

Referencing the Dutch Qualifications Framework NLQF to the European Qualifications Framework

Update September 2019 Final version

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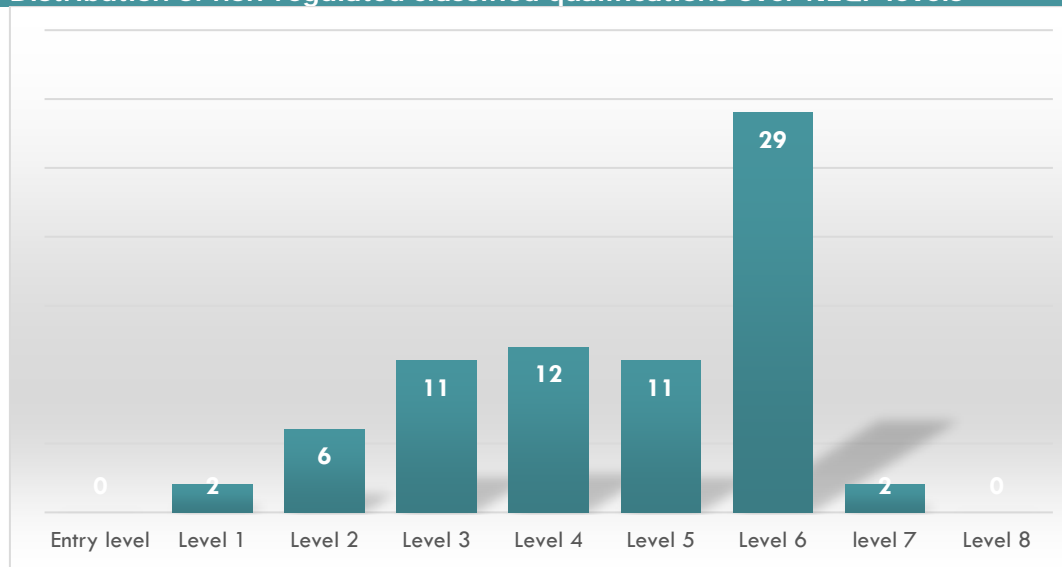
1 Executive summary

- 1 An NLQF level indication strengthens the civil value of a qualification. Bringing together both, regulated and non-regulated qualifications into one qualifications framework, supports the transparency in levels of the qualifications offered in the Netherlands.
- 2 The main tasks of the NCP-NLQF are: 1)classification of non-regulated qualifications (upon request of the owners of the qualification); 2)registration of the classified non regulated qualifications; 3)communication and information on the NLQF to its stakeholders.
- 3 In the Netherlands most types of qualifications, including in higher education, are based on learning outcomes. This has been taken as point of departure for the development of the NLQF. The existing 17 types of qualifications are classified in nine levels of learning: the entry level and levels 1 to 8 of the NLQF. Levels 1-8 of the NLQF are referenced to the eight levels in the EQF. During the update of the referencing report the Ministry of OCW confirmed that the classification of the 17 types of qualifications into the levels of the NLQF is still correct.
- 4 The regulated qualifications are generically classified into the levels of the NLQF. For example all VET level 4 qualifications are classified in NLQF level 4. However the committee NLQF-EQF recommended in 2011, to create the possibility for individual VET level 4 qualifications to be classified into NLQF level 5, based on their learning outcomes. Until now, no such request has formally been made to the Ministry of OCW. The reason was that some stakeholders did not consider level 5 to be a level for VET qualifications. However the Netherlands Association of VET colleges, the MBO Raad, is currently internally considering to make use of such a possibility for one or more individual VET qualifications.
- 5 The activities of the NCP-NLQF gradually shifted from setting up the organisation and its procedures and building trust with stakeholders to classifying non-regulated qualifications. In the first phase of its existence the NCP-NLQF also had the focus on building trust by stakeholders like the Inspectorate of Education and NVAO by developing robust criteria and procedures, a register and looking for the right people to take place in the Programme council, validation – and classifying commission. The figures below demonstrates the **non-regulated qualifications** that have been classified¹.

¹ State of Play September 2019

**OVERVIEW OF NON-REGULATED QUALIFICATIONS CLASSIFIED IN THE NLQF
SEPTEMBER 2019**

Distribution of non-regulated classified qualifications over NLQF levels



Number of qualifications per sector (ISCED-F)	NLQF / EOF level									Total	
	Entry level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Biochemistry					1						1
Chemical engineering and processes					1	1					2
Engineering and engineering trades				3							3
Fashion, interior and industrial design					1						1
Finance, banking and insurance							1				1
Hair and beauty services				2	2						4
Horticulture						1					1
Hotel, restaurants and catering	2	1									3
Journalism and reporting							1				1
Management and administration							1				1
Medical diagnostic and treatment technology							2	1			3
Military and defence							5				5
Nursing and midwifery							13				13
Physics						1					1
Protection of persons and property			1	1	1		1				4
Psychology							2				2
Sociology and cultural studies								1			1
Sports			1	3	3	5					12
Transport services			2		1						3
Travel, tourism and leisure						1					1
Veterinary				1							1
Wholesale and retail sales			1	1	2	2	3				9
Total	0	2	6	11	12	11	29	2	0	73	

- 6 In the past 7 years several studies and evaluations have taken place. Most significant remarks coming from nearly all evaluations is the need for the development of a law on NLQF as well as a more extended and targeted information and communication.

- 7 Concerning information and communication the NCP-NLQF has invested in website, folders, an animation video, articles, interviews and conferences. But so far, apart from stakeholders and those providers requesting classification of a qualification, the wider audience in the Netherlands has not yet been reached.
- 8 The updated referencing report has been send to, an partly discussed with the main stakeholders as there are the Inspectorate of Education, the NVAO, Associations for education and training, employers – and trade union. Apart from minor changes they agree with the proposed report. The Ministry of OCW, as responsible authority of the NCP, has been involved from scratch on. The Ministry of OCW has approved the report.
- 9 The NLQF level descriptors have been used to classify qualifications by the NLQF bureau, classification experts, the Quality commission, the Classification Commission and the Program Council. This has resulted in minor changes in the descriptors and clarifications.
- 10 The communication with the different stakeholders of the NLQF has been intensified as an effect of writing this update of the referencing report NLQF to the EQF.
- 11 Addressing the criteria:
 - *Criterion 1:* Updating the report included a written consultation process with the main stakeholders: a round asking for remarks and adjustments and a second round asking for agreement on the text. As main owner of the NLQF the Ministry of OCW has been involved from scratch on.
 - *Criterion 2:* there is detailed evidence that the descriptors of the NLQF are referenced to the descriptors of the EQF.
 - *Criterion 3:* the qualifications are based on learning outcomes already a long tradition in the Netherlands.
 - *Criterion 4:* referencing the regulated qualifications in 2011 was based on an intensive procedure with all stakeholders involved, in order to properly classify each level of education in the levels of the NLQF. At that time the process was guided by a Ministerial Steering Committee and an expert group with representatives of all education sectors. The minister of OCW has assigned a committee NLQF-EQF to provide an independent advice on the NLQF, the generic classification of the regulated qualifications, the approach to non-regulated qualifications and the organisation of the NCP NLQF. The commission NLQF-EQF was chaired by professor Leijnse and was composed of professors representing the different domains of education. For the update of the referencing report the different sectors have been asked to indicate if any change in the generic classification should be effected. No changes are required, however there is a request to have the possibility to classify some VET level 4 qualifications into NLQF level 5.
 - *Criterion 5:* the 10 criteria on quality assurance in the EQF recommendation 2017 are met by the quality assurance systems as demonstrated in tables at criterion 5 and Annex 2.
 - *Criterion 6:* the competent bodies on quality assurance find the description of the quality assurance to be in line with national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice. Furthermore 10 criteria on quality assurance in the EQF recommendation 2017 are met by the quality assurance systems.
 - *Criterion 7:* feedback of the international experts is reflected in the report.

- *Criterion 8:* the update of the referencing report is approved by the Ministry of education, culture and science.
- 12 A growing economy, fast changing demand for new skills from the labour market, aging population and less youngsters lead to lifelong development being high on the political agenda. There is a lively debate in the Government and new measures like individual learning accounts are in development. These developments will help to better position the NLQF since more providers want to classify qualifications in one of the NLQF levels. Qualifications having an NLQF level might be one of the eligibility criteria for using the money from the learning account. Another need for the general public is having a better insight in education and training possibilities. Therefore an integrated register will be developed. Also conditions under which education and training can be followed need to be improved as: different types of learning and learning on the workplace.
- 13 Following the 2017 Ockham – IPS report the Ministry of OCW established a sounding board composed of the NLQF's most important stakeholders; social partners, associations of education, SBB, inspectorate, NVAO. The discussions and conclusions of the sounding board are greatly reflected in the challenges for the NLQF in the near future:
- the development and implementation of the law on NLQF;
 - the classifications of international qualifications; credential evaluation: difference in levelling of similar qualifications in neighbour countries). This does not stimulate transparency and comparability of qualifications which is needed for (labour market) mobility.;
 - classification based on learning outcomes irrespective of education sector: e.g. discussion on level 5 to be open for qualifications from vocational education and training sector;
 - intended vs achieved learning outcomes: whether or not taking the by students achieved learning outcomes into consideration when classifying non-regulated qualifications. The NCP-NLQF considers this is not to be in line with the EQF principles;
 - whether or not regulated partial qualifications will have a NLQF level on their certificates. It is now decided that parts of qualifications will not receive a separate NLQF level but will have the denomination: this partial qualification is part of regulated qualification..followed by the name of the qualifications it part of;
 - increasing demand for classification is foreseen. What are the implications for the staffing and the budget of the NCP;
 - to strengthen the position of NLQF/EQF in the policy developments in the area of lifelong development and to provide the NCP-NLQF with a legal status as an independent organisation;
 - communication; how to better explain NLQF/EQF to a wider audience on national and European level.

The assignment of the sounding board of the Ministry of OCW has ended and the NCP-NLQF intends to install a sounding board composed of the former members. of the mentioned sounding board of the Ministry of OCW.

2 Introduction

This report is an update of the by the EQF Advisory Group adopted Dutch referencing report of 2012².

The first Recommendation adopting the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) was approved by the European Parliament and the Council in April 2008³. The 2008 Recommendation invited Member States to link their national qualifications systems to the EQF by referencing their national qualifications levels to the relevant EQF levels and, where applicable, to develop national qualification frameworks in line with national legislation and practice.

