SOUTH ASIA QUALIFICATIONS REFERENCE FRAMEWORK (SAQRF)

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1. Background

1.1   The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka on 8 December 1985. SAARC comprises eight Member States (MS): Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The Secretariat of the Association was set up in Kathmandu on 17 January 1987.

1.2   The SAARC Charter outlines the following objectives:

1.2.1   "promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life; accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development in the region; and provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and realize their full potential;

1.2.2   promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia;

1.2.3   contribute to mutual trust, understanding, and appreciation of one another's problems;

1.2.4   promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical, and scientific fields;

1.2.5   strengthen cooperation with other developing countries;

1.2.6   strengthen cooperation among its MS in international forums on matters of common interest; and cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes".

1.3   The New Delhi Declaration on Education (31 October 2014) resolved to foster quality education and expand the scope of cooperation, which would involve the formulation of the SAARC Framework for Action for Education 2030. The Declaration resolved to focus, among other things, on the following:

1.3.1   enhancing the availability, accessibility, and quality of secondary education;

1.3.2   expanding opportunities for skill development, including technical and vocational education and training; and

1.3.3   revitalizing higher education, including "facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications and mobility of students".[1]

1.4   In the 18th Meeting of Heads of State of Government (Kathmandu, November 2014), the leaders expressed strong determination to deepen regional integration in South Asia for peace, stability, and prosperity by intensifying cooperation. The leaders also renewed their commitment to achieving a South Asian Economic Union (SAEU) in a phased and planned manner through a Free Trade Area, Customs Union, Common Market, and Common Economic and Monetary Union. They also expressed a resolve to ensure quality education for all. The leaders also agreed to "collaborate and cooperate on safe, orderly and responsible management of labour migration from South Asia to ensure safety, security and well-being of their migrant workers in the destination countries outside the region"[2].

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1 New Delhi Declaration on Education, October 2014, p. 1.
2 SAARC Plan of Action on Labour Migration, November 2014, Kathmandu, p. 1.

1.5   The SAARC Plan of Action on Labour Migration (adopted in Kathmandu, May 2016) endorses the development of a South Asian Qualifications Reference Framework as follows:
"Developing a South Asian qualification reference framework... would facilitate harmonization of skills qualifications at the regional level and also facilitate enhanced recognition of skills of migrant workers from South Asia in the destination countries".[3]

1.6   The SAARC Framework for Action for Education 2030 was endorsed in September 2016 at the Third Technical Meeting of senior officials in education in South Asia. The senior officials identified 12 priority areas, of which the following five are relevant:
1.6.1   improving learning outcomes and promoting quality education;
1.6.2   promoting the acquisition of skills for life and work;
1.6.3   ensuring lifelong learning opportunities;
1.6.4   improving education governance; and strengthening partnership and collaboration.

1.7   At the ILO–MSDE Inter-regional Expert Forum on Skills and Migration in the South Asia– Middle East Corridor in New Delhi (July 2017), one of the key recommendations was to:

"Work with the SAARC Secretariat, and through the existing SAARC frameworks on education and on migration, to endorse the development of a South Asian Qualification Reference Framework. The Framework would function as a mechanism to enable comparisons of qualifications across SAARC Member States, also facilitate enhanced recognition of skills of migrant workers from South Asia in countries of destination."[4]

1.8   The Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) has identified skills recognition as one of four priority areas. In the strategy proposed for cooperating on skills certification in the Asia–GCC labour migration corridors (January 2017), the ADD puts forward two important steps that countries of origin can take:

"Countries that have not put in place a qualifications framework which maps to international standards should accelerate the development of the framework without which MoUs of mutual recognition of skills cannot happen."[5]

"Countries of origin that have a qualifications framework in place may want to proactively engage in MoUs with GCC countries to recognize equivalences, but can also consider accelerating that process with other third party countries... The recognized mapping of their qualifications framework to third party countries can then be shared with GCC countries transparently so GCC countries can consider recognizing the same mapping through their existing partners."[6]

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3 SAARC Plan of Action on Labour Migration, May 2016, p. 3

4 Inter-Regional Expert Forum on Skills and Migration in the South Asia – Middle East Corridor, July 2017, New Delhi, p. 3.

