challenge and benchmark the competence of their workforce, accredit competences or to provide evidence of competence of the workforce.

Work-Based Awards are often associated with apprenticeship schemes in which learning takes place in controlled work environments. It is vital for economies to grow and for social well-being that more people are given the opportunity to learn while they work. These awards may also take into account prior learning so that learners are given the opportunity to build, during their working years, their own portfolio of achievements as a means to ensure employability. WBAs offer mature workers the same opportunities as trainees to have their existing competences recognised as well as providing opportunities for lifelong learning.

For the purpose of this document, *School Awards* are qualifications acquired during compulsory and post-secondary education that leads to higher education but which is not vocational training. The SEC and MATSEC awards fall under this category. But there could be other awards such as the International or the European Baccalaureate.

Legacy awards are of two categories: those within vocational education and training and which fall within the first five levels of the MQF and those that fall within each level of the Malta Qualifications Framework in mainstream education including higher education. Legacy awards are qualifications awarded prior to a date which competent authorities establish as enough to represent a knowledge-base and competences required in today's labour market.

In establishing a classification of awards that can be referenced to the MQF, this document also refers to a credit system that cuts across all awards. In defining

awards, 1 credit represents 25 hours of total learning. Learning can take place through a combination of contact hours, controlled practical sessions, mentoring, self-study such as reading and research, tutorials, assignments, assessments in the form of written and oral tests, seminars, conferences and recognition of informal and non-formal learning. It is pertinent to point out that the distribution of credits is the prerogative of accredited and recognised training institutions however this document establishes the minimum required to achieve full qualification at the prescribed level.

An important aspect of this development is that of establishing a title (award) to a qualification. For instance, learners may obtain a Level 6 qualification by successfully completing a Bachelor's degree or a Continuous Professional Development Award or a Customised Award. Similarly a learner may obtain a Master's degree or a post-graduate diploma or a Continuous Professional Development Award at MQF Level 7. Although each award within the same qualification level will have a different workload, yet the title itself of the award will express the nature of the qualification at the prescribed level descriptor of the MQF. Learners may also achieve partial qualifications having obtained fewer credits than the minimum established by this document but partial qualifications **do not** constitute an award. **Partial qualifications will only be accredited within the context of full awards.** It is a huge benefit to providers and learners to work within a credit system. For learners in particular it would be easier to get on to qualifications and progress.

This process is an important development in the implementation of the MQF.

Awards will establish workloads and therefore employers will have a clearer picture of one's own achievements within the national and European framework of qualifications.

The system encourages more learners to partake of the lifelong learning process which NQFs support. It will make

MQC will only level-rate qualifications with a minimum number of credits as stipulated by the MQF. Partial qualifications will not be level-rated.

the MQF easier to understand and more transparent at national and international level. This system will also increase permeability between vocational education and training and higher system education making learning pathways more visible, facilitating access and participation. Furthermore the system will strengthen the link between education and training and the labour market and opens the opportunity for competent authorities to validate informal and non-formal learning with agreed structures of assessment and standards.

5.2 Definition of Terms

A qualifications framework provides a methodology for indicating the level of difficulty and attainment in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences achieved, as a result of formal, informal or non-formal learning experience.

Qualifications are generally reflected in educational awards and describe the knowledge, skills and competences a person must acquire to be successful in a particular occupation, or in a field of study, or in a field of culture, or in a sector of development. Classification of qualifications to a specific level of difficulty is based on the weighting of the workload and learning activities required to achieve the award.

An objective of this document is to respond to the need of giving short courses a clear value indicative of the level of difficulty and the workload translated in credits. Malta's proposed credit system cuts across all learning in further and higher education and is based on the notion of 1 credit equals 25 hours of total learning which includes contact hours, self-study, hands-on experience and assessment.

The transparency and value of such short courses creates a culture in which these courses are considered as building blocks of qualifications that promote and facilitate lifelong learning. A credit system facilitates flexibility as the learners, particularly those engaged in the labour market, are encouraged to accumulate the credits at one's own pace.

Particular attention has been given to include all learning activities at all levels in the framework and through all learning pathways, from doctoral programmes, to work-based learning, to older awards. The aim is to assist education and training providers to design qualifications in a more focused, outcomes-based approach.

Experience within the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) and relations with ENICs (European Network of Information Centres) and NARICs

(National Academic Recognition Information Centres) has shown that qualifications at the same level of difficulty vary in duration, size, input, output, intensity, and outcomes. For instance, a Master's programme, a post-graduate diploma and a post-graduate certificate all fall within MQF Level 7, yet all three awards carry different workloads and outcomes. The same could be said in the vocational education and training sector in which one level of difficulty could be expressed in different qualifications ranging in size and outcomes from two-year programmes to an intensive 5-hour or 10-hour course.

Similarly, recognition processes are constantly being challenged by an increasing variety of qualifications that, although they respect the level of difficulty set within the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), have reduced workloads or may serve as credits for transfer, progression or continuous professional development. In vocational training, an increasing number of short courses are being designed to cater for immediate and specific needs within industry and the labour market in general. Some skills (example, VRT - vocationally related training - courses; courses in the printing, care and beauty industries) require a few hours of training in order to acquire specific knowledge, skills and competences. The classification of such concrete learning experiences is necessary to provide a more comprehensive picture of the variety of such experiences that can be referenced to the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MQF).

The current stage of awards and classification within the Malta Qualifications Framework is backed by the profiles of qualifications verified since August 2008 as follows: School Awards (SAW), VET Awards (VAW); Higher

Education Awards (HEA), Higher VET Awards (HVA), Continuous Professional Development Awards (CPD), Customised Awards (CUS), Work-based Learning Awards (WBA), Legacy Awards (LGE/LHE/LVT) which can be of two types: Higher and General Education Legacy Awards or VET Legacy Awards.

This classification is neither exhaustive nor complete but solely indicative of a pilot phase in which public and private training providers are being invited to classify their learning experiences (courses, training programmes and any other form of learning experience) within one or more levels of the MQF. The following tables lists the acronyms used for each award:

In classifying qualifications, learners and employers will be in a better position to assess the knowledge, skills and competences needed to achieve specific tasks in a work-based environment.

The system may also be applied to qualifications awarded by recognised international sectoral or professional certifying bodies.

Awards are also referenced to specific levels within the MQF as follows:

Academic Higher Education Awards	MQF Level 5 to 8
Higher VET Awards	MQF Level 5 to 8
VET Awards	MQF Level 1 to 4
CPDs	MQF Level 5 to 7
Customised Awards	MQF Level 1 to 6
Work-Based Awards	MQF Level 1 to 5
School Awards	MQF Level 1 to 4
Legacy Awards (VET)	MQF Level 1 to 5
Legacy Awards (HE/General Education)	MQF Level 1 to 8

Table 29 - Awards by Education Sector

MQF LEVEL	General Education Academic Strand			Vocational/Professional Strand Recognition of prior Learning				
	HEA	LEG	CPD	HVA	CPD	CUS	WBA	LEG
8	HEA	LEG		HVA				
7	HEA	LEG	CPD	HVA	CPD	CUS		
6	HEA	LEG	CPD	HVA	CPD	CUS		
5	HEA	LEG	CPD	HVA	CPD	CUS	WBA	LEG
4	SAW	LEG		VAW	CPD	CUS	WBA	LEG
3	SAW	LEG		VAW		CUS	WBA	LEG
2	SAW	LEG		VAW		CUS	WBA	LEG
1	SAW	LEG		VAW		CUS	WBA	LEG

3. Purpose

The purpose of this development within the MQF is to contribute to greater transparency and fairness in the classification of qualifications and awards falling within the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MQF) which is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

The key functions of this document are to:

- establish transparency and consistency at national level of nomenclature in the education sector
- establish consistent relationship between programmes and awards within the national qualifications framework;
- maintain a national register of recognised and accredited awards;
- provide guidelines developed by MQC on a national awards system;
- promote an understanding of an awards system related to all education and training programmes
- promote credit accumulation and transfer thus facilitating lifelong learning
- recognise informal and non-formal learning across the first three levels of the MQF

Increasingly diverse qualifications and awards require a clear policy on the classification of knowledge, skills and competence within each level (level of difficulty) and the workload attached to the attainment of each qualification.

The MQF is characterised by eight levels of qualifications. Within each level a number of qualifications have been placed to distinguish between one level and another and to classify qualifications according to levels of difficulty.

Levels covering general education or vocational education and training enjoy the same parity of esteem which means that the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) recommends to employers that individuals in possession of either general education certificates or diplomas or vocational education and training certificates and diplomas should be considered of comparable labour market value (though they may have very different profiles.)

4. Applicability

The classification of qualifications and awards applies to all qualifications and awards within the MQF and to those qualifications and awards referenced to the MQF accredited and recognised by the Malta Qualifications and Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC). It also applies to general education, vocational training, continuous professional training, short courses, professional qualifications and those qualifications falling within the three cycles of the *Bologna* Process.

It also applies to foreign qualifications requiring recognition status within the MQF.

Due to the increasing number of diverse local and foreign qualifications, it is necessary to assign to each qualification a status within a level of difficulty based on the formal workload of each accredited and recognised qualification.

The classification of Awards is recommended by MQC/ NCHE.

5. Definitions

There are eight types of Awards in Malta referenced to the MQF:

Full title

1. Academic Higher Education Awards HEA
Higher VET Awards HVA
2. VET Awards VAW
3. Continuing Professional Development
Award CPD
4. Customised Awards CUS
5. Work-based Learning Awards WBA
6. School Awards SAW
7. Legacy Awards VET LEG
8. Legacy Awards GE*/HE LEG
*General Education

Table 30 - Awards by definition

Higher Education Award including VET Awards (Doctoral degree)	A supervised research of up to 100,000 words leading to an academic or vocational award conferred by a recognised institution of higher education
Higher Education Award including VET Awards (Postgraduate Diploma)	A post-graduate taught academic or vocational award with a minimum of 60 ECTS by a recognised institution of higher education
Higher Education Award including VET Awards (Bachelors' Honours Degree)	A taught academic or vocational award which may include supervised research and a maximum of 240 ECTS awarded by a recognised institution of higher education.
Higher Education Award including VET Awards (Higher VET Diploma)	An undergraduate taught vocational award (which may include a final dissertation or practical assessment) and a minimum of 120 ECVET credits by a recognised institution of higher education.
Higher Education Award including VET Awards (Undergraduate Higher Certificate)	A taught academic award with a minimum of 30 ECTS by a recognised institution of higher education.
School Award (Matriculation Certificate)	The Matriculation Certificate (2 subjects at Advanced Level, three at intermediate level and Systems of Knowledge) as awarded by the University of Malta or a recognised Awarding body or a VET MQF Level 4 qualification comparable to an MCAST Level 4 qualification with a minimum of 120 ECVET.
School Award (4 SEC subjects grades 6-7)	4 single subjects grades 6 or 7 as awarded by the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) of the University of Malta or a VET Level 2 MCAST qualification with a minimum of 60 ECVET.
Continuing Vocational / Professional Development Award	An award based on a minimum of 4 ECVET/ECTS in a specific sector.
Work-based Learning Awards	Awards based on supervised on-the-job training with a minimum of 5 ECVET or the validation of prior learning and a minimum of 5 years of professional experience in a recognised sector.

The definition of each award requires an adequate distribution of study / practice / workloads assigned to each award as an indication of the extent of the

study and training period required to achieve defined knowledge, skills and competence. The following table illustrates the bands for each award:

Table 31 - Awards by credits		
Award	MQF Level	Workload
Academic Higher Education Award including VET Awards	Level 8 Level 7 Level 6 Level 5	Doctoral degree 60-120 ECTS/ECVET 180-240 ECTS/ECVET 30-90 ECTS/ECVET
VET Awards	Level 4 Level 3 Level 2 Level 1	60-120 ECVET 60-120 ECVET 60-120 ECVET Minimum 40 ECVET
Continuing Professional Development Award	Level 6 Level 5 Level 4	Min of 4 ECTS/ECVET Min of 4 ECTS/ECVET Min of 4 ECTS/ECVET
Customised Awards	Level 6 Level 5 Level 4 Level 3 Level 2 Level 1	Min of 4 ECTS/ECVET Min of 4 ECVET Min of 4 ECVET Min of 4 ECVET Min of 4 ECVET Min of 4 ECVET
Work-based Learning Awards	Level 6 Level 5 Level 4 Level 3 Level 2 Level 1	Awards based on supervised on-the-job training with a minimum of 5 ECVET OR the validation of prior learning and a minimum of 5 years of professional experience in a recognised sector.
Legacy Awards (General Education MQF L1 to L8 or VET-related MQF L1 to L5)	Level 8 Level 7 Level 6 Level 5 Level 4 Level 3 Level 2 Level 1	Awards conferred to individuals prior to 2012 and which have relevance to the labour market and employment. VET awards are classified up to MQF Level 5.
School Awards	Level 4 Level 3 Level 2 Level 1	Matriculation Certificate 6 SEC Grades 1-5 4 SEC Grades 6-7 Secondary School Certificate and Profile

6. Classification, authority and responsibility

The classification of awards applies only to home-grown qualifications. Only the Malta Qualifications Council/ National Commission for Higher Education is authorised to define and classify qualifications in consultation with competent and designated authorities, sector skills councils and further, vocational, higher education institutions and professional bodies where applicable.

The classification of the awards as listed in the Malta Qualifications Framework is mandatory according to legislation. Where there is no prescribed title of an award (eg VET Diploma), users may construct a basic title in consultation and with the approval of the MQC/ NCHE and related designated authorities or sector skills councils as appropriate.

Table 32 - Awards by level of difficulty

MALTA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK incorporating the EQF & the QF-EHEA			
A Classification of Qualifications by level of difficulty.			
	QUALIFICATION	TYPE OF AWARD	
8	Doctoral Degree 3rd cycle <i>Bologna</i> Process E/MQF Level 8	Academic Higher Education Award Higher Vet Awards Legacy Awards	8
7	Master's Degree (Academic or Vocational) Post-graduate Diploma (Academic or Vocational) Post-Graduate Certificate (Academic or Vocational) 2nd cycle <i>Bologna</i> Process E/MQF Level 7	Higher Education Award HE Award HE Award Continuing Professional Development Award Legacy Awards	7
6	Bachelor's Degree (Academic or Vocational) 1st cycle <i>Bologna</i> Process E/MQF Level 6	HE Award Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards Legacy Awards	6
5	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate Foundation Degree/VET Higher Diploma Higher Education Certificate Short-cycle <i>Bologna</i> Process E/MQF Level 5	HE Award HE Award HE Award Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Awards	5
4	Matriculation Certificate VET Diploma Advanced level Intermediate level Pre-Tertiary Course E/MQF Level 4	School Award VET Award School Award School Award School Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Awards	4
3	6 Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) grades 1-5 VET Level 3 E/MQF Level 3	School Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Awards	3
2	Secondary School Certificate and Profile (B) 4 SEC grades 6-7 VET Level 2 E/MQF Level 2	School Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Awards	2
1	Secondary School Certificate and Profile (A) VET Level 1 E/MQF Level 1	School Award VET Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Awards	1

7. Classification structure

The classification structure is based on the qualifications as defined by the *Bologna* Process and established awards in the Laws of Malta. The following tables illustrate the title of the qualification and the assigned type of award (based on the prescribed level of difficulty) at each level of the MQF.

8. Criteria for classifying qualifications

The criteria for referencing qualifications has been based on the specific workloads as specified in the *Bologna* Process (for higher education) and on established standards and criteria for all other qualifications in vocational and professional education and training and in general education. For instance, a Level 6 qualification is based on a minimum of 180 or maximum of 240 ECTS credits; a qualification in the HE short-cycle on 30 ECTS; a Matriculation certificate comprising 2 Advanced Level subjects, 3 at Intermediate level and Systems of Knowledge as a separate subject. Other options may be established from time to time.

In vocational education and training the model adopted by VET public institutions has been established as benchmark against which all vocational and professional training qualifications will be classified.

9. Classification appeals

It is established that public and private Education and Training providers should be entitled to appeal to the MQC Classification Appeals Board on the classification of their qualifications, the assigned title of awards, and the prescribed workloads.

All training providers shall have a right to full access to information kept at the Malta Qualifications Council/NCHE that is relevant to their pending appeal. Filing a classification appeal does not affect any other rights that the education and training providers may have under other provisions of law or regulation.

The proposed Classification Appeals Board should be made up of two independent members, the Registrar or his representative of the MCAST, and the Registrar or her representative of the University of Malta. The Chief Executive Officer of MQC will act as secretary to the Board but will have no vote. Representatives of private training providers may also be co-opted. The Chairman of the Board shall be one of the two independent members appointed on the Board.

Decisions by the Classification Appeals Board should be final.

Compliance with classifications appeal decisions should be mandatory

10. Qualifications standards

It is also being established that qualifications standards should be determined by the MQC/NCHE in consultation with public and private training providers. It is the relevant Ministry or the University of Malta or the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, or the competent / designated authority or the Sector Skills Committee/Units that shall establish the process to meet such standards in terms of: title, workload, assessment procedure, entry requirements, and format of the final transcript (which should either be in the EUROPASS Diploma or Certificate Supplement format).

Classified qualifications should be only those based on a final formal assessment which may be in written, oral or project format. Only quality assured qualifications should be formally classified.

Legacy Awards should be recognised in consultation with the University of Malta and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology or the competent / designated authority or the Sector Skills Council.

Awards with no formal or/and authenticated information attached to the certificate or diploma should not be recognised.

Customised Awards should be classified as long as the criteria mentioned above are adhered to. Such awards may include very short courses normally at MQF Level 1 to 7 only. Awards at MQF Level 5 to 7 would normally be classified according to established workloads and assigned minimum credits.

11. International Sectoral Awards

For many years, several Maltese citizens have acquired qualifications from international sectoral bodies or from established international bodies particularly in information and communication technology and in vocational subjects and in the arts. A number of Maltese institutions have adopted 'international' or 'outreach' qualifications as their benchmark for access into employment or have acted as franchisee for international awarding bodies.

Table 33 - Awards by workloads

Description of workloads			
	DESIGNATED AWARD	INDICATIVE WORKLOAD	
8	Academic HE Award Higher VET Awards Legacy Awards	Full-time research equivalence minimum 36 months Transcript verification	8
7	Academic HE Award (Master's) Higher VET Awards Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards (Short courses) Legacy Award	Minimum 60 ECTS Minimum 60 ECTS Minimum 04 ECTS Minimum 04 ECTS Transcript verification	7
6	Academic or VET HE Award (BA/BSc Hons) Academic or VET HE Award (BA/BSc) Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards Legacy Award	Minimum 240 ECTS/ECVET Minimum 180 ECTS/ECVET Minimum 04 ECTS/ECVET Minimum 04 ECTS/ECVET Transcript verification	6
5	HE Award Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards (Short courses) Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Award	Minimum 120 ECVET for Foundation Degree or VET Higher Diploma) Minimum 04 ECTS/ECVET Minimum 04 ECVET Minimum 04 ECVET Transcript verification	5
4	School Award/VET Award School Award/VET Award School Award/VET Award School Award/VET Award Continuing Professional Development Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Award	Minimum of 60 Credits Minimum of 60 ECVET (VET Diploma) Minimum of 60 Credits (3 A Level subjects) Minimum of 30 Credits (3 Intermediate single subjects) Minimum 04 ECVET Minimum 04 ECVET Not applicable Transcript verification	4
3	School Award/VET Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Award	Minimum of 60 credits Minimum of 04 ECVET Minimum of 04 ECVET Transcript verification	3
2	School Award/VET Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Award	Minimum of 60 credits Minimum of 04 ECVET Minimum of 04 ECVET Transcript verification	2
1	School Award/VET Award Customised Awards Work-based Learning Award (RPL – Award) Legacy Award	Minimum of 40 credits Minimum of 04 ECVET Minimum of 04 ECVET Transcript verification	1

MQC considers appropriate to include in this document its proposed policies and criteria for the level-rating of such 'international' qualifications/awards with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF).

MQC considers the *Bologna* and the *Copenhagen* processes (and subsequent developments since 1999 and 2002 respectively) and the Referencing Report published in November 2009 as guidelines for the level-rating of all international qualifications to the MQF.

All international qualifications or “outreach” programmes awarded in Malta should be governed by (a) a credit system comparable to that used in Malta (1:25) and (b) final transcripts using the Certificate or Diploma Supplement format where applicable. The entry criteria for higher education “outreach” programmes aiming at learners aged 17 to 23 should be comparable to those established by public higher education institutions (where applicable).

11.1 MQC will have no authority in setting the standards and size of international qualifications and awards. Neither does it have any influence on the content of such awards and whether these awards match the occupational standards requested by industry.

11.2 MQC should consider size and content relevant to local contexts as important criteria for level-rating such awards to the MQF.

11.3 For the purpose of this policy, international sectoral awards are defined as awards (qualifications) designed to meet the industry-driven needs of a specific sector. Although these awards are not home-grown and do not form part of the national qualifications system, they are generally accepted by both industry and the learner as meeting the knowledge, skills and competences needed in specific sectors leading to employability. Examples of such awards are those related to IT, such as the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence), qualifications in the arts, music, dance and drama awarded by various accredited institutes and centres or those awarded by bodies such as City and Guilds, LCCI (London Chamber of Commerce and Industry) through various local representatives and EDEXCEL/BTEC awards.

11.4 International awarding bodies adopt various forms of programme design, delivery, quality assurance and certification. Such processes are either managed centrally or through a franchise in a particular country. In Malta there are several franchisees for international awarding bodies. In cases where the international sectoral certifying body operates a franchise model, the MQC policies and criteria set out in this document shall apply to the appointed franchisee in Malta.

11.5 The following principles underpin the process of having international sectoral awards level-rated with the MQF:

Established sectoral certifying bodies or their appointed franchisee may continue to deliver awards in Malta; they may apply for recognition of the awards from MQC;

- all international or outreach awards/qualifications may retain their own brand and identity;
- If international sectoral certifying bodies or their franchisee wish to level-rate these awards to the MQF, they shall apply for validation to the MQC.

The Award document should include:

- a set of learning outcomes for each programme that clearly respond to the level descriptors of the MQF;
- a quality assurance policy which is already in place and functioning;
- a credit system comparable with that established within the MQF and evidence of an appropriately qualified coordinator/director and lecturer/s together with the necessary facilities and resources for each programme delivered in Malta.

Alignment of sectoral awards with the MQF should be kept under review in line with national and international developments in the area of sectoral awards, the specific needs within local industry and, where applicable, the European Qualifications Framework and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.

11.6 In order to have its awards/qualifications level-rated with the MQF, the international sectoral certifying body should also fulfil the following criteria:

- documented evidence of its international status and stature, including reviews from at least three

different countries (two of which must be full members of the European Union) of competent authorities on the quality, standards and relevance of sectoral/international qualifications to industry and employment;

- if an appointed franchisee, the franchisee should show evidence of a minimum of 5 years experience in the sector or in a relevant education and training in Malta and should provide recognised references that indicate good standing and credibility within its sector and industry;
- indication of authorisation and appraisal of the franchisee from the international certifying/awarding body;
- evidence that it has the academic/training capacity to design, re-design, up-grade qualifications/awards according to changing sectoral requirements to match the level-descriptors of the MQF;
- have documented procedures of a quality assurance policy in place, including internal and external verification processes and an appeals / complaints system;
- a documented programme and assessment procedure in line with international and national standards and governed by a credit system in line with MQF guidelines and standards.

11.7 Applications for the alignment of international qualifications should be submitted to an MQC/NCHE Technical Committee (MQC/NCHE-TC) which shall include representatives of industry (by sector) and public training authorities. The MQC/TC will send its recommendations to the MQC/NCHE Council for a final decision.

11.8 Applications for the level-rating of international qualifications to the MQF must reach MQC in writing. The eligibility criteria are those defined in 11.5 and 11.6. Applicants shall submit all the required information before the application is processed.

If all documentation is considered eligible for verification, the MQC/TC may request clarifications or further information from the international awarding/certification body or the franchisee. The final decision will be taken by the MQC Council and will be published on the MQC website.

12. Conclusion

The classification of qualifications is an ongoing task which facilitates the recognition, accreditation and quality assurance of qualifications of the Maltese Educational system at all levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework. This classification may also be adopted with respect to international sectoral awards / qualifications.

Such classification is based on European tools (*Bologna/Copenhagen*) and Maltese standards as established from time-to-time by nationally recognised competent authorities and bodies.

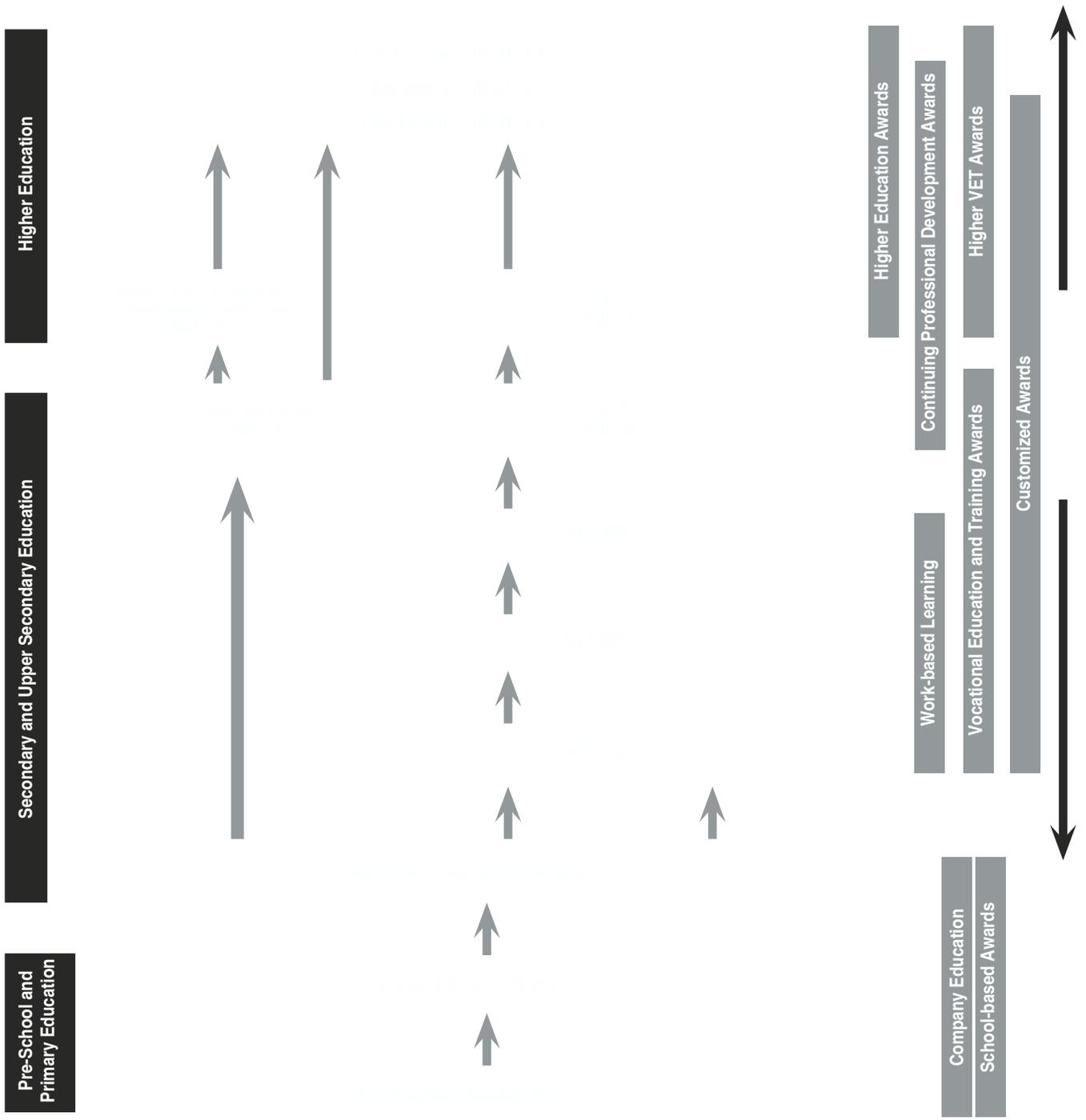
The *Bologna* and *Copenhagen* tools serve as constant indicators of quality and standards and transparency in classifying qualifications and the related awards. The following are the tools used to classify and level-rate qualifications:

- European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
- Qualifications Framework – European Higher Education Area (*Bologna* Process)
- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)
- European Quality Assurance and Reference Framework (EQARF)
- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)
- European Credit for Vocational Education and training (ECVET)
- EUROPASS Diploma Supplement
- EUROPASS Certificate Supplement•
- The European Framework for Key Competences
- The National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC)

This document will be updated regularly so that it reflects current trends in classifying qualifications and their respective award title.

Table 34 - The Maltese Education and Awards Systems

THE MALTESE EDUCATION AND AWARDS SYSTEM



5.2 Referencing MQF to ISCED: a contextual analysis

In Q4 of 2010 MQC took the initiative to establish a *rapport* between the MQF and ISCED levels. In 2011 both MQC and the National Commission for Higher Education as well as the Ministry of Education took part in the discussions. In discussions held with the National Office of Statistics (NSO), the revised ISCED (2011) as well as the European Qualifications Frameworks (EQF and QF-EHEA) were taken as points of reference to the MQF. It was therefore agreed that in referencing MQF we would reference the Malta Qualifications Framework to both ISCED 1997 and to the proposed ISCED 2011 which has now been approved and will enter into force in 2014.

Although ISCED classifies education sectors and is primarily used as a statistical device and MQF is a qualifications framework, their structural relationship will assist statisticians to gather data which will reflect the real participation in the various sectors of education. Malta being a small country, a head count of each and every active learner is not an impossible task as long as structures are clearly defined and agreed by all.

The theme which sparked the discussions with the NSO for the referencing of the two frameworks concerned the definition of early school leavers (ESL) in the context of both MQF at Levels 1 to 3 and ISCED Levels 0 to 3.

As for higher levels, both ISCED and MQF have been adequately referenced (as can be verified from Table 35) as ISCED Level 4 matches MQF Level 4, ISCED 5, MQF Levels 5, 6 and 7 and ISCED 6 in ISCED 1997 match MQF Level 8.

ISCED 2011 has a much more transparent relationship with MQF as ISCED Levels 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 and MQF Levels 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 reflect the same level of qualifications. It was for this reason that the issue of Early School Leavers produced an excellent platform for the referencing process of both ISCED versions (1997-2011) to the MQF.

In Malta, the National Statistics Office (NSO) is responsible for collecting data for calculating the Early School Leaving (ESL) rate at a National basis, using the criteria and definition of the term ESL as

stipulated by the Eurostat, which is then reported to the Eurostat. The ESL rate is acquired through the Labour Force Survey (LFS) which the NSO conducts quarterly every year. Therefore, the NSO provides the anonymous micro data of each of the four quarters to the Eurostat and the ESL rates are calculated directly by Eurostat on a quarterly basis. It should be noted that significant progress has been registered insofar as the ESL rate is concerned, and the current rate according to NSO is around 33% as compared with 54.2% for the year 2000.

A number of studies taking ESL as the point of reference were undertaken to establish this rapport between qualifications frameworks and the ISCED levels as well as the various interpretations of ESL in different countries in the context of ISCED.

The first study focused on the education section questions asked within the Labour Force Surveys of each member state (MS), particularly to compare and analyse the questions asked by the MS which register a very low percentage rate of Early School Leavers against the questions asked by those countries which register a very high percentage rate of Early School Leavers in the context of ISCED. Eleven MS were under study. The analysis was done on those countries which register high rates of ESL, namely: Malta, Spain, and Portugal against countries which register very low percentage rates of ESL, namely: Slovakia, Poland, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Austria, Lithuania, and Finland. The scope was to identify whether there is a common pattern in the methodology used by these countries (which report a low rate of ESL) in obtaining their ESL rate. Results indicated that the questions could be improved to enhance clarity amongst respondents. The study however also revealed that the ESL rate depends very much on the socio-cultural and socio-economic factors of a country. It was found that the economy of the coastal periphery countries including Malta, Spain and Portugal is very much driven by family-run Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which obviously affects the rate of ESL considering that more often than not this may lead to direct inheritance of business irrespective of education. The Large dependence on the tourism sector for these countries is also one of the factors which triggers the need for low skilled or semi-skilled workers, hence directly affecting the ESL rate.

