



هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب

Education & Training Quality Authority

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN مملكة البحرين

## National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

### General Policies

## NQF General Policies

### POLICY 1: Listing Institutions in the NQF Register

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

#### Purpose

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

#### Policy Statements

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

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<sup>1</sup> Some institutions are not included within the review scope of BQA

## **POLICY 2: Qualifications Compliance with NQF Requirements**

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

### **Purpose**

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

### **Policy Statements**

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

## **POLICY 3: Qualification Placement on the NQF**

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

### **Purpose**

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

### **Policy Statements**

1. Institutions are required to submit all eligible qualifications to the GDQ for placement on the NQF. The eligibility criteria must be clearly defined and published by the BQA in the NQF Handbook.
2. The GDQ must process all qualification placement applications in a transparent, fair and consistent manner that embraces international good practice.
3. Institutions are required to submit documentation and evidence to support their Qualification Placement applications.
4. The Level Descriptors, along with provided rationales, form the basis for allocating the NQF Level of each unit within any given qualification. The overall NQF Level of a qualification is determined by considering the NQF Levels of comprising units.
5. The GDQ must verify the proposed NQF Level and NQF Credit of a qualification and its comprising units, as well as verifying the qualification's compliance with the NQF requirements (see *Policy 2*).
6. The GDQ must ensure that all submitted qualifications for placement on the NQF are subject to a validation process (see *Policy 4*).
7. Placed Qualifications will be archived if they:
  - are no longer valid (i.e. do not satisfy the Validation Standards);
  - are discontinued and no longer delivered by the institution; or
  - do not pass its periodic GDR's quality review.
8. Institutions have the right to appeal the outcome of their application for qualification placement on the NQF, in accordance with the BQA's policies.

## **POLICY 4: Validation of Qualifications**

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

### **Purpose**

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

### **Policy Statements**

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

## **POLICY 5: Enabling Learners with Special Needs**

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

### **Purpose**

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

### **Policy Statements**

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

## **POLICY 6: Promoting Lifelong Learning**

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

### **Purpose**

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

### **Policy Statements**

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

## **POLICY 7: Communication and National Cooperation**

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

### **Purpose**

- To raise public awareness about the aims, benefits, and principles governing the NQF, and promote its usage and application.
- To ensure that all policies, guidelines and publications governing the NQF are available, accessible and updated.
- To ensure the readiness of institutions for all NQF-related operations, particularly Institutional Listing and Qualifications Placement.
- To maintain an up-to-date NQF register (database) that includes all listed institutions along with all qualifications placed on, or aligned to, the NQF.
- To engage and communicate with regulatory bodies and stakeholders, with the aim of implementation and improvement of the NQF.

### **Policy Statements**

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



## **POLICY 8: Referencing the NQF**

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

### **Purpose**

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

### **Policy Statements**

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

## **POLICY 9: Alignment of Foreign Qualifications**

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

### **Purpose**

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

### **Policy Statements**

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

## **POLICY 10: Continuous Quality Improvement**

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

### **Purpose**

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

### **Policy statements**

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