5 Cooperating on skills certification in Asia-GCC labour migration corridors, January 2017, p. 3

6 Cooperating on skills certification in Asia-GCC labour migration corridors, January 2017, p. 3

1.9   The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (July 2018) contains a dedicated section on skills:

"We commit to invest in innovative solutions that facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences of migrant workers at all skills levels, and promote demand-driven skills development to optimize the employability of migrants in formal labour markets in countries of destination and in countries of origin."[7]

1.10   The initial development of the South Asia Qualifications Reference Framework (SAQRF), supported by the ILO, began in mid to late 2020 with a survey and interviews of representatives and culminated in a background report (Bateman 2020a). The report was followed by consultations on a concept proposal (Bateman 2020b), with a final draft concept design for the regional qualifications reference framework and a roadmap for finalization/endorsement and implementation (Bateman 2020c).

1.11   The first technical meeting on the South Asia Qualifications Reference Framework (SAQRF) was held virtually on 15–16 February 2022 with the participation of Member State representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. There were three more virtual technical meetings, and the fifth technical experts meeting was in person on 26–27 June 2023 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. A final virtual meeting was held on 21–22 August 2023.

1.12   The SAQRF was endorsed by the ministries responsible for education and training in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.[8] Each Member State also identified additional ministries for its endorsement according to their own context. The SAQRF was endorsed on XX November 2023.

1.13   The MS acknowledge the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) in the development of the SAQRF.

1.14   Considering the aforementioned political and legal context and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, the SAQRF is established as an instrument of regional scope. It aims to enhance the transparency of qualifications and establish mutual trust between qualifications frameworks and systems for lifelong learning in South Asia. It supports and supplements activities of MS and should be implemented in accordance with national laws and practices.

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7 Global impact for safe, orderly and regular migration, final draft July 2018, p. 25.

8 Afghanistan was not included in these consultations given the political situation at the time.

2. Purpose

2.1   The SAQRF is a common reference framework that aims to enhance regional understandings of South Asian Member States' national qualifications frameworks or systems.

2.2   The purpose of the SAQRF is to:

2.2.1   promote the recognition of qualifications;

2.2.2   promote the mobility of learners and workers;

2.2.3   promote transparency of national qualifications frameworks or systems and associated quality assurance mechanisms;

2.2.4   promote recognition of all forms of learning, including formal, non-formal, and informal learning;

2.2.5   encourage and facilitate lifelong learning through the support of national qualifications frameworks;

2.2.6   strengthen regional identity and facilitate other regional initiatives; and

2.2.7   provide a link to other regional qualifications frameworks internationally.

3. Scope

3.1   The SAQRF:

3.1.1   acts as a common reference framework and functions as a translation instrument to enable comparisons of national qualifications framework/s or systems across the South Asian MS;

3.1.2   aims to be a neutral influence on national qualifications framework/s or systems in MS that does not impinge on national sovereignty; and

3.1.3   acknowledges all forms of learning across all educational services.

4. Principles

4.1   The SAQRF: is based on common understandings among the MS in relation to educational services.

4.1.1   promotes the transparency, comparability, transferability, and recognition of qualifications.

4.1.2   encourages lifelong learning, the recognition of prior learning, and credit transfer processes or systems.

4.1.3   is based on a hierarchy of learning outcomes with increasing levels of learning complexity to facilitate better understanding of different national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications.

4.1.4   does not replace or define national qualifications framework/s or systems in MS or describe specific qualifications. Instead, specific qualifications should only be referenced to the SAQRF by way of the relevant national qualifications framework/s or system.

4.1.5 allows for voluntary engagement of MS to determine when they will undertake the referencing process (refer to Section 6). The SAQRF and referencing process should be implemented in accordance with each Member State's laws, policies, and practices.

4.1.6 allows MS to revise and update their referencing reports as their national qualifications frameworks or systems may change over time.

