

National Qualifications Framework

Approved by Cabinet Resolution No. (106) of 2024

Article (1)

Introduction

The United Arab Emirates aspires to achieve global leadership in various fields and has been a regional pioneer in establishing a comprehensive qualifications system, under Cabinet Resolution No. (22) of 2013 approving the National Qualifications Framework. The UAE Qualifications Framework (QFEmirates) is an updated version of the National Qualifications Framework, aiming to assess the learning outcomes of every individual, thereby providing all members of society with opportunities for continuous learning, training, and career advancement. The National Qualifications Framework is a significant step towards achieving these goals, as it promotes lifelong learning, fosters innovation, and enhances academic and professional excellence. This contributes to the realization of the UAE's vision and priorities, and helps build a skilled workforce capable of meeting the requirements of a knowledge-based economy and global competitiveness.

This framework promotes recognition of learning acquired in formal, non-formal, and informal settings, and serves as a fundamental tool for classifying qualifications in a consistent and outcomes-based manner. This, in turn, enhances the reliability of the education system and contributes to improving the quality of education and training in the country. The updated framework has eight levels, each representing a distinct set of knowledge, skills, values, and responsibilities. Moreover, this framework is comprehensive, describing and classifying a wide range of qualifications in early childhood education, general education, higher education, and technical and vocational education and training.

The National Qualifications Framework is based on a sequential set of learning outcomes provided through three pathways: general education (including early childhood education), higher education, and technical and vocational education and training. Each level of this framework defines the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to achieve a specific

qualification, ensuring that learning outcomes align with the requirements of working in evolving economic sectors. Also, this framework provides comprehensive information on the structure of qualifications in the country and sets the standards required for the progression of these qualifications, enabling their alignment with international qualifications frameworks. The National Qualifications Framework serves as a guide and reference tool for both the public and private sectors, as well as for entities responsible for developing, implementing, and overseeing national qualifications and standards.

Article (2)

Definitions

In application of the articles of this Resolution, the words and expressions set forth herein shall bear the meanings ascribed to them, unless the context otherwise requires:

- National Qualifications Framework** : A national reference and comprehensive guide to structuring qualifications in the United Arab Emirates, and aligning with international qualifications frameworks. The framework consists of eight levels, which are progressively structured based on the nature and complexity of knowledge, skills, values, and responsibilities.
- Credit Hour** : The standard unit of measurement in the National Qualifications Framework is the credit hour. In theoretical education, one credit hour is equivalent to 15 learning hours, while in applied education, one credit hour is equivalent to 30 learning and training hours, and in clinical training, one credit hour is equivalent to 36 to 40 weekly working hours.
- Level Descriptors** : They are a set of descriptive statements of learning outcomes that define the "eight" levels of the National Qualifications Framework. These statements are categorized into three "domains": "knowledge", "skills", and "responsibility".
- Primary Qualification** : It is a full academic or technical/vocational qualification that has been placed at one of the levels of the National Qualifications

- Framework. Learners can obtain this qualification after achieving the required learning outcomes as defined by the level descriptors.
- Partial Qualification** : It is a partial technical or vocational qualification that has been placed at a specific level within the National Qualifications Framework. Learners can obtain this qualification after achieving the required learning outcomes as defined by the level descriptors. This qualification can be standalone or part of primary qualifications, and it is used for various purposes, such as meeting job requirements or developing skills.
- Short Learning Units** : A term referring to a type of partial qualification, which is a set of specific learning outcomes that the learner obtains in higher education or technical and vocational education and training, according to transparent and specific criteria aimed at enhancing and developing individuals' skills and competencies to meet the needs of the labour market.
- Health Professions Programmes** : Academic educational programmes to obtain qualifications in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy.
- Apprenticeship** : It is a regular, dual educational programme that combines theoretical education in an accredited educational and training institution with practical training in a workplace, enabling individuals to acquire both practical experience and theoretical knowledge in a specific profession and leading to a recognized qualification upon completion of the programme.
- Recognition of Prior Learning** : It is an assessment process aimed at evaluating the knowledge and skills that an individual has acquired through prior learning and experience. This requires the provision of all supporting evidence to demonstrate the achievement of the required learning outcomes at one of the framework levels for assessment purposes.

Compatibility : Procedures for determining the compatibility of the National Qualifications Framework levels to corresponding levels in international frameworks, and for determining the compatibility of the level of a qualification issued outside the country to the corresponding levels of the National Qualifications Framework.