Table 35: Malta Qualifications Framework

Table 35: Malta Qualifications Framework			ISCED 1997	ISCED 2011
8	Doctoral Degree		8 → ISCED 6 Second Stage Tertiary	ISCED 8 Doctoral Degree (PhD) or equivalent
7	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate		7 → ISCED 5 First Stage of Tertiary Education	ISCED 7 Master's Degree or equivalent
6	Bachelor's Degree		6 → ISCED 5 First Stage of Tertiary Education	ISCED 6 Bachelor's Degree or equivalent
5	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate	Foundation Diploma VET Higher Diploma f	5 → ISCED 5 First Stage of Tertiary Education	ISCED 5 Short-cycle tertiary (Undergraduate Certificate, Diploma or equivalent)
4	Matriculation Certificate Advanced Level Intermediate Level	VET Diploma e	4 → ISCED 4 Post-Secondary Level	ISCED 4 Post-Secondary Level
3	General Education Level 3 SEC Grade 1-5	VET Level 3 d	3 → ISCED 3 Upper Secondary Level	ISCED 3 Upper Secondary Level
2	General Education Level 2 Secondary School Certificate and Profile (B)	VET Level 2 c	2 → ISCED 3 Upper Secondary Level	ISCED 3 Upper Secondary Level
1	General Education Level 1 Secondary School Certificate and Profile (A)	VET Level 1 b a	1 → ISCED 2 Lower Secondary Level	ISCED 2 Lower Secondary Level
			ISCED 1 Primary Level	ISCED 1 Primary Level
			ISCED 0 Pre-Primary Level	ISCED 02 Pre-Primary Level ≥3 years
				ISCED 02 Pre-Primary Level 0 - 3 years

* VET stands for Vocational Education and Training

Annotations:

- * The Qualifications Framework is designed in such a way as to be able to include diverse forms of qualifications not as yet covered by this Framework.
- (a) Attainment of the Basic Employment Passport together with either the Adult Skills Certificate or the MQC 8 Key Competences at Level 1 are also considered as a Full VET Level 1 qualification.
- (b) The MQC recommends that a Full VET Level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a Secondary School Certificate and Profile (A).
- (c) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 4 SEC General Education Level 2 subjects grade 6 and 7 and a Secondary School Certificate and Profile (B).
- (d) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 3 Qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 6 SEC General Level subjects at grade 1 to 5.
- (e) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 3 Advanced Level subjects.

In another study, the NCHE/MQC concluded that the ISCED levels should be interpreted more accurately in line with Malta's Educational System and based on the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF).

ISCED stands for International Standard Classification of Education, which has been designed by the UNESCO in the early 1970's serving as an instrument suitable for assembling, compiling and presenting comparable indicators and statistics of education both within individual countries and internationally. It presents standard concepts, definitions and classifications. ISCED covers all organized and sustained learning opportunities for children, youth and adults including those with special needs education, irrespective of the institution or entity providing them or the form in which they are delivered.

For the purpose of the ESL research (and the referencing process) which specifically focuses on ISCED levels 0, 1, 2, and 3, below is a definition of each level as described by UNESCO.

ISCED 0

Programmes at level 0, (pre-primary) are defined as the initial stage of organised instruction, and are designed primarily to introduce very young children to a school-type environment, i.e. to provide a bridge between the home and a school-based atmosphere. Upon completion of these programmes, children continue their education at level 1 (primary education).

ISCED 1

Programmes at level 1 are normally designed on a unit or project basis to give students a sound basic education in reading, writing and mathematics along with an elementary understanding of other subjects such as history, geography, natural science, social science, art and music. In some cases religious instruction is featured. For the definition of the boundary between education levels 0 and 1 (pre-primary and primary education) the following criteria are relevant:

Main criterion: the beginning of systematic studies characteristic of primary education, e.g. reading, writing and mathematics.

Subsidiary criteria: entry into the nationally designated primary institutions or programmes; and the start of compulsory education where it exists.

ISCED 2

The contents of education at this stage are typically designed to complete the provision of basic education which began at ISCED level 1. In many, if not most countries, the educational aim is to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and human development on which countries may expand, systematically, further educational opportunities. Entry is after some 6 years of primary education and the end of this level is after some 9 years of schooling since the beginning of primary education. The programmes at this level are usually on a more subject-oriented pattern using more specialized teachers and more often several teachers conducting classes in their field of specialization. The full implementation of basic skills occurs at this level. As an educational property, qualifications at this level should demonstrate the full implementation of basic skills and foundation for lifelong learning. The end of this level often coincides with the end of compulsory education where it exists.⁹⁴

ISCED 3

This level of education typically begins at the end of full-time compulsory education for those countries that have a system of compulsory education. More specialization may be observed at this level than at ISCED level 2 and often teachers need to be more qualified or specialized than for ISCED level 2. The entrance age to this level is typically 15 or 16 years. The educational programmes included at this level typically require the completion of some 9 years of full-time education (since the beginning of level 1) for admission or a combination of education and vocational or technical experience and with as minimum entrance requirements the completion of level 2 or demonstrable ability to handle programmes at this level. As an educational property, qualifications at this level are typical entrance qualifications, and serve as a minimum entrance requirement to post-secondary non-tertiary education.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Refer to Levels of Education at a Glance, UNESCO 1997

⁹⁵ Refer to Table 1: Levels of Education at a Glance, UNESCO 1997

The issue of ESL and referencing

At national level the main aspect which is affecting the ESL rate is the interpretation of the ISCED (1997) definitions (i.e. what qualifications/courses fall under the various ISCED 2, 3, and 3c short). The main problem lies with the 'ordinary level qualifications' (O-Levels), and any comparable qualification. The fact that NSO classifies Ordinary (O)-Levels as ISCED level 2 (lower secondary), implies by definition, that a person within the age bracket 18-24 possessing O-Levels but not in further and higher education is considered as an early school leaver.

NCHE/MQC are of the opinion, however, that any person (between the age bracket of 18-24) possessing O-Levels or anything comparable, in other words, any qualification that falls under MQF levels 2 and 3, and not in further education and training, should not be considered as an early school leaver.

For instance O-levels, and any qualification comparable which also falls under MQF levels 2 and 3 should be classified under ISCED 3 (upper secondary) and therefore above the threshold of school leaving. The NCHE/MQC mapped the interpretations provided by UNESCO of each ISCED level with Malta's educational system, referencing the different qualification levels as recommended by the Malta Qualifications Framework under the corresponding ISCED levels lined to the criteria of the definition provided by UNESCO.

Here is the reasoning why the NCHE/MQC therefore believes that revising the interpretation of ISCED 1997 in a way which perfectly matches our NQF, should more realistically reflect the Commission's definition of ESL:

According to the European Commission, Early School leavers are those persons between the age 18-24 (18 and 24 included) satisfying these conditions:

1) 'a failure to complete upper secondary school' – a person sitting for O-Levels has clearly completed upper secondary schooling in Malta as this is achieved after 11 years of education and O-Levels are the "key" and the certificate that

takes you to post-secondary in Malta (a school leaving certificate on its own (which is acquired after completion of lower secondary education) does not give you access to post-secondary education that ultimately leads you to tertiary education).

- 2) 'a failure to complete compulsory schooling' – the O-Levels are not compulsory, so indeed a person with one O-Level cannot be considered as failing to complete compulsory schooling.
- 3) 'a failure to gain qualifications or school leaving certificates' – when a person sits for O-Levels, in general terms s/he has obtained a school leaving certificate (i.e. in possession a school leaving certificate + 1 or more O-Levels).
- 4) 'a person aged 18-24 with only lower secondary education or less and no longer in education and training' – a person sitting for O-Levels has clearly finished his lower secondary education and also achieved an upper secondary certification.

If as stated by the Commission early school leavers are those who have only achieved pre-primary, primary, lower secondary or a short upper secondary education of less than 2 years (ISCED 0, 1, 2 or 3c short), and include those who have only a pre-vocational or vocational education which did not lead to an upper secondary certification, then a person with O-Level passes has indeed achieved pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and completed upper secondary education.

An O-Level is considered a qualification awarded by a certificate and therefore has to be considered as an upper secondary certification. If one clearly analyses the criteria specified for both ISCED level 2 and 3, one can notice that as a criteria for ISCED level 2, this is achieved after some 9 years of schooling since the beginning of primary education. In contrast in Malta, by the end of this level students would have had already spent a total of 11 years in general education. The same applies for ISCED level 3 which specifies that at this level, the educational programmes included typically require the completion of some 9 years of full-time education (since the beginning of level 1).

In Malta, students at this age (15-16) would have had already successfully completed a total of 11 years of compulsory education with a completion of a lower secondary certification (i.e.: a school leaving certificate).

According to the definition of EUROSTAT:

‘a person aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training’ – is an early school leaver. Hence, considering the NCHE/MQC’s proposal, a person with any qualification that falls under level 2 or 3 of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) has clearly finished his/her lower secondary education and hence, if s/he is not in further education or training is not an early school leaver.

Further to this, the NCHE / MQC and NSO conducted further research to determine and suggest a threshold for the number of qualifications at MQF levels 2 and 3 that a person must possess in order not to be considered as an ESL. The main rationale behind this exercise was to determine how many SEC qualifications (O-Levels) a person must have acquired not to be considered as an ESL. The methodological process for this exercise was as follows:

The NSO acquired the number of SEC results from the MATSEC Board for students who have successfully obtained a pass in one or more O-Levels, in three or more O-Levels, and in five or more O-Levels for the ten year period 2002-2011. NSO then calculated a number of ESL rates for the years 2001-2010 using the Labour Force Survey (LFS) current interpretation

of the mapping of ISCED with Malta’s qualifications, and the proposed revised interpretation of ISCED with the Malta Qualifications Framework which was established in 2007 illustrating three possibilities:

- i. persons possessing 1 or more O-Levels,
- ii. persons possessing 3 or more O-Levels, and
- iii. persons possessing 5 or more O-Levels.

All persons aged 15/16 who sat for at least one MATSEC exam in 2002 were selected. These persons were followed for the next 9 years in order to determine whether they managed to achieve more O-Level qualifications. In this way it was possible to determine the total number of O-Levels that a person managed to achieve in 10 years (which covers the 18-24 age group). Given that an O-Level certification is provided for grades 1 till 7 (which are all considered as pass rates), NSO therefore considered a grade of 7 or higher as a pass.

The following results were obtained:

Number of O-Levels	Students	Ratio
1+	5,031	1
3+	4,251	0.844961
5+	3,740	0.743391

This means that for every 100 students who got a pass grade in 1 O-Level, 84 managed to get at least 3 O-Levels, and 74 managed to get at least 5 O-Levels. Using these ratios, it was possible to revise the main ESL figures that were used in a study by researcher Dr. Liberato Camilleri (University of Malta) in order to project the ESL rates, as follows:

Year	LFS current definition	1+ O level (Grades 1-7)	3+ O levels (Grades 1-7)	5+ O levels (Grades 1-7)
2001	54.4	38.1	40.8	42.6
2002	53.2	37.3	39.9	41.7
2003	49.7	34.8	37.3	38.9
2004	42.3	29.7	31.8	33.1
2005	39.2	27.5	29.4	30.7
2006	40.9	28.7	30.7	32.0
2007	39	27.3	29.3	30.6
2008	37.7	26.4	28.3	29.5
2009	36.8	25.8	27.6	28.8
2010	36.9	25.9	27.7	28.9

It is pertinent to point out that this exercise was used as an example, and hence only students who sat for MATSEC exams were considered. This implies that in reality one has to consider also other vocational or general academic qualifications equivalent to MQF levels 2 and 3 also provided by other public and private institutions. In addition, for the purpose of this exercise, it is being assumed that these ratios have not varied during the past 10 years.

Another simulation exercise has been carried out by NSO similar to the one illustrated above, with the difference being that of setting a threshold based on pass marks. A threshold of pass marks 1-5 had been considered for this test, to identify the ESL rates for the past ten years for persons holding either 1+ SEC passes with grades from 1-5, 3+ SEC passes with grades from 1-5, or 5+ SEC passes with grades from 1-5.

The results of this exercise are as follows:

Year	LFS current definition	1+ O level (Grades 1-5)	3+ O levels (Grades 1-5)	5+ O levels (Grades 1-5)
2001	54.4	39.4	43.0	44.9
2002	53.2	38.6	42.0	43.9
2003	49.7	36.0	39.3	41.0
2004	42.3	30.7	33.4	34.9
2005	39.2	28.4	31.0	32.4
2006	40.9	29.7	32.3	33.8
2007	39	28.3	30.8	32.2
2008	37.7	27.3	29.8	31.1
2009	36.8	26.7	29.1	30.4
2010	36.9	26.8	29.2	30.5

The table below explains the difference in the ESL rates for the year 2010 based on:

(a) option 1: ESL rate based on 3+ SEC passes with grades 1-7 or

(b) option 2: ESL rate based on 3+ SEC passes with grades 1-5

Grades	Year	LFS) current definition (%)	1+ O-Levels (%)	3+ O-Levels (%)	5+ O-Levels (%)
Grades 1-7	2010	36.9	25.9	27.7	28.9
Grades 1-5	2010	36.9	26.8	29.2	30.5

On the other hand, if we had to compare ESL rates based on 5+ SEC passes with grades 1-7 and 5+ SEC passes with grades 1-5, the ESL rates would rise from 28.9 per cent to 30.5 per cent.

general qualifications at MQF levels 2 and 3. If it were decided that these fall under ISCED Level 3, Malta's ESL rate would go down significantly as also highlighted in the results of the NSO simulation O-Level exercise explained in the section above.

Referencing criteria – conclusions

From the above, it is clear that a way forward needs to be determined as to the threshold for O-Level passes or any qualification comparable to O-level that fall under MQF levels 2 and 3⁹⁶; including VET qualifications at levels 2 and 3 of the MQF which share the same parity of esteem to the academic/

The exercise illustrated that for ISCED 1997, Malta has submitted data which was based on the NSO interpretation of the ISCED 97 which if revised (as recommended by NCHE/MQC) would fit perfectly Malta's educational system, and more importantly, the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) which was established in 2007.

⁹⁶ The UK considers students who obtained 5 or more O-Levels, GCSE grade A-C or equivalent under ISCED 3c long as not falling under the ESL rate. Those who obtain less than 5 are considered under ISCED 3c short.

It is also important to note that revising the ISCED 97 interpretation to the MQF by classifying any qualification that falls under levels 2 and 3 of the MQF at ISCED level 3, would mean that everything else would also have to shift upwards, such as classifying the A-Levels and anything comparable, at as ISCED level 4. In doing so, the revision of the ISCED 97 interpretation, will in the future also fit perfectly the ISCED 2011 which will be in force in 2014, and which will after all reflect perfectly the 8-tier framework of the EQF and Malta's NQF.

ISCED 1997	ISCED 2011
-	ISCED 01
ISCED 0	ISCED 02
ISCED level 1	ISCED level 1
ISCED level 2	ISCED level 2
ISCED level 3	ISCED level 3
ISCED level 4	ISCED level 4
ISCED level 5	ISCED level 5
ISCED level 5	ISCED level 6
ISCED level 5	ISCED level 7
ISCED level 6	ISCED level 8

Studies show that the differences between the ISCED 1997 and the ISCED 2011 do not affect the changes that the NCHE/MQC proposes to the ISCED 1997 interpretations. This means that for both ISCED 1997 and ISCED 2011, levels 2 and 3 refer to lower secondary and upper secondary levels respectively.⁹⁷

Hence, if Malta revises the ISCED 1997 interpretation in a way which considers any qualification that falls under MQF level 2 and 3 as ISCED level 3, this will also apply to the ISCED 2011. The only differences in the two ISCED models is that the ISCED 2011 further sub-divides the pre-primary levels into 01 and 02 where 01 refers pre-primary education for children under 3 years of age, and 02 refers to pre-primary education generally for children from 3 years and over.

The other difference between the ISCED 1997 and the ISCED 2011 is that level 5 which (in ISCED 97) used to incorporate all the undergraduate certificates, Bachelors and Masters. These have now been split into different levels just like the EQF and our MQF, where for ISCED 2011 Level 5 would refer to undergraduate certificates, ISCED level 6 would refer to Bachelors, and ISCED level 7 to Masters and any qualification comparable at that respective level. Another difference is that the PhDs (Doctoral Degrees) under the ISCED 2011 will be classified under level 8, instead of Level 6 which was the highest level under the ISCED 1997 framework.

These differences between ISCED 1997 and ISCED 2011 have been tabled below for ease of reference:

Since the establishment of the MQF in 2007, Malta has been working to level rate all accredited courses to the MQF. Thus, there should be no difficulty to now match the MQF levels to the ISCED levels. NCHE/MQC recommend that any qualification that falls under the MQF levels 2 and 3, irrespective of whether it is a vocational qualification or academic qualification, (as they both share the same parity of esteem) shall be classified under ISCED level 3, and that the whole mapping exercise will therefore need to be reviewed for all levels in order to match perfectly the MQF levels with the ISCED 1997 levels. See attached table for the mapping of the MQF with ISCED 1997 and 2011.⁹⁸

Such a revision will ultimately also fit the new ISCED 2011, which is characterized by an 8-tier framework just like the EQF and MQF.

Furthermore, from the NSO simulation exercise carried out by NSO in week 6 of 2012 and based on data provided by MATSEC, one can also propose a threshold for the number of O-Levels that a person possess not to be considered as an ESL.

The NCHE / MQC recommend a threshold of a minimum of three passes at SEC (i.e. 3+ O-Levels). As explained earlier, for every 100 students who get a pass grade in 1 SEC exam, 84 managed to get at least 3 SEC passes. This threshold, therefore, would capture a large proportion of students passing SEC examinations. As compared with the existing NSO interpretation and mapping of the MQF with the ISCED (whereby O-Levels are classified at ISCED

97 Refer to attached documents titled: Attachment 1 and 2

98 Refer to attached document titled: Attachment 3; NCHE/MQC recommendation on the mapping of the MQF with ISCED 1997 and 2011

level 2), setting at least 3 SEC passes would in effect reduce ESL from 36.9 per cent in 2010 to 27.7 per cent as shown on page 6. Setting a threshold (3+ SEC passes) for a person not to be considered as an ESL should also include equivalent vocational qualifications such as Full VET Level 2 qualification (also considered as upper secondary as shown in Attachment 5 - based on ISCED 1997 and 2011).

In line with the Referencing Diagram ISCED 1997-2011 to MQF and according to the MQF a full VET level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem for employability reasons as 4 General Education Level 2 subjects. Furthermore, setting a threshold of 3+ SEC passes would be similar to the threshold adopted in England when 18 to 24 year olds who obtained 5 or more GCSE grade A – C or equivalent under ISCED 3c long, are classified as not falling under the ESL rate. It should be noted that GCSE are not necessarily strictly comparable with the standard of SEC.

The NCHE/MQC considers that setting a further threshold for SEC Grades other than recommending 3+ O-Levels at any pass grade (i.e. 1-7) may not be appropriate given the scope of the Malta Qualifications Framework which also sets out guidelines for comparability of qualifications at a given level. Given the fact that the NCHE/MQC is proposing that any qualifications that fall under MQF levels 2 and 3 could be both classified at ISCED level 3, setting a threshold for a person to be considered as a non-ESL if s/he possess 3+ O-Levels at grades 1-5 would run counter to the MQF itself which states that a full VET qualification at MQF level 2 should share the same parity of esteem as 4 general education level 2 subjects (i.e. SEC at grades between 6-7). Apart from that, setting such a threshold for SEC grades could be discriminatory. This can be more easily understood by the following four examples:

Situation (A). A person at age 19 possessing 3 O-Levels at grades between 1-5 and not in further education and training.

Situation (B). A person at age 19 possessing 10 O-Levels, two of which at grade 2 and the other eight at grades between 6-7 and not in further education and training.

Situation (C). A person at age 19 possessing an academic IT qualification at MQF level 2 obtained from a private institution offering further and/or higher education, and is not in further education and training.

Situation (D). A person at the age 19 possessing a vocational Beauty Therapist qualification at MQF level 2 obtained from a private institution offering further and/or higher education, and is not in further education and training.

Given the NCHE/MQC recommendation that any qualifications that fall under MQF Levels 2 and 3 should be classified at ISCED Level 3 (i.e. treated as upper secondary level of qualifications) due to the fact that they are achieved after the compulsory education stage and after the Secondary School Certificate and Profile, and considering a threshold of SEC grades 1-5, technically, the person in situation (A) is not an ESL.

However, if one applies the same criteria above to situation (B), technically, the person would be an ESL. What about situation C? How will one determine whether the academic IT qualification at MQF level 2 is equivalent to 3+ O-Levels at grades 1-5? The same applies for situation (D). How can one determine whether the vocational Beauty Therapist qualification at MQF Level 2 is equivalent to 3+ O-Levels at grades 1-5 when according to our MQF it was established that a full VET qualification at MQF Level 2 should share the same parity of esteem as to 4 General education Level 2 subjects at grades 6-7?

The main concern for NCHE/MQC in this case is that this could be discriminatory in a referencing process. This is because in the case presented in the previous paragraph, the NCHE/MQC believes that the person in situation (B) with 10 O-Levels should not be considered as an ESL simply because eight of the O-Levels obtained are at grades 6-7. If one had to assume 3+ SEC passes with a threshold of SEC grades 1-7, the unintended discriminatory effect would be avoided as both persons would be considered as non early school leavers. Apart from that, one other major concern is that if any

threshold for grades is adopted, this would in practice have a negative effect on the proxy answers of the LFS, where the data collection process will be complicated resulting in a larger rate of sampling error. The same arguments would arise if a threshold of 5+ SEC passes is adopted with grades 1-5. Setting this threshold, however, would mimic the threshold set by England as explained earlier, and *may* appear more acceptable in the event of adopting a new definition of ESL. Furthermore, the NCHE/MQC studied how other EU countries are mapping their National Qualifications framework with the ISCED, uncovering what qualifications the different countries classify under ISCED level 3 as upper secondary qualifications.

It was evident that some countries have the same concern. It was also found that several countries have not yet clearly mapped their NQF with the ISCED, and where this was evident one could not clearly map it to the Maltese educational system for comparability reasons. Hence, it was difficult to analyse what other countries actually classify as qualifications under ISCED level 3 given all the different educational systems across Europe. However, a case in point could be that of Slovenia where students spend 9 years in compulsory lower secondary education. At the age of fifteen students would already be in upper secondary education. This further proves Malta's justifications for considering O-Levels and any comparable qualifications that fall under MQF Levels 2 and 3 at ISCED Level 3 (i.e. upper secondary). Students in Malta spend 11 years in compulsory education, which is far beyond the criteria set by UNESCO through ISCED for the completion cycle of lower secondary education at ISCED level 2.

Thus, NCHE / MQC recommend that:

- (a) All qualifications that fall under the MQF levels 2 and 3 should be classified under ISCED 1997 and 2011 Level 3.

- (b) Subsequently the mapping of all the remaining levels have to be shifted upwards as illustrated in the diagram which illustrates the NCHE/MQC recommended revised mapping of the MQF with the ISCED 1997 and 2011.

- (c) Setting a threshold of 3 or more SEC passes (3+ O-Levels) at grades 1-7 as necessary minimum qualifications that are required for a person not to be considered as an early school leaver. This implies that persons having qualifications classified at MQF level 2 and over, and are not in further and higher education; they are not considered as early school leavers. However, in case of persons possessing O-Levels at MQF levels 2 and 3, the threshold for O-Levels would be that of 3 or more O-Levels at grades 1-7. A threshold of 5 or more SEC passes at grades 1-7 could also be considered given that the threshold is similar to that applied in England.

In conclusion, MQF referencing to ISCED 2011 is a straight forward exercise particularly at the higher levels of the two frameworks. There is perfect synergy (as explained earlier on) at a structural level between the sectors as defined within ISCED and the qualifications awarded at the end of each of these cycles.

ISCED Level 3 corresponds to MQF Levels 2 and 3 whereas ISCED Level 2 corresponds largely to the end of compulsory education (MQF Level 1) and the awarding of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile. ISCED Level 1 (Primary Education) and ISCED Levels 01 and 02 correspond to the lower level of MQF Level 1 when the award of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile is the first official recognition (qualification) at national level of 'what a person knows and is able to do'.

Although the profile of the two frameworks is different (ISCED classifies sectors and is primarily used as a statistical device whereas MQF is a qualifications framework) yet their referencing will ensure that a country's statistics (as is the case shown with early school leavers) reflects the reality on the ground.

5.3 Secondary School Certificate and Profile Guidelines determining the verification of informal learning in secondary education (prepared in collaboration with DQSE)

An update

Implementation of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile (SSC&P) in the educational system commenced in September 2010 after an official launch by the Minister of Education in November 2009. Students in secondary school (Forms 1, 2 and 3) started being credited and given marks for their informal and non-formal learning as well as for evident personal qualities. Information about this innovation was disseminated through the media and students were informed by their respective schools about the procedures that needed to be followed.

The Assessment for learning (AfL) section within the Directorate for Standards and Quality in Education (DQSE) took charge of this task, answered numerous call from parents and held various meetings in schools and other institutions where clarifications and support were requested.

With reference to informal learning, the main issues focused on the registering of the organisation/society/individual with MQC, since no application for credit by the students could be validated unless the said organisation/society/individual was duly registered by MQC. To date, there are over 810 organisations/societies/individuals that have registered,

DQSE also accepts and gives credit to informal activities carried out during the summer period with registered groups and organisations. This is in line with the philosophy of lifelong education which is not restricted to the duration of the school year.

The following data refers to informal and non-formal learning in **state schools** from the scholastic year (2010-2011):

From a total of 8179 students, there were 1708 (20.9%) who gave in their informal learning form for accreditation to their respective schools. The relatively low percentage reflects a new culture that takes time to take root..

Schools were informed that non-formal learning was related to extra-curricular themes or subjects, such as an Italian club, a choir, preparation for a play, etc. Statistics obtained from the schools information management system show that for non-formal learning there was a slightly higher participation rate than for informal learning. From a total of 8179 students, there were 1984 (24.3%) who participated in non-formal activities during school hours. Non-formal learning depends solely on the school's initiative to create such opportunities for its students.

Students could be awarded up to 20 marks for the informal activities they carried out after school hours per year and up to 20 marks for the non-formal activities they carried out in school. Apart from these marks, students could also be awarded marks for personal qualities. Initially, eight common personal qualities were agreed upon for all schools in Malta and Gozo. They are listed as follows: adherence to regulations, altruism, communicative skills, entrepreneurship, leadership, sense of respect, teamwork and sense of responsibility. Each state college and all non-state schools were also encouraged to choose another two qualities. Each of the ten qualities carried a maximum of 30 marks and teachers were informed to give such marks in steps of five. It was decided that teachers would award marks to a maximum of five personal qualities per student per year.

The database was updated to include the marks assigned for informal and non-formal learning as well as for personal qualities. Work was completed by June 2011 and marks were duly inputted into the system by each state school. Independent and Church schools adapted their own systems accordingly.

Feedback on the implementation process was received from various stakeholders and the Directorate General - DQSE set up a working group (WG) to study the implementation process and analyse the critique to date. The technical report was presented to the Director General – DQSE and the Permanent Secretary with the Ministry of Education and Employment in March 2012.

The main recommendations for the improvement of the implementation process of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile are listed below:

- 1 To retain all the components of the present SSC&P to emphasize the profiling aspect of the document throughout the five years.
- 2 To do away with a graded SSC&P (Distinction, Merit, and Pass).
- 3 To remove the allocation of marks for Informal and Non-formal activities and also for Personal Qualities.
- 4 To list all the non-formal and informal activities that the student participates in, per year.
- 5 To assign descriptors to explicate further the personal qualities demonstrated by the student per year..
- 6 To raise the minimum accepted level of attendance from 60% to 85% in line with policy direction in Malta and within the EU.
- 7 To raise the SSC&P from Level 1 to Level 2 of the MQF for all students provided they fulfil the necessary criteria. Those students who do not achieve SSC&P at Level 2 may qualify for a SSC&P at Level 1 of the MQF, provided that they fulfil the necessary criteria.
- 8 Individual schools (particularly in the Non-State Sector) will have the right to choose the format of their certificate, subject to approval by the MQC.
- 9 Providers of Informal activities will continue to be registered by the MQC. Quality assurance measures to be put in place in the near future. To propose that individual schools (particularly the Church and Independent Sector) be given the right to choose the format of their certificate, subject to approval by the MQC.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of these Guidelines, informal learning is being defined as all formal and non-formal activities that take place outside school hours in which learners are actively engaged in a culturally or life skill enriching experience.

The restructuring by the Directorate for Standards and Quality in Education (DQSE) of the School Leaving Certificate led to the integration of formal, non-formal and informal activities in a new transcript

that illustrates what a person has achieved during secondary education. This includes all academic subjects, all non-formal activities organised by the College or school but which do not feature in the National Curriculum, informal learning which takes place outside school hours and which is independent from school regulations and assessment procedures, personal qualities which a learner acquires during his or her school days and evidence of attendance during the school year.

This document focuses on the guidelines that determine whether or not teachers and education officers should list learning activities submitted by learners aged 11 to 16 outside school hours and which can be valued as learning experiences.

These guidelines have been divided into five sections:

- definitions of informal learning and the school context;
- registering a learning institution;
- documenting informal learning;
- validating evidence of learning;
- the teacher's role.

MQC and DQSE issued a Call for all public and private institutions in which these forms of learning take place to register their interest in validating informal learning to learners aged between 11 and 16.

The database is updated regularly and kept on the MQC/DQSE websites for visibility, verification and information purposes. Certified informal learning must correspond to registered institutions only. No entry in the Secondary School Certificate and Profile will be valid unless the registered institution conforms to the standards and procedures set in this document.

Specific marks were allocated to each verified activity as indicated in the DQSE Handbook of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile. As indicated in the recommendations above, this will no longer be the practice in future.

Learning takes place in different contexts and should develop various capabilities in individuals. For centuries, learning has been considered as a tool for

the acquisition of knowledge leading to a status in one's adult life. However, with the increase in leisure time and technology, learning, irrespective of how and where it is acquired, is helping individuals gather knowledge, but also develop and express new skills and competences such as entrepreneurship, entertainment skills, creativity in the arts, dance and music and organisational skills.

These learning environments help learners to develop specific qualities and attitudes, for instance responsibility, punctuality, appearance, sociability, loyalty and so on. These personal qualities will also be valued by the Secondary School Certificate and Profile.

The main objective of a wider concept of education should be that of lifelong learning, where individuals yearn to consider learning as a lifelong experience.

Traditionally, we have perceived learning as that taking place in schools and universities. But experience has shown that learning can also take place beyond the formal classroom or lecture room environments. Indeed learning can also take place at work, in the community, at home, in kitchens, parks, youth clubs, the theatre and band clubs, among others. In fact, the majority of learning opportunities outside the classroom, such as those provided by private, religious, philharmonic, social and voluntary organisations are often classified as informal learning. The main advantage with informal learning is flexibility – it can happen anywhere and any time and can also be tailored to meet the needs of the learners, the organisations and, most importantly, the community.

Until the introduction of the SSC&P informal learning had no formal recognition by the State in Malta. By means of this innovation, informal learning became formally recognised and valued and can serve as one of the indicators for employment, further studies or for a person's curriculum vitae. Informal learning improves the quality of life and the learner's outreach in the community both at national and international levels. This document also indicates the various opportunities students have to value the rich cultural and social heritage of our population and to ensure that skills and competences acquired are acknowledged and made visible in the education landscape and in the labour market.

Definitions of informal learning and the school context

CEDEFOP defines informal learning as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure.

It is often referred to as experiential learning, and can to a degree, be understood as accidental learning. The European Commission in its communication on Lifelong Learning defines informal learning as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time and/or learning support). Typically, it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is also non-intentional.

Informal learning is seen by some as the learning that takes place in everyday life, and this includes for example, learning how to tie laces or a rope. Others perceive informal learning as projects undertaken by individuals, such as photography. Individuals may start reading about the subject, reading texts and surfing the internet as to acquire more knowledge about the subject and also joining groups that include enthusiasts about photography. Indeed, some also view informal learning as learning that is acquired through joining voluntary, social, cultural and private organisations, such as youth clubs, band clubs, scouts and girl guides.

Specialist (and often generous) individuals in these settings help individuals to think about experiences and situations that would help in the individual's strive for self-actualisation. In fact informal learning can be all the above and more. It is a process of continuous learning in different contexts and different settings for purposes that vary from learning a life skill to learning a language, drama, dance or playing a musical instrument.

In her study *Informal Learning in the Community: a trigger for change and development*, McGivney defines informal learning as follows:

- Learning that takes place outside a dedicated learning environment and which arises from the activities and interests of individuals and groups, but which may not be recognised as learning.
- Non course-based learning activities (which might include discussion, talks or presentations,

information, advice and guidance) provided or facilitated in response to expressed interests and needs by people from a range of sectors and organisations (health, housing, social services, employment services, education and training services, guidance services).

- Planned and structured learning such as short courses organized in response to identified interests and needs but delivered in flexible and informal ways and in informal community settings.

It can be clearly seen that the distinction between what is formal learning and informal learning is that while the prior takes place in education institutions such as schools, the latter occurs in settings beyond these education institutions.

Coombs and Ahmed (1974) view informal learning as the lifelong process by which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment – at home, at work, at play: from the examples and attitudes of family and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; or by listening to the radio or viewing films or television. Generally (informal learning) takes place in unorganized, unsystematic and even unintentional settings at times, yet accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning – including that of a highly 'schooled' person.

These definitions, together with those of CEDEFOP and the European Commission clearly indicate informal learning as learning that takes place outside formal educational environments. However, whereas McGivney states that 'planned and structured learning such as short courses' is part of informal learning, Coombs and Ahmed see informal learning as that learning that takes place in 'unorganized, unsystematic and even unintentional settings and contexts'.