The 2008 Recommendation is repealed and replaced by a new Recommendation in 2017⁴. The 2017 Recommendation reaffirms this invitation, enhanced with the invitation “...to review and update, when relevant, the referencing of the levels of the national qualifications frameworks or systems to the levels of the EQF...”.

Now, following the 2017 Recommendation and 6 years of implementation of the NLQF, on request of the Dutch Ministry of Education Culture and Science, from now on referred to as Ministry of OCW, the NCP-NLQF has prepared an up-dated Referencing report.

The update of the report addresses the following topics:

- Activities of the NCP-NLQF in the past 6 years.
- Requirements for and processes of classifying non-regulated qualifications⁵ in the NLQF.
- Conclusions of studies and evaluations commissioned by the NCP-NLQF and or by the Ministry of OCW.
- Responding to the 10 criteria as described in the EQF Recommendation 2017, including an update of the statements of the main stakeholders.
- A renewed description of the Dutch education sector.
- An update of the level descriptors of the NLQF.

The first referencing report was discussed with all stakeholders in regular meetings and by the committee NLQF-EQF in 2011. These, meetings did not take place for the current report since it concerns an update.

However, the NCP NLQF has regular meetings with the different stakeholders. In these meetings and in the sounding board installed by the Ministry of OCW following the 2017 Ockham IPS report, many of the topics addressed in this report were discussed. For example the possibility to classify a VET level 4 qualification in NLQF level 5, admission criteria for classification of non-regulated qualifications, the difference in EQF levels as a result of classifying comparable qualifications in different Member States, achieved or intended learning outcomes.

² https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-efq/files/EQF_Referencing_Netherlands_022012.pdf

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32008H0506%2801%29>

⁴ <https://www.europa.eu/eqf>

⁵ For more information on non-regulated qualifications please see chapter 3

Furthermore, the main stakeholders of the NLQF (social partners, associations of education, SBB, Inspectorate, NVAO, NRTO, NLQF experts, NLQF Commissions and NLQF Programme council) were asked to comment on relevant parts of the draft report and Annexes. The NCP NLQF has updated the draft based on the comments received. The revised version of the report was send to the stakeholders in January 2019. Furthermore, the report is discussed on a regular base with, and finally approved by the Ministry of OCW.

3 Development of the Dutch National Qualifications Framework NLQF

Following the EQF developments, the Dutch Ministry of OCW, initiated a project for the development of a qualifications framework in 2010.

The Dutch formal qualification system is composed of four educational sectors:

- primary education;
- secondary education, including preparatory senior vocational education and training (vmbo);
- senior vocational education and training (mbo);
- higher education, including the associate degree.

Of these sectors vmbo, mbo and higher education are organised in levels. The education sectors and their levels contain in total 17 types qualifications. Most of the types of qualifications in the Netherlands, including in higher education, are based on learning outcomes.

This situation has been taken as point of departure for the development of the levels of learning of the NLQF and resulted in an NLQF with learning outcomes based level descriptors for an entry level and levels 1 to 8. NLQF levels 1-8 are referenced to the eight levels in the EQF. Classification of qualifications in the NLQF is meant to be performed based on the levels of learning outcomes of the qualifications, regardless of where and how they have been acquired.

All above mentioned 17 types of qualifications, regulated by the ministry of OCW, from now on referred to as **regulated qualifications**, are generically classified in one of the levels of the NLQF. Meaning all qualifications part of a certain level of a certain education sector are classified at the same NLQF level. NLQF levels thus refer to levels of learning outcomes and not to education systems or providers.

Regulated qualifications do not refer to *regulated professions* as defined in Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union⁶

The project was executed close cooperation with experts from the different educational sectors, the main stakeholders from formal and non-formal education and training, and by consultation with a wider public, including providers of education and training. The committee NLQF-EQF, installed by the Minister of OCW and chaired by Professor F. Leijnse, formulated a recommendation based on the results of the project group to the Minister of OCW⁷. Part of the recommendation of the committee NLQF-EQF was to acknowledge the generic classification of these 17 types of **regulated qualifications** as pictured in the Figure 1.

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32013L0055&qid=1520864087882>

⁷ https://nlqf.nl/images/downloads/NLQF/c_Het_advies_van_de_Commissie.pdf

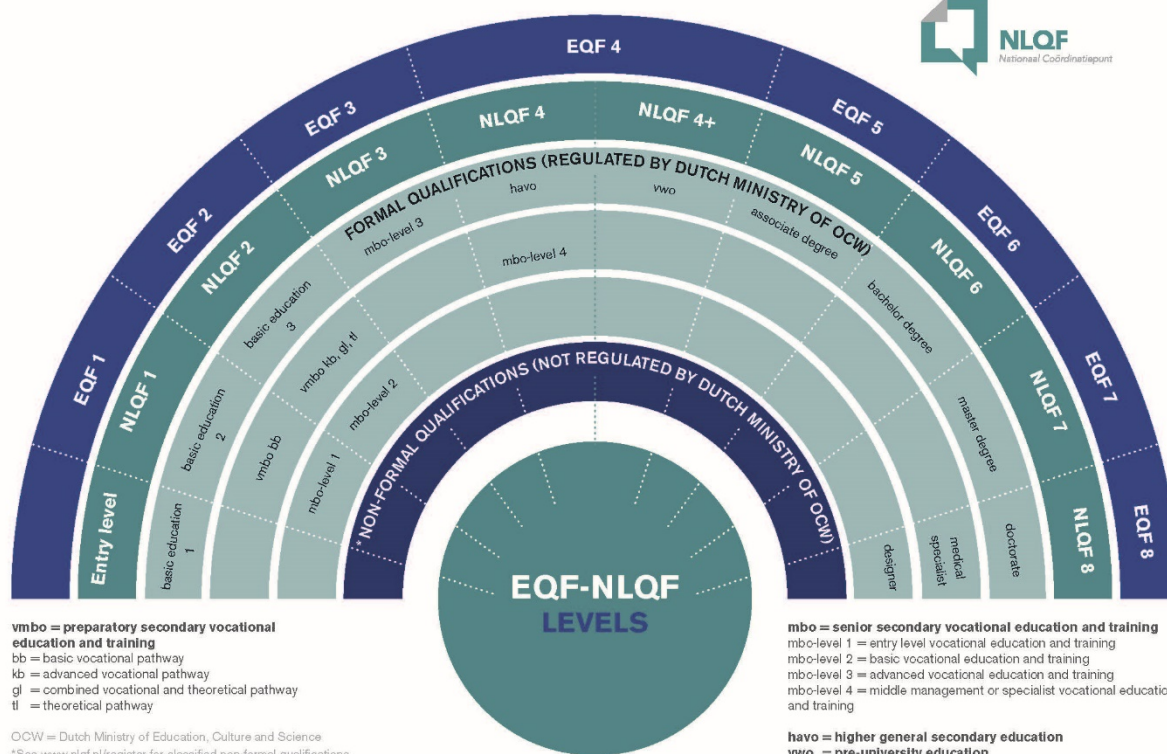


Figure 1 Schematic overview of the NLQF

Regulated qualifications are offered by both recognised publicly funded providers and by private providers. Private providers offering regulated qualifications need to be recognised by the Ministry of OCW for each regulated qualification they would like to offer. When recognised they are, for those qualifications, subject to the same rules and regulations as public providers, **including quality assurance**. However, they do not receive any funding of the Ministry of OCW.

In addition to the qualifications regulated by the ministry of OCW many other qualifications that are relevant to and have ‘qualifying’ power on the labour market are offered⁸, henceforth referred to in this report as **non-regulated qualifications**. Most of these qualifications are offered by private providers. 84% of adult learning takes place in this sector with a turnover of around 3.4 billion. However, they can also be offered in contract activities by public providers, albeit not funded by the Ministry of OCW. Table 1 demonstrates the relation between types of providers, types of qualifications and the role of the Ministry of OCW.

⁸ 2018: 14,400 registered private providers 1,3 million students, total revenue €3,400.000.000

Table 1: Relation between types of providers and qualifications and OCW recognition and funding

PROVIDERS QUALIFICATIONS	Public	Private
Regulated	<i>Recognised Funded</i>	<i>Recognised NOT funded</i>
Non-regulated	<i>Not recognised NOT funded</i>	<i>Not recognised NOT funded</i>

When developing the NLQF it was considered that classifying those **non-regulated** qualifications into the NLQF will strengthen their value. Furthermore, bringing together in one qualifications framework both types of qualifications will provide insight and transparency into the levels of the main qualifications in the Netherlands. Therefore it was decided to open up, under strict conditions, the NLQF to **non-regulated** qualifications⁹.

For classifying qualifications into the NLQF the **'best fit'** principle is used, meaning that qualifications are classified at the level where the level descriptor best fits their learning outcomes. That is, not all learning outcomes of a qualification have to comply with all the descriptor elements of an NLQF level. The fact that two or more qualifications are classified at the same level in the NLQF indicates that the level of complexity of learning related to these qualifications is more or less comparable. It does not necessarily mean that such qualifications have the same objectives, and content. Nor does it mean that the qualifications are equivalent or interchangeable or are offered in the same education sector. A regulated qualification of a more general character, such as HAVO, can be positioned at the same level as regulated qualifications with a more vocationally-orientated character such as VET Level 4. The same goes for non-regulated qualifications classified in the NLQF: such qualifications can have the same NLQF-level as a regulated qualifications because of the level of complexity of their learning outcomes. This does not mean they are equivalent or interchangeable. Furthermore, NLQF levels do not include admission and or progression rights.

Following the recommendation of the NLQF–EQF Committee, the Minister of OCW and the Government adopted the NLQF in 2011. The first referencing document was presented to, and adopted by the EQF Advisory group in October 2011. The referencing report was improved based on feedback received, and was published on the dedicated European portal¹⁰ on the 31st of January 2012.

⁹ For more details on conditions and procedures see Annex 3

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/EQF_Referencing_Netherlands_022012.pdf

4 Implementation of the NLQF

4.1 Set up of the NCP NLQF

The Ministry of OCW commissioned the establishment of a National Coordination Point for the Dutch qualifications framework, the **NCP-NLQF**. This coordination point started its activities in 2012.

The **main tasks** of the NCP-NLQF are:

- 1 classification of non-regulated qualifications (upon request of the owner of the qualification);
- 2 registration of the classified non regulated qualifications; and
- 3 communication and information on the NLQF to stakeholders and the wider public.

The activities of the NCP-NLQF are funded by three revenues:

- structural funding by the Ministry of OCW;
- a grant of the European Commission;
- revenues from classification of non-regulated qualifications.