Article (3)

Objectives

The National Qualifications Framework aims to achieve a set of objectives that contribute to:

1. Enhancing the quality and efficiency of education in the country.
2. Alignment of learning outcomes with labour market needs.
3. Learners' transition between educational pathways domestically and internationally.
4. Developing flexible education systems.
5. Promoting lifelong learning.
6. Providing an official reference for structuring all qualifications and programmes in the country to ensure transparency and ease of access.
7. Alignment with international qualifications frameworks.
8. Enhancing future skills.

Article (4)

National Qualifications Framework Levels

The UAE National Qualifications Framework (QF Emirates) is designed to encompass diverse educational pathways: general education (including early childhood education), higher education, and technical and vocational education and training. It is based on eight sequential levels, where each level represents the learning outcomes that the learner must successfully achieve in order to obtain a specific qualification recognized at that specific level. Moreover, it serves as a means to achieve a coherent and consistent classification of qualifications; as the level on the framework increases, so too does the complexity and depth of the knowledge, skills, values, and responsibilities required.

Learning outcomes are used as a common language in designing qualifications frameworks, which facilitates alignment with international frameworks. Early childhood education has been included as part of the general education pathway in the National Qualifications Framework, recognizing the importance of this stage in developing learners' basic knowledge and skills. The types of qualifications used in the National Qualifications Framework are outlined in Table No. (1) of this Resolution. It is possible for multiple qualifications to exist at the same level, offering diversity and flexibility to meet the education and training needs in the country.

Table No. (1): National Qualifications Framework Levels

| Level | Qualification Title by Levels | | |
|-------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| | General Education | Higher Education | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| 8 | – | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral degree or equivalent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 8 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 8 Professional Certificate |
| 7 | – | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree or equivalent • Postgraduate Diploma or equivalent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 7 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 7 Professional Certificate |

| | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| 6 | – | • Bachelor's degree or equivalent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 6 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 6 Professional Certificate |
| 5 | – | • Higher diploma or equivalent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 5 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 5 Advanced Vocational Diploma • Level 5 Professional Certificate |
| 4 | – | • Diploma or equivalent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 4 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 4 Vocational Diploma • Level 4 Professional Certificate |
| 3 | • General Certificate of Secondary Education or equivalent | – | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 3 Professional Certificate |
| 2 | • Middle school education or equivalent | – | • Level 2 Technical/Vocational Qualification |

| | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|--|
| 1 | • Primary Education | – | • Level 1 Technical/Vocational Qualification |
| 0 | • Early Education | – | – |

Article (5)

Description of the National Qualifications Framework Levels

1. Level Descriptors Elements:

They are a set of descriptive statements of learning outcomes that define the "eight" levels of the National Qualifications Framework. These statements are categorized into three "domains": "knowledge", "skills", and "values and responsibility". Each level represents a complete unit and must be read across all three domains to distinguish it from other levels.

Level (0):

Knowledge : The learner demonstrates basic knowledge of concepts, terminology, and numerical values and can successfully differentiate between them.

Skills : The learner can comprehend and assimilate the information and activities assigned to him.

Responsibility : The learner demonstrates basic awareness of fundamental concepts and terminology, in addition to acquiring the basics of societal and professional values.

Level (1):

Knowledge : The learner demonstrates a basic understanding of a specific field, including knowledge of simple facts, procedures, and concepts necessary to complete clearly defined tasks or solve simple problems within a particular work field or specialty, including basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Skills : The learner applies basic practical skills to carry out simple, routine tasks and procedures under supervision in a specific context, including basic cognitive, numeracy, and communication skills.

Responsibility : The learner works under supervision and collaborates with colleagues in a structured environment, demonstrating a basic awareness and understanding of tasks within a work or study context and performing them in a professional manner.

Level (2):

Knowledge : The learner demonstrates theoretical knowledge and understanding of basic facts and procedures in a specific field of study or work, along with sufficient language proficiency to read and write short, coherent texts, and knowledge of arithmetic to comprehend complete mathematical operations.

Skills : The learner applies basic cognitive skills and processes enabling him to select and use the necessary information, tools, and methods to solve simple problems within a predictable context.

Responsibility : The learner demonstrates limited independence in making simple decisions and performing basic tasks in a professional manner within a work or study context.

Level (3):

Knowledge : The learner demonstrates sufficient language proficiency to comprehend and produce extended, coherent text, as well as a sufficient knowledge of arithmetic to understand and construct mathematical representations, and/or has basic knowledge applied in a practical context in a specific domain.

Skills : The learner applies cognitive skills, processes, and concepts to interpret information and act upon it, analyse and provide solutions to specific problems, and handle unexpected situations using known solutions.

Responsibility : The learner demonstrates accountability for completing tasks in work or study, adapts behaviour appropriately to circumstances in order to solve problems, collaborates with others, and exhibits ethical behaviour and responsible citizenship.

