



RQFs and level descriptors

SESSION 3 - ACQF Peer Learning Webinar #11

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Key features of an RQF

Feature	Comments
Purpose and scope	• Quality, transparency, build trust, mobility • FL/NFL/IFL, sectors
Principles	Implicit or explicit e.g. does not impinge on sovereignty, aims to be a neutral influence
Level descriptors	Emphasis is placed here as part of the ‘translation device’
Linkages with QA	Includes QA into criteria - or links with regional QA frameworks
Governance arrangements	Influenced by the governance structures of the community

Referencing approach

- ▶ Approach varies across the RQFs
 - ▶ Referencing against criteria (e.g. referencing reports)
 - ▶ Reference against QF and QA frameworks (e.g. alignment, analysis of EQAA processes)
 - ▶ Alignment activities (e.g. alignment report)
- ▶ Referencing criteria vary but can be categorised into:
 - ▶ Criteria that can only be responded to in the report
 - ▶ Criteria that is more procedural or process orientated
 - ▶ Post referencing obligations criteria

Level descriptors - RQFs

- ▶ Influenced heavily by the purpose, scope and principles
- ▶ Levels of learning complexity
- ▶ Key question - How many levels?
 - ▶ Considerations of primary purpose:
 1. To bring the members together?
 2. To link with NQFs or RQFs external to the community?
 - ▶ ACQF - aims to bring the community of 55 members together
 - ▶ Therefore the number of levels must accommodate and enable countries to reference their NQF
 - ▶ Research needs to be undertake on the 55 members, those with NQFs and those without

Level descriptors - NQFs

- ▶ Should reflect the needs of the country's qualifications system
- ▶ Should accommodate the qualification types
- ▶ Tend to be influenced by a RQF (if it exists)

Drafting principles

PQF	EQF
• Are neutral, that is, they do not identify the learning or the workplace context • Are developmental in that each successive level implies a higher level of complexity of learning • Do not exclude specific learner groups through the use of language or implied contexts • Are content free • Are not sector specific	• All forms of learning outcomes are covered, irrespective of the learning context or institutional context • An adequate distinction is made between the descriptors of lower and higher levels • Repetition is avoided, i.e. each level should build on the lower levels and encompass all the previous levels • Only positive statements are made • jargon is avoided • Clear, specific statements are made, keeping them as simple and general as possible.

Conceptual basis of level descriptors

- ▶ Domains:
 - ▶ Knowledge, skills, application, responsibility, autonomy - and many more
 - ▶ Should reflect what is important to the member states
 - ▶ Level descriptors assume that the learning outcomes are cumulative by level - one level assumes that the knowledge, skills and conditions at one level include those at the lower levels.
 - ▶ Domains must be read together to give a true indication of level
 - ▶ There is very little written about the conceptual basis of level descriptors:
 - ▶ SOLO & Dreyfus - are taxonomies that focus on an individual's skill acquisition or performance of specific tasks and therefore are not relevant to levels of learning complexity of a qualifications system (or NQF or RQF)

Domains

- ▶ How many domains?
 - ▶ The more levels the more difficult it is to differentiate between
 - ▶ Need agreed definitions for each domain to direct the drafting
 - ▶ Need to have clear drafting principles to direct the drafting
 - ▶ Need to be sufficiently general to accommodate all learning (i.e. formal, nonformal, informal) and to allow member countries to relate to or reference to the framework

Linkages to Quality Assurance - NQFs

- ▶ Level descriptors (and qualification types) linked to conception, formulation and review of qualifications
- ▶ In the accreditation process, the qualification specification is aligned to the level of learning complexity to provide the basis for determining the qualification type
- ▶ Qualification types:
 - ▶ Two metrics - level of learning complexity and volume of learning
 - ▶ Plus - entry requirements, purpose, pathways, relationship to other qualifications, examination details [especially for PhD]

Linkages to QA - RQF

- ▶ RQFs incorporate QA in two main ways:
 - ▶ As criteria used within the referencing process
 - ▶ As an associated quality assurance framework that is agreed by member countries

Learnings

- ▶ RQFs are not just specifications of levels, level descriptors, referencing criteria and governance arrangements. RQFs operate within a region or community grouping and can be used not just as a process to align NQFs or qualifications systems but for other more broader purposes agreed to by the community of countries
- ▶ RQFs should not be considered as static frameworks
- Strong governance arrangements are needed to manage and monitor the implementation of the framework
- RQFs should have strong links to other initiatives within the region, such as regional QA frameworks, labour and student mobility initiatives and other initiatives that facilitate recognition
- Clear framework structures (e.g. purpose, level descriptors, referencing criteria) to support a strong referencing process
- International credibility is critical to the success of the framework. Risks to this credibility include poor integrity and lack of transparency of the referencing process, and, lack of thoroughness and accuracy of the referencing reports
- Level of maturity of the qualifications systems assists in building trust across the community of countries
- ▶ Member countries need technical capability to understand and interpret the technical nature of the framework and of referencing. Member countries need ongoing support and dialogue to improve understandings, and agree on understanding of aspects these frameworks