In its starting phase the NCP-NLQF focused on:

- developing procedures and formats for the classification of non-regulated qualifications;
- developing profiles for- and recruitment of the necessary experts;
- testing procedures and criteria with stakeholders and providers of non-regulated qualifications;
- developing information material including the website and users' guides;
- PR and communication activities.

After the first year of organising the NCP-NLQF, the interest for classification of non-regulated qualifications picked up slowly, mainly because of a lack of awareness with the providers of non-regulated qualifications. However this interest is progressing year after year, with an increasing amount of classification requests in the last two years (see section 5.1).

4.2 Studies and evaluation

Ever since the Ministry of OCW initiated the development of the NLQF multiple studies have taken place, commissioned by the Ministry of OCW and involving the main stakeholders. The results of these studies give a good picture of the developments, impact, challenges and obstacles of the implementation of the NLQF and its NCP. The following sections describe the main studies.

➤ Committee NLQF-EQF (2011)

The NLQF is established based on a study executed by the committee NLQF-EQF. This committee also recommended the Minister of OCW on the establishment, tasks and processes of the NCP-NLQF. The main recommendations were:

- to accept the level descriptors of the NLQF and their relation to the EQF as presented in the recommendation of the Committee NLQF-EQF;
- to accept the generic classification of the regulated qualifications as presented in the recommendation of the Committee NLQF-EQF;
- to accept individual classification of regulated qualifications upon request of the relevant stakeholders and upon advice of the NCP-NLQF;
- to accept the classification of non-regulated qualifications with a minimum nominal workload of 400 hrs under strict conditions, based on transparent procedures and for a restricted validity period;
- to register the non-regulated qualifications in a NLQF register¹¹;
- to position an independent NCP-NLQF outside the Ministry of OCW with as main tasks:
 - the tasks as described in the EQF Recommendation;
 - the classification of non-regulated qualifications;
 - the management and evaluation of the NLQF;
 - the management and evaluation of its procedures;
- to evaluate the NCP-NLQF after five years.

➤ **Hobéon Study “Implementation of the NLQF, legal modalities and consequences” (June 2013)** ¹²

The NLQF is a framework that is **education system neutral** meaning that qualifications are classified in one of its levels based on their learning outcomes and irrespective of how and where the qualifications are obtained. Furthermore the Committee NLQF-EQF recommended to the Minister of OCW in 2011 to allow individual classification of regulated qualifications in case the generic classification would prove not to be appropriate. However, stakeholders from Higher Education considered that a VET qualification cannot be positioned at the same level as qualifications from Higher Education, for example the Associate Degree at level 5 of NLQF.

This issue, urged for the further clarification of the legal status and the possible development of a dedicated law on the NLQF. Therefore the Ministry of OCW commissioned the study: *“Implementation of the NLQF, legal modalities and consequences”*. The study was executed by Prof. mr. P.W.A. Huisman, Erasmus School of Law/De Haagse Hogeschool, Mr. F. A.M. Hendriks, Hobéon and M.m.v. Ir. A.T. de Bruijn, Hobéon.

The study addressed the following research questions

- the appropriateness of legal regulation of EQF/NLQF;
- the legal duties and powers of the NCP-NLQF;
- the other rights and obligations arising for providers and other from possible anchoring of EQF/NLQF.

The main conclusions and recommendations of the study are:

- 1 The need for the regulation of the NLQF in a dedicated law.
- 2 The need for a legal status of the NCP-NLQF with as most important tasks:
 - a classification of non-regulated qualifications;

¹¹ Regulated qualifications are registered in several registers. For more information see: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/hoger-onderwijs/vraag-en-antwoord/waar-vind-ik-een-overzicht-van-erkende-opleidingen>

¹² https://www.hobeon.nl/uploads/nieuws/130628_juridische_implementatie_nlqf_onderzoeksrapport_ocw_huisman_hendriks_def.pdf

- b registration of those qualifications;
 - c communication.
- 3 The need for the Ministry to decide if NLQF level classification should be protected by law, comparable to the protection of official degrees.
 - 4 In case no dedicated law will be developed and implemented the NLQF will become an instrument managed by labour market stakeholders.

The results of the study were input for the first draft legislative proposal in 2015.

➤ **Ockham IPS study on the implementation of the NLQF (November 2013)**¹³

After having positioned the NCP-NLQF within an independent organisation (CINOP¹⁴) on a temporary basis, this study looked at the functioning of the NCP-NLQF and the impact of the NLQF so far. It was executed by Ockham IPS, a private research organisation, in 2013. The main conclusions and recommendations were:

- Much work is done and is in line with the principles as formulated with the Committee NLQF-EQF.
- Procedures are robust and the quality is well assured.
- In general the researchers see an increasing awareness of importance of the learning outcomes principle.
- There is a real need to define the legal status of both, the NLQF the NCP-NLQF.
- The NLQF is still an abstract instrument. More targeted communication and information will help in particular employers and employees, to understand the added value of an NLQF/EQF level and to explain why and how it can be used and what it does not do.
- To better position the NLQF as a labour market instrument in the context of lifelong learning, its relation with ECVET and EVC should be strengthened.
- Change the eligibility rules for non-regulated qualifications as recommended by the Committee NLQF-EQF: the 400 hrs rule should be abolished and replaced by the requirement of labour market relevance and civil effect.

➤ **ProfitWise Onderzoek & Advies study on the Value of the NLQF (September 2014)**¹⁵

For this study ProfitWise has done research on the characteristics, properties and advantages of the NLQF, and on which of them are in line with the interests of owners of non-regulated qualifications. When using this knowledge, the NCP NLQF can better stimulate providers to make more and earlier use of the NLQF, and that more employees, employers and students benefit from the advantages that NLQF offers. Interviews show that providers mainly use the NLQF classification to demonstrate how the level of their courses relates to that of regulated programs. This comparison helps convincing potential students and employers of the distinguishing qualities of the program. Furthermore it provides prestige. The mere classification procedure itself has improved the quality of the programs that are classified.

¹³ https://nlqf.nl/images/Eindrapport_OCKHAM_IPS_definitief_29112013_NCP_NLQF.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.cinop.nl/>

¹⁵ https://nlqf.nl/images/downloads/De_Waarde_van_het_NLQF_-_Eindrapportseptember2014_-_ProfitWise.pdf

The study also demonstrates that the more knowledge the providers have about the NLQF levels, the more applications of the NLQF they have in mind and the greater the chance that they would like to have their qualifications classified in the NLQF.

The study shows inter alia:

- the NLQF is an important instrument in communication and marketing to explain the level of non-regulated qualifications;
- a NLQF classification helps give an insight in the value of a non-regulated qualification in the labour market;
- a NLQF classification provides more trust in the level of a diploma and or certificate.

ProfitWise recommended the NCP-NLQF inter alia:

- to better use practical examples in their communication tools;
- to use the advantages experienced by providers of classified qualifications in the communication and marketing;
- to focus communication on increasing the knowledge about the different levels of qualifications, and the ways in which NLQF can be used;
- to increase the knowledge on the NLQF with the wider public. When especially employers are more aware of the NLQF and its possibilities they will probably increase the demand for NLQF classified qualifications.

➤ **ProfitWise Onderzoek & Advies study 'Goed voorbeeld doet goed volgen' (May 2015)**¹⁶

In 2015, on request of the NCP-NLQF, ProfitWise did research on how reach out to the different possible users of NLQF and more specifically achieve employer engagement by developing an employer engagement strategy. To this end ProfitWise visited the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQF) and interviewed the different users of SCQF. Communication and marketing strategy was the main focus of the research.

The study concludes that the most important messages to be used in the communication of the NCP-NLQF are:

- The NLQF can help understand the value of qualifications in the Netherlands and abroad.
- Using the NLQF can help structuring and ranking qualifications, programs and learning outcomes.
- Using NLQF levels will increase the chances to finding the right employees.
- The NLQF can help formulating the requirements for a function in a clear and consistent way.
- Classifying qualifications in the NLQF enhances the quality of those qualifications.
- By using the NLQF the chances of your employers on the labour market will increase.

ProfitWise most important recommendations are:

- 1 Create partnerships with employers and involve them on a structural basis in the organisation of the NCP-NLQF.
- 2 Use clear and accessible marketing strategy and messages.
- 3 Create a layered employer engagement strategy.
- 4 Connect with the strategic interest of employers.

¹⁶ https://nlqf.nl/images/Eindrapport_ProfitWise_onderzoek_SCQF-NCP_NLQF-definitieve_versie.pdf

The lessons learned from both studies are input in the NCP-NLQF communication approach.

➤ **Public consultations on the first draft legislative proposal**

According to standard legislative procedures a public consultation was held to receive input on the first draft legislative proposal. The results of this public consultation created the need for **follow up consultation** focussing on questions related to:

- 1 The relation with the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (BAMA structure).
- 2 The possible misconception of quality assurance or accreditation through classification of non-regulated qualifications on the NLQF.
- 3 How to deal with classification of parts of regulated and non-regulated qualifications and programmes.

➤ **Study on the NLQF by Ockham IPS (September 2017)**¹⁷

The Ministry of OCW commissioned a study in response to the results of the second public consultation. It was again performed by Ockham IPS. They did a more in depth research on 1) the functioning of the NCP-NLQF since it came into existence in 2012, 2) possible objections against the NLQF as such, and 3) possible objections against the development of a law regulating the NLQF.

The main conclusions and recommendations of this study are the following:

Achievements

- 47 non-regulated qualifications are classified in one of the levels of the NLQF over the past 5 years.
- Procedures used for 'validation' of the applying organisation and for classification of their qualification(s) are considered to be transparent, robust and intensive and are subject to continuous improvement.
- The procedures for validation and classification often lead to the improvement of the quality assurance and examination procedures of the applying organisation.
- Social Partners see the added value of further implementing the NLQF as they consider it to be an important instrument for lifelong learning.

Issues and misconceptions of interviewees

- Some of the interviewees are afraid that the lack of legislation of the NLQF diminishes the trust in, and added value of classification of non-regulated qualifications.
- Because of the primary tasks and the structure of the NCP-NLQF, focussing on the classification of non-regulated qualifications, the general impression is that the NLQF is an instrument reserved for non-regulated qualifications.
- It is unclear to interviewees if an NLQF level is the level of a person or of a qualification.
- Some interviewees are afraid that by classifying non-regulated qualifications at level 5-8 the civic value of formal degrees will diminish.
- Some interviewees object to the fact that the classification of non-regulated qualifications is based on intended learning outcomes and not on achieved learning outcomes.