Level (4):

Knowledge : The learner demonstrates a broad range of theoretical knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of facts, concepts, processes, procedures, and/or techniques necessary for collecting, analysing, and evaluating information and ideas from a variety of sources.

Skills : The learner applies a wide range of cognitive, technical, and conceptual skills, including creative approaches to interpreting and responding to both familiar and unfamiliar problems, and possesses communication skills sufficient to present information and ideas clearly and coherently in both written and oral formats.

Responsibility : The learner demonstrates self-reliance in unexpected circumstances, oversees routine work of others, assumes some responsibility for evaluation and improvement, and exhibits evidence of lifelong learning, responsible citizenship, and respect for others.

Level (5):

Knowledge : The learner demonstrates comprehensive and specialized theoretical and factual knowledge as well as a critical understanding of concepts in order to analyse and construct data and information.

Skills : The learner applies a comprehensive range of specialized, technical, and creative skills to solve abstract problems, analyse, and construct information and ideas.

Responsibility : The learner demonstrates the ability to manage and supervise in situations where unexpected change occurs, reviews and improves personal and others' performance in work or study contexts, and actively participates in lifelong learning, leadership, management,

entrepreneurship, collaboration, ethical behaviour, responsible citizenship, and co-existence with others.

Level (6):

- Knowledge** : The learner demonstrates advanced theoretical knowledge (facts and procedures) and a broad understanding of concepts, as well as a critical understanding of the principles, concepts, and methods of inquiry relevant to a particular specialty to perform critical analysis and implement appropriate problem-solving techniques.
- Skills** : The learner applies advanced cognitive, procedural, and technical skills to perform evidence-based critical analysis, construct information, analyse concepts and information, solve specialized problems in both anticipated and novel contexts, and/or contribute to enriching cognitive inquiry.
- Responsibility** : The learner manages complex technical or professional activities or projects, assumes responsibility for decision-making in unexpected contexts, is accountable for managing the professional development of individuals and groups, and actively participates in lifelong learning, leadership, management, entrepreneurship, collaboration, ethical behaviour, responsible citizenship, and co-existence with others.

Level (7):

- Knowledge** : The learner demonstrates a specialized, integrated, and comprehensive theoretical, practical, and real-world understanding of a range of knowledge, in addition to a critical awareness of qualitative and quantitative data collection, interpretation, and analysis methods, which facilitate the formulation and development of a flexible and effective strategy for dealing with concepts, theories, and achieving objectives.

Skills : The learner applies specialized cognitive and practical skills to integrate, analyse, construct, and evaluate complex information, plan and conduct independent research, and generate creative solutions to develop knowledge, procedures, and integrate knowledge from various fields.

Responsibility : The learner demonstrates creativity and spirit of initiative in novel work or study situations, exhibits a high level of accountability and independence, takes responsibility for self-directed learning, and exhibits leadership, management, entrepreneurship, innovation, collaboration, ethical behaviour, responsible citizenship, and co-existence with others.

Level (8):

Knowledge : The learner demonstrates profound knowledge of research skills and strategic comprehension of concepts and theories, as well as the ability to apply them in a specific field to solve complex challenges in a flexible and innovative manner, creating new and proactive solutions.

Skills : The learner applies cognitive skills in a manner that demonstrates a high level of expertise, advanced specialized skills to construct, evaluate, and plan strategic thinking, and develop ideas at high levels of abstraction, cognitive skills, and intellectual independence for critical thinking, evaluates existing knowledge, and adheres to systematic research methods to build new knowledge or to expand and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.

Responsibility : The learner demonstrates a clear ability, independence, scientific and professional integrity, and a sustained commitment to developing new or innovative ideas or methods to remain at the forefront of work or study, including research, leadership, lifelong learning, management, entrepreneurship, collaboration, ethical behaviour, responsible citizenship, and co-existence with others.

2. Measurement Unit:

The standard unit of measurement in the National Qualifications Framework is the "credit hour", used to determine the amount of time and effort required to meet the requirements for obtaining a specific qualification according to the level specified in the National Qualifications Framework. It also reflects the amount of theoretical and practical learning required.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for developing and updating the policies, guidelines, and standards necessary to determine the credit hour matrix for each qualification, according to its defined level in the National Qualifications Framework.

Article (6)

Types of Qualifications

The UAE National Qualifications Framework (QFEmirates) encompasses a diverse range of qualifications developed to meet the needs of the labour market at each level. These qualifications vary in content and scope, covering multiple domains of knowledge, skills, values, and responsibilities. They are awarded to individuals who demonstrate a specific set of learning outcomes, contributing to the holistic development of their skills and abilities in line with the demands of the labour market.