4.1.7 shall be reviewed and evaluated in consultation with MS and other relevant regional stakeholders, and updated, if necessary.

5. Structure

5.1 **Overview**

5.1.1 The structure of the SAQRF includes its learning outcomes approach, the eight level descriptors (refer to Annexure 1), and the referencing criteria and obligations (refer to Annexure 2).

5.2 **Level descriptors**

5.2.1 The level descriptors, based on the notion of competence, use the following domains: knowledge, skills, and application.

5.2.2 Knowledge is defined as the "body of facts, principles, theories, and practices related to a field of work or study. In the context of the SAQRF, knowledge is described as theoretical, factual, or technical".[9]

5.2.3 Skills is defined as the "ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems."[10] In the context of the SAQRF, skills are described as "cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and/or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)."[11]

5.2.4 Application is defined in terms of the types of tasks, problems, or issues to be resolved in a field of work or study, and the ability of the learner to apply the knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility.[12]

5.2.5 The level descriptors assume that the:
a. level of learning outcomes incorporates those in the lower levels; and
b. domains at one level are interpreted together to provide an understanding of the level of learning complexity.

5.2.6 The level descriptors are included in Annexure 1.

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9 EQF 2017, p. 20
10 EQF 2017, p. 20
11 EQF 2017, p. 20
12 EQF 2017, p. 20

5.3   **Referencing criteria and obligations**

5.3.1   The aim of any referencing process is to promote understanding and engender trust in a Member State's qualifications within a national qualifications framework or system. To provide a consistent approach to referencing, the MS have agreed to the following:

   a.   the referencing process culminates in a referencing report;

   b.   the Member State's referencing report provides a response against each referencing criterion; and

   c.   the referencing obligations clarify key processes and outcomes following the completion of the referencing process, ensuring that referencing reports are shared with MS's stakeholders and are readily accessible.

5.3.2   The referencing criteria and obligations are outlined in Annexure 2.

5.3.3   In addition, the MS have agreed to the role of the SAQRF Technical Committee and the National SAQRF Committee in the referencing process. The referencing process requires that each Member State form a National SAQRF Committee (NSC) of key stakeholders to coordinate the referencing process. Refer to Section 10, Governance.

6.   Quality assurance

6.1   Trust in a Member State's qualifications that are part of a national qualifications framework or system is essential for supporting the mobility of learners and workers within and external to the region. Quality assurance of qualifications, and the provision of the qualifications through educational service providers, is critical to engendering trust.

6.2   Quality assurance, in relation to educational services, is a set of mechanisms established by competent bodies to assure the quality of qualifications and the provision of these qualifications to provide confidence to stakeholders. The MS are responsible for setting the quality requirements and outcomes for quality assurance.[13]

6.3   The referencing process requires the MS to not only reference their national qualifications framework/s or system, but also to describe the quality assurance mechanisms linked to their qualifications. They have agreed to a set of quality assurance criteria.

6.4   The quality assurance criteria to be considered in the referencing process are included in Annexure 3.

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13 Adapted from CEDEFOP 2011, p. 134.

7. Credit systems

7.1 Credit systems help learners progress in their learning and assist their transfers across qualifications, qualifications systems, and countries. Credit systems allow learners to accumulate and transfer credit related to learning outcomes.

7.2 The SAQRF encourages MS to develop credit systems within their own context, and it supports a link with a future regional credit system.

8. Glossary

8.1 The agreed terms and understandings are included in Annexure 4.

8.2 The agreed terms and understandings do not impinge on agreed terms and understandings within the qualifications system of MS but are used to assist in a common understanding of practices.

9. Governance

9.1 The SAQRF recognises two committees:
    9.1.1 The SAQRF Technical Committee; and
    9.1.2 The National SAQRF Committee (NSC).