¹⁷ https://www.nlqf.nl/images/downloads/Artikelen/Eindrapport_onderzoek_NLQF_Ockham_IPS_2017.PDF

- It is unclear to some of the interviewees if the classification of a non-regulated qualification also should be considered to be a quality judgement and how this then is related to the quality assurance and accreditation of regulated qualifications.

Need for communication

- Better communication is needed on the fact that the qualifications framework is education system neutral a qualification is classified at a level based on its learning outcomes, irrespective of where and how the qualification is obtained. This means that not every qualification at level 6 NLQF is or needs to be a bachelor. Levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 are therefore not only reserved for qualifications coming from formal Higher Education providers.
- It is important to have clear rules and protocols for the owners of classified non-regulated qualifications for their communication about their classified non-regulated qualifications.
- Up till now the NLQF is not very well known. This is mainly due to:
 - the small amount so far of classified non-regulated qualifications;
 - the fact that no NLQF/EQF levels are indicated yet on the certificates and diplomas of regulated qualifications (because of lack of legislation);
 - no wide communication campaign yet has taken place.

4.3 Next steps

The Ministry of OCW has discussed the conclusions of the latest Ockham IPS research intensively in a **sounding board** composed of the associations of the different educational sectors, social partners, other ministries, the Inspectorate, the NVAO and the umbrella organisation of providers in private education (NRTO)

These discussions resulted in the following next steps:

- 1 The Ministry of OCW has re-started the further development of the law on the NLQF, which is foreseen to be implemented in 2020, also resulting in the publication of the NLQF/EQF level on certificates and diplomas of regulated qualifications.
- 2 A public wide communication campaign is planned in relation to lifelong development including explanations how the NLQF can be of benefit for all.
- 3 The NCP-NLQF will improve the communication protocol in close cooperation with the Inspectorate of Education, the NVAO and NRTO.
- 4 The NCP-NLQF will extend the information in the register of non-regulated qualifications with a web-link to the provider of the non-regulated classified qualification, as such providing more information on size and content of the classified qualification.
- 5 The Inspectorate of Education will have the authority to issue administrative fines for misuse of NLQF levels and or logo. This will be part of the law on the NLQF.
- 6 On request of Higher Education stakeholders in the sounding board, the NCP-NLQF together with the NVAO will test in 2019 the effect of involving the achieved learning outcomes in the process of classification. **NB** The NCP-NLQF bases its classification on intended learning outcomes, those that are described in the qualification, and not on achieved learning outcomes as the NCP-NLQF considers this is not to be in line with the objectives of the EQF.

- 7 The NCP-NLQF is in the process of installing a sounding board. The objectives of the sounding board are to advise the NCP-NLQF on policy and statistic developments in a social, policy and political context and to give more profile to the NLQF in the outside world. It also can play a role in better answering the questions/concerns of the main stakeholders in education and training in the Netherlands.

4.4 The development of the law on the NLQF

The law of the NLQF is in development. The process concerning the adoption of the law is composed of the following steps:

- Advice of the Education council.
- Agreement within the Council of Ministers.
- Recommendation by the Council of State.
- Discussion and vote within the House of Representatives.
- Discussion and vote in the Senate.
- Signature of The King and the Minister.

These steps take time meaning that most likely the law will be ready for implementation by 2020/2021.

It is foreseen that the law regulating the NLQF might include:

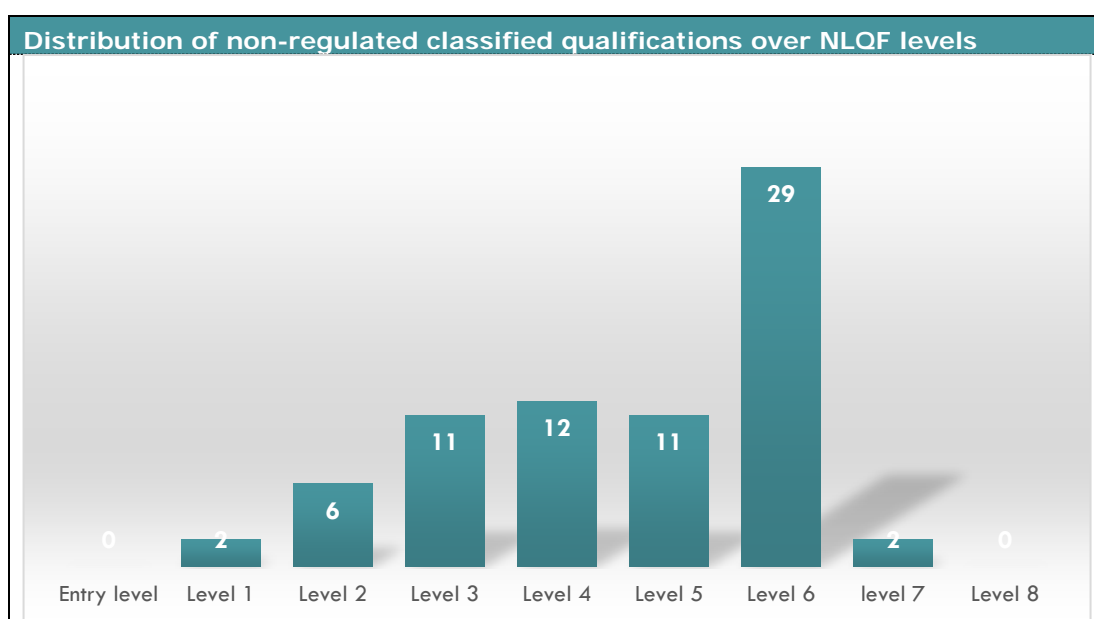
- Acknowledgment of the qualification levels and level descriptors of the NLQF.
- Acknowledgement of the generic classification of the regulated qualifications.
- The obligation to publish the relevant NLQF/EQF-level on qualifications documents from regulated qualifications.
- Allowing the classification of non-regulated qualifications.
- Allowing that relevant NLQF/EQF-levels are published on qualification documents from non-regulated qualifications.
- Enforcement of the law on the NLQF through issuing administrative fines by the Inspectorate of Education in case of misuse of the NLQF level indication and or the misuse of the NLQF logo
- A legal status of the NCP-NLQF as an independent organisation.

5 Main results¹⁸

5.1 Number and types of classified non-regulated qualifications

Over 73 non-regulated qualifications, from 28 different owners/organisations are classified in the NLQF end of September 2019, and a substantial demand for classification is expected. The following figure and table demonstrate the distribution over the NLQF levels and ISCED Fields of Education and Training 2013, detailed fields. (ISCED F 2013)¹⁹.

OVERVIEW OF NON-REGULATED QUALIFICATIONS CLASSIFIED IN THE NLQF SEPTEMBER 2019



¹⁸ State of play September 2019.

¹⁹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000228085>

Number of qualifications per sector (ISCED-F)	NLQF / EQF level										
	Entry level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	
Biochemistry					1					1	
Chemical engineering and processes					1	1				2	
Engineering and engineering trades				3						3	
Fashion, interior and industrial design					1					1	
Finance, banking and insurance							1			1	
Hair and beauty services				2	2					4	
Horticulture						1				1	
Hotel, restaurants and catering		2	1							3	
Journalism and reporting							1			1	
Management and administration							1			1	
Medical diagnostic and treatment technology							2	1		3	
Military and defence							5			5	
Nursing and midwifery							13			13	
Physics						1				1	
Protection of persons and property			1	1	1		1			4	
Psychology							2			2	
Sociology and cultural studies								1		1	
Sports			1	3	3	5				12	
Transport services			2		1					3	
Travel, tourism and leisure						1				1	
Veterinary				1						1	
Wholesale and retail sales			1	1	2	2	3			9	
Total		0	2	6	11	12	11	29	2	0	73

5.2 Changes to level descriptors

The NLQF experts, committees and Program Council have thoroughly tested the level descriptors of the NLQF through the process of classifying non-regulated qualifications over the last six years. Their comments have been carefully recorded and with the writing of this report, based on those comments, the level descriptors have been slightly adapted accordingly. It has also resulted in the development of guidelines to avoid different interpretation of the descriptors when classifying qualifications. This fine tuning of the level descriptors has not led to changes in the levelling as such. Annex 4 demonstrates in a table the updated level descriptors and guidelines, compared to the 2012 descriptors, also showing the changes .

5.3 Policy development in relation to the NLQF

Policy developments and several recommendations to the Government by the Socio Economic Council, the OECD Skills Strategy report and the report on lifelong development 'Doorleren werkt'²⁰ refer to the importance of working with learning outcomes. Moreover these reports consider the NLQF to be a useful tool to improve the transparency in the levels of all qualifications for all concerned: employers, employees, students, education providers etc.

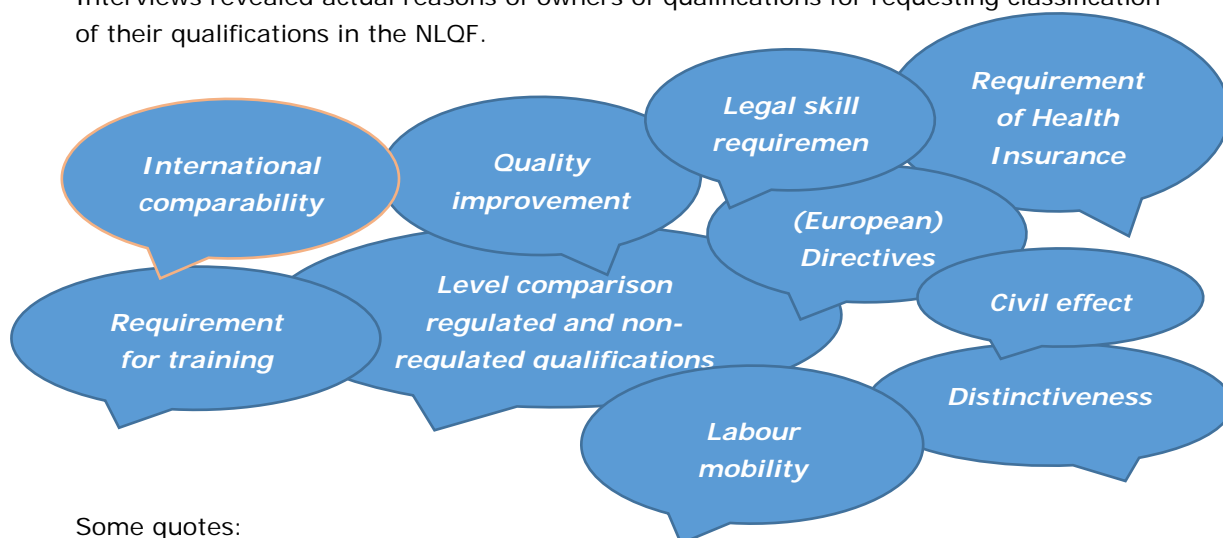
²⁰ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2017/04/04/doorleren-werkt.-samen-investeren-in-nieuwe-zekerheid>

On the level of the qualifications regulated by the ministry of OCW there are more developments to be seen:

- The *qualification files* of the VET qualifications structure already mention the corresponding EQF level. After adoption of the law the EQF and NLOF levels will also be mentioned on all diploma and certificate documents.
- The ministries of Social Affairs and OCW use the NLOF in in their communication to the government.
- The Ministry of OCW stimulates providers of Higher Education to use learning outcomes related to NLOF levels in *pilots concerning the development of flexible partial learning pathways*. By using the learning outcomes and the way the independent learning pathways are offered, the access to and participation in higher education is facilitated and growing.
- The 2017 Recommendation and the discussions following the latest Ockham IPS report triggered new attention for the development of an integrated credit system for all educational sectors related to the descriptors of the EQF/NLOF.
- Discussion is ongoing on the development of *partial* regulated qualifications obtaining an EQF/NLOF level.

