

BFUG7 8b

Note on the complementarities between the overarching framework for qualifications of the EHEA and the proposal in EU-Commission staff working document on a European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF).

Scope

The EHEA-framework is a framework already adopted by European ministers (Bergen, May 2005) whereas the Commission document is for consultation that may result in a Commission proposal for a recommendation to be adopted by the European Parliament and Council probably in 2007.

The EHEA-framework covers 45 countries whereas the EQF will relate to the 25 EU member states plus 7 other countries attached to the “Education and Training 2010” programme.

The EHEA-framework covers only higher education whereas the EQF intends to cover higher education, vocational education and training and schooling awards.

The EHEA-framework and EQF both aim to be meta-frameworks enabling national (and sectoral) frameworks to relate and communicate to another. As reference frameworks they are non-prescriptive.

For the EHEA-framework the existence of operational national qualifications frameworks is a precondition for the function of the framework and its function of enhancing transparency, recognition and mobility across borders. For EQF this is not clearly stated.

Sectoral frameworks attached to EQF may either be frameworks for an educational sector or for an employment sector. EQF could be a useful tool to assist in the development of frameworks for employment sectors but the manner in which qualifications should be recognised across Europe should be through their inclusion in national qualifications frameworks.

Levels

There is consistency between the EQF and the EHEA-framework as the three top levels of the EQF – levels 6, 7 and 8 – correspond to 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle of the EHEA-framework.

It is also noted that for those countries having intermediate qualifications within the first cycle of their national qualifications framework, level 5 in EQF is generally consistent with the short cycle descriptor of the Joint Quality Initiative.

Descriptor Methodology

The descriptor methodology developed for the EHEA-framework and for the EQF is different but not incompatible. The reason for the difference is that some qualifications linked through national frameworks to EQF levels 6, 7 and 8 would not necessarily be in national qualifications frameworks for higher education.

The descriptors should refer to learning outcomes. For that reason table 2 in the EQF proposal should not be part of the EQF in the final recommendation.

Descriptors in a meta-framework should be simple and robust. This should be kept in mind in the further development of the EQF descriptors. Emerging differences between the two frameworks need to be closely monitored.

Differences in actual descriptors

The actual descriptors for level 6, 7 and 8 in EQF are different from the Dublin descriptors used in the EHEA-framework. But the two sets of descriptors are compatible, as the generic EQF descriptors are consistent with the learning outcomes described by the Dublin descriptors as demonstrated in the appendix.

A few changes in the EQF descriptors are suggested in the appendix (in red and brackets).

Conclusion

The proposed European framework for lifelong learning qualifications is different from the EHEA-framework as regards to scope and methodology. But they are not inconsistent and not incompatible.

The EHEA-framework will continue to exist as a sectoral overarching framework for higher education enabling higher education qualifications to relate to each other through national qualifications frameworks in each of the 45 Bologna member countries. The added value of the EQF should be to relate higher education to other areas of education and training and vice versa.

The establishment of national qualifications frameworks for higher education as decided by ministers in Bergen should continue. When a recommendation for EQF is adopted it is up to the EU member states to decide to extend the existing framework for higher education to cover the whole range of lifelong learning. This two-step procedure is possible because the two reference frameworks are consistent and compatible.

Mogens Berg
Chairman

30 September 2005

1. Dublin descriptors as used in The Framework for Qualifications of EHEA compared to the descriptors as used in the EU Commission staff working document: Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle are awarded to students who:	EQF-level 6
<i>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education²⁷, 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;</i>	<p>Use detailed theoretical and practical knowledge of a field. Some knowledge is at the forefront of the field and will involve a critical understanding of theories and principles</p> <p>Demonstrate mastery of methods and tools in a complex and specialised field and demonstrate Innovation in terms of methods used Devise and sustain arguments to solve problems</p>
<i>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;</i>	<p>Demonstrate administrative design, resource and team management responsibilities in work and study contexts that are unpredictable and require that complex problems are solved where there are many interacting factors Show creativity in developing projects and show initiative in management processes that includes the training of others to develop team performance</p>
<i>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;</i>	<p>Consistently evaluate own learning and identify learning needs</p>
<i>can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;</i>	<p>Communicate ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences using a range of techniques involving qualitative and quantitative information</p>
<i>have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.</i>	<p>Express a comprehensive internalised personal world view manifesting solidarity with others</p> <p>Gather and interpret relevant data in a field to solve problems Demonstrate experience of operational interaction within a complex environment Make judgements based on social and ethical issues that arise in work or study</p>

¹ The word 'professional' is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, relating to those attributes relevant to undertaking work or 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.