1. Primary Qualifications:

The National Qualifications Framework specifies the primary qualifications for higher education pathway from Level 4 to Level 8, encompassing various academic degrees. Additionally, the National Qualifications Framework outlines the primary qualifications for technical and vocational education and training from Level 1 to Level 8, as detailed in Table No. (1) of this framework.

2. Partial Qualifications:

Partial qualifications within the technical and vocational education and training pathway, ranging from Level 1 to Level 8, are being developed, and the Ministry of Education is responsible for developing guidelines and policies required to obtain these qualifications.

3. Short Learning Units

Short learning units enable individuals to obtain a certificate awarded at different levels of the National Qualifications Framework in the Higher Education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training pathways. These units aim to provide learners with new skills or to enhance or develop their existing skills and competencies in line with the evolving needs of the labour market. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education is responsible for implementing these units by developing, updating, and disseminating the necessary guidelines and policies to the relevant authorities.

Article (7)

Qualifications Admission Requirements

Table No. (2): Primary Qualifications Admission Requirements in Higher Education

Pathway:

| Level | Primary Qualification | Qualification Admission Requirements |
|-------|---|---|
| 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctoral degree or equivalent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a qualification at Level 7, or at Level 6 under special conditions, in addition to conducting independent academic research. |
| 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree or equivalent • Postgraduate Diploma or equivalent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be admitted to Master's programmes, a Level 6 qualification is required, along with academic research where applicable |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be eligible for postgraduate diploma programmes or equivalent, a Level 6 qualification is required |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be admitted to health professions programmes such as medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy, a general certificate of secondary education is required |
| 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree or equivalent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain a General Certificate of Secondary Education or equivalent * |
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher diploma or equivalent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain a General Certificate of Secondary Education or equivalent ** |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diploma or equivalent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain a General Certificate of Secondary Education or equivalent |

(*) The terms and conditions issued by the Ministry of Education regarding the transfer of credit hours from Levels 4 and 5 shall apply.

(**) The terms and conditions issued by the Ministry of Education regarding the transfer of credit hours from Level 4 shall apply.

Table No. (3): Primary Qualifications Admission Requirements in Technical and Vocational Education and Training Pathway:

| Level | Primary Qualification | Qualification Admission Requirements |
|-------|--|--|
| 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 8 Technical/Vocational Qualification Level 8 Professional Certificate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain a Level 7 qualification or equivalent, or a Level 6 qualification or equivalent with specific conditions, in addition to an independent research or project |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | | where applicable |
| 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 7 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 7 Professional Certificate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a Level 6 qualification or equivalent |
| 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 6 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 6 Professional Certificate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a Level 3 qualification or General Certificate of Secondary Education or equivalent * |
| 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 5 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 5 Advanced Vocational Diploma • Level 5 Professional Certificate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a Level 3 qualification or General Certificate of Secondary Education or equivalent ** |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 4 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 4 Vocational Diploma • Level 4 Professional Certificate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a Level 3 qualification or General Certificate of Secondary Education or equivalent *** |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Technical/Vocational Qualification • Level 3 Professional Certificate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a Level 2 qualification or equivalent, or as determined by the competent authority |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 Technical/Vocational Qualification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a Level 1 qualification or equivalent, or as determined by the competent authority |
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 Technical/Vocational Qualification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As determined by the competent authority |

(*) The terms and conditions issued by the Ministry of Education regarding the transfer of credit hours from Levels 4 and 5 shall apply.

(**) The terms and conditions issued by the Ministry of Education regarding the transfer of credit hours from Levels 3 and 4 shall apply.

(***) The terms and conditions issued by the Ministry of Education regarding the transfer of credit hours from Level 3 shall apply.

Article (8)

Coding of Qualifications in Technical and Vocational Education and Training Pathway

Qualifications are coded according to a national coding system, which serves as an important tool for enhancing governance, ensuring the quality of qualifications and national standards, and providing comprehensive information on qualifications in terms of their type, level, economic sector, specialization, and more.

Article (9)

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is a fundamental concept in the UAE Qualifications Framework (QFEmirates). The framework supports this principle by recognizing learning acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal pathways, thereby motivating and encouraging individuals to continuously develop their skills and knowledge, and keep learning in order to adapt to rapid changes in the labour market, and promote innovation, which in turn contributes to the realization of a knowledge-based economy and sustainable development. To foster and implement initiatives related to the principle of lifelong learning.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for developing and updating policies, guidelines, and standards necessary for recognizing prior learning, facilitating transfer between educational pathways, and supporting other flexible learning systems.