5.4 Arguments for classification of non-regulated qualifications

Interviews revealed actual reasons of owners of qualifications for requesting classification of their qualifications in the NLOF.



Some quotes:

NOC*NSF wants to assure the quality of sports-based training. *“Take the trainer of an amateur hockey team, for example. Is he/she a well-meaning volunteer or a well-trained sportsman/woman that knows exactly what a trainer must do? Well, both, in fact; just like a professional coach in football or table tennis, for example. The sporting umbrella organisation NOC*NSF would like the underlying qualifications to be allocated an NLOF level so that they are (internationally) comparable and enable us to estimate the level of the coach that comes from Romania”.*

Het Centraal Bureau Levensmiddelenhandel (CBL, the sector organisation of super markets) wants to have their own education programmes classified in the NLOF. *“We want to show the labour market the civil value/effect of our education programmes”.*

There are a lot of specialised functions in the **health care sector**. For these functions specialised education programmes are not available in the regulated education

programmes. They are offered by private providers and in practice. *“By classifying these programmes in NLQF, everybody (students and employers) can recognise the level, which is highly appreciated.”*

5.5 Use of NLQF/EQF in the labour market

For the last two years NIDAP²¹ performed a small research, on request of the NCP-NLQF, on the use of the NLQF/EQF in the labour market, mainly in vacancies. It turns out that there is a minimum yet increasing use of mentioning the level of NLQF/EQF in vacancies. More impact of the use of EQF/NLQF is expected when the law is implemented and the wide public communication campaign is launched.

The NCP-NLQF has requested NIDAP to monitor the impact of the NLQF with HR managers of larger organisations the coming years, by adding survey questions related to the NLQF to standard regular research.

The 2019 result of the NIDAP research demonstrates:

Company size in nr employees	NLQF		EQF	
	% know NLQF and know what it stands for		% know EQF and know what it stands for	
	2018	2014	2018	2014
< 1000	15%	3%	15%	8%
> 1000	16%	8%	16%	10%

Company size in nr employees	NLQF		EQF	
	% has heard of NLQF but does not know what it stands for		% has heard of EQF but does not know what it stands for	
	2018	2014	2018	2014
< 1000	12%	6%	22%	6%
> 1000	23%	16%	32%	15%

Company size in nr employees	NLQF		EQF	
	% has never heard of NLQF		% has never heard of EQF	
	2018	2014	2018	2014
< 1000	73%	91%	63%	86%
> 1000	61%	76%	52%	74%

This year's new question on *how important* companies find a neutral level indication of qualifications the result was

< 1000: **45%** interesting or very interesting

> 1000: **57%** interesting or very interesting.

²¹ NIDAP is a research organisation surveying and monitoring educational market development and learning opportunities. They combine research data with job monitor information from employers.

6 Challenges

6.1 The challenge of the development of the law on NLOF

When writing this report, the draft law on NLOF is in its final development stage at the Ministry of OCW. The next steps consist of finding approval with all bodies involved in the law making process:

- Advice of the Education Council
- Agreement within the Council of Ministers
- Recommendation by the Council of State
- Discussion and vote within the House of Representatives
- Discussion and vote in the Senate
- Signature of The King and the Minister

These steps take time meaning that most likely the law will be ready for implementation in 2020.

6.2 The challenge of the international qualifications

The NCP-NLOF is open to national and international non-regulated qualifications. Currently the non-regulated international qualifications will have to undergo a classification process in all countries they would like to be active in with an EQF and NQF indication. This is a cumbersome procedure since a) it is time and resource intense for the awarding body of the qualification and for the classifying countries and b) classification procedures in the participating countries are different and it is a challenge to end up with the same EQF level as a result of the classification procedures.

The Netherlands take part in an EQF AG working group on international qualifications on how best to deal with this issue.

6.3 Challenges with foreign credential evaluation

Experiences with credential evaluation of foreign qualifications show that several similar qualifications from other EU countries have a different EQF-level than the Dutch qualifications. This does not stimulate transparency and comparability of qualifications which is needed for labour market mobility. In fact it is an obstacle since people might not get permission to work in a specific profession, even if it does not concern regulated professions. There are examples of qualifications in the Netherlands, Germany and Flanders in which this is an issue. It is important to map these differences, well identify the issues and look for solutions, together with the relevant foreign country.

6.4 Challenges with understanding of classification based on learning outcomes irrespective of education sector

One of the implications of the implementation of NLQF is that the NCP-NLQF classifies both regulated qualifications and, on request of its/their owner(s), non-regulated qualifications.

The regulated qualifications are generically classified. Meaning for example that all qualifications of VET level 1 are classified in NLQF level 1 and that all new qualifications of VET level 1 are automatically classified in that level. However, in reality it might occur for example that the learning outcomes of a VET level 4 qualification might better fit NLQF level 5. If this would be allowed, than what should be displayed on certificates and diplomas? VET level 4 and NLQF/EQF level 5, where other VET level 4 certificates carry NLQF/EQF level 4? Currently there are no provisions for dealing with this situation. At the time of writing this report it is not yet clear to what extent the law on NLQF under development will address this issue.

Another challenge related to this topic is that predominately stakeholders in Higher Education consider that VET qualifications cannot have the same NLQF level as a qualification from Higher Education. Meaning that actual requests for classifying some VET level 4 qualifications at NLQF level 5, that is also the level of the Associate Degree, have not yet been processed.

6.5 Intended vs achieved learning outcomes

Another issue to be solved is the request of some stakeholders in Higher Education that in the process of classification the NCP-NLQF should include the analyses if intended learning outcomes are actually achieved and demonstrated by the candidates. The NCP-NLQF considers this not to be in line with the EQF principles, but together with the NVAO, is testing to see what the effect will be .

6.6 Communication

It is a challenge to bring the NLQF and EQF to the attention of students, employers, parents, owners of non-regulated qualifications and the wider public. One of the instruments to be used is a public wide campaign to be initiated by the Ministry of OCW at the time of presentation of the new law. Another action of the NCP-NLQF will to take part in the working group on communication, set up by the EQF Advisory Group. Further actions will be discussed.

6.7 The challenge of an increasing demand

The current organisation and financing of the NCP-NLQF is based on classifying a limited amount of qualifications. However, requests for classification are increasing. A steep increase in the amount of classification requests will overburden the current capacity of the experts, the validation and classification committees and the program council. These groups would need to be extended. It will also challenge the capacity of the NCP-NLQF staff. Expansion of staff is a challenge due to the approach of working with a yearly budget.

6.8 The balance between reality and wishes

In the Netherlands the ambition is to work on the basis of learning outcomes in all education sectors. In VET, the learning outcomes approach is already being used for years. However the sector wide introduction of the learning outcomes approach in general education and higher education might need to lead to changes in the education system. This takes place in a political environment that is already existing and functioning for ages. These changes might lead to resistance.

6.9 How to stronger position the NLQF in governmental policy on lifelong development

The Dutch Cabinet wants to achieve a breakthrough in the field of Lifelong Development and to create a positive and strong learning culture. In this context, the Ministers of Social Affairs and OCW sent a letter²² to Parliament in September 2018, explaining intended actions of the Government in lifelong development. These actions include:

- creating insight into the education and learning options people have, formal and non-formal, for them to take control more easily;
- creating a personal learning and development budget for adults, to be used to their own discretion;
- creating the right preconditions, so that people are able to take control over work and life.

To achieve the needed culture change in Lifelong development, government will take measures to:

- stimulate peoples own direct management of lifelong development;
- stimulate a lifelong development culture within SMEs;
- improve the support for workers and employers in lifelong development;
- make the training offer for adults more flexible;
- closely cooperate with social partners.

The NLQF can play a role where it concerns showing the levels of non-regulated qualifications offered by private providers and the regulated qualifications. It will build up trust for the final users in choosing an education and training programme. Furthermore, the level descriptors of the NLQF can support a flexible training offer for adults, based on learning outcomes.

²² <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2018/09/27/kamerbrief-leven-lang-ontwikkelen>

7 Responding to the EQF Referencing Criteria

The EQF Referencing Criteria, developed by the EQF Advisory Group and applied in all referencing reports, have been slightly adapted and now form part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation. The section below presents per criterion:

- the criterion as originally agreed by the EQF AG;
- the criterion as in the 2017 Recommendation;
- the change to the old criterion.

This is then followed by an explanation of how the NLQF meets the new EQF criterion.

7.1 Criterion 1

CRITERION 1 as part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation	CRITERION 1 as agreed by the EQF AG in 2008	CHANGE 2008 - 2017
The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the competent authorities.	The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.	In the 2017 criterion no mentioning of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Coordination Point (NCP) since it is the NCP that is responsible for the referencing. • Competent public authorities, just competent authorities.

The national competent authority for this update of the referencing report is the Ministry of OCW. It is the responsible Ministry for the NLQF and has assigned the update of the Dutch referencing report to the NCP-NLQF. The NCP-NLQF provides a quarterly update of the updating process. Upon approval of the Ministry of OCW, the updated report will be discussed in the EQF AG

The first referencing report was discussed with all relevant stakeholders in regular meetings and by the committee NLQF-EQF in 2011. These meetings did not take place for the current report since it concerns an update.

However, the NCP-NLQF holds regular meetings with the different stakeholders. In these meetings, and in the sounding board installed by the Ministry of OCW following the 2017 Ockham IPS report, many of the topics addressed in this report were discussed. This sounding board was composed of the associations of the different educational sectors, social partners, other ministries, the Inspectorate, the NVAO and the umbrella organisation of providers in private education (NRTO).