For the purpose of this document, MQC/DQSE are valuing informal learning as all learning that occurs outside formal schooling.

Thanks to information and communication technology, it is now widely accepted that children and young people learn all the time. Informal learning enhances motivation, enjoyment and skill acquisition, and this by tapping into real life scenarios. Experiences in different settings and outside the formal can help young people gain higher aspirations, greater self-esteem, higher confidence, greater well-being and the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences that would be useful in their working life.

Registering a learning institution

Learners from the ages of 11 to 16 years can register their informal learning experiences if the organisation that they attend is registered with the MQC. The registration of such organisations is an ongoing process.

Organisations that are eligible for registration must have one or more of these descriptions:

- Social clubs
- Band clubs
- Drama schools
- Dance schools
- Music academies and schools
- Art academies and schools
- All recognised religious organisations
- Sport clubs, nurseries and academies
- MFA/GFA registered Football Clubs
- Philanthropic organisations
- Philharmonic societies
- Life skill clubs
- Voluntary associations
- Hobby clubs
- Chess Academy
- NGOs

In registering for validation, organisations must submit the following information online or through surface mail:

Malta Qualifications Council and the Directorate for Standards and Quality in Education	
SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE AND PROFILE REGISTRATION FORM VALIDATION OF INFORMAL LEARNING	
Name of the organisation	
Location	
Objectives	
Short history of the organisation	
Statute or Constitution	
Head of Organisation	
Teaching staff and a short curriculum vitae	
Police conduct	
Sample of regular teaching programmes or activities	

Information submitted will be archived within MQC and subject to the Laws of Malta namely the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act.

On successful Registration, the Organisation will be given an MQC/DQSE Accreditation Label (to be produced on each certified learning experience) and a certificate to be displayed for information purposes.

Registration is conditional to verification of organisation's conduct, activities and assessment by MQC or DQSE verifiers.

Organisations which have either filed for bankruptcy or have been judged by the Law Courts of Malta to be found guilty of crime or inappropriate behaviour or not conforming to the Laws of Malta will be deleted from the list.

Documenting Informal Learning

Each Accredited Organisation can produce its own learning toolkit. Examples of such toolkits will be provided for all organisations for the assessment of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by the young person.

Different assessment methods can be used according to the sector or activity. MQC/DQSE recommend that a common tool should be introduced for the documentation of the learning experiences of the individual.

Recognising the achievements of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by young people in informal settings, can provide a basis for qualitative and quantitative monitoring system for the organisations to use in order to monitor and improve the provision of the training offered and also to measure the impact of such training on the young people and also on the organisation itself.

Assessment methods currently in use include:

- Interviews (particularly at the start of the learning experience)
- Simulated and real activities/performances/exhibitions etc. (e.g. playing an instrument, dancing, acting, singing)
- Debate (discussions, internal and external participation in groups)
- Presentations (internally or to the community)
- Observation (of individual competence/skill followed by a structured debrief)
- Group or peer assessment
- Artefacts, photographs and other forms of evidence of the informal learning experience
- Portfolio

The common tool for organisations should be the portfolio method (which could be in the form of diaries, journals, learners' files, pen drives).

This could include:

- Details of the young person;
- Experiences acquired through the different Accredited Organisation/s and in other informal learning settings. Such experiences can be documented in writing and also through photos or other forms of media;
- Competences – social, innovative, organisational, leadership, problem solving, team skills, intercultural, creative, artistic and communication skills;
- How the criteria stipulated for this learning process was met – how the knowledge was met
- Feedback from the Accredited Organisation/s

Validating evidence of learning

Recognising, valuing and validating informal learning provides a basis for improving quality and also for improving the learner experience.

Recognising the achievements of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by young people in informal settings, can provide a basis for qualitative and quantitative monitoring system for the organisations to use in order to monitor and improve the provision of the training offered and also to measure the impact of such training on the young people and also on the organisation itself.

Consequently, these results would offer sound evidence to be included in the Secondary School Certificate and Profile.

Young people, who attend the organisations offering informal learning, can also benefit from the accreditation of their participation. Accrediting informal learning can help individuals to become more motivated, to engage more actively in the activities and learning within the organisation and also to progress further within the formal systems of learning.

Recognising the achievements of the individuals in informal settings could also be the key to lifelong learning, as the individuals reflect on their achievements and encourage and motivate themselves to carry on learning. Barriers to learning can be overcome and positive attitudes towards formal learning can be developed.

For all informal learning experienced by young people, there needs to be a credible and transparent system that would

- recognise and record knowledge, skills and competences acquired and
- assure that the learning process in the informal settings is appropriate and fit for purpose.

Hence, this system should be designed as to:

- 1 promote the needs and interests of young people.
- 2 look at 'reasonable accommodation' – this through taking account the diverse situations of the learners and the learning itself
- 3 look for specific learning outcomes

Informal learning is a mixture of these various approaches to learning. People learn in different ways depending on the stimulus the environment provides and the motivating factors that push learners to learn an activity or skill.

- 4 empower and encourage learners to reflect, identify and recognise progress and achievement so that they better their self-efficacy beliefs
- 5 promote and instil dialogue between learners and trainers
- 6 promote good and best practices, so as to improve the acquisition and transfer of learning and the assessment.

Registered Organisations that provide informal learning should look at the following five elements in introducing a measuring system for informal learning:

- 1 an appropriate aim – aims of all activities should be stated and explained. This should be done as to ensure that all involved are aware of the activity, the contents, roles and outcomes.
- 2 an initial assessment – young people need to go through an initial assessment to find out what they already know, what support they need and consequently to establish a bench mark for the assessment of the learners' achievement. This initial assessment could include a) previous learning, b) reasons for learning, c) existing skills and d) preferred learning style and activities.
- 3 establishing objectives and learning outcomes – the objectives and learning outcomes should be identified at the start of the learning process.
- 4 recognising and recording of progress during the learning process – young people should be provided with the chance of reviewing their progress at different stages during this learning process so that both the learner and the trainer will be able to notice any progress or lack of it. The process of informal learning should encourage young people to be constantly and consistently aware of what they are acquiring and the level of progress achieved from time to time. Indeed, young people should be given supported feedback or reviews throughout the learning process, identifying strengths and weaknesses and areas that need developing within agreed timeframes.
- 5 Assessment (learner and trainer), overall achievement at the end of the learning process – this final assessment allows both the learner and the Registered Organisation to measure the progress made in relation to the learning objectives and bench marks stipulated at the

beginning of the learning process. This final assessment should include a) learner self-assessment, b) impact of the learning process on the learner, c) feedback from the trainer (future progression) and d) evidence of the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by the learner. It is the responsibility of each MQC/DQSE Accredited Organisation to ensure transparency in its learning processes and in its certification. MQC/DQSE will be making ad hoc inspections to verify that standards and procedures are being followed particularly in the following three areas:

- A healthy and clean environment
- Qualified and responsible personnel & teachers
- Documentation and activities

It is the responsibility of the school to recognise informal learning on the forms provided by DQSE and as detailed in the Handbook for Computation of Marks for the Secondary School Certificate and Profile (see Appendix 2). As indicated in the recommendations above, the allocation of marks will no longer be the practice in future.

The Teacher's role

Teachers play an important role in the recognition of informal learning

In education teachers play different roles in different contexts. In Skinner's world, the teacher is expected to prepare the whole learning process in detail and during the process he or she is expected to take an observer or evaluators' role. In Piaget's world, besides laying down the rules for learning to take place, the teacher leaves room for experimenting in a relatively open structure but this freedom is also restricted within defined pedagogical frameworks. In Rousseau's world, the teacher gives up control and leaves learning to incidental experiences which the learner is expected to grasp from his or her environments. The teacher facilitates learning and assists the learner in classifying these experiences into worthwhile life skills.

Informal learning is a mixture of these various approaches to learning. People learn in different ways depending on the stimulus the environment provides and the motivating factors that push learners to learn an activity or skill.

Validating informal learning is an added value given to learning that takes place outside the teacher's remit. Educators today acknowledge that outside the formal schooling hours, learning takes place systematically through other means of activities such as social, cultural, sport clubs and primarily through systems of communication such as internet and television.

For the purpose of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile, teachers will validate recognised certificates that indicate a learning experience which the learner has acquired within:

- a defined period of time or/and
- as an ongoing activity or/and
- by participating in a club or association or organisation.

In recognizing such informal learning experiences teachers must ensure that the following indicators are clearly documented:

- the certificate carries the MQC/DQSE label
- awarding association/body is a recognised organisation listed in the MQC/DQSE
- the activity is not part of the formal or informal school activities
- the name of the accredited organisation is printed in a clear manner;
- the name and signature of the Head of the organisation should appear on the informal Education form provided by DQSE.

As stated earlier on, it is strongly recommended that teachers see that the Informal Education forms are filled in properly and that they carry the organisation's stamp, registration number and the attendance. Such activities and any associated appearance, behaviour and performance must not be in conflict with the rules and regulations of the school .

The teacher may ask the learner questions about what has been learnt or may invite the learner to share this knowledge or skill during formal and non-formal activities in the school. Skills learnt during informal activities may also be used to encourage other learners to take up new hobbies, new social or sport activities or engage themselves into more active participation in the community.

The validation of informal learning is a great challenge at all levels of education. Learners provide new experiences; there will be added access to information on new skills, new activities in the community and an increased belonging to civic and social roles. Furthermore, learners are exposed to possible activities which, as a class or group, they can entertain outside school hours.

Informal learning is a mixture of these various approaches to learning. People learn in different ways depending on the stimulus the environment provides and the motivating factors that push learners to learn an activity or skill.

Informal learning shows great promise for revitalizing education and schooling. Teachers must be on the look out to explore the spaces, situations and relationships within which learning occurs and the nature of that learning. Every opportunity should be taken to discover the connections and tensions that exist between the informal acquisition of incidental and organised knowledge and the espoused formal process of reference to competence-based standards set in national curricula. Informal learning must be seen within the context of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile as a support to formal learning and a critique of 'what it means. to be competent and knowledgeable' .

Not everyone is an educator but all experiences educate. Teachers are formal and professional educators who consider informal learning as an added value to their classroom paradigm. More and more teachers acknowledge that:

- Young learners may not have the time to spend exchanging and learning with others in the way they wish within formal education and therefore resort to other means to achieve other forms of skills and competences;
- Pressures that national curricula often put on teachers and learners transform education into a formal rather than an enjoyable activity - learning becomes a duty rather than a pleasure.

The validation of informal learning places formal education as the meeting point for:

- sharing of skills and competences outside schooling

- widening the context of learning to include other centres, social, cultural and sport activities, community life, religious activities
- exploring and expanding the range of experiences
- building active citizenship
- developing new learning tools with an emphasis on group work
- intergenerational participation in the formal process of learning – outside school educators can be invited to school to attract more learners to informal activities.
- information on community development and community action, outdoor and adventure activities, arts and cultural work and youth work.

Conclusion

Teachers should act as promoters of informal learning and ensure that all learning experiences are valued and documented within the Secondary School Certificate and Profile.

The scope of these guidelines is to acknowledge informal learning as a value within the Secondary School Certificate and Profile. Teachers play an important role in verifying such learning and ensuring that these experiences add to the general evaluation of a learner at the end of compulsory education.

Informal learning can be verified in many ways. But for the purpose of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile specific procedures have to be respected by the organisations and individuals awarding the certificate, by the teachers who fill in the required information and by the administrators of the schools and colleges that ensure that information as illustrated in Appendix 1 is correct, transparent and archived as formal, informal and non-formal.

Appendix 1

DQSE Secondary School Certificate and Profile Handbook*
Informal Education

This refers to students' participation in activities outside school hours.

Up to twenty (20) marks are allotted to this section for every year of Secondary schooling. So a maximum of 100 marks may be awarded over the five-year period.

Students are awarded the twenty marks if they actively participate in a voluntary organisation after school hours. The students' participation has to be guaranteed by the competent authority.

Computation of marks

Add together the marks awarded in this section during Secondary schooling.

* Extract taken from the Handbook concerning the validation of Informal Learning

Appendix 2

DQSE Specimen Informal Education Forms.



DIRECTORATE FOR
QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND THE FAMILY

Informal Education: Courses

Name: _____ who lives at _____

_____ is doing a course in _____

(Name of Course and Address)

Stamp if available

Registration Number

The student has been following this course for weeks/months/years and attends around:

ATTENDANCE	MARK WITH AN X
80% - 100%	
60% - 79%	
30% - 59%	
10% - 29%	

Mention some achievements of this student:

Declaration Form
I _____ with the ID number _____,
guide _____ in the above mentioned course, and
declare that all the information provided is true.

Signature

Name and surname of parent/guardian of student _____

ID Number _____ Signature _____



**DIRECTORATE FOR
QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND THE FAMILY**

Informal Education: Organisations

Name: _____ who lives at _____

is a member of _____

(Name and Address of Organisation)

Organisation's Stamp

Registration Number

He/She has been a member of this organisation for weeks/months/years and attends around:

ATTENDANCE	MARK WITH AN X
80% - 100%	
60% - 79%	
30% - 59%	
10% - 29%	

Mention some activities in which the student actively participated within the organisation:

Declaration Form

I _____ with the ID number _____,
who holds the position of _____ within the above mentioned
organisation, declare that the information provided is true.

Signature

Name and surname of parent/guardian of student _____

ID Number _____ Signature _____

5.4 Implementing a learning-outcomes approach in the MQF system

The MQF is based on a learning outcomes approach system. The implementation of this system in Malta is increasingly significant at all levels of the framework from compulsory to adult education. Across the country, all public and private learning institutions are transforming short courses, programmes of studies, degree programmes into a learning outcomes approach. This is particularly evident at the University of Malta, at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, at the Institute of Tourism Studies, at the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, the latter responsible for all compulsory public education and works closely with similar institutions of Church and independent schools.

This report indicates forms of learning outcomes approaches chosen from different institutions. The important point related to this referencing report is that a learning outcomes approach to all qualifications is mandatory if these qualifications are to be level-rated and referenced to the MQF. A learning-outcomes approach may take different formats. The important aspect is that it reflects three important indicators namely:

- Knowledge (in forms of theoretical, practical, ethical, normative, specialized and analytical);
- Skills (evidence of practical demonstrations that illustrate capacity to conduct activities – depending on the level of qualification) under formal examinable conditions which may but not limited to, include continuous assessment);
- Competence (concrete evidence that the learning process can be transformed into a activity which shows full autonomy and responsibility of the learner in real life simulated circumstances).

Learning outcomes are facts that demonstrate that a person can move from a (sheltered/controlled) learning context to a work environment (real or simulated) with initial skills that could keep him or her on track for a career or a specific job. In those career where health and safety measures are at the core of the work activity, learning outcomes can only be tested after a minimum of two years apprenticeship in which the new recruit is guided by more experienced persons within that sector.

Learning outcomes are therefore authentic plans of teaching and learning processes. Adapting learning outcomes may be helpful, but, not as useful as those created by the individual teacher or teachers

Learning outcomes can be written in a variety of ways. There is no prototype learning-outcomes approach as yet and there will never be. Learning outcomes reflect specific qualifications and therefore one expects their presentation to be designed in a way that it captures the breadth and depth of the knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired by the individual learner and delivered by the specific teacher/s and other assistants to the learning process such as those engaged in practical and assessment sessions. Learning outcomes are therefore authentic plans of teaching and learning processes. Adapting learning outcomes may be helpful, but, not as useful as those created by the individual teacher or teachers of the particular subject or skill required. Learning outcomes therefore set the pace of learning, provide a roadmap of a step-by-step achievement by the individual learner and determine what a person will know and will be capable of doing at the end of the learning process. Furthermore, learning outcomes are expected to reflect occupational standards (if and when applicable) particularly in areas normally delivered within the context of vocational education and training. MQC has delivered in 2011 a set of guidelines through its ESF funded project *Skills Plus*. The aim of the project was to illustrate how occupational standards are related to a learning outcomes approach in nine sector areas of development namely business and commerce, construction engineering, hospitality, care, agribusiness, art and design, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and cultural heritage. Reference to the occupational standards listed in the project will further assist teachers to write learning outcomes in ways which demonstrate clarity and vision.

The simpler and clearer learning outcomes are the better. Learning outcomes should be determined by action words such as verbs to illustrate what a person should know and is able to do. The two indicators govern the whole spectrum of what learning outcomes are all about. In accrediting courses, MQC/NCHE will assess to what extent learning outcomes give a comprehensive picture of the learning experience/s as well as the assessment criteria upon which the individual will be examined at the end of the process. Examples of qualifications in a learning outcomes approach can be verified from the public institutions mentioned earlier on. The quality assurance units within these institutions are accumulating a number of interesting examples of qualifications in a learning outcomes approach.

Learning outcomes are verifiable evidence of transparency, progression and quality assurance. They provide an indication of content, duration, level of difficulty and assessment at the same time. It is therefore strongly recommended to all public and private education and training providers ensure that all qualifications which are expected to be referenced to the MQF would be designed in this approach. Accreditation of programmes of studies, degree courses, awards at the different levels of the MQF all require qualifications and awards based on a learning outcomes approach.

5.5 Outreach Programmes and Stateless Qualifications

The referencing to the MQF of the so-called *outreach* programmes and *stateless qualifications* remains a critical issue yet to be agreed upon with all stakeholders.

Outreach programmes (particularly those awarded by UK-based higher education institutions) are courses *online* or a mixture of *online* and taught activities which are quality assured and certified by accredited and fully recognised institutions. In referencing these programmes to the MQF, MQC/NCHE is taking every possible measure to ensure that workloads, learning outcomes and a quality assurance respond to the standards set for comparable qualifications within the MQF at the various levels. There is full awareness of the fact that some outreach programmes may take short cuts in workloads, student-teacher contacts, research methodologies and supervision, reading material and duration of courses. Furthermore, questions are being constantly asked concerning the 'entry' point for

courses within the higher education sector. Students as young as 17 year olds are being lured into these programmes before having achieved an advanced level of education in subjects directly related to the chosen area of study and/or research. The rate of success of students is also critical with very high percentages of success rates which may need further clarification. This report is highlighting the issue so that further referencing processes of outreach programmes (particularly those in higher education – MQF Levels 5 to 7) will be subject to the same rigour as other similar or comparable qualifications within the MQF. Same standards will be applied to outreach programmes so that we ensure fairness, quality and meaningful learning experiences.

Stateless qualifications are international awards including degree programmes governed by non-unitary state educational institutions through interstate relations such as the United Nations or inter-governmental organisations or responding to particular global sectors such as information technology, aviation, maritime affairs, fashion, care services and beauty therapy and others. Malta has not yet adopted agreed procedures to leveling specific stateless qualifications. However, despite not level-rating such qualifications, Malta recognizes these by identifying the extensive quality-assurance regimes of a number of awarding bodies that provide such qualifications, usually tied by an advanced specific sector backed by decades

Stateless qualifications are international awards including degree programmes governed by non-unitary state educational institutions through interstate relations such as the United Nations or inter-governmental organisations or responding to particular global sectors

of quality assurance mechanisms, monitoring and accreditation procedures.

However, there are specific initiatives in which MQC/NCHE is a full active partner intended to initiate such procedures. An example of this is the initiative by the eSkills Alliance Malta to commence compiling the IT-related qualifications in Malta in order to build a framework of IT qualifications which can then be referenced to the MQF through the established level-rating process.

Even if these stateless qualifications are informally recognised within the respective sector, there are wider benefits to be gained through the general purposes of implementing a learning outcomes approach and thus referencing to the MQF/EQF. An example of such would be the permeability between different types of sectoral qualifications; the transparent understanding of learners, trainers and employers of what the learner knows and is able to do following a set learning processes and, the recognition of cross-sectoral transversal skills acquired through one qualification into diverse facets of education.

If *stateless* qualifications were to be referenced separately to each individual NQF, the processes might create insurmountable differences between assessment and recognition standards. In an ideal world, it would be best if agencies and MQF Focal Points were to apply the same scrutiny which is applied to the referencing of qualifications to the NQFs and to the EQF. This should result in a similar process which would enable pegging to the EQF and therefore to other NQFs, rather than having varying levels of scrutiny applied between international and national qualifications. This is so since the latter situation would result in stateless qualifications being level-rated at different levels from one country to another. At this stage of development, Malta advocates for a Europe based referencing process to the EQF rather than to NQFs.

The referencing of a stateless or an international qualification to a particular NQF level should not undermine the process by which it would be referenced in other NQFs. However every caution should be taken not to adopt different approaches. The level descriptors of NQFs should be applied in the same way that they would be applied to any other type of qualification. In

practice, however, this may not guarantee that each NQF responsible agency would level-rate the same international or stateless qualification at the same level if this is done through individual level-rating in different countries.

In order to achieve comparable level-rating one should see whether these qualifications are defined in learning outcomes which in most cases they are such as in aviation and maritime affairs. Malta strongly adheres to the importance of a learning outcomes approach and this is reflected in the successful referencing experiences achieved so far. If stateless qualifications are determined in a learning outcomes approach what is the procedure used and what quality assurance system governs this procedure? Furthermore, a more legitimate question would be to verify which level descriptors are stateless qualifications being referred to?

In principle, referencing to one NQF should be enough, if the principle of mutual trust amongst referenced countries is to prevail. There should not be a system which defines a % of NQFs that need to ratify the level-rating of a qualification for it to be accepted since the level-rating in one country should be automatically recognised in another. Otherwise this process could allow countries referencing the same international/stateless qualification at different levels which would eventually break down the envisaged system of mutual recognition through the use of EQF level-rating.

This however involves the need for stronger QA systems to maintain the principle of mutual trust. Stronger QA systems would ensure that international/stateless qualifications (of the type defined earlier on) accepted in one particular country lead to fair automatic recognition by other countries. This would avoid the likelihood of countries applying weaker standards and criteria to level-rate qualifications with the eventual possibility of diminishing mutual trust and thus weakening the entire system.

Notwithstanding, Malta recognizes that referencing of international/stateless qualifications to one NQF may be problematic in practice, due to possible varying levels of scrutiny or applicability in different national contexts. Therefore this report indicates that this might not be the best approach, but rather to refer the international awarding bodies to reference their qualifications to a

central European body (such as the EQF), which in turn is then referred to by each of the NQFs of the Member States. This applies within and beyond Europe. Other qualifications frameworks already referenced to the EQF (such as the Transnational Qualifications Framework for Small States in the Commonwealth) would do well to ensure that the level-rating of stateless/international qualifications are classified at the same or comparable levels.

At this stage of the referencing process, Malta supports the setting up of an international Committee made up of experts from different Member States to design guidelines for the referencing of stateless qualifications to the EQF. MQC/NCHE through its Focal Point for the EQF supports the idea for international qualifications to be governed by a credit system comparable and translatable to that in the *Bologna Process* (1 ECTS credit=25hrs of learning) or ECVET and that final transcripts use the Certificate or Diploma Supplement where applicable.

In its proposal for a national awards system, as part of its update of Malta's Referencing Report in 2010, MQC stated that established sectoral certifying bodies or their appointed franchisee may continue to deliver such awards in Malta and they may apply for recognition of the awards from the MQC. All international qualifications may retain their own brand and identity. However, if international sectoral certifying bodies or their franchisee wish to level-rate these awards to the MQF, they shall apply for validation to the MQC. This is MQC's position vis-à-vis stateless qualifications aimed at giving value to international qualifications in the context of the MQF/EQF paradigm.

As an ad interim measure to give learners value to their stateless/international qualifications any application for recognition of these qualifications should be backed (where possible) by:

- A set of learning outcomes for each programme and units thereof, that clearly correspond to the level descriptors of the MQF;
- A quality assurance policy which is recognised by the international organization, already in place and functioning;
- A credit system comparable with that established within the MQF and evidence of an appropriately qualified coordinator/director and lecturer/s

together with the necessary facilities and resources for each programme delivered in Malta.

International qualifications and sectoral awards aligned with the MQF should be reviewed according to relevant national and international developments

The international body applying for level-rating to the MQF should also have as stated earlier on in this report evidence of its international status and stature, evidence of a minimum of 5 years experience in the sector or in relevant education and training in Malta; recognised references that indicate good standing and credibility within its sector and industry; indication of authorization; academic/training capacity to design, re-design, upgrade qualifications/awards; documented procedures of a quality assurance policy in place; assessment procedure in line with international recognised standards and governed by a credit system comparable to MQF guidelines and standards.

One of the major issues with regards to stateless qualifications is that the lack of adequate referencing systems may lead to the international awarding bodies not referring to EQF and thus undermining the EQF. This would result in lack of transparency and lack of information. The benefits of the learning outcomes-based approach will not be achieved. Varied methods of referencing may also lead to different levels for the same qualification. This would result in comparability and transferability problems, undermining mutual recognition processes.

An example of diverse systems of referencing is the ECDL. Malta references the full ECDL course at Level 3 and the full ECDL Advanced course at Level 4. However in the UK the ECDL course is divided between two levels (EQF Level 2 and 3). This lack of clarity has led training providers in Malta to conclude that this is not clear enough and therefore are opting to apply their own interpretation of whether this qualification should be regarded as a comparable entry qualification to the ones that they require due to the fact that there seems to be disagreements about how to level-rate this qualification in two different EQF-referenced countries. There is therefore the need for a centralized recognised system which could be led by the EQF Advisory Board within the European Commission.

If there is no clear linkage and pegging to the EQF at EU level, the issue of stateless/international qualifications will continue to produce different interpretations between EQF-compliant states. As more countries finalise their referencing processes, more avenues for different level-rating methods emerge. If there is no one coherent system towards stateless/international awards, there may be multiple interpretations of the value of these qualifications in the context of the EQF or any other NQF outside Europe.

In the meantime, the referencing process in Malta will continue to engage stakeholders at national and European levels to ensure that any level-rating of stateless and international qualifications is comparable and recognised from different NQFs.

5.6. Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks linked to the MQF

A 'sectoral qualifications framework' is defined as a framework of qualifications established by a sector (e.g. an academic or artistic discipline, profession, specialized sector such as those related to IT, handicrafts etc.../). It shows what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on the basis of a given qualification in a particular sector - in terms of expected learning outcomes. For instance, the *Polifonia* Tuning Working Group has produced a qualifications framework for higher music education with a set of subject-specific learning outcomes for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd study cycles in music.

The key objective of a sectoral qualifications framework is to develop a shared language and a model upon which knowledge, skills and competences of a particular sector can be understood and used as a tool for transparency, comparability and progression. The focus of sectoral frameworks is on competences and learning outcomes instead of job profiles and on full rather than partial qualifications. A strong relationship with the NQF (MQF) is therefore necessary so that each qualification is profiled in terms of esteem and recognition and valued within the overarching complex system of a national qualifications framework. Therefore consistency with the MQF parameters is essential with competences put into action into concrete contexts at specific levels of complexity, autonomy and responsibility.

Sectoral qualifications frameworks particularly in vocational education and training have to be strongly linked with competence-based professional standards (also known as occupational standards) established and maintained by recognised professional bodies such as those associated with or based at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry for work-based competences or cultural groups, music and drama Associations, Boards and official Committees for those within an artistic context.

Sectoral qualifications frameworks reinforce a competence-based approach to qualifications. It provides more flexibility for credit transfer and greater transparency for comparison with other national qualifications or/and with qualifications across other systems of education. Sectoral frameworks also enhance a system of recognition of informal and non-formal learning through explicit mechanisms which enable learners to test their competences against established tests or through their own portfolio and performance in the case of artistic qualifications. Furthermore, sectoral frameworks also promote the growth of structured partnerships between multi stakeholder interests, the professional training institutions and the accreditation and qualifications agencies.

At the core of sectoral qualifications frameworks one acknowledges:-

- wider participation and promotion of life-long learning
- a new structural relationship between qualifications
- focus on learning experiences and aspirations of employees who are able to take advantage of learning opportunities on the workplace
- better choice and combination of qualification types and breadth of study opportunities within a particular area.

CEDEFOP has produced an extensive bibliography of a number of sectors which could establish sectoral frameworks. A number of relevant sectors to the Maltese economy and culture have been selected for ease of reference:

- Insurance, Banking Commerce
- Agriculture
- Civil aviation
- Telecommunications

- Construction
- Electricity
- Financial Intermediation
- Sea Fishing
- Hotels and Catering
- Road Transport
- Food industry
- Furniture
- Shipping and aircraft
- Woodworking
- Hairdresser
- Personal services
- Telecommunications – post and courier
- Local public services
- Culture media and audiovisuals
- Retail trade
- Transport activities

Some European projects managed by sectors have been developed or are in development from calls of proposals concerning the implementation of EQF: in 2006 Sports and active leisure sector, Tourism sector, Automotive sector, Chemistry Industry; in 2007 ICT sector, Construction Industry, Metal and electrical Industry.

The Malta Qualifications Framework is a *meta*-framework that can also capture sectoral frameworks when these are developed by the relevant sectors which can be of five types – Industry-based, Professional, Skilled trades, Artistic or Traditional Artifact Products. Whereas the industry-based qualifications will largely be based on agreed occupational standards (and therefore it is expected that qualifications would be industry led), professional qualifications (especially those within the health and safety sectors) are determined by higher education qualifications, professional training such as CPDs and relevant and verified experience.

The Skilled Trade qualifications frameworks would normally be established by Boards and Trade Committees authorized to assess skills and award licenses to practice work within that sector. These awards are also largely based on vocational qualifications and trade-tested experience. On the

other hand, artistic qualifications are established by Professional Boards set up by governments to regulate the professional artistic expressions within a particular culture. Some countries (such as the UK, Italy, Spain and France) have independent authorities that assess and award qualifications according to established and traditionally recognised standards and procedures.

In the case of Traditional Artifact Skills these are normally regulated by the Department of Trade and Commerce (in Malta) but each sector has its own particular set of standards and criteria which could be developed to create specific qualifications within a sectoral framework.

The initiative taken by the Malta Qualifications Council to establish (through a 2009 ESF project) occupational standards in nine sector areas (cfr 2.8 in this report) is a major step in the right direction. Art and Design, Community Services, Agribusiness, Building and Construction Engineering, Business and Commerce, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Hospitality and Heritage skills all have basic occupational standards defined by their respective professional sectors. Added to these sectors, the Malta Printing Industry Association (MPIA) has been the first competent Association to establish occupational standards for their sector as well as a qualifications framework which is aligned to the MQF. The table on the next page illustrates the Sectoral Qualifications Framework developed by the Malta Printing Industry Association (MPIA).

The table hereunder represents two important aspects. On the right hand side one finds the description of the type of responsibility within an occupation that a person is expected to have according to the level of qualification awarded. On the left hand side of the table, the position of the various occupations for which the qualifications and occupational standards have been drawn up. There is progression in the level of knowledge, skills and competences required which implies that a person who presents him/herself for validation at a particular level must show that s/he also possess skills and competences at lower levels of the framework.

The Sectoral Qualifications Framework developed by MPIA

7	MANAGER	7	The holder of a qualification at this level will have access to employment in specialized fields and career progression for jobs requiring research skills, scholarly work and leadership.
6	ASSISTANT MANAGER	6	The holder of a qualification at this level will be able to gain access to employment and to career progression within the specialist field.
5	SENIOR SUPERVISOR	5	The holder of a qualification at this level will be able to gain access to professional employment opportunities and are often career entry qualifications for professional and managerial work.
4	PREP-PRESS SUPERVISOR PRESS SHEET-FED OFFSET- LITHO PRINTING SUPERVISOR POST-PRESS SUPERVISOR	4	The holder of a qualification at this level will be able to gain access to higher education programmes at Level 6, to employment in highly skilled work or to career progression through improved recognition of work capabilities.
3	PRE-PRESS SENIOR OPERATOR PRESS SHEET-FED OFFSET- LITHO SENIOR MACHINE OPERATOR POST-PRESS SENIOR MACHINE OPERATOR	3	The holder of a qualification at this level will be able to obtain routes to further learning and to employment in skilled work that can be performed independently and entail supervisory and coordination duties. This level of qualification also supports further specialized training for those seeking job enhancement.
2	PRE-PRESS OPERATOR PRESS SHEET-FED OFFSET- LITHO MACHINE OPERATOR POST-PRESS MACHINE OPERATOR	2	The holder of a qualification at this level will be able to gain access to semiskilled employment, further training and higher education.
1	PRE-PRESS ASSISTANT PRESS SHEET-FED OFFSET- LITHO MACHINE ASSISTANT POST-PRESS MACHINE ASSISTANT	1	The holder of a qualification at this level will be able to further learning opportunities and to gain access to unskilled employment that may include a further element of training. This level is often the entry point to a lifelong pathway for people with no qualifications.

These developments show clear evidence that the MQF lends itself to capturing all learning if professional bodies and competent authorities take the initiative to establish sectoral qualifications frameworks linked with the level-descriptors of the MQF and based on established and agreed standards and criteria for the recognition of specific awards.

In 5.6 a similar sectoral framework has also been developed by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning to qualifications awarded by the Ministry of Education Schools of Music, Drama and Art.

These developments show clear evidence that the MQF lends itself to capturing all learning if professional bodies and competent authorities take the initiative to establish sectoral qualifications frameworks linked with the level-descriptors of the MQF and based on established and agreed standards and criteria for the recognition of specific awards.