9.2 The oversight of the SAQRF is managed by the SAQRF Technical Committee. This committee shall:
    9.2.1 provide high-level technical advice and engage with policy issues arising from the implementation of the SAQRF;
    9.2.2 foster collaboration among the MS;
    9.2.3 facilitate the resolution of issues with agreements on common approaches and understanding culminating in briefing papers and guidelines;
    9.2.4 promote the SAQRF and quality assurance of educational services within its MS;
    9.2.5 monitor the implementation of the SAQRF;
    9.2.6 provide for the consideration of referencing reports and confirm whether the report meets the SAQRF referencing criteria;
    9.2.7 facilitate capacity development of MS in terms of national qualifications frameworks and quality assurance; and
    9.2.8 promote the SAQRF in the international education and training community.

9.3 Each Member State shall have one vote and nominate their representative. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall be determined from the list of MS on an alphabetical basis and rotated every two years, with the Vice-Chair continuing as the Chair for the following two years. Decision-making processes shall be based on consensus. Further arrangements and protocols are stipulated in the decisions made by the Technical Committee.

9.4 The National SAQRF Committee (NSC) acts as the interface between the SAQRF Technical Committee and the Member State. Membership is determined by the Member State. The NSC is responsible for

9.4.1 updating and reporting to the SAQRF Technical Committee on changes and progress in qualifications systems within its own country;

9.4.2 developing a nationally agreed roadmap for referencing;

9.4.3 steering and guiding the referencing process; and

9.4.4 ensuring the quality of the referencing milestones and outcomes and producing an endorsed report.

9.5 A SAQRF Secretariat supports the functions of the SAQRF Technical Committee.

Annexure 1: Level descriptors

	Knowledge	Skills	Application	
			Problem solving	Responsibility and autonomy
	Learning outcomes include:	Learning outcomes include:	Learning outcomes include the ability to:	Learning outcomes involve the ability to:
8	Knowledge that is at the most advanced frontier or field and at the interface between fields Creation of new knowledge or practice	Most advanced and specialized skills and techniques including synthesis and evaluation	Solve critical problems in research and/or innovation, and to extend and redefine knowledge or professional practice	Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, and scholarly and professional integrity Demonstrate sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of a context, including research
7	Highly specialized knowledge (some of which is at the forefront of a field) as the basis for original thinking and/or research A critical awareness of issues within a field and at the interface between different fields	Specialized skills demonstrating mastery in research and/or innovation	Develop new knowledge and processes to solve highly complex problems, and to integrate knowledge from different fields in research or innovation	Manage and modify 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 others
6	Advanced knowledge in a field involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	Advanced skills demonstrating proficiency and innovation	Solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialized field	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects Take responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable contexts, and for managing professional development of individuals or groups

	Knowledge	Skills	Application	
			Problem solving	Responsibility and autonomy
	Learning outcomes include:	Learning outcomes include:	Learning outcomes include the ability to:	Learning outcomes involve the ability to:
5	Comprehensive and specialized, factual, and theoretical knowledge within a field, and an understanding of the boundaries of that knowledge	A comprehensive range of cognitive, analytical, and practical skills	Develop creative solutions to complex and sometimes abstract problems	Exercise management and supervision in contexts where there are some aspects of unpredictable change Review and develop the performance of self and others
4	Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts	A broad range of cognitive and practical skills	Generate solutions to specific problems in a field	Exercise self-management within guidelines and in contexts that are usually predictable but subject to change Supervise routine activities of others, taking some responsibility for their performance
3	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes, and general concepts in a field	A range of cognitive and practical skills	Accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying known methods, tools, materials, and information	Take responsibility for the completion of tasks and adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems
2	Basic factual knowledge of a field	Basic cognitive and practical skills	Carry out tasks and solve routine problems using defined processes and tools	Carry out tasks under broad supervision with some autonomy
1	Basic general knowledge	Basic general skills	Carry out basic tasks to solve simple problems	Carry out tasks in a structured context under direct supervision