Furthermore, the main stakeholders of the NLQF, social partners, associations of education, SBB, Inspectorate, NVAO, NRTO, NLQF experts, NLQF Commissions and NLQF Programme council, were asked to comment on relevant parts of the draft report and

Annexes. The NCP-NLQF has updated the draft report based on the comments received. The revised version of the report was sent to the stakeholders in January 2019. Furthermore, the report is discussed on a regular base with, and finally approved by the Ministry of OCW.

The 2017 Ockham report and the conclusions of the discussions in the sounding board as a follow up of this report have had influence on this report. In particular in the challenges ahead in the near future for the NCP-NLQF. The stakeholders represented in the sounding board are asked by mail to send their feedback on the draft report and the Annexes and again after revision of the report in January 2019.

Also the NLQF experts, NLQF committees and NLQF Programme council were involved in the process. The state of play of the report was presented and discussed in meetings. Furthermore they were asked to comment on the final report and agree with the revised level descriptors.

During the discussions in the regular meetings with the VET association and SBB some important points were stressed:

- 1 the possibility of VET level 4 qualifications to be positioned at NLQF level 5 and;
- 2 the inconsistencies in EQF levels of similar qualifications in different Member States.

The section below describes the different stakeholders and if relevant their position as regards the NLQF. The statements of the Inspectorate and NVAO are placed at criterion 6.

➤ **The Ministry of OCW²³**

The Ministry of OCW is the responsible Ministry for NLQF and has assigned the update of the Dutch referencing report to the NCP-NLQF²⁴. The NCP provides a quarterly update of the updating process. Upon approval of the Ministry of OCW, the updated report will be discussed in the EQF AG.

➤ **Inspectorate of Education²⁵ and The Accreditation Organisation of The Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)**

The Inspectorate of Education and the NVAO are regularly involved in the processes of the NCP-NLQF. This involvement is further explained at criterion 5. They have been closely involved in the development of the NLQF, in the first referencing report and have provided feedback on the current report. The Inspectorate of Education and the NVAO have provided statements for this update of the referencing report on i) the quality of the process of classification on non-regulated qualifications into NLQF and ii) the impact of NLQF in the Dutch society. Their statements are placed at criterion 6.

²³ www.government.nl/topics/themes/education

²⁴ nlqf.nl/English

²⁵ english.onderwijsinspectie.nl/

➤ **SBB²⁶**

The agency SBB is the responsible organisation for maintaining the framework and files of regulated VET qualifications. The SBB is an agency where vocational education and training and labour market actors co-operate at national, sectoral and regional level.

The SBB has the following legal tasks:

- Maintaining the VET qualifications framework.
- Accrediting and monitoring organisations offering work-based learning.
- Providing information on labour market trends, work based learning placements and apprenticeships, and the efficiency and relevance of training programs.

The SBB advises the minister of OCW on the connection between VET and the labour market. The SBB designs and updates the VET qualifications (structure), develops partial qualifications, and translates the labour market requirements in new qualifications.

Regular meetings take place between the NCP-NLQF and SBB. Moreover, the NCP-NLQF regularly involves SBB in closely looking at the correct classification of non-regulated qualifications at levels 1 to 4. SBB has been closely involved in the development of the NLQF, in the first referencing report and has provided feedback on the state of play of education in The Netherlands in the current report.

➤ **National centre of expertise curriculum development SLO²⁷**

SLO has the responsibility for designing and updating qualifications in primary and secondary education. SLO has been closely involved in the development of the NLQF, the first referencing report and provided feedback on the description of the state of play of education in The Netherlands of the current report.

➤ **The Council for VET and Adult Education (MBO-Council)²⁸**

The main association and advocate for secondary vocational and adult education in the Netherlands. The Council has 66 member providers funded by the Ministry of OCW. The Council represents the common interests of its members, including collective labour agreements, and provides services and joint activities related to their interests.

Upon request of the NCP-NLQF the MBO Council provided the following statement:

The Council agrees with the current classification of the levels 1-4 of the VET qualifications structure at the levels 1-4 of the NLQF and the EQF. They still agree with the recommendations of the committee NLQF-EQF and are pleased in particular with the recommendation at that time of the possibility to classifying an individual regulated qualifications at possibly a higher NLQF level, when appropriate.

²⁶ www.s-bb.nl/en

²⁷ www.slo.nl

²⁸ www.mboraad.nl/english

➤ **The Association of Universities (VSNU)²⁹**

The association and main advocate for the 14 Dutch universities (276.713 students), represents its members' interests to government, politics and civil society. VSNU is also an employers' association which consults with government and employee organisations in the university sector (which employs c. 52,000 people). VSNU also provides service activities for its members.

➤ **The Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences³⁰**

The association and main advocate for universities of applied sciences. All 36 publicly-funded HEIs are members of the Council, which represents its members' interests to government, politics and civil society. The Council is also an employers' association, representing 48.128 people, which consults with government and unions on the working conditions in the Higher Professional Education sector.

➤ **NRTO³¹**

The NRTO is the umbrella trade association of **private** training and education providers in the Netherlands. The NRTO promotes the interests of associated private providers of training and education. Companies as well as other trade associations can join the NRTO.

The level of representation is regional, national as well sectoral, but the focus is on national level. All members should sign the code of conduct. For private providers offering government regulated qualifications it is essential that they are able to offer courses that are of high quality and fulfil the legal requirements. A large part of the private providers do not offer government-regulated training.

The NRTO is pleased that the NLQF is open for the classification of qualifications other than those regulated by the ministry of OCW. They feel that this will increase the civil effect of the programmes offered by private providers and will contribute to the transparency of education and training programmes in The Netherlands.

➤ **VNO-NCW³²**

The Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers, VNO – NCW is the largest employers' organisation in the Netherlands. VNO-NCW represents the common interests of Dutch business, both at home and abroad and provides a variety of services for its members. Over 160 (branch) associations are members, representing more than 185.000 enterprises. They cover almost all sectors of the economy, including more than 80% of all medium-sized companies in the Netherlands and nearly all of the larger, corporate institutions.

➤ **The Royal Association MKB-Nederland³³**

The Royal Association MKB-Nederland is the largest entrepreneurs' organisation in the Netherlands. Some 120 branch organisations and 250 regional and local entrepreneurs'

²⁹ www.vsnu.nl/en

³⁰ www.vereniginghogescholen.nl/english

³¹ www.nrto.nl/

³² <https://www.vno-ncw.nl/over-vno-ncw/english>

³³ <https://www.mkb.nl/over-mkb-nederland/english>

fellowships are affiliated to this umbrella organisation. All in all, MKB-Nederland promotes the interests of some 150.000 entrepreneurs.

Both VNO NCW and MKB Nederland support the implementation process of the NLQF/EQF in The Netherlands. After setting up the NCP-NLQF, developing procedures and criteria and assuring the quality of the non-regulated qualifications offered we observe the positive effect of this instrument. It contributes to the transparency in the educational landscape in particular in the light of life long development.

It contributes to the step by step to more mobility on the labour market. It's important to use NLQF in conjunction with APL, partial qualifications (ECVET) and quality assurance.

➤ **The organisation of unions in The Netherlands (FNV)³⁴**

The Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV) has 1.1 million members, making it the largest trade union in the Netherlands. Its precursors date back to the beginning of the 20th century, and over the years the FNV has grown into a vibrant association of workers, people on benefits, pensioners and self-employed people across many sectors. The FNV plays an important social and political role in the Netherlands, standing up for the people who work, who (have no work and) want to work, or have had long working lives.

NLQF contributes to the promotion of lifelong learning and to the employability and mobility of individuals. NLQF could lead to greater transparency of non-formal education and training, both in terms of quality and level indication. It increases an employee's opportunities of choosing training appropriate to his/her existing level and it offers an employer a better guarantee of a good return on money spent on the education and training.

In particular, NLQF is considered to be a tool that will open up opportunities for greater transparency in branch/sector qualifications. Classifying the levels of qualifications offered by branches/sectors to NLQF and EQF levels will increase the visibility of education and training offers. Thus, NLQF offers possibilities for strengthening career policy within sectors and transfer opportunities within and between sectors. However, EQF is just a tool and will be only effective if it is part of employability policy in which EVC and career and education and training strategies are integrated.

NLQF can also play an important role for low- skilled workers or job seekers who have difficulty using the formal route to a diploma/certificate. By giving them insight into the level of education they have already successfully completed it could stimulate them to undertake further education which could, ultimately, lead to a formal qualification.

³⁴ https://www.fnv.nl/site/over-de-fnv/internationaal/897902/15195_insouts_fnv_eng.pdf

7.2 Criterion 2

CRITERION 2 as part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation	CRITERION 2 as agreed by the EQF AG in 2008	CHANGE 2008 – 2017
There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the level descriptors of the EQF.	There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework	No content change

7.2.1 Important characteristics of the NLQF and the referencing to the EQF

- The NLQF is a comprehensive framework covering all levels and types of learning.
- The NLQF is composed of an entry level followed by level 1 to 8. The entry level is meant to facilitate and stimulate people to enter into learning. The learning outcomes of the entry level are below the level of the EQF level 1 and thus cannot be referenced to the EQF. It is a starting level which shouldn't be too difficult in terms of learning outcomes in order to encourage individuals to stay on until they achieve this qualification. Basic Education Level 1 is classified at NLQF Level 1.
- The positioning of pre-university education (VWO) at NLQF level 4+:
Compared to many other countries, the Dutch VWO is of a high level. Many countries have the practice of a foundation year in preparation for university studies. Such a foundation year is actually embedded in VWO. As it is considered fair to clearly show the distinction between HAVO and VWO school leaving certificate, the VWO level was initially put at NLQF level 5 corresponding with EQF level 5. However because i) the EQF Advisory Group did not support an EQF level 5 for a school leaving certificate and ii) the ISCED classification places school leaving certificates at level 4, the Ministry of OCW decided to create a level 4+ for pre-university education to clearly demonstrate the difference in complexity between other education at level 4 and VWO.
- Generic classification of the Dutch VET level 4:
After the referencing in 2011 research has been undertaken among 23 VET level 4 qualifications to identify if any of them would be better placed at NLQF level 5. The result of the research demonstrated that some qualifications indeed deserved a NLQF level 5 classification. However due to serious objections of other sectors so far no formal request for repositioning has been made.
Although the VET qualification files are renewed based on the NLQF descriptors, the discussions related to the update of the referencing report demonstrated this topic is still relevant.
- Levels 5-8
For the purpose of being recognisable, the level descriptors of NLQF levels 5-8 are tailored to the descriptors of the EQF and the Dublin descriptors of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework. However NLQF levels 5-8 are also open to

qualifications that are offered outside the HE system. Indeed, the NLQF levels refer to learning outcomes and not to education classifications

The Netherlands distinguish between Professional Bachelors and Masters offered by Universities of applied sciences and Academic Bachelors and Masters offered by Research Universities. However this difference doesn't affect the classification in the NLQF and therefore both the Professional and Academic Bachelor are classified in NLQF level 6 (EQF level 6) and both the Professional and Academic Master are classified in NLQF level 7 (EQF level 7).