The challenge in establishing sectoral qualifications frameworks is across many countries aligned to the EQF or other regional frameworks. In Malta's case, there are at least five challenges that this Referencing Report has identified that can ensure compatibility with Malta Qualifications Framework:

1. The first is that sectors (Industry-based, Professional, Skilled trades, Artistic or Traditional Artifact Products) need to put their act together and unify in **one all inclusive association** or competent body which represents their sector at a national level and in which conflict of interests would have been ironed out a priori;
2. The second challenge is that established bodies need **government recognition** (at least at Ministerial level and not necessarily through legislation) so that their legitimacy is safeguarded at national level;
3. The third challenge is to create a **Register of all Sectoral Qualifications** (national or awarded by foreign organizations) and to ensure that all listed qualifications are based on a learning-outcomes approach, workloads acknowledged in credits comparable to those within the MQF and a quality assurance policy established as a point of reference to recognition and esteem. Quality standards would strengthen sectoral qualifications frameworks. In essence quality standards are packaged for “sector specific employees” centred on the development of skills and competencies of specific categories of employees and which would address the needs of the sector.
4. The fourth challenge is to establish a **rapport between the association or competent authority and the accreditation and quality assurance agency** (in the case of Malta the MQC/NCHE – later the National Commission for Further and Higher Education – NCFHE) so that a process of referencing is established and concluded through the signing of a portfolio.
5. The fifth challenge is to ensure that **access into employment** or professional activity (of any kind) within the sector is strictly governed by the process of recognition of qualifications within the established Sectoral Qualifications Framework and a licensing procedure renewed periodically to ensure quality and standards.

A key point in developing a sectoral qualifications framework is also the establishment of Sector Skills Units (SSUs). SSUs are at the heart of a Legal framework (2012) focused on the validation of informal and non-formal learning. SSUs would ensure that

every industry is equipped with a knowledgeable and competent workforce and that the training provided by the education system meets the demands of the labour market. This can be achieved only through full consultation between councils, employers, along with representation from the education system, under the umbrella of the Malta Qualifications Council/National Commission for Higher Education. This will ensure the development of standards and qualifications that meet the agreed criteria for high standards both in the skills of workers as well as the services offered by industry and other sectors.

Among other responsibilities, the role of Sector Skills Units (as contemplated in the legal framework) is to carry out research on necessary skills required in the specific sector, anticipate future skills needs and encourage employers to invest in their sector, both by training their workforce and by equipping them with new skills for new competences. Sector Skills Units can also serve as valuable tools for a specific sector by raising the profile of the sector through the development of occupational or professional standards and the quality of qualifications and training offered by the sector. These standards will help to define the role of competent individuals, and create a consistent approach to developing and accrediting training and qualifications. Occupational and professional standards determine the learning and skills needed in particular sectors and serve as the basis for developing qualifications.

The use of standards, as a common currency between different systems of education helps to remove unnecessary barriers for individuals who wish to enter the formal education system. It also allows for more transparency for those who want to progress in their career within the sector. Occupational and professional standards provide a common currency for learners to have clearer pathways between the academic, vocational and professional systems and to achieve the qualifications needed and gain access into the labour market.

Individuals learn in different contexts and therefore occupational and professional standards have the potential to be a tool that helps the recognition, assessment and certification of the skills individuals possess in any of the five identified sectors.

The MQF has been a catalyst in promoting sectoral qualifications frameworks in Malta. The time is ripe to reap the benefits that a national qualifications framework offers to sectoral qualifications so that learners' skills and competences will not only be recognised within the sector itself but would have a more holistic value with the NQF. This in turn, would provide learners (and training institutions) with a wider spectrum of skills and competences that society would recognize as valuable tools for personal and professional development, a better quality of life of its citizens and a more respectful status within the community.

5.7 Referencing qualifications in Art, Drama, Music and Dance: a public sector perspective

Referencing qualifications in the visual and performing arts has so far been an unresolved issue in Malta's referencing report. During 2011, consultation and initiatives within the Ministry of Education have led to a proposed sectoral qualifications framework based on two important developments. The first is the setting up of the College of the Arts which, although is still a project in the making has already seen strategic reforms within governments' schools of art, drama, dance and music. The Schools have also spearheaded a complete restructuring of all its courses so that all learning experiences are based on learning outcomes, credit rated and quality assured for greater transparency, mobility and relevancy to the labour market.

This chapter shows a new initiative in the implementation phase of Malta's Qualifications Framework.

Following the establishment of the academic and vocational qualifications and awards within the MQF and the design of an awards system for 'smaller' awards that fit the framework, the inclusion of visual and performing arts awards and qualifications is a major step in the right direction for this growing sector in Malta.

This is the second sectoral qualifications framework that has been developed (the first being that of the printing industry) reflecting a very promising and potential industry in Malta. The amount of quality representations throughout the year on stage, TV and theatres of talented people, the increasing number of concerts and performances of all genre in practically all towns and villages in Malta and the burgeoning film industry are creating new niches of economic growth which the country must address at the very high standards.

Needless to mention that over the years Malta has become a cultural destination through the establishment of a rich cultural calendar, including regular high profile events at the Manoel Theatre, The Mediterranean Conference, Centre, St. James Cavalier and several other venues which have established themselves over the past years. The revamped Malta Arts Festival together with numerous regular grand performances featuring international stars who enjoy a world-wide acclaim, are giving our young people the opportunity to learn and in many cases the chance to show their talents. These complement the regular cultural activities which are presented in many localities, Museums, Theatres and various Heritage Malta sites.

Linked to this context is focus on the key competences for lifelong learning as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. They are particularly necessary for personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment. Key competences are essential in a knowledge society and guarantee more flexibility in the labour force, allowing it to adapt more quickly to constant changes in an increasingly interconnected world. They are also a major factor in innovation, productivity and competitiveness, and they contribute to the motivation and satisfaction of workers and the quality of work. This reference framework refers particularly to the competences related to **cultural awareness and expression**, which involves appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media (music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts).

The step to move into a more structured learning environment in the visual and performing arts is therefore a development which will enable our scholars, teachers and curriculum setters to embark on a project which will certainly push the sector to higher levels of excellence.

Background to the Culture and Creative Sector

The Malta National Cultural Policy emphasises the need to reinvent Cultural Education and recommends a rethinking of the links between the role of education and cultural expression. The policy highlights the importance of cultural resources, such as knowledge, creativity and design, which are replacing natural resources as a primary source of economic growth. Cultural resources are seen today as added economic value. Education is the key factor that is central in bringing out each individual's capacity to produce such added value.

This sector, better known as the Cultural and Creative Industries, contributes around 4% of the national GDP, with around 9,000 individuals actively participating in this economy. The Visual & Performing Arts are at the core of these activities, and therefore the time has come to establish an Educational Structure for this sector.

The framework being proposed outlines present pathways within the compulsory education set-up, and establishes new and alternative pathways to enhance the Visual & Performing Arts Sector, leading to improved quality and standards of the Cultural & Creative Industries (CCIs).

The establishment of a **Qualifications Framework for the Visual & Performing Arts** sector within our education structure will set standards through

the level-rating of all courses offered, outlining the knowledge skills and key competences required at each level leading to established standards and through a learning outcomes approach. All Awards in this sector in public education will henceforth be governed by this approach.

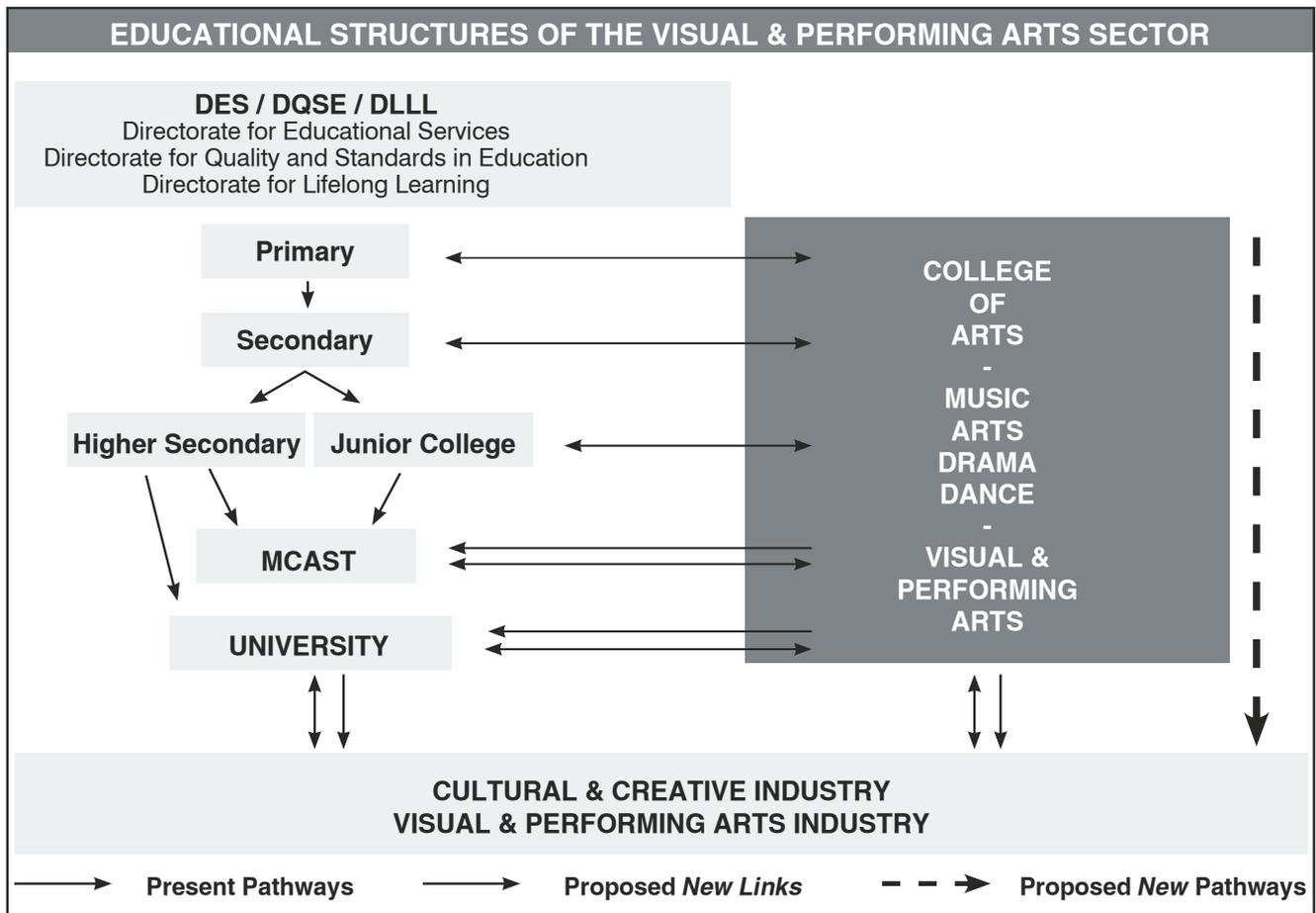
Establishing an Educational Structure for the Visual & Performing Arts Sector

The current Educational Structure for the Visual & Performing Arts Sector incorporates the schools for the visual & performing arts, namely the School of Music, School of Art, and the School of Drama and Dance, which will be part of the newly-proposed set-up of the College of Arts.

Currently, these schools offer part-time courses to students who wish to have specialised training in this sector, leading to awards / qualifications which are attained through a combination of individual or group lessons, contact hours, aural training, theory, controlled practice sessions and mentoring, self-study including practice of the main subject, reading, research, tutorials, assignments, workshops, performances and other practice-based projects which may be assigned periodically.

QUALIFICATIONS WITHIN THE PROPOSED COLLEGE OF ARTS

The new set-up of the College of Arts shall be pivotal in the proposed educational structure as illustrated in this diagram:



1. All courses offered at the College of Arts will lead to a qualification referenced on the Malta Qualifications Framework. For the time being, courses would lead to MQF Levels 1 to 5.
2. The College of Arts will provide synergy with the Private Sector and non-Governmental Service Providers to set parameters and guidelines to complement this strong private sector. The College of Arts shall create the necessary professional back-up and support as regards teaching methods and pedagogical guidelines, for the vast private sector. The College's expertise shall also serve as the point of reference for the Sectoral Skills Council for the Visual & Performing Arts, which is to be established within the Malta Qualifications Council, to give the necessary direction and assure quality for locally home-grown courses. Moreover the establishment of strong synergies between the College of Arts and non-Governmental organizations, such as the local band clubs, dance & drama organizations as well as Arts foundations, will be highly regarded, to enhance the arts sector as per guidelines outlined in the National Cultural Policy
3. The College of Arts shall be a centre of propagation of specialisation in the arts in a number of specialised strands namely:
 - a) to provide specialised learning in different forms of music, art, drama and dance from MQF Levels 1 to 5 and prepare students for further specialisation in MQF Levels 6 to 8 which may be continued in joint programmes with recognised and accredited Higher Education Institutions;

- b) to provide specialised support in the field of performance to the state, church and independent schools for the teaching of the visual & performing arts at primary, secondary, post-secondary and possibly at tertiary levels and become an arts resource centre for state, church and independent schools;
 - c) to provide professional development to the teachers of music, art, drama and dance which are employed in the state, church and independent schools.
 - d) to create courses of different duration, to professionalise the servicing industry that supports the culture and creative economy. These courses shall be responsive to opportunities (sometimes major international productions, such as concerts, film making, etc.) that arise from time-to-time.
 - e) to provide backup expertise to children with exceptional talent in the arts in compulsory education. Each year, a number of exceptionally talented children may voluntarily apply to attend primary and secondary schooling at the College of Arts where the curriculum will offer the core subjects but will be biased towards music, art, drama or dance or combinations thereof. The selection shall be on a competitive and limited basis. Students may enter at any level (from primary to secondary) provided that it is within the complement that shall be accepted in the group at that particular level.
4. The College of Arts will also provide growth and improved quality of the Visual & Performing Arts Sector and implement a strong lifelong learning strategy which will also serve as a direct contribution to enhance the Culture & Creative Industries in a broader spectrum.

The College of Arts would play a leading role in enhancing the present learning pathways and create new pathways and links as illustrated below:

- In **Primary Schools**, the Education Officers will be able to coordinate Music, Art, Drama & Dance lessons with the College of Arts, as regards resources and tuition guidelines.
- The College of Arts would also serve in a combined programme for **Secondary Schools** to offer the areas of specialization within the SEC (Secondary Education Certificate awarded by the University of Malta) course of studies to students who choose the Performance or Composition credits - tuition to be provided by the qualified and specialized staff of the College of Arts.
- **At the Higher Secondary & Junior College**, where Music & Art are offered at SEC, Intermediate & 'A' Level, leading to entry requirements to MCAST & University, the "Practical" components within these courses will be offered by the specialized tutorial staff at the College of Arts.
- **Specialized School for Primary & Secondary Students – Full-time Courses**
A limited number of students will be selected every year to follow a full-time course of studies, which would include the academic core subjects and a substantial number of hours of specialized subjects (Music, Art, Drama or Dance). This would lay the foundations of a Conservatoire, whereby students will be offered the whole educational pathway in this sector as early as the Primary Years, to Secondary and further Higher Education levels, specializing in their main artistic discipline within the environment of a College of Arts (Academy).
- **Sharing of Resources with Higher Education Institutions - Part-time Courses**
Specific resources of the College of Arts will be offered to MCAST and University, to support their needs within the practice-based credits of their programmes. Moreover, along the years, joint-courses can be developed as well as further specialized programmes at advanced certificate or Diploma level.
- **Servicing the Creative Industry through Specialized Short Courses**
The College of Arts will also introduce a number of short specialized practice-based courses, possibly in conjunction with cultural institutions, production houses, service providers, TV and Film productions, to serve

the needs and professionalise the specific services to meet the demands of the Creative Cultural Industries.

- **Enhancement of the Quality Assurance of the current schools of Music, Art, Drama & Dance, to be transformed into Academies.**

The establishment of qualifications within a new framework for the Visual & Performing Arts of the Malta Qualifications Council will be referenced to the European Qualifications Framework to assure mobility, wider recognition and transparency in the quality of teaching and learning. The revision and upgrading of course content, assessments and learning outcomes will lead to a higher quality in education and attract more students providing them with a better opportunity to attain

to improve upon their skills and competences so that they provide a better level of tuition. This will slowly transform the present structures into Academies, based on the model of European *Conservatoires*, presenting a clear specialization pathway from early ages to post-graduate levels.

A Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Visual & Performing Arts Awards

Courses and qualifications in Visual & Performing Arts, including Music, Art, Drama and Dance, will be integrated in a new Sectoral Qualifications Framework, leading to Awards in Visual & Performing Arts, which will be referred to as VPA Awards

A Sectoral Council will be appointed within the MQC to establish the framework of qualifications



a level of excellence in the Visual & Performing Arts Sector. A new quality assurance regime will govern this system. A quality assurance policy for VPAs is being designed to ensure both national and European benchmarking and scrutiny.

The restructuring of these learning institutions and thus, also the recognition of qualifications at national and European levels, will attract more qualified teachers to join these academies. Likewise, teaching staff requires further training

for the Visual & Performing Arts - Music, Art, Drama and Dance.

The VPA Sectoral Council shall:

- Establish and maintain the standards for the VPA Qualifications Framework
- Establish and Maintain the Level Descriptions of Courses & Classification of Courses
- Establish and maintain a Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Assurance Tools

Since VPAs will be awarded upon successful completion of home-grown courses, the Sectoral Framework for the VPAs has (for the time being) been limited to awards and qualifications at MQF Levels 1 to 5.

Level descriptors of the Sectoral framework of qualifications for the Visual & Performing Arts (VPAs) correspond to the level descriptors of the Malta Qualifications Framework as proposed hereunder:

MQF Level 1 VPA award

Knowledge Basic general knowledge;

1. acquires basic general knowledge related to the immediate environment and expressed through a variety of simple tools and contexts as an entry point to the visual and performing art (Art, Music, Drama and Dance);
2. knows and understands the steps needed to complete simple tasks and activities in familiar environments such as keeping a steady tempo and rhythmic flow, using basic dynamics and articulation as well as basic knowledge of the various styles of acting and/or performing including the application of basic skills needed to demonstrate eye/hand co-ordination when using tools and materials to create an art work.
3. is aware and understands basic tasks and instructions related to basic acting, dance, artistic and musical qualities and principles.
4. understands basic textbooks and the knowledge required to transfer basic elements of theory to practice and performing.

Skills Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks;

1. has the ability to apply basic knowledge and carry out a limited range of simple tasks such as the ability to articulate or perform what has been experienced, observed and imagined in an expressive manner under guidance and support.
2. has basic repetitive communication skills to complete well defined routine tasks and identifies whether actions have been accomplished using the appropriate tools

and techniques needed when performing or creating art work while being able to interpret and express music/acting/art and be aware of spatial considerations.

3. moves towards progressing scales of autonomy and responsibility and shows basic ability to assess and ensures that assigned tasks have been completed effectively.

Competences Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context;

1. applies basic knowledge and skills to do simple repetitive and familiar tasks related to the visual and performing art demonstrating confidence and conveying self-awareness;
2. participates in and takes basic responsibility for the action of simple tasks such as observing and recording from selected sources under guidance;
3. activities are carried out under guidance and within simple defined timeframes while using the available tools and demonstrating some evidence of planning to solve a simple task in images, acting or music performance while taking responsibility in preparing study work adequately and in good time for each lesson/performance.

MQF Level 2 VPA award

Knowledge Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study

1. possess good knowledge of a field of work or study and promotes distinctive ways of understanding self, develops individual abilities and gives personal satisfaction and enjoyment.
2. is aware of and interprets types of information and ideas while developing aesthetic awareness.
3. understands facts and procedures in the application of basic tasks and instructions and will obtain basic knowledge of the various styles of acting and performing and artistic productions..
4. selects and uses relevant knowledge to accomplish specific actions for self and others including acting and musical dynamics,

improvisation and theatre voice techniques that enhance the acting styles and acquires basic knowledge and understanding of correct steps, precision and control within the range of own physical capacity.

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;

1. has the ability to demonstrate a range of skills by carrying out a range of complex tasks within a specified field of work or study related to the visual and performing art.
2. communicates basic information with the audience, partners and/or within a dance or musical ensemble.
3. ensures tasks are carried out effectively while taking responsibility to express ideas and opinions, develop a theatrical and fine art as well as musical vocabulary, and the ability to use knowledge to support such views while judging the different systematic basic methods and styles related to the visual and performing art.

Competences Work or study under supervision with some autonomy;

1. applies factual knowledge and practical skills to do some structured tasks;
2. ensures one acts pro-actively and is able to select, experiment and explore a given range of musical, theatrical and artistic genres in a free and spontaneous way, but with evidence of organisation and control.
3. carries out activities showing an ability to plan ahead, select, organise and control materials in order to solve a specified problem, task or performance.
4. acquires and applies basic key competences at this level and with some autonomy be able to consider and discuss information from several sources indicating a few similarities and differences in works related to the visual and performing art.

MQF Level 3 VPA award

Knowledge Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts in a field of work or study;

1. understands the relevancy of theoretical knowledge and information related to the main periods and events in music, theatre and arts' history.
2. assesses, evaluates and interprets facts establishing basic principles and concepts in a particular field of work or study related to the visual and performing art;
3. understands facts and procedures in the application of more complex tasks and instructions such as obtaining basic knowledge of the various styles of acting, music, dance and art and the techniques needed to achieve this proficiency.
4. selects and uses relevant knowledge acquired on one's own initiative to accomplish specific actions for self and others.

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;

1. demonstrates a range of developed skills to carry out more than one complex task effectively and in unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts including analysing, selecting and recording or performing from direct experience, observation and imagination and ideas, and research and organise a range of evidence and information, visual or otherwise, so that it informs and guide ones' own ideas and responses.
2. communicates more complex information and continue to explore and develop the relationship between the mass media and their own work.
3. solves basic problems by applying basic methods, tools, materials and information given in a restricted learning environment while gradually developing one own fantasy and imagination to continue to investigate and develop the process of researching and working from ideas through to work and/

or performance related to the visual and performing art.

Competences Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems;

- 1 applies knowledge and skills to do some tasks systematically including rhythms with all note values including rhythms and irregular groups in the case of music and dance, and confidence and self-awareness resulting in a more naturalistic conveyance of the acting or performance as well as starting to develop one own techniques and organised fine art portfolio.
2. adapts own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems by participating pro-actively in structured learning environments;
3. uses own initiative with established responsibility and autonomy, but supervised in quality controlled learning environments following the educator's instructions autonomously especially when exploring one's feelings, thoughts and ideas in response to stimuli related to the visual and performing art.

MQF Level 4 VPA award

Knowledge Factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study:

1. understands broad theoretical knowledge and analysis of information related to the visual and performing art.
2. understands facts and establishes basic principles in broad contexts within a field of work or study or performance.
3. applies facts and procedures in broad contexts within a defined field of work or technical study or repertoire with a good sense of tone, contextual awareness and stylistic accuracy.
4. selects and analysis theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a specific 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;

1. demonstrates acquired knowledge and the ability to apply a range of technical or academic skills to carry out multiple complex tasks while acquiring an effective understanding of various performing, acting or artistic techniques, period style, diction and/or intonation, stage movement, body control and voice projection.
2. communicates theoretical and technical information in a work or learning environment when choosing between materials, tools and techniques as a result of knowledge gained by experience and experimentation, in order to create responses to the visual and performing art in a variety of appropriate dimensions and scales.
3. generates solutions to specific problems within a field of work or study showing evidence of personal selection, ideas and creativity.

Competences 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, take some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities;

1. applies knowledge and skills to perform qualitative and quantitative tasks that require technical capacity normally associated with proficiency in the main field of study.
2. supervises the quality and quantity of work of self and others' under quality assured structures, with responsibility and autonomy and articulating and explaining connections with the work of others.
3. demonstrates an advanced level of key competences at this level as a basis for higher education in the visual and performing art industry.

MQF Level 5 VPA awards

Knowledge Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundary of that knowledge;

1. understands knowledge in a field of study within the visual and performing art that

builds upon advanced general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced techniques leading to further specialised studies in cultural awareness and expression, which involves appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media (music, performing arts and the visual arts).

2. develops strategic and creative responses in researching solutions to well defined concrete and abstract problems including life performance and creative art.
3. makes judgements based on knowledge of relevant social and ethical issues and undertake studio practice in a responsible, safe and ethical manner.

Skills A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems;

1. demonstrates transfer of theoretical and practical knowledge, in creating solutions to problems encountered in the field of visual and performing art.
2. conveys ideas, in a well structured and coherent way to peers, supervisors and clients using qualitative and quantitative information and develops an appreciation of the interdisciplinary nature of visual and performing art, and the capacity to give a clear and accurate account of a subjects or performance and marshal arguments in a mature way and engage in debate and dialogue both with specialists and non-specialists.
3. has the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems;
4. evaluates own learning and identifies learning needs necessary to undertake further specialised learning while showing command in analysing, synthesising, and summarising information critically in a contextualised manner.

Competences Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; Review and develop performance of self and others;

1. manages projects independently that require problem solving techniques where there are many factors, some of which interact and lead to unpredictable outcomes;
2. shows creativity in managing projects, manages people and reviews performance of self and others; train others and develop team performance in the case of music, dance and drama and in collective exhibits in the case of arts;
3. expresses a comprehensive internalized personal world view reflecting engagement of solidarity with others during production, performance and studies;
4. has the learning skills to undertake further studies in the field of the visual and performing art with some autonomy.

VPA awards are neither academic nor vocational awards. A separate segment or sub-division is being proposed to fit within the MQF so that these awards and qualifications (governed by a robust quality assurance system which envisages national and international scrutiny and benchmarking) will be given the same parity of esteem as other awards and qualifications in mainstream education and vocational training.

All qualifications and awards within the public sector are currently being transformed into:

- a learning outcomes approach;
- a credit system based on hours of learning commensurate with the credit system governing the MQF;
- represented by a standard national certification system for Visual and Performing Arts Awards/ qualifications; and
- A transcript which illustrates clearly all that a person knows and is able to perform.

It is therefore being proposed that the VPA Levels will form part of the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning as indicated below:

PROPOSED SECTORAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS				
8	Doctoral Degree			8
7	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate			7
6	Bachelor's Degree			6
5	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate Higher Education Certificate	VET Higher Diploma	VPA Level 5	5
4	Matriculation Certificate Advanced Level Intermediate Level	VET Diploma	VPA Level 4	4
3	General Education Level 3 SEC Grade 1-5	VET Level 3	VPA Level 3	3
2	General Education Level 2 SEC Grade 6-7 Secondary School Certificate and Profile (B)	VET Level 2	VPA Level 2	2
1	General Education Level 1 Secondary School Certificate and Profile (A)	*VET Level 1	**VPA Level 1	1

* VET stands for Vocational Education and Training

** VPA stands for Visual and Performing Arts





Conclusion

The objective of this 3rd edition (2009, 2010 and 2012) of the Referencing Report is two-fold: on the one hand to maintain the referencing process of the Malta Qualifications Framework to two overarching European frameworks - The EQF and the QF-EHEA and on the other hand to illustrate how the process lends itself to reform and innovation of the education system through wider stakeholders' involvement. The Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) represents national reform, commitment and investment in Malta's most important resource – its human capital.

The MQF records and encourages the individual's assessed learning whether this is defined as formal, informal or non-formal from pre-school to compulsory education to further and higher education including adult learning. This report is a toolkit for quality assured qualifications which have a national, European and international value.

The challenges to establish a knowledge-based society are embedded in education, research and innovation. These indicators are part of the progressing levels of the MQF with an emphasis on the achievement of key competences at the lower levels as foundation for more complex learning in further education and eventually to higher education which includes research and training. Education, research and innovation within the MQF are given value when the MQF is attributed a currency and compared to other regional or international frameworks.

This report highlights the comparability process of the MQF Level descriptors to the level descriptors of the EQF and the QF/EHEA. The level descriptors describe the workload and are easy to use. Furthermore such referencing is also meant to increase the individual's achievement within the context of international recognition. The rationale behind the referencing process is that of setting standards. Through learning outcomes-based level descriptors and a workload system based on credit values the system of qualifications becomes transparent transferable and supports lifelong learning without bureaucratic frontiers. Such a transparent system offers the possibility of accumulation and transfer of credit and supports lifelong learning in an increasingly competitive labour market.

The results of this report are endorsed by stakeholders as they have been involved in the design of the MQF. The direct involvement of stakeholders particularly of

education and training providers and employers is an important aspect of this process. This will reflect itself the consistent use of CPDs (Continuous Professional Development) and how this learning experience can also be measured more accurately and referenced to the Malta's Qualifications Framework. The implementation of the MQF will largely depend upon those who will determine the value that such Framework has in increasing skills, competitiveness as well as a culture of lifelong learning. Qualifications Frameworks address primarily the market's skills needs and add greater possibilities to individuals to retain their employment or to seek new challenges within the labour market.

The implementation of a European Qualifications Framework comes at a time when the culture of qualifications frameworks is engulfing educational systems worldwide. Referencing the Malta Qualifications Framework to a regional Framework such as the EQF is a major step towards linking Malta's educational system with at least 27 other Member States of the European Union and many more within the *Bologna* Process. The referencing process took the 'EQF indicators for Referencing' as key sign posts of an evolving development. Table 28 illustrates how each criterion has been applied in referencing the MQF to the EQF.

Beyond the regional context lies an emerging system of qualifications frameworks at regional levels (such as the one being developed by the Commonwealth, the Gulf States, Canada and others) which will gradually transform education into a global system of learning and mobility.

Referencing qualifications frameworks is a major step in meeting the challenge of harmonising cultures and systems of education and training.



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Reviews of National and International Experts

First published in September 2009





1. Reviews of National Independent Experts

1.1 Mr Felix Borg Employment and Training Corporation

The promulgation of LN347 of 2005 creating the Malta Qualifications Council and establishing eight levels of competence, replaced LN215 of 2000 in force at the time and which established five levels of competence primarily based on the British NVQ system. This means that Malta already then had the foresight of establishing level descriptors which not only endow those who demonstrate competence in any particular vocational area with a local qualification but which would also facilitate the pegging of such qualifications with other European frameworks. This first experiment was then improved and reinforced through the establishment of the eight levels of competence/level descriptors by means of LN347 of 2005 and which were wisely based on the European Qualifications Framework which had to serve as the European model.

The transportability of qualifications within the European Union has long been an objective of the Union. Guideline 24 of the Employment Guidelines states that European Union Member States should respond to new occupational needs, key competences and future skill requirements by improving the definition and transparency of qualifications, their effective recognition and the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Commission Communication COM(2008) 868/3 on New skills for new jobs states under the heading 3.4 Mobilising Community Instruments “... The implementation of the European Qualifications Framework should increase the transparency of qualifications and facilitate access to further learning. The *Copenhagen* process on cooperation in VET will include a new priority to improve the links with the labour market”. The key words here are ‘improve the links with the labour market’. Any learning outcomes derived from formal or informal, academic or vocational education, on or off-the-job training will not enjoy any currency in the labour market unless they address the human resources needs of such market. Consequently, qualifications attesting such outcomes may not enable beholders to secure employment or take up a satisfying career in the labour market.

The level descriptors drawn up by the Malta Qualifications Council are carefully drawn up to distinguish between the knowledge, skills and competences required at each level of the MQF and how they relate to the EQF level descriptors. The learning outcomes have been classified under six categories which clearly show the differences in learning outcomes for the eight levels. The differences between each of the elements for the various levels have been carefully crafted out; they may seem minimal but are significant in determining the level of competence of individuals. They address one of the flexicurity measures mentioned in the National Reform Programme for Malta 2008-2010 i.e. “Launch

occupational standards of competence and define the basis for their accreditation with a view to validating all forms of learning including non-formal and informal learning.”

Level descriptors and standards of knowledge, skills and competences reflecting such descriptors that will eventually be developed by MQC will help employers in identifying the skills necessary for a sustainable economy. Such level descriptors assist employers in:

- determining the competences possessed by holders of qualifications at the various levels be they potential new recruits or current employees;
- drawing up job descriptions and specifications as level descriptors and standards specify the knowledge, skills and competences that the person to be recruited or already in employment must possess;
- providing opportunities for career and personal development, improving motivation of employees and enhancing their performance;
- supporting personnel management functions, from appraisal and promotion systems, to career planning, job enrichment and multi-skilling initiatives.

Jobseekers, employees, guidance personnel and others also stand to benefit from level descriptors by:

- being aware of the competence levels;
- being guided by the level descriptors in mapping their career paths;
- enjoying labour market accreditation of competences they possess;
- offering recognition of the skills that individuals already possess and use in their day-to-day work or that they may be working towards obtaining through learning initiatives;
- ensure that efforts exerted in training and development will result in recognised certification;
- provide evidence of an individual's ability to do a job and to have transferable skills thereby improving a person's employability and career prospects.

The Employment and Training Corporation welcomes both the Malta Qualifications Framework as also the level descriptors drawn up by the Malta Qualifications Council and their referencing to the European Qualifications Framework.