Source: Adapted from EQF 2017 and AQRF 2014

Annexure 2: Referencing criteria and obligations

Referencing criteria

1. The structure and profile of the broader education and training system is described, including an overview of the national qualifications system and its national qualifications framework/s.
2. The quality assurance mechanisms for educational services are integral to the national qualifications framework/s or system, and are consistent with the quality assurance criteria in Annexure 3.
3. Qualifications are based on the principles of learning[14] outcomes, which inform the recognition of all forms of learning[14] and credit systems (where they exist) within the national qualifications framework/s or system.
4. The process for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework/s (or describing the place of qualifications within the qualifications system) is clear and transparent.
5. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualification levels of the national qualifications framework/s or system and the level descriptors of the SAQRF.
6. The legitimacy and responsibilities of all relevant competent bodies involved in the referencing process are clear and transparent. The referencing report has been prepared and endorsed by the Member State's National SAQRF Committee (NSC), and any relevant legitimate competent bodies. It is endorsed as being an accurate representation of the relevant quality assurance mechanisms, provisions, and practices. The referencing report shall include these endorsements.
7. The referencing process involves two international experts from two different countries (internal or external to the region) to support and assist the development of trusted outcomes. The referencing report shall include a written statement from each of the international experts.

Referencing obligations

1. There is one comprehensive referencing report that sets out the response to each criterion and includes any supplementary information or evidence.
2. Following the referencing process, the Member State is encouraged to commit to a clear reference to the appropriate SAQRF level on new qualifications and certification documents issued within the qualifications system and/or in qualifications registers managed by relevant competent bodies. This commitment is implemented according to MS legislation and practices, and may change from time to time.
3. The report shall be readily available and published by the competent body within the Member State and by the SAQRF Secretariat within six months of having referenced or updated the referencing report and its acceptance by the MS.

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14 Formal, non-formal, and informal learning

Annexure 3: Quality assurance criteria

All qualifications should be quality assured to build trust in their design, development, and provision. In consideration of the MS context and circumstances, these quality assurance criteria apply to educational services within the MS's qualifications system.

Quality assurance criteria

The quality assurance of qualifications should:

1. involve competent bodies that operate with clear and transparent governance arrangements;
2. be based on clear, transparent, and measurable objectives, quality standards, rules, or guidelines;
3. address the design of qualifications and the application of learning outcomes;
4. promote the recognition of all forms of learning[15] by minimising barriers, if any;[16]
5. provide for fair and valid assessments of the learning outcomes, including certification;
6. address the quality of the provider and their provision of qualifications, including internal and external review; making the findings of external reviews public;
7. involve relevant stakeholder groups in key aspects of quality assurance;
8. be underpinned by a continuous improvement approach involving decisions that are informed by feedback, data, and research;
9. involve competent bodies carrying out their own internal and external evaluations, as they deem fit;
10. be fit for purpose, appropriately resourced, and sustainable; and
11. be enhanced through national and international linkages and cooperation.[17]

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15 Formal, non-formal, and informal learning

16 Barriers may relate to access and equity for vulnerable groups, such as those based on gender, age, disability, or geo- graphic location.

17 These criteria have been adapted from UNESCO 2017 and European Commission 2017.

Annexure 4: Glossary of terms

For the purposes of the SAQRF the following definitions apply.

Competence	Competence is the "proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development".[18]
Competent body	A competent body is an organization that has the legal authority, capability, or power to undertake a specific function. Within qualifications systems, that could include: ▸ agencies responsible for approving and managing qualifications under the NQF/s; ▸ agencies responsible for approving and monitoring educational service providers and the provision of programmes that lead to approved qualifications. These agencies could be qualifications agencies, quality assurance agencies, official review boards, or other approved bodies or agencies.
Credit	Credit "means confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate assessments and can be expressed in a quantitative value (e.g. credits or credit points) demonstrating the estimated workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes".[19]
Credit systems	Credit systems are a "transparency tool for facilitating the recognition of credit(s). These systems can comprise, inter alia, equivalence, exemptions, units/modules that can be accumulated and transferred, the autonomy of providers who can individualise pathways, and the validation of non-formal and informal learning".[20]
Credit transfer	Credit transfer means "the process of allowing individuals who have accumulated credit on one context to have it valued and recognised in another context".[21] It may include but is not limited to the following processes: cross-credit, advanced standing, block credit, specified credit, and unspecified credit.
Educational services	In relation to the SAQRF, educational services refer to all relevant education and training sectors within a Member State's qualifications system, such as higher education, TVET,[22] or skills.