Level 1 to 8 of the NLQF are referenced to level 1 to 8 of the EQF as is demonstrated in figure 3.

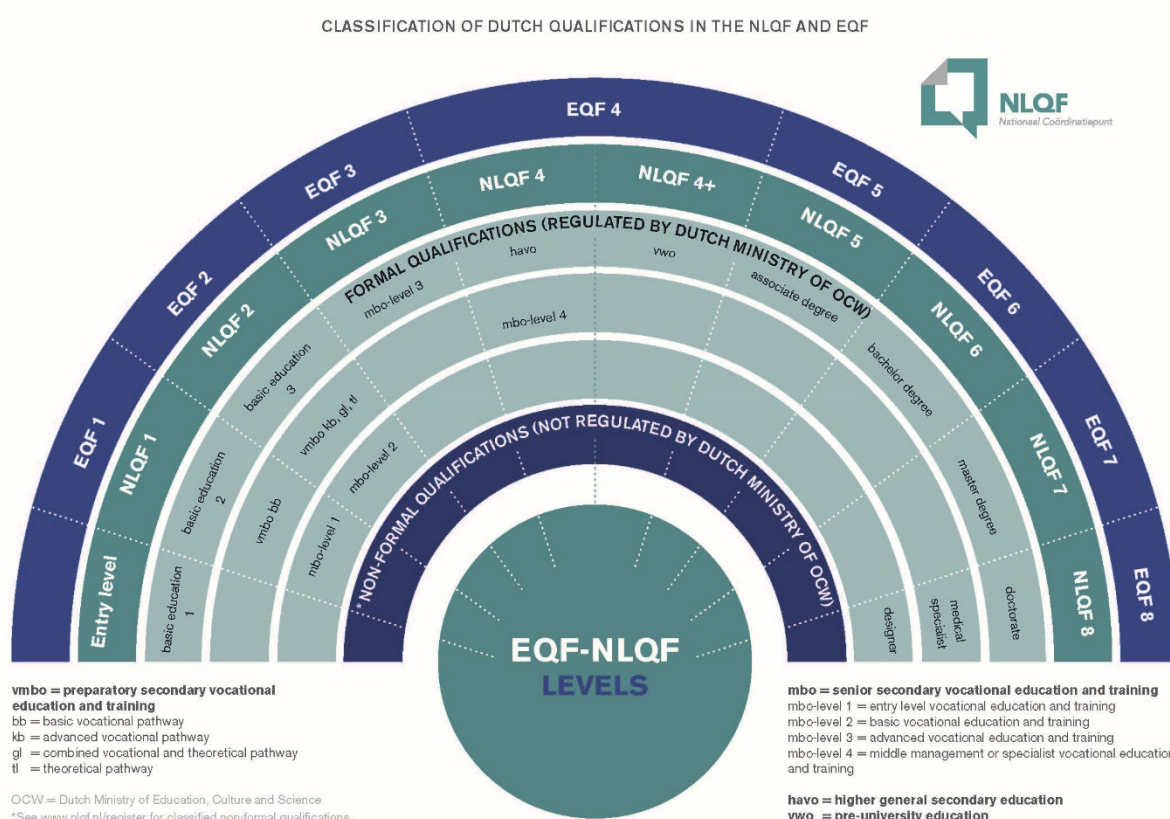


Figure 2: Schematic overview of the NLQF

The first referencing report demonstrated the link between the NLQF level descriptors and the EQF level descriptors.

7.2.2 Level descriptors EQF

The level descriptors of the 2017 EQF Recommendation are composed of the descriptor elements: *Knowledge; Skills; Autonomy and Responsibility*. The 2017 EQF Recommendation did not change the content of the 2008 EQF level descriptors. However, the title of the third descriptor element of the EQF descriptors changed from *Competence* into *Autonomy and Responsibility*. The title of the third column of the NLQF is *Responsibility and Independence* and therefore still corresponds.

7.2.3 Level descriptors NLQF

The level descriptors of the NLQF are composed of the descriptor elements: *Context, Knowledge, Skills and Responsibility and Independence*. The descriptor element Skills is subdivided in: *Applying knowledge; Problem solving skills; Learning and development skills; Information skills and Communication Skills*. The comparison of the NLQF descriptor concepts to the EQF descriptor concepts is displayed in table 3

The descriptor elements of the NLQF have not changed since the first referencing report. However, the level descriptors themselves have intensively been used in the process of classification of non-regulated qualifications. The NLQF experts, Quality Committee, Classification Committee and Program Council have provided constant input on the descriptors that has led to a proposal for small changes and some guidelines of how to interpret the descriptors in 2018. The changes have been approved by the Ministry of OCW. The updated level descriptors are in Annex 4.

The changes in the level descriptors are minor and analyses has demonstrated that this does not influence the correspondence with the level descriptors of the EQF as is demonstrated in the first reference report.

NLQF descriptors		EQF descriptors
Context		
The context descriptions of the levels are used along with the described knowledge to determine the grade of difficulty of the skills		
Knowledge		Knowledge
Knowledge is the totality of facts, principles, theories and ways of working related to an occupation or a knowledge domain		Knowledge means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual
Skills		Skills
Cognitive abilities (logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical abilities (psychomotor skills in applying methods, materials, tools and instruments)	<i>Applying knowledge</i> Reproduce, analyse, integrate, evaluate, combine and apply knowledge in an occupation or a knowledge domain	Skills mean the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)
	<i>Problem solving skills</i> Recognise or identify and solve problems	

NLQF descriptors		EQF descriptors
applied within a given context	<i>Learning and development skills</i> Personal development, autonomously or with guidance	
	<i>Information skills</i> Obtain, collect, process, combine, analyse and assess information	
	<i>Communication skills</i> Communicate based on conventions relevant to the context	
Responsibility and independence		Responsibility and autonomy
The proven ability to collaborate with others and to take responsibility for own work or study results or of others		Competence means 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 In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy

Table 3: Comparison NLQF and EQF descriptor concepts

7.3 Criterion 3

CRITERION 3 as part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation	CRITERION 3 as agreed by the EQF AG in 2008	CHANGE 2008 – 2017
The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems.	The national framework or qualifications system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems	...linked to..., where these exist, to credit systems Changed into: ...related to..., where appropriate, to credit systems.

- 1 The NLQF is based on the principle of learning outcomes, demonstrated by the way the level descriptors are composed and formulated in *Context, Knowledge, Skills and Responsibility and Independence*. Skills are further detailed in applying knowledge, problem solving skills, learning and development skills, information skills and communication skills.
- 2 The qualifications in regulated secondary education are based on so called attainment targets. For the upper years subject-specific, learning outcomes based examination programs are developed for each of the school types. They are elaborated more in detail compared to the attainment targets for the lower years but still leave room for schools to make their own choices and define the framework for their education. (see Annex 1, chapter 4-7)
- 3 The regulated VET qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes. They are developed by the designated agency Sbb. SBB's education experts develop a qualification file based on one or more occupational profiles and in partnership with vocational education and training, and labour market. A qualification file describes the content of one or more professions and the competencies, knowledge and skills of a starting professional. Or in other words: what a student should learn in order to obtain his qualifications. The qualification files are part of the qualification structure. For more information on the VET qualifications see Annex 1 chapter 8. The way the qualifications are described is set in regulations. One of the instructions is that the learning outcomes described in the files have to be based on the descriptors of the NLQF.
- 4 The regulated qualifications in Higher Education are aligned with the Dublin Descriptors of the Bologna Process. They are accredited by the designated accreditation organisation NVAO. The relevant standard for the level of learning outcomes is Standard 1 of the NVAO accreditation framework:

Intended learning outcomes Standard 1: The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the programme; they are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline, and international requirements. The intended learning outcomes demonstrably describe the level of the programme (Associate Degree, Bachelor's, or Master's) as defined in the Dutch Qualifications Framework, as well as its orientation (professional or academic). In addition, they tie in with the regional, national or international perspective of the requirements currently set by the professional field and the discipline with regard to the contents of the programme. Insofar as is applicable, the intended learning outcomes are in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations
- 5 Since the introduction of the NLQF the learning outcomes approach has strengthened. For example:
 - a The level descriptors of the renewed VET qualification system are now based on the level descriptors of the NLQF.
 - b In HE there is an increasing focus on learning outcomes, also demonstrated by pilots for flexible HE programs, focussing on achieving learning outcomes instead of mandatory periods of study. These pilots are commissioned by the Ministry of OCW.
- 6 The non-regulated qualifications that are classified in the NLQF have to be based on learning outcomes. This is a pre-requisite for classification. One of the main elements in the process of classification is the demonstration by the owner how the learning outcomes of the qualifications fit the level descriptors of the NLQF at the required

level. The application than is evaluated by a team of NCP-NLOF experts, the Quality Committee and the Programme Board. For the entire process see Annex 3, chapter 2 and 3.

- 7 The NCP-NLOF offers support in writing learning outcomes for those owners of non-regulated qualifications that want their qualifications classified.
- 8 The NLOF has developed guidelines for writing learning outcomes and substantiation of the desired NLOF level. These guidelines are freely available on the NLOF website³⁵.
- 9 The CEDEFOP publication 'Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes' is freely available on the website of the NCP-NLOF³⁶.
- 10 All regulated qualifications in VET and HE can function as standards for Validation of non-formal and informal learning, in the Netherlands referred to as EVC. Non-regulated sector qualifications can be recognised for this purpose. For more information on EVC see Annex 1 chapter 13.
- 11 The NLOF is not a credit based framework. HE in the Netherlands uses ECTS according to European agreements. ECVET principles are being promoted but until today there are not concrete plans for introducing ECVET points in VET.

7.4 Criterion 4

CRITERION 4 as part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation	CRITERION 4 as agreed by the EQF AG in 2008	CHANGE 2008 – 2017
The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.	The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.	No change

7.4.1 Classifying regulated qualifications

The responsibility for including the qualifications **regulated by the ministry of OCW** lies within the ministerial responsibility of the Minister of OCW.