As Malta's public employment service and hence responsible for managing the European Employment Services network (EURES) in Malta, the level descriptors and their referencing to the EQF will facilitate the mobility of workers and jobseekers to address areas of labour and skills shortages that EU Member States may have. They empower individuals by the latter having portable and recognised qualifications

opening the European labour market to all those Maltese wishing to further their employment or personal development prospects within the European dimension.

1.2 Dr Jennifer Cassingena Harper Malta Council for Science and Technology

The author was asked to review the Report and in particular to focus on the level descriptors and how the proposed referencing framework affects students in Higher Education and Higher Education institutions. This review addresses both the structure and content of the Report since both are important in communicating clear messages on the referencing approach being used to policy-makers, the management of higher education institutions, and students.

The Referencing Report represents a rigorous effort on the part of MQC to develop a comprehensive referencing of qualifications in Malta to *Bologna* guidelines. The MQC are to be commended for the approach they have taken in involving a complementary team of foreign and local experts, in recognition of the need to garner a range of different expertise, insights and perspectives in tackling this complex task. This Report provides an very good basis for launching a consultation. As this is work in progress, the review has suggested ways of improving content and presentation.

Proposed Review Framework

It is helpful to clarify what the terms of reference of the review are at the outset.

From Page 11, one can extract a tentative review framework for this work which however would need to be confirmed:

Review Framework for the Handbook

The extent to which:

- the responsibilities and legal competencies of the key players are clarified and accepted
- the direct links between the qualifications levels in the NQF to the EQF level descriptors are specified and clear
- the NQF system and qualifications are based on learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for the validation of informal and non-formal learning and credit systems
- the transparent inclusion of qualifications in one of the levels of the framework has been implemented
- the national quality assurance system and policy conforms to European principles

It would be useful to set out in the introductory pages the review framework on the basis of which this work is being carried out.

Main Findings

In this section an overview of the main strengths and shortcomings is presented. The main emphasis is on a number of recommendations for improving structure and content with a view to maximizing overall impact of the Report.

The Report's main strengths are:

- The Report provides a clear overview of the proposed national quality assurance system and policy and how this conforms to EU principles.

- The rationale and objectives of the study have been clearly formulated and highlight an effort to combine attention to both EU principles and national needs and realities.
- The approach is grounded in a sound analysis of referencing work underway/ completed in other countries as evidenced by the engagement of experts from these countries in this Review.
- A conscious effort has been made to take appropriate account of Malta's particular economic, political and socio-cultural context in the definition of the level descriptors. It is important to note that level descriptors were already in place in Malta in 2005. This approach is very much in line with current trends at EU level to move away from one-size-fits-all approaches and to encourage more tailored and targeted national approaches which take proper account of national context.
- The Report draws on the results of a number of ongoing ESF projects which grounds the approach more firmly in practice rather than theory.

The Report's shortcomings:

- In the current global political and economic climate characterized by sudden economic, financial and security crises, there is a growing emphasis on the need to develop skills at all levels in coping with unpredictability and sudden change. These challenges also highlight the need for skills in strategy development and strategic approaches. In Malta these skills are often not sufficiently developed and evident in our labour force and this affects the country's competitiveness and the flexibility and speed for shifting to the knowledge-based society. Competencies should also make a specific reference to taking the lead in research contexts demonstrating innovation in the development of new processes. It is important that these skills and competencies are given higher priority and appropriately targeted in the level descriptors.

General Comments about Presentation

In finalizing the structure and presentation of the Report, it is important to consider who will be the primary entities and persons consulting the document and for what purpose. Will the Report serve as a reference for Maltese or also for those abroad interested in our system? The document will need to be reframed accordingly in a second iteration.

In order to facilitate reading and to ensure its use as a reference document, definitions or statements of reference or fact could be put in quotations marks or in boxes. This way it will make clearer where reference is being made to a general definition and where you are explaining your interpretation of it in the local context.

The Report is initially referred to as a 'handbook'. It is recommended that this idea is given serious thought since the handbook could serve as an important tool for stimulating and supporting the peer learning process at European and national level. It would also give Malta an edge at European level in taking this initiative.

Relevant extracts of this Report could be adapted to form the basis of the handbook. Careful thought would need to go into identifying the target audience and targeting the content and presentation accordingly. The experts could be invited to a workshop to discuss this in more detail. The eventual publication of this handbook as an interactive guide posted on-line could increase its use and consultation. It could also encourage feedback and updates.

1.3 Dr Suzanne Gatt University of Malta

Having read through the document in detail and reflected on the issues raised within the document, the following comments include the reactions and feedback provided with reference to the implications overall and with special emphasis on Higher Education.

Overall Structure: The document is overall well structured. The first part provides the international backdrop within which the referencing exercise is set and how the document fits in with the next step envisaged following the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Framework. The second part provides the local context. It revisits the Malta Qualifications Framework as well as key developments since the establishment of the Malta Qualifications Council. This local context leads to the third part which deals directly with the referencing exercise and shows how the Malta Qualifications Framework is compared to both the EQF and the QF/EHEA. The last part (four) then tackles the different stakeholders involved in the process as well as the target groups on which the referencing exercise has an impact. The overall structure thus follows a logical development of argument from international and national obligations to the actual referencing exercise in itself as well as its impact on the different interest groups. There is thus coherence throughout the whole document.

It is also evident that the major publications and official international and national documents have been consulted and the referencing document has been developed in the knowledge of these changes and obligations. It is well set in the context and fits in with the general trend being taken across Europe for the comparison and harmonisation of qualifications.

There are only two main comments with respect to the general development of the document. In the case of Part 3, I believe that it would be easier for the reader to be first presented by the official Malta Qualifications Frameworks with its specific level descriptors, and only afterwards are these compared to the EQF and the QF/EHEA. As presented, it is difficult for the reader to identify which are those tables which actually represent the Malta Qualifications Framework. Part 3 should thus start from the official framework and then move on to the referencing to the other frameworks. The specific examples provided can either come right after the Malta Qualifications Framework to illustrate how these fulfil the level descriptors or else after the comparison to the other frameworks.

One particular comment to be made with respect to the whole framework, but specifically with respect to Higher Education (Levels 6-8), the document states that the MQF provides more detail than the present EQF and EHEA/Dublin Descriptors. The impression given is that these levels (6-8) for Malta tend to be more demanding than the International levels. If this is not the case, but just that the descriptors for the MQF are just more comprehensive (in that they do not ask for more but just describe in more detail and identify more types of skills and competences), then this is to be stated clearly in the beginning of the section dealing with the level descriptors and particularly with respect to the comparison to the EHEA. This is to be considered important as the descriptors will have an impact on the type of tertiary courses being offered, particularly in the area of skills and 'making judgements'.

Otherwise, there are only a number of small specific issues which will be listed below for MQC to consider in its aim to improve the document for publication.

As a concluding comment, I can say that I have found the document to be overall comprehensive and a very good piece of work. I hope and auger that MQC will achieve its aim in having all qualifications in Malta referenced to the MQF and consequently with a European and global currency.

1.4 Mr Emanuel Zahra Former Director, Malta College of Arts Science and Technology

The referencing process of all National Qualifications Frameworks to the European Qualifications Framework is a very valid step in the right direction. It aims at bringing all Europeans speaking and understanding the same language in relation to levels of qualifications.

In Malta, the introduction of our National Qualifications Framework coincided with the birth of the European Qualifications Framework. Thus the Legal Notice founding the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) tied the future National Framework to the 8 point scale of the EQF. Thus our referencing and comparative exercises are more direct and lack complications. The domains of the EQF are the Knowledge, Skills and Competences. This can be verified as very generic and flexible; however it is the objective of every NQF to adopt the national level descriptors according to the *best fit* principle. A key element in all the levels of the MQF is the provision of detail which makes it more user-friendly, easier to understand and to relate with irrespective of diverse cultural systems.

The Malta Qualifications Framework levelling all forms of qualifications was something lacking and sought after for ages. This was mentioned in all reports commissioned by the Maltese Education Authorities in the late 1990s, namely: *Proposals for Improvement in Technical and Vocational Education*. 1997, *The White Paper* 1998, *The Trade Schools Report 1999*, *The ETF Report 2000* to mention a few. All these reports served as a catalyst for the publication in 2005 of Legal Notice 347 governing the Malta Qualifications Framework and the level descriptors of the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

As a small country and due to its political and cultural ties with Britain, Malta had an educational system formatted, for nearly two centuries, on the British systems. The academic and university educational routes were always formal and well known and accredited to British-based awarding bodies. Some forms of vocational education existed but not well organized and did not enjoy the same parity of esteem as the academic programmes. With the introduction in 2001 of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), Vocational Education obtained a new dimension and left a positive impact on our population. Now we are also experiencing a culture shift from exclusive academic education to vocational education and training. So the need of a National Qualifications Framework combining both streams and giving them the same parity of esteem was a very positive milestone in Malta. Such process could be possible through the work of MQC.

As evaluator of this document I shall refer more to the Vocational aspect in this referencing review. The Vocational qualifications offered were, either home-grown and certified locally (Master Builders License, Electricians License, etc) or UK-based Awarding Bodies such as those of City & Guilds, tutor Foreign-based qualifications and certified in conjunction with local institutions – a double-badging process (MCAST/BTEC).

So the majority of all vocational qualifications were based on the British levelling of qualifications namely the previous 5 point scale:

Level 5	First Degree	Professional
Level 4	HND	Advanced Technician
Level 3	National Diploma	Technician
Level 2	Craft Diploma	Craftsman
Level 1	Foundation	Semi Skilled

The process of referencing was not that difficult on paper although I appreciated the enormous work which was undertaken to ensure that the referencing of the Maltese level descriptors match those of the European Qualifications Framework and that such referencing serves as guidelines for the design of qualifications and assessment processes.

In reality this process will help to standardize all programmes and courses according to the requested areas of both the EQF and the MQF. This was a very interesting process. In a way it had already been concluded within those institutions that had finalised the formal Protocol with the MQC or are in the process of formalising hence in the process of discussing a draft Protocol.

The examples shown in the document on pages 51 to 60 are clear examples of the work of each working programme at each Level in relation to the MQF. It was noted in the document, and in fact it is really so, that the descriptors of the MQF are broader and more defined than the EQF. Moreover it includes also the learning outcomes which is an innovative aspect of the referencing process and which would assist training providers in no small measure. I am also aware that the shift to learning outcomes led to an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, particularly the private industry so that the MQF will create adequate space to demand-driven qualifications which have their programmes constantly maintained. Learning outcomes are also a guidance tool for all stakeholders which include teachers, students, parents, guidance and career officers as well as policy-makers.

The referencing process of the existing levels was clearly based on the 8 point scale of both the MQF and EQF. Thus all the above mentioned Levels moved one number up from the previous British-based scale. The Bachelor's degree is on Level 6, the Masters Degree is on Level 7 and the PhD or Doctorate is on Level 8. Thus the *Bologna* process has been fully respected including the credit system which makes it easier for learners to transfer their knowledge from one level to another or from one higher education institution to the other. Level 1 now incorporates the Secondary School Leaving Certificate. The four VET levels illustrate a progressive and hierarchical scale which matches the Malta VET system. All levels are designed on Learning Outcomes and all lead to progression to further higher levels. Another positive issue is the capability of exchanging the local qualifications into Transferable Credits using both the ECTS and the ECVET credits systems. An important aspect of this referencing process has been the integration of the *Copenhagen* and the *Bologna* Processes into one over-arching Framework which facilitates mobility, transferability and progression while establishing the much-needed claim for parity of esteem between vocational and academic programme of studies.

One of the major aspects that the MQC took into account was not to repeat the mistakes of other countries' Qualifications systems. As a member of the MQC and as director of a public vocational training centre I was very familiar with the UK system especially the NVQs. The first decisions were to include the practical sectoral competences, relative underpinning knowledge and the key skills relative to each level of the Framework particularly in vocational qualifications. This is clearly shown in the tabulation on table 6 where it has been clearly documented.

The only shortcoming in this referencing process is the absence of a Sectoral skills area. It is mentioned and I personally am aware that it is being considered and will in the near future be implemented. The Sectoral Qualifications Framework will also include all formal, non-formal and informal qualifications. This Sectoral Qualifications Framework must also be aligned to the Malta Qualifications Framework which will act as the national Framework of qualifications. Hopefully all the 9 identified sectors will have the occupational standards and a sectoral framework in place by 2012.

By having a flexible and needs-responsive Qualifications Framework, we will be putting lifelong learning on sound foundations for all Maltese citizens and for European citizens who choose to study and/or work in Malta.

2. Reviews of International Experts

2.1 Mr Tom Bain Scotland

Introduction to Review

The terms of reference, provided by the Chief Executive of the MQC in an e mail dated 22 April 2009, are to give a view on whether the referencing procedure adopted by MQC illustrates, in a transparent and informative way, the connection between the two frameworks (EQF/QF/EHEA and MQF) at all levels of the framework. This review is based on an assessment of the extent to which the referencing process has been transparent and informative for the first six of the ten criteria and procedures agreed by the EQF Advisory Group, based on the explanatory note on context and intentions provided in the Annex to Note 14499 of 6 November 2008. This Annex also contains the criteria and procedures for self certification of the MQF to the QF/EHEA, but without further elaboration on context or intentions.

A referencing process is not as straightforward as might appear on the surface, given that the EQF is a meta-framework with overarching aims and objectives, designed to facilitate recognition and movement across national boundaries, whereas the MQF is concerned with the specifics of internal qualifications and their operation. However, it is obvious from the Report that the construction of the MQF has been influenced by the format of the EQF, and the descriptors at the higher levels take advantage of the Dublin Descriptors with the addition of autonomy and responsibility. This, together with the inclusion of key competences, has undoubtedly aided the referencing process for the MQF, which in a highly creditable way encompasses - in a single credit and qualifications framework - compulsory education certificates, and academic and vocational qualifications whether gained through formal, non-formal or informal routes.

Preface to the Report

In the preface, which sets the scene well for the Report with the inclusion of the overarching principles for referencing, there is an analogy with designing and furnishing a house. This is useful for an audience that is coming to terms with the concept of frameworks for qualifications and how they are populated. It is a useful device for promoting the MQF with those stakeholders and social partners who are unfamiliar with such constructs, but it might not be needed for an international audience. Also the phrase 'learning block' is used. This phrase might be added to the glossary to ensure that it is not misinterpreted as a 'hurdle' in translation internationally, as a 'learning block' in classical educational psychology was the term used for a barrier to learning.

Introduction to the Report

The introduction is informative - it sets out the criteria on which the MQF is based and MQC's role in implementing the framework, together with the criteria on which referencing to the EQF will be carried out.

Part One – Malta's Response to European Reform

The European reform initiatives and processes are well presented. There is scope in this section to elaborate more fully on Malta's contribution and achievements in a relatively short period of time in respect of the projects, processes and conferences linked to the reforms eg BFUG, EQAR, EURASHE, Non- Formal and Informal Learning, VQ-FRAME and VQPACK.

Part Two – The Malta Qualifications Framework

The basis of the MQF, the drivers for its establishment, the components, maintenance and development via a quality-assured approach, are all well documented in an informative way. The QA approach is reflected in protocols defining criteria for placing qualifications in the MQF. The level descriptors in particular provide good detail to assist users.

Transparency has already been achieved with the publication of the four volumes in the 'Valuing All Learning' series covering the MQF, Guidelines, QA Policy and Non-Formal/Informal Learning. Proposals for going online with details of formal qualifications will enhance transparency.

Part Three – Referencing the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA

The review that follows has been carried out with reference to each of the following criteria and procedures for the EQF with the equivalent for self certification of QF/EHEA in parentheses, all shown in italics.

1. *The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities (Csc1)*

It would be helpful to an international audience if an early statement in the Report contained relevant details of MQC being set up by the Maltese Government in December 2005 via Legal Notice 347/2005 to steer the development of the NQF, and included other formal responsibilities such as its designation as the National Coordination Point for all matters concerning referencing.

2. *There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework. (Csc2)*

The methodology used by MQF for describing level descriptors reflects that of the EQF, with additional detail in the MQF version. There is a clear tabular comparison and exposition of the two sets of descriptors for each of the 8 levels in each framework, with explanatory text for each level that elaborates on the salient features of that level.

3. *The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems. (Csc3)*

The tabular comparison mentioned above has an additional feature - at the foot of each table a list of learning outcomes identifies the extent of knowledge, skills and competences identified with that level of the MQF. MQC protocols require providers to base their submissions for accreditation of qualifications on learning outcomes and credits and will in future include arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning. By way of illustration, three examples of units written in learning outcomes format are provided at levels 2, 4 and 6 respectively. The third example includes a credit value - if available, perhaps this could be included in the other two cases, given that credit at these levels is defined in the report.

4. *The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent. (Csc4)*

Procedures are published in vol 2 of 'Valuing all Learning' (Guidance for a Vocational Education and Training System) and the report refers to these in some detail, reproducing the nine steps required of providers to have a qualification placed at the appropriate level in the MQF. Protocols between MQC and public and private training providers capture the principles of transparency and transferability of qualifications

5. *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 3 of the Recommendation). (Csc5)*

One of the three 'pillars' on which the MQF is founded is a set of Quality Assurance criteria which are to be found in vol3 of 'Valuing all Learning' (A Quality Assurance Policy for Vocational Education and Training). In the HE system, QA is also one of the strategic priorities of the NCHE which will feature in Malta's forthcoming Further and Higher Education Act. In that context, it is understood that NCHE has a submission pending to EQAR. Under the same Act, non-formal and informal learning is to be assessed, quality assured and certified for inclusion in the MQF. The role of DQSE is not mentioned in the report in the context of QA, although qualifications gained in the compulsory education system populate the MQF at low to mid levels of the framework. The proposed online database is to list in a register all formal qualifications accredited by MQC.

References to QA occur at regular intervals throughout the Report in a variety of contexts, and it might help benchmarking against the above criterion if these were brought together in a discrete section.

6. *The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies. (Psc2)*

Presumably formal statements will be included to this effect once the Report has gone through the full consultative processes.

Part 4 - Beyond Referencing

The final section very usefully reminds readers of the extent to which the MQF has been the outcome of a very full and comprehensive exercise that has involved all relevant stakeholders and social partners, also of the added value that the referencing process will provide.

Conclusion from Review

The conclusion from this review is quite simple - in my view the Report has, in a comprehensive way, achieved its aim of demonstrating, through the referencing process, the connection between the EQF/QF/EHEA and the MQF at all levels of the framework

2.2 Dr James Keevy South Africa

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) welcomes this opportunity to support the Malta Qualifications Council in its attempt to reference the MQF to international standards, in this case the EQF and QF/EHEA. In turn, SAQA's involvement in this initiative, will undoubtedly also contribute to the development of the South African NQF and the Southern African Development Community Regional Qualifications Framework (SADCQF). As requested, this response has been limited in its extent, but has nonetheless attempted to address the brief in a comprehensive manner, namely **whether or not the referencing procedure adapted by MQC illustrates, in a transparent and informative way, the connection between the two frameworks (EQF/QF/EHEA and MQF) at all levels of the framework.**

My review of the report on the Referencing of the Malta Qualifications Framework to the EQF and QF/EHEA (May 2009) (henceforth referred to as "the report") included the following:

- A detailed reading of the MQC report (May 2009)
- A brief comparison of the MQC report (May 2009) with similar reports developed for England and Northern Ireland (QCA & CCEA October 2008), Ireland (NQAI April 2009) and Scotland (Hart 2008)
- Interactions with South African and international qualifications framework partners
- Consideration of the initial CEDEFOP report on European reference levels

Main observations

1. The report is **well written and offers a comprehensive description** of the referencing process of the MQF to the EQF and QF/EHEA.
2. Referencing between qualifications frameworks is a relatively new and unexplored area of development that is being prioritised as the global distribution of qualifications frameworks continues unabatedly; the report has therefore been considered within this broader context wherein tried and tested referencing methodologies are yet to be developed. In this regard the **MQC has shown strategic foresight** by actively participating in this initiative and contributing to the development of improved referencing methodologies.

3. Considering Point 2 above, namely the need for strengthening referencing methodologies, the report can be greatly improved by including **a more thorough description of the referencing methodology developed and employed** during the referencing of the MQF to the EQF and QF/EHEA. While it is acknowledged that the overarching methodology is suggested/prescribed by the EQF Advisory Group, the application and refinement of the national procedure remains the prerogative of the MQC (therefore the request to reviewers to consider the extent to which such a procedure adequately illustrated the links between the frameworks). While the report does include a valuable description of the 'methodology of writing the MQF level descriptors' (p50), the referencing methodology remains by and large implied, rather than explicitly described. A meta-reflection of the application of the methodology beyond the apparent uncritical technical application, added value and potential impact, as the report currently reads, will further contribute to the broader understanding of referencing of qualifications frameworks in Europe and further afield.
4. Emerging literature on qualifications framework referencing suggest that referencing takes place on at least two levels:
 - a. *Primary* – direct cross-referencing of level descriptors and domains, and in some cases, also the treatment of knowledge and management activities; and
 - b. *Supplementary* (external, secondary) – through mapping specific qualifications to both frameworks, and in some cases, through cross-referencing with third party frameworks.

In the case of the MQF referencing to the EQF and QF/HEA it appears that the emphasis has been placed on primary referencing, but also with some supplementary referencing (at least in mapping specific qualifications to all three frameworks). **This approach is in line with emerging thinking and can be further complimented with referencing to third party frameworks** (i.e. other than the EQF and QF/HEA).
5. The primary role of level descriptors in the MQF referencing process, admittedly as is also the case also in other countries that have participated in the EQF referencing process (e.g. England and Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland), is of concern. Interpretations of level descriptors, often using the similar, if not identical, terminologies is fraught with difficulties and open to valid criticism. In cases where the national set of level descriptors, such as for the MQF, were by-and-large based on the EQF descriptors in the first place, the comparison becomes even more complicated. In this regard **the use of domains that organise different categories of outcomes in level descriptors is useful and has been adequately employed by the MQC to strengthen the referencing process.**
6. In conclusion it is my view that the referencing of the MQF to the EQF and QF/EHEA is on par with the referencing conducted by other participating countries. The referencing

procedure adapted by MQC illustrates the connection between the two frameworks (EQF/QF/EHEA and MQF) using available, albeit limited, technologies, but stops short of contributing to the further development and interrogation of such technologies. The weaknesses in the referencing methodology/procedure, as pointed out, cannot be ascribed to the work of the MQC only, but is rather due to a general need for more research and empirical testing of the best available methodologies. It is for this very reason that, **while it is apparent that the MQC has been thorough in applying available technologies, greater interrogation of the methodology employed, as well as the inclusion of critical reflections on the results of the referencing process, is strongly recommended**

2.3 Mr Vincent McBride European Training Foundation, Turin

Many thanks for the opportunity to look through this second draft referencing report of the MQF against the EQF and the EHEA framework. It was very interesting to reflect on the report since there are - as yet- few examples of the process to consider. It was made even more interesting because, by including the EHEA framework, it is a sort of 'double referencing'. I had considered these processes, ie, the *Bologna* and EQF referencing processes, although compatible, as largely separate exercises, but having looked at the report, I can see that it is a possible approach.

I note that this is a draft report and is intended to provide the basis for further discussion as part of an ongoing process of consultation, so in that respect the referencing is still a work that is underway. In this respect, my impression from the report is that it is building towards a complete review of how Malta's framework will reference to both the EQF and the EHEA. I looked at the report entirely from the perspective of the EQF referencing procedures and criteria - I didn't think that it was useful for me to consider the *Bologna* criteria and procedures. Although both sets of procedures and criteria are compatible, I think there are people closer to the *Bologna* process and more competent in that area than I who could look at referencing from that perspective.

I think the report is abundant in that it contains a great deal of information and reflects extensive dialogue and consultation. It is very useful to have the schedule of dialogue as one can track the various discussions and stages of the process. It gives a general and at times quite detailed picture of the approach to lifelong learning and emerging links between different education sectors in Malta as well as the different stakeholders involved. In looking through the report, I basically compared it with the 10 criteria from the EQF Advisory Group. It is a very complex report to prepare; as this is still going through a process, it might be worthwhile to see if each criterion could have a specific section in the final report. I hope that you find this useful feedback and I would be happy to comment further on subsequent drafts.

EQF Advisory Group Criteria	Comments
1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.	This criteria is being addressed. The finalisation of the Further and Higher Education Act will provide additional information on the roles of the various agencies and authorities
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.	Clearly addressed and covers the criteria. The comparison of descriptors follows the pattern being used elsewhere.
3. The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.	Clearly addressed and covers the criteria
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.	Clearly addressed and covers the criteria, in the sense that I can see what qualifications are included in the framework in Malta and how they are constructed.
5. 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 3 of the Recommendation).	The QA approach is described in section 2 of the report. I think there could be some more information on higher education, but additional information will presumably be available in the autumn following the new legislation.
6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.	As with criteria 5
7. The referencing process shall involve international experts.	Clearly addressed and covers the criteria
8. The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately each of the criteria.	From the report I see that this will be concluded in the autumn.
9. The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.	Being addressed
10. Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of nation.	Being addressed

2.4 Dr Jim Murray Ireland

General Observations

- The report gives a very comprehensive and convincing demonstration
 - of the link between the descriptors of the MQF and the EQF and the cycles of the QFEHEA (Part 3 of the report)
 - that the MQF is based on learning outcomes and linked to a credit system and arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Parts 2 and 3 of the report)
 - and that the procedures for inclusion of qualifications in MQF are transparent (alignment process and use of protocols)
- I think that more needs to be said on quality assurance to demonstrate that criteria 5 and 6 are being met, and also the similar criteria in relation to the *Bologna* Framework. How is Malta linked in to ENQA and ENQA VET? Has work been done on implementing the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, the *Common Quality Assurance Framework* for European vocational education and training or the principles on quality assurance in the annex to the Recommendation on EQF? There is a need to describe the quality assurance systems for higher education and training, vocational education and training and the schools sector as they operate in Malta and how they reference MQF. How many quality assurance bodies are there? Is MQC the only one? On page 28 there is a reference to accreditation 'by institutions such as MQC', which suggests that other bodies operate in this space. Have they all stated their agreement to the referencing report (criterion 6)? Can anything more be said about the new quality assurance arrangements that are to be introduced?
- Part One of the report is intended to provide an overview of Malta's response to European Education Reform. In many respects, this section is an extended description of policy developments at the European level and does not say very much about the Maltese response to each of the developments described. All of this comes later in the report. Perhaps the section should be renamed and simply called European Education Reform. It could then be clearly stated that this is the European policy context for the development of the MQF and its relationship to EQF and QF/EHEA.
- It would be helpful for the external reader if the report began with a short introductory overview of the Maltese education and training system. This should describe the different sectors of education and training, the awarding bodies operating there and the awards they make, and the various institutions that provide education and training. In the Irish referencing report we included such a section at the suggestion of the international experts, as they did not know our system as well as the national stakeholders participating in the referencing process. Communicating with an international audience is an important requirement of the referencing report.
- Part Two on the Malta Qualifications Framework – I think more needs to be said about the structure of the MQF in this introductory section i.e, more about the levels, qualification types (and information on who makes them) and quality assurance criteria. Maybe, something could be said about the type of Framework it is using the Jens Bjornevald/Mike Coles typology. You mention elsewhere in the document that MQF is an overarching framework and that it will link to sectoral frameworks. I think all of this material on the nature and structure of MQF should be brought together in this section for the sake of clarity, and should include a full set of references to the existing documentation on the development and structure of MQF.
- It would be helpful, particularly in demonstrating compliance to criterion 1 - EQF and *Bologna* Framework (legal competence of relevant national bodies)- if more information was given about the Malta Qualifications Council. This might be done by extending section 2.1 or maybe a separate section could be included in Part 3 as a separate heading related to criterion 1. Areas that could be covered would include more information on the manner of its establishment by the Maltese government, and its roles and responsibilities: in particular, what is its relationship with the different sectors of education - schools, vocational and higher education? How does it relate to the bodies that make awards and those institutions across the sectors that deliver education and training in Malta? What is its relationship with other quality assurance and regulatory bodies? Again, much of this material is scattered throughout the report. Bringing it together and amplifying it would strengthen the report.
- Part 3: Although you are referencing MQF to EQF and QFEHEA in a single process and report, you might be advised to make more explicit reference to the QFEHEA verification criteria and procedures and to reference at different points where the same pieces of work are fulfilling both sets of criteria and procedures. This could be important in terms of building up trust and confidence in your national higher education system amongst peers in the *Bologna* signatory states.



Annexes



1. Abbreviations
2. Glossary of Selected Terminology Associated with Qualifications Frameworks
3. Compulsory Education School Timetable
4. Samples of MQC Protocol Documents
5. Trans-National Qualifications Framework and
6. Specimen of the Europass Diploma Supplement used by the University of Malta and Specimen of the revised Europass Certificate Supplement
7. About the Malta Qualifications Council and the National Commission for Higher Education

1 Abbreviations

APQRU	Academic Programmes Quality and Resources Unit	KC	Key Competences
BFUG	<i>Bologna</i> Follow-Up Group	LLL	Life Long Learning
CQAF	Common Quality Assurance Reference Framework	MQA	Malaysia Qualifications Authority
DES	Directorate for Educational Services	MCAST	Malta College of Arts Science and Technology
DQSE	Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (Malta)	MCCEI	Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System	MCST	Malta Council for Science and Technology
ECVET	European Credit Vocational Education and Training	MQC	Malta Qualifications Council
EHEA	European Higher Education Area	MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education	MQRIC	Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre
ENQA-VET	European Network for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training	NCFHE	National Commission for Further and Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register	NCHE	National Commission for Higher Education (Malta)
EQF	European Qualifications Framework	NQA	Namibia Qualifications Authority
EQARF	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework	NQF	National Qualifications Framework
ESF	European Social Fund	NZ NQF	New Zealand National Qualifications Framework
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area	NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
ESU	European Students' Union	OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ETC	Employment and Training Corporation (Malta)	PLM	People in the Labour Market
ETF	European Training Foundation	QCA	Qualifications and Credit Authority
ETSE	Empowerment of transparency in the Vocational Framework of Security Employees	QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
EUA	European Universities' Association	QF/EHEA	Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area
EUPA	European Union Programmes Agency	R&I	Research and Innovation
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education	SA NQF	South African National Qualifications Framework
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment	SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
FHRD	Foundation for Human Resources Development	SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
HE	Higher Education	SEC	Secondary Education Certificate
HR	Human Resources	SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
ICMCH	Institute for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage	SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
INFQ	Irish National Framework of Qualifications	SS	Sectoral Skills
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education	TQF	Trans-National Qualifications Framework (Commonwealth)
ITS	Institute for Tourism Studies (Malta)	VET	Vocational Education and Training
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training	VETPRO	Vocational Education and Training Professionals
		VUSSC	Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth
		UK	Underpinning Knowledge
		UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation

2 Glossary of Selected Terminology Associated With Qualifications Frameworks

Accumulation and transfer of qualifications⁹⁹

Accumulation and transfer of qualifications means that training programmes or parts [units] of programmes are interchangeable or can replace each other and that validated learning outcomes can exempt a person of whole or part of a training programme. Accumulation and transfer of qualifications require that learning outcomes acquired in different contexts and at different times are compared as regards equivalence and relative value.

Accreditation of programmes and institutions

The process of accrediting an institution of education and training, a programme of study, or a service, showing it has been approved by the relevant legislative and professional authorities by having met predetermined standards.

Apprenticeship¹⁰⁰

Apprenticeship is the systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation.

Assessment

The sum of methods and processes used to evaluate the attainments (knowledge, know-how, skills and competences) of an individual, and typically leading to certification.

Awarding body

An awarding body issues qualifications (certificates or diplomas) formally recognizing the achievements of an individual, following a standard assessment procedure.

Bologna process

The *Bologna* process initiated by the *Bologna* Declaration of European Ministers of Education in 19th June 1999 is a commitment by all EU Member States to harmonize the architecture of the European higher education system by improving external recognition and facilitating student mobility as well as employability.

Certificate/Diploma

An official document issued by an awarding body, which records the achievements of an individual following the successful completion of a training programme or a course of studies.

Certification (of knowledge, skills and competences)

A formal record of achievement based on a standard assessment of knowledge, skills and competences. Certificates or diplomas are issued by accredited awarding bodies.

Competence

'Competence' is the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and other abilities to perform a function against a given standard in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development. In the EQF, 'competence' is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

Comparability of qualifications

The extent to which it is possible to establish parity of esteem between the level and content of all formal qualifications at sectoral, regional, national or international levels.

Continuing education and training

Education or training after initial education or entry into working life aimed at helping individuals to: *improve*

⁹⁹ MQC, *Glossary of Terminology Associated with Qualifications Framework*

¹⁰⁰ CEDEFOP, *Terminology of European Education and Training Policy: A Selection of 100 Key Terms*. (Luxembourg 2008)

or update their knowledge and/or skills; acquire new skills for a career move or retraining; continue their personal or professional development.

Copenhagen Declaration.

The *Copenhagen* Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training and the European Commission convened in *Copenhagen* on the 29th and 30th of June 2002 is a declaration on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training.