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18 European Commission 2017, p. 20.

19 European Commission 2017, p. 20.

20 European Commission 2017, p. 21.

21 European Commission 2017, p. 21.

22 Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Evaluation	Evaluation incorporates a review or assessment of performance of an initiative, a policy, or organisational practices. It generally involves the evaluation as a systematic investigation to determine the work or merit of the programme or policy.[23] In relation to the SAQRF, internal evaluation may include a self-assessment or internal audit. External evaluation may include an external (or independent) audit.
Formal learning	Formal learning occurs in an organized and structured environment (such as in an educational or training institution, 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 and typically leads to certification.[24]
Informal learning	Informal learning is 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.[25]
Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes are statements regarding what a learner knows, understands, and is able to do on completion of a learning process. Within the SAQRF, learning outcomes are described in terms of knowledge, skills, and application (responsibility and autonomy).[26]
National qualifications frameworks	National qualifications frameworks are instruments for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved. They aim at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improving the transparency, access, progression, and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.[27]
Non-formal learning	Non-formal learning is learning that is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time, or learning support), but that contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification.[28]
Programme	A programme is a set of arrangements developed by a provider for the teaching, learning, and assessment of a body of knowledge, set of skills, and wider competences. A programme may lead to the award of a qualification.[29]

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23 Adapted from CEDEFOP 2011, p. 71.

24 CEDEFOP 2011, p. 75.

25 CEDEFOP 2011, p. 85.

26 Adapted from European Commission 2017.

27 Adapted from European Commission 2017.

28 CEDEFOP 2011, p. 113.

29 Adapted from CEDEFOP 2011, p. 127 & 128, and EQAP 2015

Provider	A provider is an institution that is approved to organize and deliver programmes that lead to a qualification. Providers may be assessment centres, colleges, institutes, universities, or similar bodies.
Qualifications	A qualification is the formal outcome of an assessment in recognition that an individual has been assessed as achieving learning outcomes or competencies to the standard specified for the qualification title, usually a type of certificate, diploma or degree. Learning and assessment for a qualification can take place through various means, such as workplace experience, a programme of study, or a blend of both. A qualification is issued by a competent agency, which confers official recognition of value in the labour market and in further education and training.[30]
Qualifications system	Qualifications system means "all aspects of a member state's activity related to the recognition of learning and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. That includes the development and implementation of institutional arrangements and processes relating to quality assurance, assessment and the award of qualifications". A national qualifications system may be composed of several subsystems and may or may not include an explicit national qualifications framework.[31]
Quality assurance	Quality assurance, in relation to educational services, is a set of mechanisms established by competent bodies to assure the quality of qualifications and provision of these qualifications to provide confidence to stakeholders. The MS are responsible for setting the quality requirements and outcomes for quality assurance.[32]
Recognition of learning outcomes	Recognition of learning outcomes means the confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes gained by an individual in a formal, non-formal, or informal setting have been assessed against predefined learning outcomes and are compliant with the requirements of a standard, such as a qualification or component/s of a qualification. Formal recognition of learning outcomes includes assessment of an individual within a formal setting, recognition of prior learning, and credit transfer processes or credit transfer systems.[33]

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30 Adapted from European Commission 2017 and from ASEAN 2015.

31 Adapted from European Commission 2017, p. 20

32 Adapted from CEDEFOP 2011, p. 134.

33 Adapted from European Commission 2017, ASEAN 2015, CEDEFOP 2011, p. 125.

Recognition of prior learning	Recognition of prior learning relates to recognizing learning gained and currently held, regardless of how, when or where the learning occurred. It involves the assessment of an individual to make a decision against specified learning outcomes.
	The recognition of prior learning process by a competent body consists of the following four distinct phases: identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual, documentation to make visible the individual's experiences, a formal assessment of those experiences, and certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification.[34]
	Recognition of prior learning may be termed assessment of prior learning.

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34 Adapted from European Commission 2017

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