<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who:</p>	<p>EQF-level 7</p>
<p><i>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research³ context;</i></p>	<p>Use specialised theoretical and practical knowledge some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in the field. This knowledge forms the basis for originality in developing and/or applying ideas Demonstrate critical awareness of knowledge issues in the field and at the interface between different fields</p>
<p><i>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;</i></p>	<p>Create a research based diagnosis to problems by integrating knowledge from new or interdisciplinary fields and make judgements with incomplete or limited information Develop new skills in response to emerging knowledge and techniques</p>
<p><i>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;</i></p>	<p>Demonstrate leadership and innovation in work and study contexts that are unfamiliar, complex and unpredictable and that require solving problems involving many interacting factors Review strategic performance of teams</p>
<p><i>can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;</i></p>	<p>Demonstrate autonomy in the direction of learning and a high level understanding of learning processes</p>
<p><i>have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.</i></p>	<p>Communicate project outcomes, methods and underpinning rationale to specialist and non-specialist audiences using appropriate techniques Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them Solve problems by integrating complex knowledge sources that are sometimes incomplete and in new and unfamiliar contexts Demonstrate experience of operational interaction in managing change within a complex environment Respond to social, scientific and ethical issues that are encountered in work or study</p>

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'.

Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks

<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:</p>	<p>EQF-level 8</p>
<p><i>have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;</i></p>	<p>Use specialised knowledge to critically analyse, evaluate and synthesise new and complex ideas that are at the most advanced frontier of a field</p>
<p><i>have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;</i></p>	<p>Extend or redefine existing knowledge and/or professional practice within a field or at the interface between fields</p>
<p><i>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;</i></p>	<p>Research, conceive, design, implement and adapt projects that lead to new knowledge and new procedural solutions</p>
<p><i>are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;</i></p>	<p>Demonstrate substantial leadership, innovation and autonomy in work and study contexts that are novel and require the solving of problems that involve many interacting factors</p>
<p><i>can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;</i></p>	<p>Demonstrate capacity for sustained commitment to development of new ideas or processes and a high level understanding of learning processes</p>
<p><i>can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.</i></p>	<p>Communicate with authority through engaging in critical dialogue with peers in a specialist community <both nationally and internationally> Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and lead action to change them</p> <p>Critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas and strategic decision making based on these processes</p> <p>Demonstrate experience of operational interaction with strategic decision-making capacity within a complex environment</p> <p>Promote social, <scientific> and ethical advancement through actions</p>

2. JQI-descriptor for short cycle higher education as compared to EQF descriptor for level 5

Qualifications that signify completion of the higher education short cycle (within the first cycle) are awarded to students who:	EQF-level 5
<i>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education⁴ and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle;</i>	<p>Use broad theoretical and practical knowledge that is often specialised within a field and show awareness of limits to knowledge base</p> <p>Develop strategic and creative responses in researching solutions to well defined concrete and abstract problems</p>
<i>can apply their knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts;</i>	<p>Demonstrate transfer of theoretical and practical knowledge in creating solutions to problems</p>
<i>have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems;</i>	<p>Manage projects independently that require problem solving where there are many factors some of which interact and lead to unpredictable change</p> <p>Show creativity in developing projects</p>
<i>can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients;</i>	<p>Manage people and review performance of self and others.</p> <p>Train others and develop team performance</p>
<i>have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy.</i>	<p>Evaluate own learning and identify learning needs necessary to undertake further learning</p> <p>Convey ideas in a well structured and coherent way to peers, supervisors and clients using qualitative and quantitative information</p> <p>Express a comprehensive internalised personal world view reflecting engagement solidarity with others</p> <p>Formulate responses to abstract and concrete problems</p> <p>Demonstrate experience of operational interaction within a field</p> <p>Make judgements based on knowledge of relevant social and ethical issues</p>

⁴ General secondary education also includes vocational education with a sufficiently general component.