Credits

Credits are one of the tools designed to facilitate the implementation of credit transfer systems at national and European level. They are used by authorities, education and training providers, competent bodies and learners to support arrangements for accumulation and recognition of learning outcomes towards a qualification and for Trans-National mobility. Credits [credit points] are allocated to the qualifications and to the units of which a qualification is made up.

Curriculum

A set of actions followed when setting up a training course: it includes defining training goals, content, methods (including assessment) and material, as well as arrangements for training teachers and trainers.

Distance Learning

Education and training imparted at a distance through communication media: books, radio, TV, telephone, correspondence, computer or video.

Employability

The combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to progress during career

EQF

EQF stands for the European Qualifications Framework which is a *meta*-Framework to support *translation* and communication between national qualifications systems and Frameworks.

Formal learning

Learning that occurs in an organized and structured environment (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is

intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to certification.

Human Capital

Knowledge, skills, competences and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate personal, social and economic well-being.

Informal learning

Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organized or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.

Initial education/training

General or vocational education carried out in the initial education system, usually before entering working life.

Key Competences

The knowledge, skills and competences needed to function in contemporary society, e.g. listening, speaking, reading, writing, digital competence and mathematics among others.

Knowledge

'Knowledge' is the outcome of the collection and assimilation of information through learning. In the EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.

Knowledge Society

A knowledge society's processes and practices are based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge.

Learning

'Learning' is a process by which individuals acquire and assimilate information, ideas and values as well as practical and cognitive skills and other personal and social competences. They learn through personal reflection and reconstruction and through social interaction. This process takes place in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings.

Learning outcomes

'Learning outcomes' are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process.

Level descriptors

Level descriptors express the level of knowledge, skills and competences in relation to higher or lower levels of achievements by the individual.

Lifelong learning

The rationale behind lifelong learning is continuous personal and professional development, with no age limit.

National Qualifications Framework

A National Qualifications Framework is a common reference point to all nationally recognised qualifications indicating level of education and training and progression from one level to another.

National Qualifications System

Qualification systems include all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalizing national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, quality assurance processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent.

Meta-Framework

A meta- Framework' like the EQF is a classification instrument for levels of qualifications designed to act as a translation device between different national and sectoral qualifications systems. For this purpose, the criteria for levels in a meta-Framework are written in a highly generalized form and the EQF does not take over any of the established roles of national systems.

Mutual trust

Mutual trust is a term used in the context of qualifications to indicate quality assurance support measures and accountability in the awarding of certificates, diplomas and degrees.

Non-formal learning

Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It normally does not lead to certification.

Programme (of education and training)

An inventory of activities, learning content and/or methods implemented to achieve education or training objectives (acquiring knowledge, skills or competences), organized in a logical sequence over a specified period of time.

Quality assurance

A transparent and clearly defined process to assure that quality education and training and quality deliverables will be built in institutions, training programmes and programmes of studies before the work is done.

Qualification

A 'qualification' is achieved when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. A qualification is a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process.

Qualifications Framework

A qualifications Framework provides a system of coordination and for comparing qualifications by relating qualifications to each other, for promoting the quality of education and training provisions, for establishing standards of knowledge, skills and wider competences and for introducing and maintaining procedures for access to learning, transfer of learning and progression in learning. The scope of Framework may be comprehensive of all learning achievement and pathways in a country or may be confined to a particular sector.

Recognition

Formal recognition is the process of granting official status to skills and competences either through the award of certificates or through the grant of equivalence, credit units, validation of gained skills and/or competences. Social recognition is the acknowledgement of the value of skills and/or competences by economic and social stakeholders such as employers or national or international institutions.

Referencing Process

The referencing process involves the alignment of the levels of the NQFs to the EQF. This alignment involves the comparison of the level of difficulty established by the learning outcomes detailed in the level descriptors of the two (or more) frameworks with which the NQF is aligned.

Regulated profession

Professional activity or group of professional activities access to which, and the practice of which (or to one of its forms) is directly or indirectly subject to legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions concerning the possession of specific professional qualifications.

Retraining

Retraining is a kind of training that enables the individuals to acquire new skills giving access either to a new occupation or to new professional activities.

Sector

A 'sector' is a range of professional activities on the basis of their main economic activity, product, service or technology (e.g. chemicals) or as a transversal professional category (e.g. marketing).

Sectoral qualifications system

A 'sectoral qualifications system' is concerned with the qualifications process confined to a specified sector and may exist at national and international level.

Sectoral qualifications Framework.

A 'sectoral qualifications Framework' is defined as the structures and processes established by a sector for the development and implementation of qualifications, including institutional arrangements, quality assurance, assessment and awarding procedures, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market.

Skills

A skill is the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the EQF, skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).

Social Partners

Social partners include employers' associations and trade unions forming the two sides of social dialogue.

Stateless Qualifications

International awards including degree programmes governed by non-unitary state educational institutions through interstate relations such as the United Nations or inter-governmental organisations.

Translation device

In the context of qualifications, the term is used to denote the language or methods of verifying the equivalence between one qualification and another. An NQF for example is a translation device to verify whether one qualification carries the same weight of another in terms of content, level of education and training and assessment.

Transparency of qualifications

Qualifications are transparent if their value is readable by, comparable and transferable to other Frameworks: sectoral, regional, national or international. Transparency gives Trans-National value to qualifications.

Transferability of learning outcomes

The degree to which knowledge, skills and competences can be used in a new occupational or educational environment, and/or to be validated and certified.

Upskilling

Short-term targeted training typically provided following initial education or training, and aimed at supplementing, improving or updating knowledge, skills and/or competences acquired during previous training.

Validation (of non-formal and informal learning)

The process of assessing and recognizing a wide range of knowledge, know-how, skills and competences, which people develop throughout their lives within different environments, for example through education, work and leisure activities.

Valuing learning

All learning is valued when there is the recognition of achievement in formal, informal or non-formal learning.

3 Compulsory Education School Timetable

Scholastic Year 2011-2012

	2011 SEP	2011 OCT	2011 NOV	2011 DEC	2011 JAN	2011 FEB	2011 MAR	2011 APR	2011 MAY	2011 JUN	2011 JUL	2011 AUG	2011 SEP
Monday													
Tuesday			1 M Term						1 PH			1	
Wednesday			2 M Term									2	
Thursday	1		3 M Term	1						1		3	
Friday	2		4	2						2		4	
Saturday	3	1	5	3	1 PH					3		5	1
Sunday	4	2	6	4	2 Ch.mas					4		6	2
Monday	5	3	7	5	3 Ch.mas					5		7	3
Tuesday	6	4	8	6	4 Ch.mas					6		8	4
Wednesday	7	5	9	7	5 Ch.mas			4 Easter		7		9	5
Thursday	8 PH	6	10	8	6 Ch.mas			5 Easter		8		10	6
Friday	9	7	11	9	7	10 PH		6 PH		9		11	7
Saturday	10	8	12	10	8	11		7 Easter		10		12	8 PH
Sunday	11	9	13	11	9	12		8 Easter		11		13	9
Monday	12	10	14	12	10	13		9 Easter		12		14	10
Tuesday	13	11	15	13	11	14		10 Easter		13	9 INSET	15	11
Wednesday	14	12	16	14	12	15		11 Easter		14	10 INSET	16	12
Thursday	15	13	17	15	13	16		12		15	11 INSET	17	13
Friday	16 INSET	14	18	16	14	17		13		16	12	18	14 INSET
Saturday	17	15	19	17	15	18		14		17	13	19	15
Sunday	18	16	20	18	16	19		15		18	14	20	16
Monday	19 INSET	17	21	19	17	20 M Term		16		19	16	21	17 INSET
Tuesday	20 INSET	18	22	20	18	21 M Term		17		20	17	22	18 INSET
Wednesday	21 NH	19	23	21	19	22 Ash Wed		18		21	18	23	19
Thursday	22	20	24	22	20	23		19		22	19	24	20
Friday	23	21	25	23	21	24		20		23	20	25	21 NH
Saturday	24	22	26	24	22	25		21		24	21	26	22
Sunday	25	23	27	25	23	26		22		25	22	27	23
Monday	26	24	28	26	24	27		23		26	23	28	24
Tuesday	27	25	29	27	25	28		24		27	24	29	25
Wednesday	28	26	30	28	26	29		25		28	25	30	26
Thursday	29	27	31	29	27	30		26		29	26	31	27
Friday	30	28		30	28	31 NH		27		30	27		28
Saturday		29		31 Ch.mas	29			28		30	28		29
Sunday		30		31	30			29		31	29		30
Monday		31						30			30		31
Tuesday													

31st October
02-03 Dec

National Curriculum Framework Colleges Consultation Day
National Curriculum Framework National Consultation Conference

Total School Days - 176 days • Total Schooling Hours - 926 hours
Term 1 - 59 School Days • Term 2 - 58 School Days • Term 3 - 59 School Days

MRR* - Days reserved for Correction of scripts, the Recording & Reporting of the annual progress and achievement of students

4 Samples of a Protocol Document

ALICE WHITE DANCE STUDIO



PROTOCOL

BETWEEN ALISON WHITE DANCE STUDIO AND THE MALTA QUALIFICATIONS COUNCIL (MQC) ON THE MALTA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

1. Alison White Dance Studio is a B.T.D.A recognized and approved dance centre, which certifies the facilities enabling all students to train up to a vocational level as a dancer or teacher up to Level 4. Disciplines taught are modern jazz, classical ballet, tap, contemporary, hip hop, Spanish, and Margaret Morris Movement. The school trains students from the tender age of 3 years up to mature students. Courses are open to individuals and groups. For those wishing to take examinations, they can gain a GCSE equivalent through the examinations or may opt out for open classes without examinations. The Alison White Dance Studio assures quality in service, personal enrichment, friendly and creative atmosphere, a place where each and every individual counts. Faculty is fully qualified in all disciplines. Above all dance is a form of self expression and enjoyment, and the studio offers courses for those who wish to train seriously and go into it professionally, or for fun and to keep fit and healthy.
2. The Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) is a national agency for the development, assessment, certification and accreditation of qualifications other than those in compulsory education and degrees. It is responsible to the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family. The overall objective of MQC is to maintain the development of the Malta Qualifications Framework and to oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies. MQC also promotes and facilitates Life-Long Learning access, transfer and progression and fosters the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta under these regulations. MQC is governed by a Council nominated by the Minister of Education, Employment and the Family.

In 2010 MQC merged with the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) and became one agency aimed at licensing, accrediting, recognizing and quality assuring programmes and institutions in further and higher education.

3. Alison White Dance Studio endorses the Malta Qualifications Framework as the official National Qualifications Framework of Malta and agrees to abide with the level descriptors, standards and criteria that the MQC publishes from time to time to maintain the framework's relevancy to the system of qualifications in Malta.
4. Following the Referencing of the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA (September 2009) it has been agreed that MQC will ensure that the MQF continues to respond to the developments in the European Frameworks and the country's social and economic priorities.
5. Alison White Dance Studio and MQC agree that:
 - 5.1 qualifications at Alison White Dance Studio will reflect Legal Notice 347/2005 and the NQF as defined in the Legal Notice mentioned above as per Annex 1 and the Level Descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning (EQF) and the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) as per Annex 2 and the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) as per Annex 3;
 - 5.2 all course-related material such as course description and certificates will reflect the Malta Qualifications Framework by the start of the Academic Year 2012-2013 as per Annex 4;
 - 5.3 all qualifications offered by Alison White Dance Studio and which are listed in this Protocol will be classified under the eight-level system as detailed in Legal Notice 347/2005;
 - 5.4 The following qualifications which are offered in Malta by Alison White Dance Studio and awarded by the *British Theatre Dance Association (BTDA)* are referenced to MQF and EQF Level Four:
 - 5.4.1 **Teaching Certificate in Tap Dancing;**
 - 5.4.2 **Advanced Ballet Member – Teacher of Dancing;**
 - 5.4.3 **Advanced Modern Member – Teacher of Dancing.**

Certificates and transcripts of the above qualifications shall carry the MQC Quality Label as per Annex 5 and the following statement in all Certificates: The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 4 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

5.5 The following qualifications which are offered in Malta by Alison White Dance Studio and awarded by the *British Theatre Dance Association (BTDA)* are referenced to MQF and EQF Level Five:

- 5.5.1 Fellowship Teaching certificate in Classical Ballet;
- 5.5.2 Fellowship Teaching Certificate in Modern Dance.

Certificates and transcripts of the above qualification shall carry the MQC Quality Label as per Annex 5 and the following statement in all Certificates: The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 5 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

- 6 Levels of qualifications are determined for each course by the exit points as detailed in the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Programmes of Studies and Quality Assurance support mechanisms will be those established and regulated by external awarding bodies as endorsed by Alison White Dance Studio and MQC on the basis of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Quality Assurance Framework for VET (EQARF) as per Annex 6 and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG) as per Annex 7.
- 7 Alison White Dance Studio and MQC agree to promote a more visible reference to the MQF and the EQF and the appropriate reference levels on the Certificate Supplement or Diploma Supplement as per Annex 8 and Annex 9 and all related publications including any transcripts.
- 8 Alison White Dance Studio obliges itself to adhere to a learning outcomes-based approach when developing and describing qualifications.
- 9 Alison White Dance Studio shall provide information on each qualification as per the template in Annex 10, which will form part of the online database of qualifications on the MQC's website.
- 10 By 2012 MQC binds itself to provide the legal and operational structures to enable Alison White Dance Studio to implement the recognition of informal and non-formal learning according to the principles agreed at EU level.
- 11 Alison White Dance Studio and MQC agree to set up a permanent technical working committee composed of ex-officio the Director or his/her representative on behalf of Alison White Dance Studio and ex-officio the Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Officer responsible for Quality Assurance at NCHE/MQC to review this Protocol every calendar year from the date of signature of this Protocol.



Mr. Joseph Abela Fitzpatrick
Chairman
Malta Qualifications Council



Ms. Alison White
Principal
Alison White Dance Studio

Witnessed by the Hon. Ms. Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Employment
and the Family.

Date 3rd August 2011



Annexes:

1. Legal Notice 347/2005;
2. Level Descriptors of the EQF and the MQF;
3. Level Descriptors of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area;
4. The Malta Qualifications Framework;
5. MQC Quality Label;
6. European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Quality Assurance Framework for VET (EQARF);
7. The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance;
8. Certificate Supplement;
9. Diploma Supplement;
10. Qualification Information for MQC's Online Database of Qualifications.

Malta Qualifications Council and Alison White Dance Studio – 3rd August 2011

INTERNATIONAL VOCATIONAL COLLEGE MALTA



PROTOCOL

BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL VOCATIONAL COLLEGE MALTA AND THE MALTA QUALIFICATIONS COUNCIL (MQC) ON THE MALTA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

1. At the International Vocational College Malta (IVCM), we understand exactly what it takes to be successful within the workplace. We are fully dedicated to equipping our students with the skills-set needed to meet the demands of today's workplace.

Our students are given the opportunity to experience different work placements and gain internationally recognised Diplomas at the same time. With our multi-national set up, our students can familiarise themselves with different cultural norms, enabling them to learn how to work within a team of diverse backgrounds and work ethics.

2. The Malta Qualifications Council [MQC] is a national agency for the development, assessment, certification and accreditation of qualifications other than those in compulsory education and degrees. It is responsible to the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family. The overall objective of MQC is to maintain the development of the Malta Qualifications Framework and to oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies. MQC also promotes and facilitates Life-Long Learning access, transfer and progression and fosters the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta under these regulations. MQC is governed by a Council nominated by the Minister of Education, Employment and the Family.

In 2010 MQC merged with the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) and became one agency aimed at licensing, accrediting, recognizing and quality assuring programmes and institutions in further and higher education.

3. International Vocational College Malta endorses the Malta Qualifications Framework as the official National Qualifications Framework of Malta and agrees to abide with the level descriptors, standards and criteria that the MQC publishes

from time to time to maintain the framework's relevancy to the system of qualifications in Malta.

4. Following the Referencing of the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA (September 2009) it has been agreed that MQC will ensure that the MQF continues to respond to the developments in the European Frameworks and the country's social and economic priorities.
5. International Vocational College Malta and MQC agree that:
 - 5.1 qualifications at International Vocational College Malta will reflect Legal Notice 347/2005 and the NQF as defined in the Legal Notice mentioned-above as per Annex 1 and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning (EQF) and the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) as per Annex 2 and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) as per Annex 3;
 - 5.2 all course-related material such as course description and certificates will reflect the Malta Qualifications Framework by the start of the Academic Year 2012-2013 as per Annex 4;
 - 5.3 all qualifications offered by International Vocational College Malta and which are listed in this protocol will be classified under the eight-level system as detailed in Legal Notice 347/2005;
 - 5.4 The following qualification which is offered in Malta by International Vocational College Malta and awarded by BTEC is referenced to MQF and EQF Level 4:
 - 5.4.1 **BTEC Diploma in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship**

Certificates and transcripts of the above qualification shall carry the MQC Quality Label as per Annex 5 and the following statement in all Certificates: The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 4 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

- 6 Levels of qualifications are determined for each course by the exit points as detailed in the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Programmes of Studies and Quality Assurance support mechanisms will be those established and regulated by external awarding bodies as endorsed by International Vocational College Malta and MQC on the basis of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF) as per Annex 6 and

the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area as per Annex 7.

- 7 International Vocational College Malta and MQC agree to promote a more visible reference to the MQF and the EQF and the appropriate reference levels on the Certificate Supplement or Diploma Supplement as per Annex 8 and Annex 9 and all related publications including any transcripts.
- 8 International Vocational College Malta obliges itself to adhere to a learning outcomes-based approach when developing and describing qualifications.
- 9 International Vocational College Malta shall provide information on each qualification as per the template in Annex 10, which will form part of the online database of qualifications on the MQC's website.
- 10 By 2012 MQC binds itself to provide the legal and operational structures to enable International Vocational College Malta to implement the recognition of informal and non-formal learning according to the principles agreed at EU level.
- 11 International Vocational College Malta and MQC agree to set up a permanent technical working committee composed of ex-officio the Director or his/her representative on behalf of International Vocational College Malta and ex-officio the Chief Executive and the Senior Officer responsible for Quality Assurance at NCHE/MQC to review this Protocol every calendar year from the date of signature of this protocol.



Mr. Joseph Abela Fitzpatrick
Chairman
Malta Qualifications Council



Dr. Michelle Gialanzè
Chief Executive Officer
International Vocational College Malta

Witnessed by the Hon Ms Dolores Cristina Minister of Education, Employment and the Family.

Date  12/9/2011



Malta Qualifications Council and International Vocational College Malta (IVCM) –
12th September 2011

Annexes:

1. Legal Notice 347/2005;
2. Level Descriptors of the EQF and the MQF;
3. Level Descriptors of the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area;
4. The Malta Qualifications Framework;
5. MQC Quality Label;
6. European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Quality Assurance Framework for VET (EQARF);
7. The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance;
8. Certificate Supplement;
9. Diploma Supplement;
10. Qualification Information for MQC's Online Database of Qualifications.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE SERVICES COMPANY LIMITED
(MISCO)



PROTOCOL

BETWEEN MARKET INTELLIGENCE SERVICES COMPANY LIMITED
(MISCO)
AND
THE MALTA QUALIFICATIONS COUNCIL
ON THE MALTA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK.

This Protocol replaces *in toto* any other Protocol which was signed between Market Intelligence Services Company Limited hereinafter referred to as MISCO and the Malta Qualifications Council, hereinafter referred to as MQC, before today the 29th day of February of the year 2012.

1. MISCO represents the Institute of Leadership in Management (ILM) Malta. MISCO, established in 1983 is a professional organisation equipped to provide learning and development, management and marketing consultancy, people selection services and marketing research services. Each unit provides a range of related services and the directors act in close collaboration with each other, ensuring dynamism and versatility within the organisation. Each service provided by MISCO is in this way carried out under the full attention of a director who either delivers the service directly or closely directs and monitors the service given. To ensure the quality of the service the organization gives, MISCO has built a solid team of people who have been carefully selected and extensively trained to carry out the tasks they are assigned. MISCO constantly keeps abreast with developments in the fields of the services offered and staff is continuously trained both in Malta and abroad. MISCO can call on an extensive network of qualified and experienced consultants in the fields of accountancy, engineering, law, psychology, sociology and marketing communications. Extensive investment is also undertaken to upgrade skills and methods both through training and association arrangements with specialised international organizations for the sharing of technology and information.
2. The MQC is a national accrediting agency for the development, assessment, certification and accreditation of qualifications other than those in compulsory education and degrees. It is responsible to the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family. The overall objective of MQC is to maintain the development of the Malta Qualifications Framework and to oversee the training

and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies. MQC also promotes and facilitates Life-Long Learning access, transfer and progression and fosters the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta under these regulations. MQC is governed by a Council nominated by the Minister of Education and Employment.

In 2010 MQC merged with the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) and became one agency aimed at licensing, accrediting, recognizing and quality assuring programmes and institutions in further and higher education.

3. MISCO endorses the Malta Qualifications Framework as the official National Qualifications Framework of Malta and agrees to abide with the level descriptors, standards and criteria that the MQC publishes from time to time to maintain the framework's relevancy to the system of qualifications in Malta.
4. Following the Referencing of the MQF to the EQF and the QF/EHEA (September 2009) it has been agreed that MQC will ensure that the MQF continues to respond to the developments in the European Frameworks and the country's social and economic priorities.
5. MISCO and the Malta Qualifications Council agree that:
 - 5.1 qualifications at MISCO will reflect Legal Notice 347/2005 (Annex 1) and the EQF as defined in the Legal Notice mentioned above and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) as per Annex 2 and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) as per Annex 3;
 - 5.2 all course-related material such as course description and certificates will reflect the Malta Qualifications Framework as per Annex 4 by the start of the Academic Year 2012-2013
 - 5.3 all qualifications offered by MISCO will be classified under the eight-level system as detailed in Legal Notice 347/2005;
 - 5.4 The following qualifications offered by MISCO and awarded by *City and Guilds* are referenced to Level two of the Malta Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning:
 - 5.4.1 Award in Office Procedures (500/7411/8)
 - 5.4.2 Award in Customer Service (501/1839/0)

Certificates and transcripts of the above qualifications shall carry the MQC Quality Label as per Annex 5 and the following statement in all Certificates: **The**

Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 2 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

5.5 The following qualifications offered by MISCO and awarded by *City and Guilds* are referenced to Level three of the Malta Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning:

5.5.1 Award in Office Procedures (500/7531/7)

5.5.2 Award in Customer Service (500/3681/6)

Certificates and transcripts of the above qualifications shall carry the MQC Quality Label as per Annex 5 and the following statement in all Certificates: The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 3 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

5.6 The following qualification offered by MISCO and awarded by *City and Guilds* is referenced to Level four of the Malta Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning:

5.6.1 Award in Customer Service (500/3680/4)

Certificates and transcripts of the above qualifications shall carry the MQC Quality Label as per Annex 5 and the following statement in all Certificates: The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 4 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

5.7 The following qualifications offered by MISCO and awarded by the *Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)* are referenced to Level four of the Malta Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning:

5.7.1 Award in First Line Management (500/3586/1)

5.7.2 Certificate in First Line Management (500/3585/X)

5.7.3 Diploma in First Line Management (500/3587/3)

Certificates and transcripts of the above qualifications shall carry the MQC Quality Label as per Annex 5 and the following statement in all Certificates: The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 4 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

5.8 The following qualifications offered by MISCO and awarded by the *Institute of Leadership in Management (ILM)* are referenced to Level Five of the Malta Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning:

- 5.8.1 **Award in Management (600/2237/1)**
- 5.8.2 **Certificate in Management (600/2240/1)**
- 5.8.3 **Diploma in Management (600/2267/X)**

The certificates and transcripts shall carry the MQC Quality Label as per Annex 5 and the following statement in all Certificates: **The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 5 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.**

5.9 The following qualification offered by MISCO and awarded by the *Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)* is referenced to Level seven of the Malta Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning:

- 5.9.1 **Diploma in Strategic Leadership and Executive Management (500/3570/8)**

Certificates and transcripts of the above qualifications shall carry the MQC Quality Label as per Annex 5 and the following statement in all Certificates: **The Malta Qualifications Council deems this Certificate to be at Level 7 of the Malta Qualifications Framework and of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.**

- 6. Levels of qualifications are determined for each course by the exit points as detailed in the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Programmes of Studies and Quality Assurance support mechanisms will be those established and regulated by external awarding bodies as endorsed by MISCO and MQC on the basis of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF) as per Annex 6 and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area as per Annex 7.
- 7. MISCO and MQC agree to promote a more visible reference to the MQF and the EQF and the appropriate reference levels on the Certificate Supplement or Diploma Supplement as per Annex 8 and Annex 9 and all related publications including any transcripts.
- 8. MISCO obliges itself to adhere to a learning-outcomes based approach when developing and describing qualifications.

9. MISCO shall provide information on each qualification as per the template in Annex 10, which will form part of the online database of qualifications on the MQC's website.
10. By 2012 MQC binds itself to provide the legal and operational structures to enable MISCO to implement the recognition of informal and non-formal learning according to the principles agreed at EU level.
11. MISCO and MQC agree to set up a permanent technical working committee composed of ex-officio the Director or his/her representative on behalf of MISCO and ex-officio the Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Officer responsible for Quality Assurance at NCHE/MQC to review this Protocol every calendar year from the date of signature of this protocol.



Dr Philip von Brockdorff
CEO
Malta Qualifications Council -
National Commission for Higher Education



Mr Joseph F.X. Zahra
Managing Director
MISCO

Witnessed by the Hon Ms Dolores Cristina Minister of Education and Employment.

Date 29th February 2012



Annexes:

Annex 1	Legal Notice 347/2006;
Annex 2	Level Descriptors of the EQF and the MQF;
Annex 3	The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area;
Annex 4	The Malta Qualifications Framework;
Annex 5	MQC Quality Label;
Annex 6	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF);
Annex 7	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area;
Annex 8	Certificate Supplement;
Annex 9	Diploma Supplement;
Annex 10	Qualification Information for MQC's Online Database of Qualifications.

5 Transnational Qualifications Framework Descriptors

VUSSC's TQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Levels	Descriptors Holders of this Qualification Will:	Illustrative Examples of Qualifications	Min Credit
10	<p>Acquire and possess a systematic understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice.</p> <p>Be able to create and interpret new knowledge at most advanced frontier of a field of work or study through original and advanced research of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend to the forefront of the discipline and merit publication.</p> <p>Possess the most advanced and specialized skills and techniques to be able to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge or to solve critical problems or to refute or redefine existing knowledge.</p> <p>Demonstrate authority, innovation, autonomy, integrity and personal responsibility to the production or development of innovative ideas or processes in the context of an academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice.</p>	<p>Doctoral degrees</p>	<p>The development of this table draws heavily from various QAAs especially from the UKQAA, NZQA, MQA, NQA and SQA.</p>
9	<p>Have a logical understanding of a body of highly (seek another term) specialized knowledge some of which is at the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice, as a basis for original thought and/or the conduct of research and/or enquiry.</p> <p>Have a comprehensive understanding of the research skills and/or relevant established techniques applicable to their own research or to advanced scholarship that can be used to create and interpret knowledge.</p> <p>Demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge to solve problems, together with practical understanding of how knowledge can be managed to transform work or study.</p> <p>Possess a conceptual understanding of how to analyse and critically evaluate current research in their academic discipline, field of study or work and apply here appropriate to solve problems.</p>	<p>Masters degrees</p> <p>MA</p> <p>MSc</p> <p>M.Phil</p> <p>MBA</p> <p>MEngineering/ME</p>	
8	<p>Have systematic, extensive and comparative knowledge of the key aspects of their academic discipline, field of study or work.</p> <p>Possess an ability to deploy accurately established analytical tools and/or techniques and enquiry within their academic discipline, field of study or work.</p> <p>Be able to use their knowledge, understanding and skills of a wide range of concepts, ideas and information to devise and sustain arguments and or to solve problems.</p>	<p>Bachelor's (Hons)</p> <p>Postgraduate Certificates</p> <p>Postgraduate Diplomas</p>	

Levels	Descriptors Holders of this Qualification Will:	Illustrative Examples of Qualifications	
7	<p>Display a critical understanding of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge and how it is developed.</p> <p>Possess the ability to manage their own learning and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (e.g. refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).</p> <p>Have advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of the well-established principles and including an understanding of some advanced aspect(s) of their area(s) of their field of work or study; where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context.</p> <p>Have an understanding of the limits of that knowledge and how this influences analysis and interpretation based on that knowledge.</p> <p>Possess advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in their specialized field of work or study.</p> <p>Be able to manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision making in unpredictable work or study contexts.</p>	<p>Degree BA BSc BE BNursing</p>	
6	<p>Possess an in-depth knowledge and critical understanding of the ideas, concepts and principles in their field of work or study</p> <p>Have knowledge of the methods of enquiry in the subject and use a range of techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, proposing solutions to problems arising from that analysis.</p> <p>Demonstrate an ability to critically evaluate and apply the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems.</p> <p>Apply those concepts and principles more widely</p> <p>Have an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations.</p> <p>Effectively communicate information arguments and analysis, in a variety of forms to specialists and non specialist audiences and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively.</p> <p>Have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.</p>	<p>Advanced Diploma of Higher Education</p> <p>Associate Degrees</p> <p>National Vocational Qualifications</p> <p>Regional Vocational Qualifications</p>	
5	<p>Have broad knowledge and understanding of the main underlying ideas, concepts and principles in a field of work or study</p> <p>Be able to use their knowledge understanding and skills to critically evaluate and determine appropriate methods and procedures to respond to a range of problems of a generally routine nature.</p>	<p>Diploma of Higher Education</p> <p>Associate Degrees</p> <p>National Vocational Qualifications</p>	240

Levels	Descriptors Holders of this Qualification Will:	Illustrative Examples of Qualifications	
	<p>Display qualities and transferable knowledge and skills necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.</p> <p>Communicate the results of their field of study or work accurately and reliably using a range of different modalities.</p> <p>Identify and articulate their own learning needs within defined context and undertake guided further learning in new areas.</p>	Regional Vocational Qualifications	
4	<p>Have a broad knowledge and understanding of the main underlying concepts and principles in a field of work or study.</p> <p>Demonstrate a basic understanding of the major theories, principle, ideas and concepts of their particular area of study.</p> <p>Be able to use different approaches to identify, evaluate and solve problems of a generally routine nature.</p> <p>Be able to use their knowledge, understanding of a particular subject area to communicate accurately and reliably with structured and coherent arguments,</p> <p>Use their knowledge, understanding and skills to undertake further learning within a structured and managed environment.</p> <p>Possess the qualities and transferable skills needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility</p>	Certificates	120
3	<p>Demonstrate a knowledge of basic concepts and principles in a field of work or study;</p> <p>Have command of analytical interpretation of information</p> <p>Express informed judgment</p> <p>Be able to display a range of known responses to familiar problems</p>	<p>Upper Secondary Education</p> <p>Certificate III National</p> <p>Vocational Qualifications</p> <p>National Certificates</p>	
2	<p>Demonstrate a narrow range of applied knowledge and basic comprehension in a field of work or study</p> <p>Display a narrow a range of skills in a field of work or study</p> <p>Be able to use known solutions to familiar problem</p>	<p>Lower Secondary Education:</p> <p>Certificate II</p> <p>National Vocational Qualification</p> <p>National Certificates</p>	
1	<p>Demonstrates basic literacy and numeracy skills.</p>	<p>Entry Level 1 Certificate 1</p> <p>Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) awards</p>	

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Shared 'Dublin' descriptors for the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral awards

A report from a Joint Quality Initiative informal group (contributors to the document are provided in the Annex).

23 March 2004

1 INTRODUCTION

This note proposes a shared 'Dublin' descriptor for the doctoral award. The descriptor extends the existing Dublin descriptors for Bachelor's and Master's awards that have been published previously through the Joint Quality Initiative.

In keeping with the Dublin Descriptors for the Bachelor's and Master's awards, the doctoral descriptor is a general statement of the expected attributes of a doctoral student that is independent of the precise nature of the educational process. The descriptor draws upon other sources some of which are associated with national frameworks of qualifications including:

- Quality Assurance Agency Framework for higher education qualifications¹
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework²
- Irish National Framework of Qualifications³
- Danish Qualifications Framework⁴

The note also considers the sequence of three Dublin Descriptors that relate to completion of the first, second and third Bologna cycles and indicates the progression steps between the cycles.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Berlin Communiqué

In September 2003 the Berlin Communiqué 2003 added a third cycle to the Bologna process to include doctor education and promote links between the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area.

Moreover, in relation to qualifications frameworks the Communiqué mentions:

Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of compatible and comparable qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.

Within such frameworks, States should have different defined outcomes. First and second cycle degrees should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. First cycle degrees should give access, in the area of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral studies.

2.2 On formulating a doctoral descriptor

The various types of doctorate in use across Europe include three broad types: the doctorate that is predominantly research based (often awarded PhD), the professional doctorate, and the so-called 'higher doctorates'.

The professional or practitioner doctorate is a relatively new and still evolving practice in European higher education. Many professional doctorates in UK, where they are well established in some fields such as Psychology, require that the candidate completes a substantial piece of original research that is comparable "in standard if not in scale"⁵ to a supervised PhD.

The 'Higher doctorates', that are available for example in Ireland, the United Kingdom and Denmark, require attributes that are different in character from those required for PhDs or professional doctorates.

Following discussion the JQI group consider that a shared Doctoral descriptor should encompass the outcomes of research-based and professional doctorates, but that it should not refer to particular forms of study.

3 DUBLIN DESCRIPTORS FOR BACHELOR'S, MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL AWARDS

3.1 'Dublin' Descriptors

The JQI Dublin descriptors for Bachelors and Masters were first proposed in March 2002 (see: www.joinquality.org). It is proposed that for a better understanding of the 'Dublin descriptors' in the context of the Berlin communiqué and their possible future usage, alternative headings, as indicated below, may be more appropriate:

Bachelor's degrees are awarded to students who:

alternative

Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle are awarded to students who:

have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and supersedes 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 professional¹ approach to their work or vocation, and have competences² 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.

Master's degrees are awarded to students who:

alternative

Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who:

have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research³ 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.

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who:

alternative

Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:

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;

Glossary

1. The word '**professional**' is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, relating to those attributes relevant to undertaking work of a vocation and that involves the application of some aspects of advanced learning. It is not used with regard to those specific requirements relating to regulated professions. The latter may be identified with the profile / specification.
2. The word '**competence**' is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, allowing for gradation of abilities or skills. It is not used in the narrower sense identified solely on the basis of a 'yes/no' assessment.
3. The word '**research**' is used to cover a wide variety of activities, with the context often related to a field of study; the term is used here to represent a careful study or investigation based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge. The word is used in an inclusive way to accommodate the range of activities that support original and innovative work in the whole range of academic, professional and technological fields, including the humanities, and traditional, performing, and other creative arts. It is not used in any limited or restricted sense, or relating solely to a traditional 'scientific method'.

Differentiating between cycles

Cycle	Knowledge and understanding:
1 (Bachelor)	[is] supported by advanced text books [with] some aspects informed by knowledge at the forefront of their field of study ..
2 (Master)	provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing or applying ideas often in a research* context ..
3 (Doctorate)	[includes] a systematic understanding of their field of study and mastery of the methods of research* associated with that field ..

	Applying knowledge and understanding:
1 (Bachelor)	[through] devising and sustaining arguments
2 (Master)	[through] problem solving abilities [applied] in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts ..
3 (Doctorate)	[is demonstrated by the] ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research* with scholarly integrity .. [is in the context of] a contribution that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work some of which merits national or international referred publication ..

	Making judgements:
1 (Bachelor)	[involves] gathering and interpreting relevant data ..
2 (Master)	[demonstrates] the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete data ..
3 (Doctorate)	[requires being] capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas..

	Communication
1 (Bachelor)	[of] information, ideas, problems and solutions ..
2 (Master)	[of] their conclusions and the underpinning knowledge and rationale (restricted scope) to specialist and non-specialist audiences (monologue) ..
3 (Doctorate)	with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general (dialogue) about their areas of expertise (broad scope)..

	Learning skills ..
1 (Bachelor)	have developed those skills needed to study further with a high level of autonomy ..
2 (Master)	study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous..
3 (Doctorate)	expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement ..

Annex 1

List of Contributors to the Dublin Meeting on the Doctorate

Country	Name	Organisation	e-mail
Norway	Mrs. Tone Flovd Strøm	Ministry Ed & Res	tf@utd.dep.no
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Spain	Dra. Gemma Raurel	AQSU de Catalunya	direccion@aqucatalunya.org
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Ireland	Bryan Maguire	DLI/ADT	Bryan.Maguire@ialt.ie

ⁱ <http://www.isinquality.org/content/ireland/Shared%20descriptions%20fr%20Ma.doc>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crtrwork/nqf/nqf.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.soqf.org.uk>

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iv <http://www.ispa.ie>

v <http://www.vtu.dk/fsk/div/bologna/DanishQI/Report.pdf>

“ UKQGI: “The Structure of the Professional Doctorate” in “Professional Doctorates” 2002.

6 Specimen of the Europass Diploma
Supplement used by the University of Malta
& Specimen of the Europass
Certificate Supplement

Europass Undergraduate Diploma Supplement Sample 1



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
www.um.edu.mt



Europass Diploma Supplement

This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient information also to improve the international 'transparency' and for academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, content, career and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, appreciative statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.

1. Information Identifying the Holder of the Qualification

Surname:	XXXXXXXXXX	Name:	XXXXXXXXXX
Date of Birth:	XXXXXXXXXX	Student Code:	XXXXXXXXXXXX

2. Information Identifying the Qualification

Name of Qualification:	Bachelor of European Studies (Honours)
Main area/s of study:	European Studies with French
Awarding Institution:	University of Malta - The University traces its origins to 1592 and was founded as a state university in 1769. It is governed by the Education Act, 1988.
Institution Administering Studies (if different from above):	Not applicable
Language of Instruction / Examination:	English and French (for French area of study only)

3. Information on the Level of the Qualification

Level of Qualification:	First cycle
Official Duration of Programme:	3 years
Access Requirements:	The Matriculation Certificate (which comprises two subjects at Advanced Level and four subjects at Intermediate Level), including a pass at Advanced Level in English and a pass at Advanced Level at Grade C or better in French. Passes at grade 5 or better in the Secondary Education Certificate Examination in Maltese, English Language and Mathematics are also required, or qualifications considered by the University to be comparable.

4. Information on the Contents and Results Achieved

Mode of Study:	Full-time
Programme Requirements:	The European Studies programme adopts a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of European integration from the standpoint of economics, politics, history and law. It consists of compulsory, elective and optional study-units at levels 1, 2 and 3 including a supervised dissertation. 132 ECTS credits are obtained in European Studies being the main area of study of which 22 ECTS credits are for the dissertation, 16 ECTS credits are obtained in the subsidiary area of study and 12 ECTS credits as optional study-units.

Programme Details and Results:

Year	Code	Title of Study-Unit	ECTS Credits	% Marks	Grade
2007/8	ARC1004	General Preliminary	8	48	D
2007/8	BHG1000	Introductory Environmental Science	2	53	D+
2007/8	ECN1011	Introductory Micro Economics	4	73	B+
2007/8	ECN1021	Introductory Macro Economics	4	47	D
2007/8	EST1010	The Theoretical Foundations of European Integration	4	38	CP
2007/8	EST1020	The Legal Order of the European Union	8	35	CP
2007/8	EST1030	Introduction to Comparative Politics of Europe	4	68	C+
2007/8	EST1031	Research Sources and Methods and Writing Styles	2	65	C+
2007/8	FRE1001	Linguistique Théorique 1	4	37	C
2007/8	FRE1002	Perfectionnement de la Langue	4	66	C+
2007/8	FRE1003	Initiation à la Traduction	2	76	B+
2007/8	FRE1004	Littérature Classique	4	60	C
2007/8	FRE1005	L'Auteur et la Société	4	65	C+
2007/8	FRE1006	Histoire de la France	6	65	C+
2007/8	FRE1007	Pratique de l'Oral et Initiation aux Spécialités de Français FLEB	2	64	C
2008/9	EST2010	Theories of International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis	4	54	D+
2008/9	EST2020	Contemporary European Security	4	40	CP
2008/9	EST2060	The Law of the Internal Market of the European Community	4	58	C
2008/9	EST2070	Competition Law of the European Community	4	42	CP
2008/9	EST2080	Biotechnology in Europe	4	69	C+
2008/9	EST2110	The History of European Integration	4	52	D+
2008/9	EST2140	Politics of the European Union	4	35	CP
2008/9	EST2150	Conflict Resolution in Contemporary Conflicts	4	67	C+
2008/9	EST2170	Malta in the European Union	4	46	D
2008/9	EST2180	The Political and Economic Theories of Small States	2	58	C
2008/9	EST2200	Contemporary Migration Issues Across the Mediterranean (History, Policy and International Law)	4	48	D
2008/9	FRE2001	Culture et Civilisation	6	64	C
2008/9	FRE2014	Linguistique Théorique 2	4	80	A
2008/9	FRE2012	Psychological Theories of Crime	4	83	A
2008/9	PHI1014	Political Philosophy	4	60	C
2009/0	ECN2210	Introduction to International Economics	4	63	C
2009/0	EST3010	The Economics of European Integration	4	50	D+
2009/0	EST3020	European Community Trade Policy	2	85	C+
2009/0	EST3030	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in the European Union	2	65	C+
2009/0	EST3040	Regional Development and the European Union Structural Funds	4	46	D
2009/0	EST3090	Euro-Mediterranean Relations	4	45	D+
2009/0	EST3100	Legal Safeguards for Human Rights in Europe	2	45	D+
2009/0	EST3120	Consumer Law and Policies in the European Union	2	48	D
2009/0	EST3130	European Environmental Law and Policy	2	71	B
2009/0	EST3150	European Union Policies and Political Dynamics	4	60	C
2009/0	EST3160	The Economic and Policy Aspects of Financial Services in the EU	4	45	D
2009/0	EST3170	External Relations of the EU	4	61	C

Total Number of ECTS Credits Taken: 180

Total Number of ECTS Credits Awarded: 180

Grading Scheme:

Mark Range	Grade	Description	Mark Range	Grade	Description
95% - 100%	A+	Work of exceptional quality	45%	D*	Maximum grade obtainable following re-assessment
85% - 94%	A	Work of excellent quality	35% - 44%	CP	Compensated Pass (under certain conditions)
75% - 79%	B+	Work of very good quality		P	Pass (on Pass/Fail basis only)
70% - 74%	B	Work of good quality	0% - 44%	F	Unsatisfactory, failing work
65% - 69%	C+	Work of average quality	N/A	W	Approved Withdrawal from study-unit
55% - 64%	C	Work of fair quality			
50% - 54%	D+	Work of rather low quality			
45% - 49%	D	Marginal Pass			

Award Achieved: Bachelor of European Studies (Honours)

Classification: Second Class Honours (Lower Division)

Date of Commencement: 1 October 2007

Date of Award: 3 December 2010

5. Information on the Function of the Qualification

Access to Further Study: Holders of this degree are eligible to register for second cycle programmes leading to Master's degrees.

Professional Status: Not applicable

6. Additional Information

Additional Information: Holders of this degree are "specialised generalists" in European Union studies. They may find work opportunities in the public service, the EU institutions, the diplomatic service, international organisations, private firms and the media and broadly speaking in areas where a good knowledge of the EU and its workings are considered a useful asset.

Further Information Sources:

- University of Malta website: <http://www.um.edu.mt/>
- General Regulations for University Undergraduate Awards, 2004: <http://www.um.edu.mt/registrar/regulations/general/undergradreg-09>
- Bachelor of European Studies (Honours) and Bachelor of European Studies Bye-Laws, 2002: <http://www.um.edu.mt/registrar/regulations/faculties/ides/besrbh-02-2005>
- EDRC website: <http://www.um.edu.mt/edrc/>

7. Certification of the Diploma Supplement

Date of Issue: 3 December 2018

Signature:

Name: Yvonne Grech

Official Post: Registrar

Official Stamp:



8. Information on the National Education System - Malta

Education in Malta at all levels is governed by the Education Act, 1988 and is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family.

Students access higher education institutions following thirteen years of schooling, of which six years of compulsory primary education, five years of compulsory secondary education and two years of post-secondary education (optional). If in possession of the Matriculation Certificate (consisting of two subjects at Advanced Level and three subjects at Intermediate Level including Systems of Knowledge), they may join the University of Malta which offers programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral degree levels (first, second and third cycling).

Students may also join two institutions offering post-compulsory education/vocational studies namely, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (which offers courses at ISCED Levels 3 and 4 and comparable to standards set through the European Union Council Decision 85/369/EEC), and the Institute of Tourism Studies (which offers courses up to undergraduate diploma level). All institutions are largely funded by the Government of Malta.

University of Malta

The University of Malta traces its origins to the Collegium Melitense, set up in 1592. This Collegium was run by the Jesuit Order on lines similar to their other colleges established elsewhere in Europe. The Collegium was eventually empowered to confer the degrees of Magister Philosophiae and Doctor Divinitatis. After the expulsion of the Jesuit Order from Malta in 1768, during the reign of the Knights Hospitallers of St. John, Grand Master Pinto de Fonseca re-founded the institution as a State University in November 1769.

The Education Act of 1988 regulates the current setup and governance. The highest governing bodies of the University are its Council and Senate. The law empowers the University to develop its own courses and confer degrees and diplomas. These are referenced at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels 4 to 7. The University also confers doctoral degrees at MQF/EQF level 8.

The University is sensitive to the local economic, industrial and cultural development within a global context providing expertise and courses in numerous fields. The courses offered are designed to produce highly qualified professionals with experience in research, who will play key roles in industry, commerce and public affairs in general. Areas of study include architecture, engineering, humanities, communications, European studies, sciences, education, diplomatic studies, medicine and surgery, dental surgery, pharmacy, health sciences, accountancy, economics, management, law, theology, agriculture, and information and communication technology. There are currently over 10,000 students, including over 600 international students from some 80 different countries, following full-time and part-time degree and diploma courses. Over 2,600 students graduate in various disciplines annually.

The University appoints its academic and administrative staff and admits students to its courses in accordance with previously published entry requirements. Academic standards are established and maintained by the institution itself using internal quality assurance procedures, which include the participation of external examiners from overseas universities.

60 ECTS credits are awarded for each full-time year of study split over two semesters. Modules are offered at different levels of study ranging from level 1 for undergraduate courses to level 3 for Master's programmes. Undergraduate first cycle degrees extend over three or four years of full-time study, with "short cycle" diplomas lasting one to one-and-a-half years. Second cycle qualifications include programmes leading to postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma and Master's degrees of between 60 and 120 ECTS credits, the norm being 90 ECTS credits, as well as the two courses leading to degrees in Medicine and Dental Surgery which follow the traditional pattern of five years of study. Third cycle doctoral research degrees lasting at least

three years of full-time study are also offered.

The University of Malta has provisions for the award of collaborative joint or dual degrees with other universities. In such cases, programmes are offered and degrees are awarded as laid down in agreements reached with partner universities.

Classification of Awards

Undergraduate first cycle degrees are awarded as follows:

- 100% - 80% Category I / First Class Honours
- 79% - 70% Category II A / Upper Second Class Honours
- 69% - 50% Category III / Lower Second Class Honours
- 49% - 45% Category III / Third Class Honours

Undergraduate short cycle diplomas are awarded as follows:

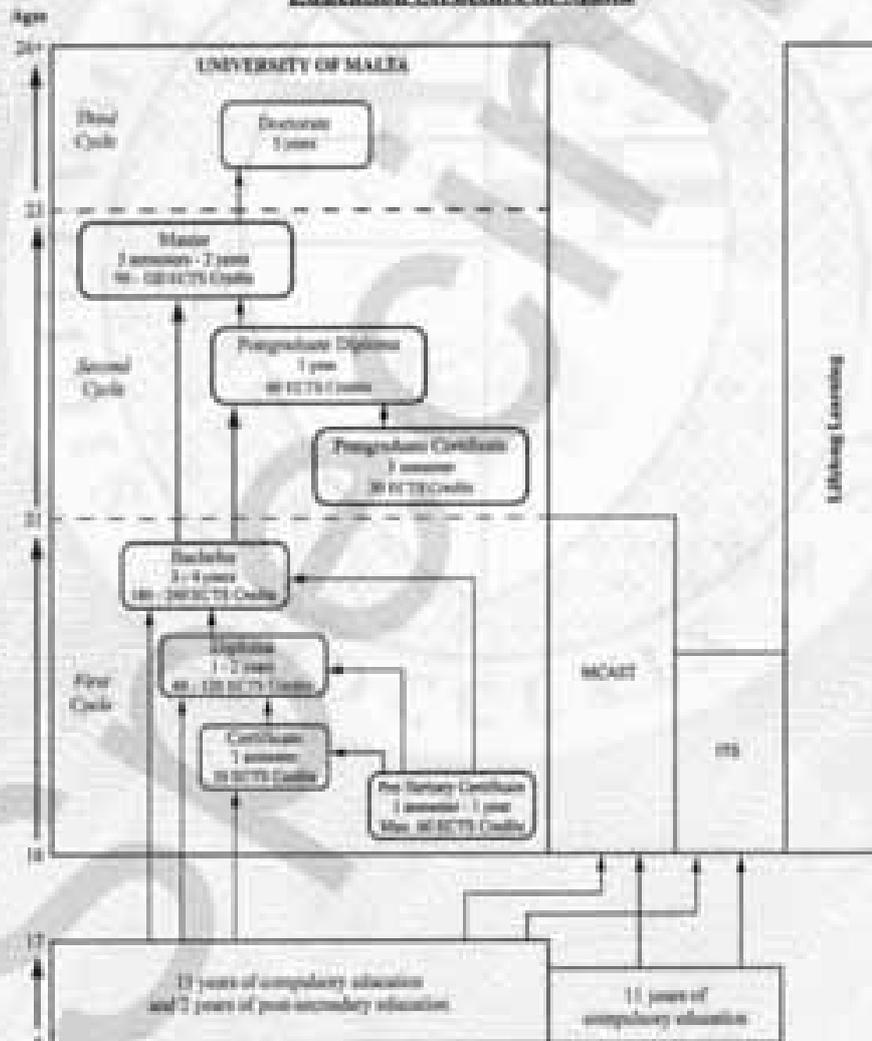
From October 2008 onwards:

- 80 - 100% Pass with Distinction
- 70 - 79% Pass with Merit
- 50 - 69% Pass

For courses commencing prior to September 2008:

- over 80% Pass with Distinction
- below 80% Pass

Education Structure in Malta



05/04/2010

Europass Undergraduate Diploma Supplement Sample 2



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Europass Diploma Supplement

This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/EFMD. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international transparency and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (degrees, diplomas, certificate etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, content, context and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by its holder(s) based on the original qualification to which the supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, qualitative comments or judgements about recognition. Information on all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.

1. Information Identifying the Holder of the Qualification

Surname:	XXXXXXXXXX	Name:	XXXXXXXXXX
Date of Birth:	XXXXXXXXXX	Student Code:	XXXXXXXXXX

2. Information Identifying the Qualification

Name of Qualification:	Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)
Main area/s of study:	Psychology
Awarding Institution:	University of Malta - The University traces its origins to 1592 and was founded as a state university in 1769. It is governed by the Education Act, 1988.
Institution Administering Studies (if different from above):	Not applicable
Language of Instruction / Examination:	English

3. Information on the Level of the Qualification

Level of Qualification:	First cycle
Official Duration of Programme:	3 years
Access Requirements:	The Matriculation Certificate (which comprises two subjects at Advanced Level and four subjects at Intermediate Level), including an Intermediate Level pass at Grade C or better in Biology. Passes at Grade 3 or better in the Secondary Education Certificate Examination in Maltese, English Language and Mathematics are also required; or qualifications considered by the University to be comparable.

4. Information on the Contents and Results Achieved

Mode of Study:	Full-time
Programme Requirements:	The course is made up of 180 ECTS credits assigned to various study-units in the following areas: Core Psychology, Psychology Related Areas, Research (including a dissertation), Developmental, Neuro-cognitive Psychology, Clinical, Counselling, Health, Social, Organisational, and Symposia in Psychology.

Programme Details and Results:

Year	Code	Title of Study-Unit	ECTS Credits	% Marks	Grade
2007/8	PHI2014	Attending Seminars/Conferences on Sport and/or Physical Education	2	70	B
2007/8	PHI1103	Philosophical Anthropology: Action and Perception	4	77	C
2007/8	PSY1403	Developing Basic Attitudes	6	88	C+
2007/8	PSY1406	Social Psychology	6	82	C
2007/8	PSY1410	Major Paradigms in Psychology (Part 1)	4	77	C
2007/8	PSY1411	Major Paradigms in Psychology (Part 2)	4	74	C
2007/8	PSY1412	Research Methods in Psychology	4	74	D+
2007/8	PSY1413	Developmental Psychology I	4	69	C+
2007/8	PSY1414	Developmental Psychology II	4	83	D+
2007/8	PSY1416	History of Psychology	2	45	D
2007/8	PSY1417	Biological Psychology I	4	82	A
2007/8	PSY1418	Biological Psychology 2	4	58	C
2007/8	SOC1008	Introduction to Applied Sociology	4	69	C+
2007/8	SOC1009	Cultural Dynamics: Sociological Insights on Youth's Culture	4	54	C
2008/9	EXT1200	Psicologia del lavoro e delle organizzazioni	6	95	A+
2008/9	EXT1201	Disabilità cognitive	8	95	A+
2008/9	EXT1202	Il questionario nella ricerca e nelle applicazioni	4	76	B+
2008/9	EXT1203	Psicologia clinica	4	72	B
2008/9	EXT1204	Antropologia culturale	4	85	A
2008/9	EXT1205	Psicologia della famiglia	4	78	B+
2008/9	PSY2403	Health Psychology	4	69	C+
2008/9	PSY2410	Psychopathology	4	58	C
2008/9	PSY2414	Psychology and Criminal Behaviour	2	63	C+
2008/9	PSY2423	Helping and Facilitation Skills	6	71	B
2008/9	PSY2426	Psychology of Sexuality	2	53	D+
2008/9	PSY3143	Writing and Argumentation Skills	4	60	C
2008/9	PSY3610	Psychology of Small Groups	2	64	C
2009/0	PSY2424	Psycho-Social Support Services in Malta	4	83	A
2009/0	PSY3130	Psychology of Adjustment	2	80	A
2009/0	PSY3404	Psychotherapeutic Methods	6	78	B+
2009/0	PSY3416	Psychology of Ageing and Rehabilitation	4	76	B+
2009/0	PSY3423	Career Education and Guidance	4	62	C
2009/0	PSY3429	Psychometrics and Psychological Assessment	6	73	B
2009/0	PSY3430	Ethical and Professional Issues	4	74	D+
2009/0	PSY3441	Dissertation: An Exploratory Study on the Performance, in Verbal and Visuo-spatial (Short Term Memory), of children with Down Syndrome - A Quantitative Study	12	73	B+
2009/0	PSY3442	Symptoms in Psychology	8	53	C
2009/0	PSY3443	Cognitive Neuroscience	6	66	C+
2009/0	PSY3444	Child and Adolescent Psychopathology	6	72	B
2009/0	PSY3445	Selected Topics in Psychology I	2	0	W
2009/0	THE1500	Introduction to Italian	2	80	A
2009/0	THE1501	Introduction to Islam	2	43	D+

EXT Study-Units followed at Università degli Studi di Padova, Italy.

Total Number of ECTS Credits Taken: 180

Total Number of ECTS Credits Awarded: 180

Grading Scheme:

Mark Range	Grade	Description	Mark Range	Grade	Description
95% - 100%	A+	Work of exceptional quality	45%	DT	Maximum grade obtainable following re-assessment
90% - 94%	A	Work of excellent quality		CP	Compensated Pass (under certain conditions)
75% - 79%	B+	Work of very good quality	35% - 44%	F	Fail (on Pass/Fail basis only)
70% - 74%	B	Work of good quality		F	Unsatisfactory, failing work
65% - 69%	C+	Work of average quality	N/A	W	Approved Withdrawal from study-unit
60% - 64%	C	Work of fair quality	0% - 44%		
50% - 54%	D+	Work of rather low quality	N/A		
45% - 49%	D	Marginal Pass			

Award Achieved: Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)

Classification: Second Class Honours (Upper Division)

Date of Commencement: 1 October 2007

Date of Award: 8 December 2010

5. Information on the Function of the Qualification

Access to Further Study: Holders of this degree are eligible to register for second cycle programmes leading to Master's degrees.

Professional Status: Not applicable

6. Additional Information

Additional Information: The programme of study is intended primarily as a preparatory programme prior to professional psychology training. However, holders of this degree can pursue career opportunities in human service agencies, personnel management, or psychological work under the supervision of a qualified psychologist.

DGP - DegreePlus is a University of Malta initiative launched in 2007/8 aimed at providing all students with the opportunity to augment their academic studies with additional skills, competences and experiences that can enhance their character and employability. DegreePlus activities are intended to provide students with the opportunity to enjoy a more holistic approach to formal education whilst enhancing their career prospects. Participation is on a voluntary basis.

Further Information Sources:

- University of Malta website: <http://www.um.edu.mt/>
- General Regulations for University Undergraduate Awards, 2004: http://www.um.edu.mt/register/regulations/general_honours/underg-04
- Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) Bye-Laws, 2007: <http://www.um.edu.mt/register/regulations/faculties/coloc/psych-07>
- Faculty of Education website: <http://www.um.edu.mt/edat>

7. Certification of the Diploma Supplement

Date of Issue: 6 December 2010

Signatory:

Name: Veneria Grech

Official Post: Registrar

Official Stamp:



8. Information on the National Education System - Malta

Education in Malta at all levels is governed by the Education Act, 1988 and is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family.

Students access higher education institutions following thirteen years of schooling, of which six years of compulsory primary education, five years of compulsory secondary education and two years of post-secondary education (optional). If in possession of the Matriculation Certificate (consisting of two subjects at Advanced Level and three subjects at Intermediate Level including Systems of Knowledge), they may join the University of Malta which offers programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral degree levels (first, second and third cycles).

Students may also join two institutions offering post-compulsory education vocational studies namely, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (which offers courses at ISCED Levels 3 and 4 and comparable to standards set through the European Union Council Decision 15/185/EEC), and the Institute of Tourism Studies (which offers courses up to undergraduate diploma level). All institutions are largely funded by the Government of Malta.

University of Malta

The University of Malta traces its origins to the Collegium Malitanum, set up in 1592. This Collegium was run by the Jesuit Order on lines similar to their other colleges established elsewhere in Europe. The Collegium was eventually empowered to confer the degrees of Magister Philosophiae and Doctor Divinitatis. After the expulsion of the Jesuit Order from Malta in 1768, during the reign of the Knights Hospitallers of St John, Grand Master Pinto de Fonseca re-founded the institution as a State University in November 1768.

The Education Act of 1988 regulates the current setup and governance. The highest governing bodies of the University are its Council and Senate. The law empowers the University to develop its own courses and confer degrees and diplomas. These are referenced at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels 4 to 7. The University also confers doctoral degrees at MQF/EQF level 8.

The University is sensitive to the local economic, industrial and cultural development within a global context providing expertise and courses in numerous fields. The courses offered are designed to produce highly qualified professionals with experience in research, who will play key roles in industry, commerce and public affairs in general. Areas of study include architecture, engineering, humanities, communications, European studies, sciences, education, diplomatic studies, medicine and surgery, dental surgery, pharmacy, health sciences, accountancy, economics, management, law, theology, agriculture, and information and communication technology. There are currently over 16,000 students, including over 600 international students from some 80 different countries, following full-time and part-time degree and diploma courses. Over 2,000 students graduate in various disciplines annually.

The University appoints its academic and administrative staff and admits students to its courses in accordance with previously published entry requirements. Academic standards are established and maintained by the institution staff using internal quality assurance procedures, which include the participation of external examiners from overseas universities.

60 ECTS credits are awarded for each full-time year of study split over two semesters. Modules are offered at different levels of study ranging from level 1 for undergraduate courses to level 3 for Master's programmes. Undergraduate first cycle degrees extend over three or five years of full-time study, with 'short cycle' diplomas lasting one to one-and-a-half years. Second cycle qualifications include programmes leading to postgraduate certificates, postgraduate diplomas and Master's degrees of between 60 and 120 ECTS credits, the norm being 90 ECTS credits, as well as the two courses leading to degrees in Medicine and Dental Surgery which follow the traditional pattern of five years of study. Third cycle doctoral research degrees lasting at least

three years of full-time study are also offered.

The University of Malta has provisions for the award of collaborative joint or dual degrees with other universities. In such cases, programmes are offered and degrees are awarded as laid down in agreements reached with partner universities.

Classification of Awards

Undergraduate first cycle degrees are awarded as follows:

- 100% - 80% Category I / First Class Honours
- 79% - 70% Category II/A / Upper Second Class Honours
- 69% - 55% Category II/B / Lower Second Class Honours
- 54% - 48% Category III / Third Class Honours

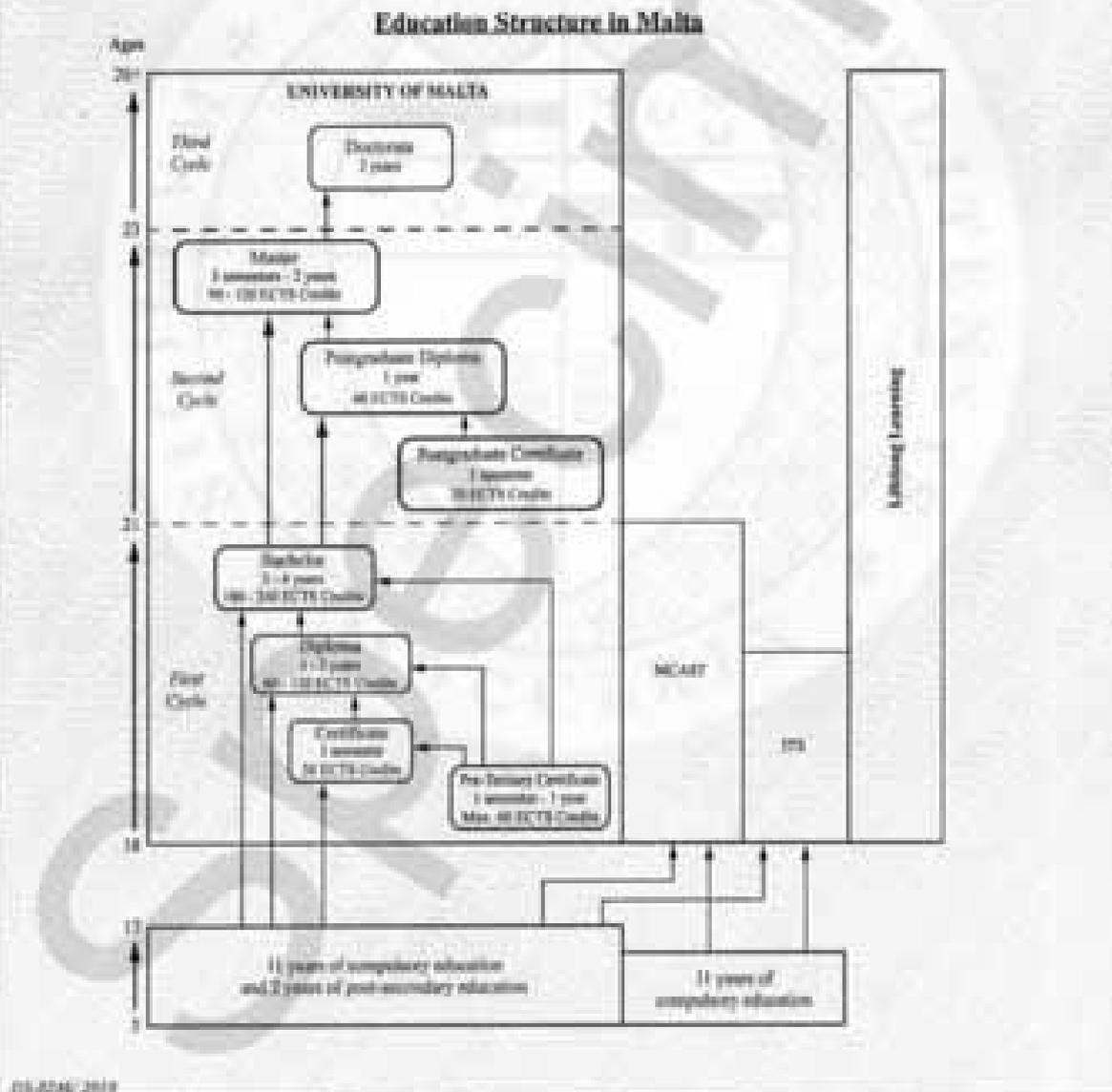
Undergraduate short cycle diplomas are awarded as follows:

From October 2008 onwards:

- 80 - 100% Pass with Distinction
- 70 - 79% Pass with Merit
- 50 - 69% Pass

For courses commencing prior to September 2008:

- over 80% Pass with Distinction
- below 80% Pass



05/2016/2019

Europass Postgraduate Diploma Supplement Sample 1



Europass Diploma Supplement

This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international transparency and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, content, context and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, equivalence assessments or suggestions about recognition. Information on all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.

1. Information Identifying the Holder of the Qualification	
Surname:	XXXXXXXXXX
Date of Birth:	XXXXXXXXXX
Name:	XXXXXXXXXX
Student Code:	XXXXXXXXXX
2. Information Identifying the Qualification	
Name of Qualification:	Master of Science in Pharmacy
Main area/s of study:	Pharmacy
Awarding Institution:	University of Malta - The University traces its origins to 1592 and was founded as a state university in 1789. It is governed by the Education Act, 1988.
Institution Administering Studies (if different from above):	Not applicable
Language of Instruction / Examination:	English
3. Information on the Level of the Qualification	
Level of Qualification:	Second cycle
Official Duration of Programme:	3 semesters
Access Requirements:	The Course is open to applicants in possession of a Bachelor degree in Pharmacy with at least Second Class Honours, or a Bachelor degree with at least Second Class Honours in any other relevant area of study, or the degree of Doctor of Medicine and Surgery obtained at least two years prior to registration in the Course, or the degree of Bachelor of Dental Surgery; or a Bachelor degree in Pharmacy or in any other area, obtained with Third Class Honours, if they are also in possession of other qualifications, including relevant experience, obtained following the first cycle degree.
4. Information on the Contents and Results Achieved	
Mode of Study:	Full-time (Taught and Research)
Programme Requirements:	The programme of study comprises study-units to which a total of 90 ECTS credits are assigned, of which 60 ECTS credits are assigned to the taught study-units and 30 ECTS credits are assigned to the dissertation study-unit.

Programme Details and Results:

Year	Code	Title of Study-Unit	ECTS Credits	% Marks	Grade
2008/9	PHR3001	Research Methodology	5	67	C
2008/9	PHR3002	Placement	20		F
2008/9	PHR3004	Introduction to Pharmacoeconomics	5	72	B
2008/9	PHR3005	Introduction to Industrial Pharmacy	5	73	B
2008/9	PHR3006	Introduction to Clinical Pharmacy	5	78	B
2009/0	PHR3003	Dissertation: The Pharmaceutical Cost of Ageing	20	75	B
2009/0	PHR3009	Specialisation in Pharmacoeconomics	20	73	B

Total Number of ECTS Credits Taken: 90

Total Number of ECTS Credits Awarded: 90

Grading Scheme:

Mark Range	Grade	Description	Mark Range	Grade	Description
80% - 100%	A	Work of excellent quality	43%	E*	Maximum grade obtainable following re-assessment
70% - 79%	B	Work of very good quality	N/A	F	Fail (on Pass/Fail basis only)
55% - 69%	C	Work of good quality	37% - 44%	F	Unsatisfactory, failing work
50% - 54%	D	Work of fair but below average quality	N/A	W	Approved Withdrawal from study-unit
47% - 49%	E	Work of marginal quality			

Award Achieved: Master of Science in Pharmacy

Classification: Merit

Date of Commencement: 1 October 2008

Date of Award: 23 November 2010

f. Information on the Function of the Qualification

Access to Further Study: Holders of this degree are eligible to register for third cycle programmes leading to a Doctoral degree.

Professional Status: Not applicable

g. Additional Information

Additional Information: Not applicable

Further Information Sources:

- University of Malta website: <http://www.um.edu.mt/>
- General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards, 2008: http://www.um.edu.mt/register/regulations/general/postgraduate_barristerhood_regulations
- Master of Science in Pharmacy Bye-Laws, 2009: <http://www.um.edu.mt/register/regulations/faculties/medicine/msc-phi-01>
- Faculty of Medicine and Surgery website: <http://www.um.edu.mt/fms>
- Department of Pharmacy website: <http://www.um.edu.mt/ta/pharmacy/>

7. Certification of the Diploma Supplement

Date of Issue: 23 November 2010

Signature: 

Name: Verónica Grech

Official Post: Registrar

Official Stamp:



8. Information on the National Education System - Malta

Education in Malta at all levels is governed by the Education Act, 1988 and is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family.

Students access higher education institutions following thirteen years of schooling, of which six years of compulsory primary education, five years of compulsory secondary education and two years of post-secondary education (optional). If in possession of the Matriculation Certificate (consisting of two subjects at Advanced Level and three subjects at Intermediate Level including Systems of Knowledge), they may join the University of Malta which offers programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral degree levels (first, second and third cycles).

Students may also join two institutions offering post-compulsory education vocational studies namely, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (which offers courses at ISCED Levels 3 and 4 and comparable to standards set through the European Union Council Decision 85/315/EEC), and the Institute of European Studies (which offers courses up to undergraduate diploma level). All institutions are largely funded by the Government of Malta.

University of Malta

The University of Malta traces its origins to the Collegium Melitense, set up in 1592. This Collegium was run by the Jesuit Order on lines similar to their other colleges established elsewhere in Europe. The Collegium was eventually empowered to confer the degrees of Magister Philosophiae and Doctor Divinitatis. After the expulsion of the Jesuit Order from Malta in 1764, during the reign of the Knights Hospitallers of St John, Grand Master Pinto de Fonseca re-founded the institution as a State University in November 1764.

The Education Act of 1988 regulates the current setup and governance. The highest governing bodies of the University are its Council and Senate. The law empowers the University to develop its own courses and confer degrees and diplomas. These are recognised at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels 4 to 7. The University also confers doctoral degrees at MQF/EQF level 8.

The University is sensitive to the local economic, industrial and cultural development within a global context providing expertise and courses in numerous fields. The courses offered are designed to produce highly qualified professionals with experience in research, who will play key roles in industry, commerce and public affairs in general. Areas of study include architecture, engineering, humanities, communications, European studies, sciences, education, diplomatic studies, medicine and surgery, dental surgery, pharmacy, health sciences, accountancy, economics, management, law, theology, agriculture, and information and communication technology. There are currently over 18,000 students, including over 600 international students from some 80 different countries, following full-time and part-time degree and diploma courses. Over 2,600 students graduate in various disciplines annually.

The University appoints its academic and administrative staff and admits students to its courses in accordance with previously published entry requirements. Academic standards are established and maintained by the institution itself using internal quality assurance procedures, which include the participation of external examiners from overseas universities.

60 ECTS credits are awarded for each full-time year of study split over two semesters. Modules are offered at different levels of study ranging from level 1 for undergraduate courses to level 3 for Master's programmes. Undergraduate first cycle degrees extend over three or four years of full-time study, with 'short cycle' diplomas lasting one to one-and-a-half years. Second cycle qualifications include programmes leading to postgraduate certificates, postgraduate diplomas and Master's degrees of between 60 and 120 ECTS credits, the norm being 90 ECTS credits, as well as the two courses leading to degrees in Medicine and Dental Surgery which follow the traditional pattern of five years of study. Third cycle doctoral research degrees lasting at least three years of full-time study are also offered.

The University of Malta has provisions for the award of collaborative joint or dual degrees with other universities. In such cases, programmes are offered and degrees are awarded as laid down in agreements reached with partner universities.

Classification of Awards

Postgraduate diplomas and Master's are awarded as follows:

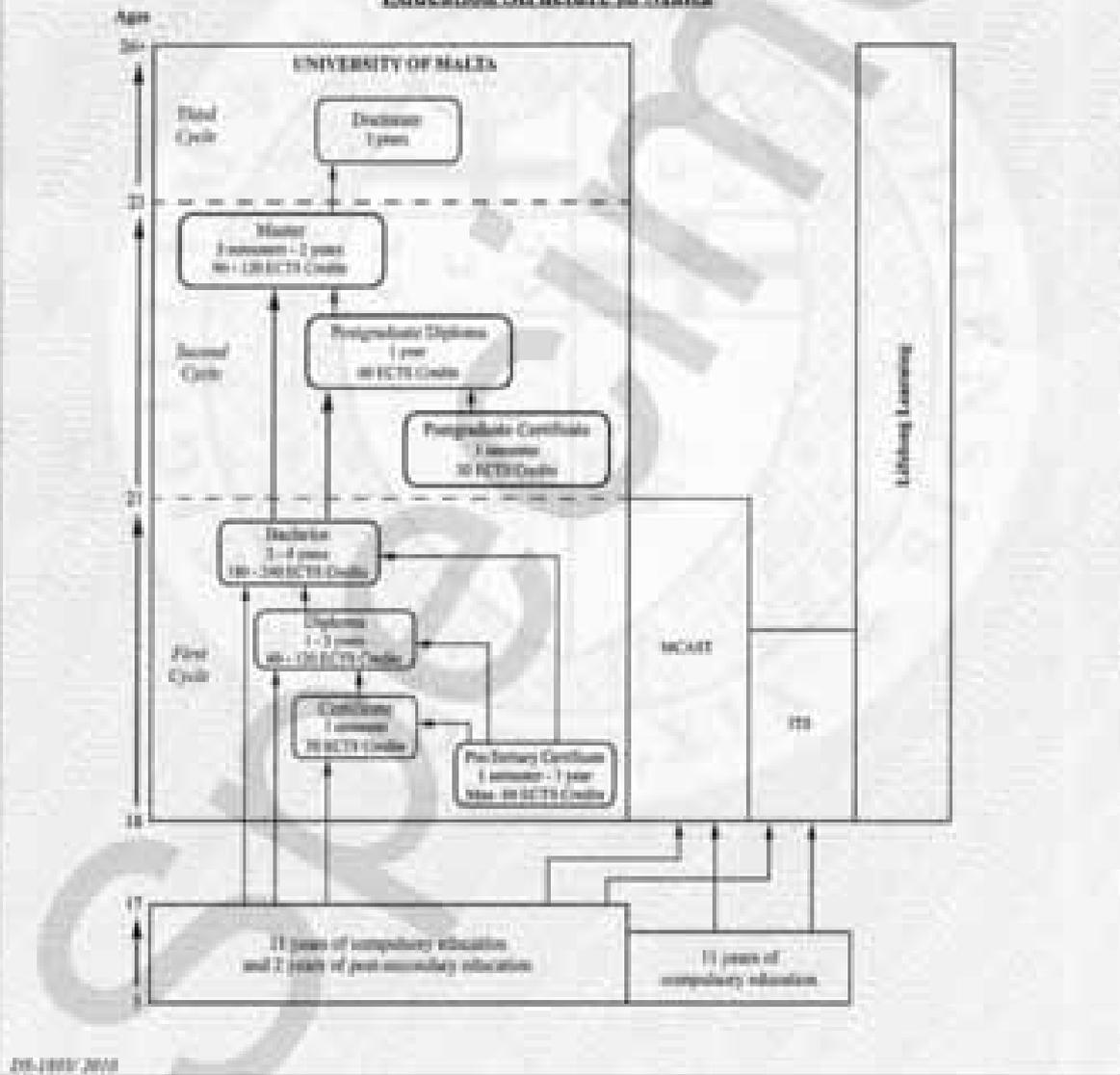
From October 2008 onwards

80 - 100% Pass with Distinction
 70 - 79% Pass with Merit
 50 - 69% Pass

For courses commencing prior to September 2008

over 80% Pass with Distinction
 below 80% Pass

Education Structure in Malta



Europass Postgraduate Diploma Supplement Sample 2



Europass Diploma Supplement

This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to ensure the international transparency and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, content, context, status and nature of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, appreciations, assessments or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.

1. Information identifying the Holder of the Qualification	
Surname(s):	XXXXXXXXXX
Date of Birth:	XXXXXXXXXX
Name:	XXXXXXXXXX
Student Code:	XXXXXXXXXX
2. Information identifying the Qualification	
Name of Qualification:	Master in Creativity and Innovation
Main areas of study:	Creativity and Innovation
Awarding Institution:	University of Malta - The University traces its origins to 1592 and was founded as a state university in 1768. It is governed by the Education Act, 1988.
Institution Administering Studies (if different from above):	Not applicable
Language of Instruction / Examination:	English
3. Information on the Level of the Qualification	
Level of Qualification:	Second cycle
Official Duration of Programme:	2 semesters
Access Requirements:	Applicants must be in possession of a Bachelor's degree from the University of Malta, or an equivalent qualification obtained from any other recognised university.
4. Information on the Contents and Results Achieved	
Mode of Study:	Full-time (Taught and Research)
Programme Requirements:	The programme of study comprises study-units to which a total of 90 ECTS credits are assigned, of which 60 ECTS credits are assigned to taught study-units and 30 ECTS credits assigned to the dissertation.

Programme Details and Results:

Year	Code	Title of Study-Unit	ECTS Credits	% Marks	Grade
2008/9	IoT5004	Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods	6	60	C
2008/9	IoT5006	Enhancing Business Performance through Strategic Interactive Design	4	80	A
2008/9	IoT5007	Foresight Techniques for Creativity and Innovation	4	58	C
2008/9	IoT5011	Creativity and Innovation in the Media	4	68	C
2008/9	IoT5019	Creativity: Idea Generation, Methods and Applications	10	67	C
2008/9	IoT5020	Entrepreneurship: Innovation and Foresight in Practice	8	80	A
2008/9	IoT5021	Strategic Marketing and Creative Decision Making	4	78	B
2008/9	IoT5023	Creativity, Innovation and New Digital Technologies	6	70	B
2008/9	IoT5024	Creativity: Psychological Perspectives	4	70	B
2008/9	IoT5025	Innovation Diffusion: Selection, Complexity and Probability Dynamics	4	70	B
2008/9	IoT5026	Innovation in Organisations	4	69	C
2009/0	IoT5031	Dissertation: Opportunity Identification and Exploitation among Established Entrepreneurs - Habitual Heuristics or Cognitive Creativity	30	78	B

Total Number of ECTS Credits Taken: 90

Total Number of ECTS Credits Awarded: 90

Grading Scheme:

Mark Range	Grade	Description	Mark Range	Grade	Description
80% - 100%	A	Work of excellent quality	45%	E*	Maximum grade obtainable following re-assessment
70% - 79%	B	Work of very good quality	N/A	F	Fail (on Pass/Fail basis only)
60% - 69%	C	Work of good quality	0% - 44%	F	Unsatisfactory, failing work
50% - 54%	D	Work of fair but below average quality	N/A	W	Approved Withdrawal from study-unit
40% - 49%	E	Work of marginal quality			

Award Achieved: Master in Creativity and Innovation

Classification: Merit

Date of Commencement: 1 October 2008

Date of Award: 24 November 2010

5. Information on the Function of the Qualification

Access to Further Study: Holders of this degree are eligible to register for third cycle programmes leading to a Doctoral degree

Professional Status: Not applicable

6. Additional Information

Additional Information: The Master in Creativity and Innovation is based on a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach that investigates the conceptual and theoretical foundations of creativity and innovation. It is presently undergoing a profound transformation in that it is questioning deeply held assumptions and challenging traditional thinking on the subject.

Further Information Sources:

- University of Malta website: <http://www.um.edu.mt>
- General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards, 2008: http://www.um.edu.mt/registrar/regulations/general/postgraduate_harmonised_regulations
- Master in Creativity and Innovation Bye-Laws, 2009: http://www.um.edu.mt/registrar/regulations/faculties/education-creativity_and_innovation-2009
- The Edward de Bono Institute for the Design & Development of Thinking website: <http://www.um.edu.mt/innovate>

7. Certification of the Diploma Supplement

Date of Issue: 24 November 2010

Signature: 

Name: Veronica Grech

Official Post: Registrar

Official Stamp:



8. Information on the National Education System - Malta

Education in Malta at all levels is governed by the Education Act, 1988 and is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family.

Students access higher education institutions following thirteen years of schooling, of which six years of compulsory primary education, five years of compulsory secondary education and two years of post-secondary education (optional). If in possession of the Matriculation Certificate (consisting of two subjects at Advanced Level and three subjects at Intermediate Level including Systems of Knowledge), they may join the University of Malta which offers programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral degree levels (first, second and third cycles).

Students may also join two institutions offering post-compulsory education vocational studies namely, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (which offers courses at INCED Levels 3 and 4 and comparable to standards set through the European Union Council Decision ES/JEM/EC), and the Institute of Tourism Studies (which offers courses up to undergraduate diploma level). All institutions are largely funded by the Government of Malta.

University of Malta

The University of Malta traces its origins to the Collegium Malitanum, set up in 1592. This Collegium was run by the Jesuit Order on lines similar to their other colleges established elsewhere in Europe. The Collegium was eventually empowered to confer the degrees of Magister Philosophiae and Doctor Divinitatis. After the expulsion of the Jesuit Order from Malta in 1768, during the reign of the Knights Hospitallers of St John, Grand Master Pinto de Fonseca re-founded the institution as a State University in November 1769.

The Education Act of 1988 regulates the current setup and governance. The highest governing bodies of the University are its Council and Senate. The law empowers the University to develop its own courses and confer degrees and diplomas. These are referenced at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels 4 to 7. The University also confers doctoral degrees at MQF/EQF level 8.

The University is sensitive to the local economic, industrial and cultural development within a global context providing expertise and courses in numerous fields. The courses offered are designed to produce highly qualified professionals with experience in research, who will play key roles in industry, commerce and public affairs in general. Areas of study include architecture, engineering, humanities, communications, European studies, sciences, education, diplomatic studies, medicine and surgery, dental surgery, pharmacy, health sciences, accountancy, economics, management, law, theology, agriculture, and

information and communication technology. There are currently over 10,000 students, including over 600 international students from some 80 different countries, following full-time and part-time degree and diploma courses. Over 2,000 students graduate in various disciplines annually.

The University appoints its academic and administrative staff and admits students to its courses in accordance with previously published entry requirements. Academic standards are established and maintained by the institution itself using internal quality assurance procedures, which include the participation of external examiners from overseas universities.

60 ECTS credits are awarded for each full-time year of study split over two semesters. Modules are offered at different levels of study ranging from level 1 for undergraduate courses to level 5 for Master's programmes. Undergraduate first cycle degrees extend over three or four years of full-time study, with 'short cycle' diplomas lasting one to one-and-a-half years. Second cycle qualifications include programmes leading to postgraduate certificates, postgraduate diplomas and Master's degrees of between 60 and 120 ECTS credits, the norm being 90 ECTS credits, as well as the two courses leading to degrees in Medicine and Dental Surgery which follow the traditional pattern of five years of study. Third cycle doctoral research degrees lasting at least three years of full-time study are also offered.

The University of Malta has provisions for the award of collaborative joint or dual degrees with other universities. In such cases, programmes are offered and degrees are awarded as laid down in agreements reached with partner universities.

Classification of Awards

Postgraduate diplomas and Master's are awarded as follows:

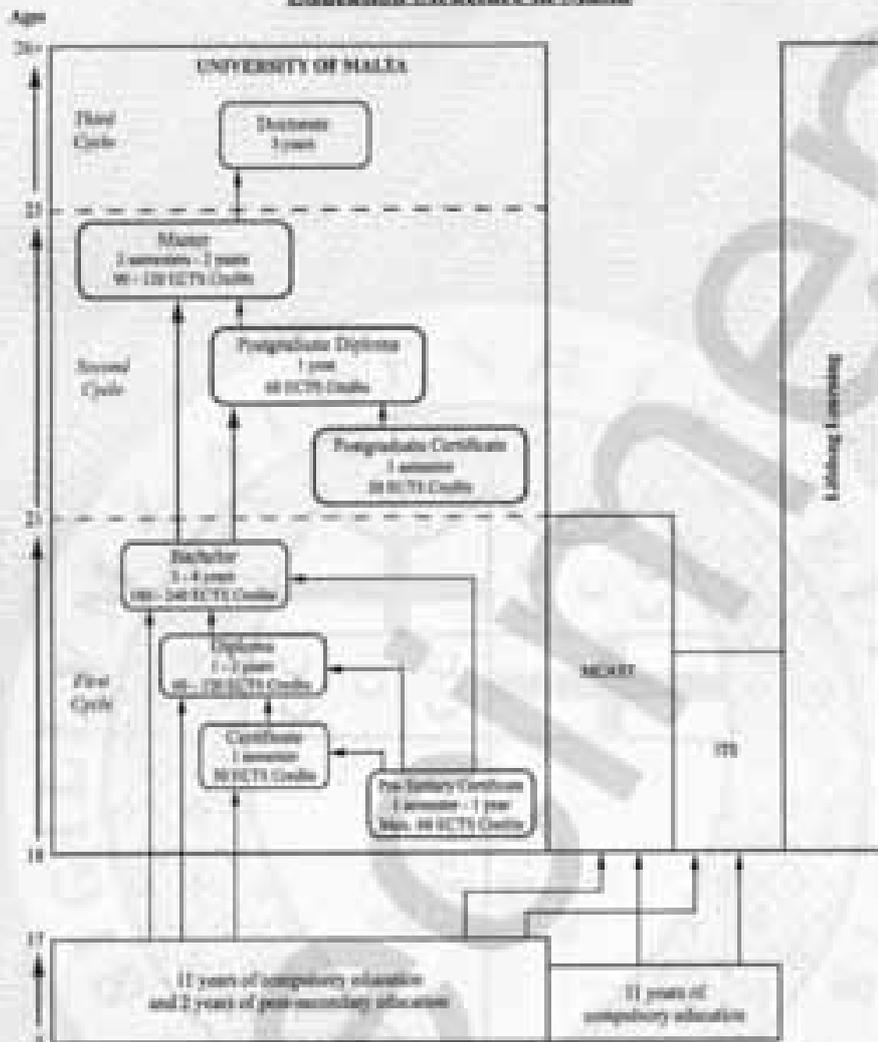
From October 2008 onwards:

80 - 100%	Pass with Distinction
70 - 79%	Pass with Merit
50 - 69%	Pass

For courses commencing prior to September 2008:

over 80%	Pass with Distinction
below 80%	Pass

Education Structure in Malta



2014/2015



Certificate Supplement

Guidelines to Develop a Certificate Supplement

2. TRANSLATED TITLE OF THE CERTIFICATE (EN)

This translation has no legal status

3. PROFILE OF SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

To be awarded this certificate the holder will have demonstrated formally through a process of assessment, administered both on and off the job, an ability to:

4. RANGE OF OCCUPATIONS ACCESSIBLE TO THE HOLDER OF THE CERTIFICATE

***Explanatory note:** This document is designed to provide additional information about the specified certificate and does not have any legal status in itself. The format of the description is based on the following texts: Council Resolution 93/C 49/01 of 3 December 1992 on the transparency of vocational training certificates, and Recommendation 2001/613/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 July 2001 on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers. More information on transparency is available at: www.cedefop.eu.int/transparency

5. OFFICIAL BASIS OF THE CERTIFICATE

<p>Name of the body awarding the certificate</p> <p>Malta Qualifications Council (MQC)</p> <p>MQC is the single statutory national awarding body for further education and training in Malta.</p>	<p>Name of the national authority providing accreditation/recognition of the certificate</p> <p>Malta Qualifications Council 16/18 Tower Promenade, St. Lucia, SLC1019, Malta Web: www.mqc.gov.mt Email: mqc@gov.mt</p>																																										
<p>MQF/EQF Level of the certificate</p>	<p>Grading scale/ Pass requirements</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Grade</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Range</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>A+</td> <td>95% - 100%</td> <td>Work of exceptional quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A</td> <td>80% - 94%</td> <td>Work of excellent quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B+</td> <td>75% - 79%</td> <td>Work of very good quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B</td> <td>70% - 74%</td> <td>Work of good quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C+</td> <td>65% - 69%</td> <td>Work of average quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C</td> <td>55% - 64%</td> <td>Work of fair quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D+</td> <td>50% - 54%</td> <td>Work of rather low quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>45% - 49%</td> <td>Marginal Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>45%</td> <td>Maximum grade obtainable following re-assessment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CP</td> <td>35%-44%</td> <td>Compensated Pass (under certain conditions)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>Pass (on Pass/Fail basis (only))</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F</td> <td>0%-44%</td> <td>Unsatisfactory, Failing Work</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>Approved withdrawal from study-unit</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	Range	Description	A+	95% - 100%	Work of exceptional quality	A	80% - 94%	Work of excellent quality	B+	75% - 79%	Work of very good quality	B	70% - 74%	Work of good quality	C+	65% - 69%	Work of average quality	C	55% - 64%	Work of fair quality	D+	50% - 54%	Work of rather low quality	D	45% - 49%	Marginal Pass	D	45%	Maximum grade obtainable following re-assessment	CP	35%-44%	Compensated Pass (under certain conditions)	P	N/A	Pass (on Pass/Fail basis (only))	F	0%-44%	Unsatisfactory, Failing Work	W	N/A	Approved withdrawal from study-unit
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6. OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED WAYS OF ACQUIRING THE CERTIFICATE

Background to Europass

Europass was established in 2004 by a decision of the European Parliament and the Council on a single transparency framework for qualifications and competences. Europass aims to facilitate the mobility of European learners and workers by making their skills and qualifications more easily understood.

Europass consists of a portfolio of five standardized documents:

- Europass Curriculum Vitae
- Europass Language Passport
- Europass Mobility
- Europass Diploma Supplement
- Europass Certificate Supplement

Each of the documents has been designed in such a way as to help people chronicle their skill and competences in a coherent manner, whether they are planning to enroll in a programme of education and training, looking for a job, or getting experience abroad.

What is the Europass Certificate Supplement?

The document that you are currently reading is a Europass Certificate Supplement. It is made available to individuals who hold a further education and reading award certificate by the body that issued the award certificate.

The Europass Certificate Supplement aims to make the award certificate more easily understood, especially by employers and learning institutions by providing information that is additional to that provided on their award certificate. In the main, this information relates to-

- the awarding status of the body that issued the award
- the skills and competences acquired by ALL holders of the award
- the level of the award in the national awarding system
- the typical entry requirements to programmes that lead to the award
- the typical employment of learning opportunities that are accessible to

The Malta Qualifications Council

The overall objective of MQC is to steer the development of the National Qualifications Framework and to oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies.

The Council also

- Promotes and maintains the National Qualifications Framework and establish policies and criteria on which the Framework shall be based;
- Approves and ensures the publication of national standards of knowledge, skills and competences and attitudes for each development sector;
- Endorses and ensures the publication of the procedures to be implemented by training agencies offering programmes of education and training for access, transfer and progression;
- Ensures that such standards and procedures are implemented;
- Endorses vocational education and training programmes delivered by training agencies;
- Endorses certificates awarded by training agencies;
- Keeps and issues official records of certification awarded.

MQC is governed by Members appointed by the Minister of Education and comprising representatives of training providers, trade unions, employers, the Ministry of Education, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education as well as the Employment and Training Corporation.

provided in the Europass Certificate Supplement?

The information provided in the Europass Certificate Supplement will benefit award holders, employers, education and training providers and guidance counselors:

- award holders will be able to communicate their qualification and competences in an effective way
- employers will find the qualifications and competences of job-seekers easier to understand
- education and training providers and guidance counselors will find it easier to provide accurate advice to award holders regarding suitable learning opportunities

The Malta Qualifications Framework

Malta launched its overarching NQF for lifelong learning in June 2007, encompassing all levels of formal, informal and non-formal education and training. It is governed by Legal Notice 347 of October 2005 which will be subsequently amended to reflect the development of the MQF.

The Malta Qualifications Framework addresses the following issues:

- Valuing All Formal, Informal and Non-Formal Learning;
- Parity of Esteem of qualifications from different learning pathways including vocational and professional degrees and academic programmes of studies;
- Access and Progression;
- Lifelong Learning; and
- Mobility

A NQF provides a solution through its referencing to the EQF, as training providers are willing to reform their system in exchange for a wider market base, social partners are involved in the design of qualifications which are learning outcomes based and demand-driven and the learners have better chances for employability and mobility.

The Malta Qualifications Council hosts a unit on Standards and Qualifications. This unit has regular meetings with stakeholders on the required standards as pre-requisites which need to be fulfilled by a training provider to offer qualifications referenced to the MQF.

When the standards are in place MQC and the training provider sign a formal Protocol outlining level-rating of all qualifications.

The key role of all stakeholders including social partners is participation in the consultation process during the design, development and implementation of the MQF. Education and Training stakeholders and labour market stakeholders are responsible for the design of demand-driven and learning outcomes qualifications.

- Malta's NQF has 8 levels of qualifications and is compatible with the European Qualifications Framework and the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.
- Malta's NQF is based on the principle that levels of education and qualifications can be measured by what a person is capable of doing rather than by what an individual has been taught.
- The NQF is also a reference tool using the learning outcomes approach.
- The NQF is a common reference and translation device between various qualifications, qualifications systems (including sectoral qualifications frameworks) and levels.
- The NQF will place sectoral qualifications within a common agreed Framework of Qualifications.
- The National Qualifications Framework increases transparency of qualifications, recognition of learning outcomes and builds mutual trust among all stakeholders.
- Malta's National Qualifications Framework adheres

to the *Bologna* and *Copenhagen* processes and aims at attracting more individuals to learning experiences and to employability.

- The descriptors for higher education short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) developed by the Joint Quality Initiative as part of the *Bologna* process corresponds to the learning outcomes of Malta's NQF Level 5.
- The descriptors for the first, second and third cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area correspond to the learning outcomes of NQF levels 6, 7 and 8
- The NQF has a Vocational Education and Training Framework with five levels of qualifications from VET Level One to a VET Higher Diploma.
- Eight Key Competences (initially at Levels 1 to 3) whose level descriptors are in line with the EQF form an integral part of Malta's NQF and will facilitate mobility and progression of Malta's workforce.
- Informal and Non-formal education and training as well as the recognition of prior learning (RPL) will eventually form part of the national qualifications framework for lifelong learning.
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8	Doctoral Degree		8
7	Master's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate		7
6	Bachelor's Degree		6
5	Undergraduate Diploma Undergraduate Certificate Higher Education Certificate	VET Higher Diploma	vi
4	Matriculation Certificate Advanced Level Intermediate Level	VET Diploma	v
3	General Education Level 3 SEC Grade 1-5	VET Level 3	iv
2	General Education Level 2 SEC Grade 6-7 Secondary School Certificate and Profile (B)	VET Level 2	iii
1	General Education Level 1 Secondary School Certificate and Profile (A)	*VET Level 1	ii i

* VET stands for Vocational Education and Training

Annotations:

- * The National Qualifications Framework is designed in such a way as to be able to include diverse forms of qualifications not as yet covered by this Framework.
- (i) Attainment of the Basic Employment Passport together with either the Adult Skills Certificate or the MQC 8 Key Competences at level 1 are also considered as a Full VET Level 1 qualification.
- (ii) The MQC recommends that a Full VET Level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a Full Secondary School Certificate and Profile (A).
- (iii) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 4 SEC General Education Level 2 subjects grades 6 or 7 or a Secondary School Certificate and Profile (B) at MQF Level 2.
- (iv) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 3 Qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 6 SEC General Level subjects grades 1 to 5.
- (v) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 3 Advanced Level subjects.
- (vi) The University of Malta awards the Higher Education Certificate is awarded to students who do not complete a degree programme but have a minimum of 60 ECTS.

7 Malta Qualifications Council / National Commission for Higher Education (MQC/NCHE)

The Malta Qualifications Council was set up, in December 2005, to oversee the development of the National Qualifications Framework in the context of lifelong learning and to work in partnership with learners, employers and training and education providers to achieve and maintain excellence as a contribution towards the national effort for competitiveness.

MQC is committed to make the relationships between qualifications clearer and user friendly. It clarifies exit points and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors. It works towards increasing the opportunities for credit transfer.

Over time, it will help accredit informal and non-formal learning, help sectors to design qualifications framework which best fit into the National Qualifications Framework and establish an accreditation system across all qualifications based on credit transfer.

Since December 2010, the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) has also incorporated the National Commission for Higher Education. The MQC has its own board which has also joined the NCHE's board. The Chief Executive Officer attends the joint board meetings. The Malta Qualifications Council is split

MQC premises



into six main departments namely the Office of the Mutual Recognition Coordinator, the Communications Department, Finance and Administration, the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC), the Department of Standards and Qualifications and the Department of Assessment and Accreditation.

The NCHE works closely with all institutions, staff and student representatives, authorities, in particular the Ministry of Education “to promote more and better further and higher education to empower all students with knowledge and skills for their future”. The National Commission for Higher Education was established by virtue of the Education Act (ACT No. XIII of 2006). The NCHE is responsible for:

- Promoting structured dialogue between all Further and Higher education institutions;
- Supporting all stakeholders with research, data and information about the sector;
- Maintaining a register of authorised and accredited institutions and programmes available in Malta;
- Developing a National Strategy for Further and Higher education;
- Preparing key performance indicators and benchmarking the sector against international developments.

The responsibilities covered by NCHE include the following –

- formulate the guiding principles for further and higher education, and propose a clear vision and sustainable strategic targets and objectives for the further and higher sectors of education;
- research, analyse, review and, through the Minister, give advice to the Government on the development,

planning and governance of the further and higher education policy;

- recommend to the competent authority systems and policies for the evaluation, approval, accreditation, authorization and recognition of institutions and programmes that will ensure their quality;
- recommend financing policies, and alternative financing systems, of the further and higher sectors of education, while addressing the issue of the adequacy of this financing and of the accountability of the sectors;
- propose policies which are related to students on sustainable options, equity in access and mobility in the institutions, financial support, services of information and guidance about pathway development for students;
- recommend policies related to research, innovation, intellectual property, and knowledge transfer;
- formulate policies related to the international dimension of further and higher education and to the expansion and diversification of their provision;
- advise and, where the case shall so require, make such recommendations as may appear to be required, to the Government and to the institutions, on any matter or other issue related to further and higher education.

The MQC, incorporating the NCHE moved to new premises in 2011. The new premises is situated in the historical building of Casa Leoni in St. Venera. The organisation is currently awaiting legislation to officialise this merger between the two entities however for all intents and purposes MQC and NCHE are one organisation working in one direction under the same management.