In the process of creation of the NLOF, the regulated qualifications are *generically included* in the NLOF. Meaning that each level of the education system has been referenced to a level of the NLOF. This with the exception of initial primary education, that is not referenced. However, adult education at this primary level is referenced. (Basic education 1 and 2). With the generic classification all qualifications that are part of a specific education system level are classified in that NLOF level. For example, the Dutch VET system has 4 levels. VET level 4 is referenced to NLOF level 4, therefore all qualifications that are part of VET level 4 are classified in NLOF level 4.

This is also the case for all new qualifications that are part of the education system regulated by the ministry of OCW. They automatically are classified in the NLOF level corresponding to the level that part of the education sector is referenced to.

³⁵ https://nlqf.nl/images/downloads/Verzoek_tot_inschaling/6_Handleiding_Inschaling_Formulieren_van_Leerresultaten_13042018.pdf
³⁶ https://www.nlqf.nl/images/downloads/Verzoek_tot_inschaling/European_handbook_learning_outcomes.pdf

In **VET** the SBB agency is, dedicated by law, the responsible organisation for maintaining the framework and files of regulated VET qualifications and the development of new files in close cooperation with sectors in the labour market. Based on regulations, the SBB used the NLQF level descriptors as the VET level descriptors. Once new qualifications files are ready, based on those descriptors, the minister approves the files, including the NLQF level.

In **Higher Education** the regulated qualifications are accredited by the NVAO, an organisation dedicated for this responsibility by law. In its accreditation process the NVAO includes the correspondence to the QF-EHEA, being fully compatible with the EQF and NLQF descriptors. Hence new regulated HE qualifications are included in the NLQF based on the accreditation by the NVAO.

7.4.2 Classifying non-regulated qualifications

The procedure for classifying **non regulated** qualifications are set by the NCP NLQ. Requirements for non-regulated qualification to be classified in the NLQF:

- Qualifications must be written in learning outcomes.
- Qualifications must be concluded with an independent, learning path independent, summative assessment.
- Qualifications have to be substantial (at least 400 hrs) and or demonstrate labour market relevance.

The procedure is divided in three steps:

1 Validity assessment of the organisation

To be deemed eligible to apply for classification of a qualification, an owner, supplier must undergo a validity assessment. The information needed is:

- a proof of legal personality of the organisation;
- a proof of the right to ownership of the qualification;
- information on the sustainability of the organisation;
- information on assessments. The way they are conducted must meet several requirements. This involves external monitoring of the qualifying assessments and certificates and the quality of the person(s) conducting them.
- Prove of quality assurance of the organisation. If the organisation employs one of the following quality assurance systems, a limited validity assessment is conducted:
 - Accreditation by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO)
 - Supervision by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education
 - ISO 9001: 2008/2015
 - INK-model (with external audit)
 - Supervision by Stichting Examenkamer

If this is not the case, an extended validity assessment is conducted. This means that in addition to the assessment of the provided documents an institutional audit will take place.

The information provided, using the dedicated documents, is assessed by the independent Quality Committee of the NCP-NLQF. The Committee prepares a recommendation to the independent Programme Council of the NCP-NLQF that decides on the acceptance of the validity of the organisation.

2 Classification of qualification(s) into levels of NLQF

An organisation that has passed step 1 can now request classification of one or more qualifications into the NLQF. The organisation needs to provide the following information on each of the qualifications:

- A comparison of the learning outcomes of the qualification to the level descriptors of the desired NLQF level.
- The amount of hours of learning (at least 400 hours) or a substantiation of the labour market relevance of the qualification. A qualification is considered to be labour market relevant if the following requirements are met i) it is clear towards which jobs, occupations and/or professions the qualification is directed to and ii) the qualification is developed by the relevant professional field for example by the professional or branch organisation or a representative group of companies or organisations. Applicants for a validation of a qualification have to demonstrate in writing the labour market relevance of the concerned qualification. This can be by declarations from sectors, branches, companies, or by using labour market forecast and or job advertisements.
- The approach to examination and or assessment demonstrating the assessment is independent, is representative of and relevant to the learning outcomes.

A team of two independent experts assesses the application and documentation provided, and drafts a report verifying whether the qualification meets the requested level. This report is forwarded to the independent Classification Committee of the NCP-NLQF. The Classification Committee formulates its advice concerning the classification level of the qualification applied for to the Programme Council. Decisions are based on the best fit principle.

3 The qualification is included in the register at www.nlqf.nl/register

In case the applicant disagrees with the Programme Council's decision, s/he may appeal the NCP-NLQF's decision to the Appeals Committee.

Both the validity and the classification decisions are valid for 6 years.

A detailed description of the procedure is available on the website of the NCP-NLQF. For the English version see <https://nlqf.nl/english>.

7.5 Criterion 5

CRITERION 5 as part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation	CRITERION 5 as agreed by the EQF AG in 2008	CHANGE 2008 – 2017
The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles on quality assurance as specified in Annex IV to this recommendation.	The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in Annex 3 of the Recommendation).	The content of the Annex on Quality Assurance changed. See table 4.

Table 4: Comparison quality Annex EQF Recommendation 2008 and 2017

EQF RECOMMENDATION 2017	EQF RECOMMENDATION 2008
<p style="text-align: center;">Quality assurance principles for qualifications that are part of national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)</p> <p>All qualifications with an EQF level should be quality assured to enhance trust in their quality and level.</p> <p>In accordance with national circumstances and taking into account sectoral differences quality assurance of qualifications with an EQF level should ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 address the design of qualifications as well as application of the learning outcomes approach; 2 ensure valid and reliable assessment according to agreed and transparent learning outcomes-based standards and address the process of certification; 3 consist of feedback mechanisms and procedures for continuous improvement; 4 involve all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the process; 5 be composed of consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review; 6 be an integral part of the internal management, including sub-contracted activities, of bodies issuing qualifications with an EQF level; 7 be based on clear and measurable objectives, standards and guidelines; 8 be supported by appropriate resources; 9 include a regular review of existing external monitoring bodies or agencies, carrying out quality assurance; 10 include the electronic accessibility of evaluation results. <p>⁽¹⁾ These common principles are fully compatible with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and with European Quality Assurance in VET (EQAVET).</p> <p>⁽²⁾ Depending on national circumstances, these principles may not apply to general education.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Common Principles for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training in the context of the European Qualifications Framework</p> <p>When implementing the European Qualifications Framework, quality assurance — which is necessary to ensure accountability and the improvement of higher education and vocational education and training — should be carried out in accordance with the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality assurance policies and procedures should underpin all levels of the European Qualifications Framework, • quality assurance should be an integral part of the internal management of education and training providers, • quality assurance should include regular evaluation of providers, their programs or their quality assurance systems by external monitoring bodies or agencies, • external monitoring bodies or agencies carrying out quality assurance should be subject to regular review, • quality assurance should include context, input, process and output dimensions, while giving emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes, • quality assurance systems should include the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – clear and measurable objectives and standards, guidelines for implementation, including stakeholder involvement, – appropriate resources, – consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review, – feedback mechanisms and procedures for improvement, – widely accessible evaluation results, • quality assurance initiatives at international, national and regional level should be coordinated in order to ensure overview, coherence, synergy and system-wide analysis, • quality assurance should be a cooperative process across education and training levels

EQF RECOMMENDATION 2017	EQF RECOMMENDATION 2008
	and systems, involving all relevant stakeholders, within Member States and across the Community, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality assurance orientations at Community level may provide reference points for evaluations and peer learning.

7.5.1 Quality assurance arrangements for regulated qualifications

For all levels in the NLQF, quality assurance policies and procedures are in place. For regulated qualifications inter alia through several laws and regulations. In general, in the Netherlands the approach to quality assurance is a combination of i) self-evaluation of the provider; ii) evaluation by students and parents (where appropriate); and iii) evaluation by external bodies such as the Inspectorate of Education and NVAO, depending on the level and sector of education.

“What is being done right? What could be done better? And what needs to be done better?” This is perhaps the best way to sum up the current Dutch regime of school inspections by the **Education Inspectorate**. The basic foundation for the schools inspection regime is provided by the 2002 Education Regulation Act (Wet op het onderwijstoezicht, WOT³⁷). As part of its remit to guarantee the basic quality of educational provision in the Netherlands, the Inspectorate is responsible for ensuring that schools’ comply with the statutory requirements set out in the respective sectoral education acts. The 2017 Inspection assessment Frameworks for each sector describe their way of working and what factors they assess.

- In *secondary education* an annual monitoring takes place of schools and their management by the Inspectorate of Education using evaluation criteria covering compliance with legislation, regulations, accountability and the level of achievement in relation to the established subject learning outcomes. Parents also monitor the quality of the school (this is established by law). The results are public.
- In *vocational education and training* the Inspectorate of Education not only reviews the quality of the providers and their management on an annual base, but also looks after the quality of the providers which are responsible for examinations in the VET sector. Students also play a role in assessing the quality of the providers. These results are public.

However, in *Higher Education* the tasks of the Education in Inspectorate are limited to enhance the development, and more specifically the quality of the structure and organisation of higher education, including the system of accreditation (WOT article 3ab4). Quality assurance procedures are in place for the Bachelor and Master levels. The law dictates that this takes the form of external peer reviews, internal self-evaluation and student evaluation. The Doctoral level is examined by university committees.

Quality of programs in Higher Education is supervised through accreditation. The WOT refers to The Act on Higher education and Scientific Research (WHW)³⁸ that mentions in article 5.2.1 an accreditation organisation.

³⁷ WOT: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0013800/2018-08-01>

³⁸ <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0005682/2019-02-01>

The treaty between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Flemish Community of Belgium, het Accreditatieverdrag (Trb. 2003, 167)³⁹ concerning the accreditation of programs within Dutch and Flemish higher education, appoints **the Dutch-Flemish accreditation organisation NVAO** with the tasks to submit both Dutch and Flemish higher education programs to an assessment for new programs and to accredit programs in accordance with the rules laid down by or pursuant to Dutch law or Flemish decree. So, in Higher Education:

- the NVAO ensures the quality and levels of HE by assessing the education and providing a quality mark (accreditation)
- the Inspectorate of Education checks the compliance of HE providers in relation to legislation.

The **NCP-NLQF** has *no role* in quality assurance of regulated qualifications. The NCP-NLQF is an independent body however it acts on behalf of the Ministry of OCW. Concerning the regulated qualifications, the NCP-NLQF relies on i) the quality assurance of the competent authorities of the providers, ii) the Inspectorate of Education and the iii) NVAO.

The tables in the following sections demonstrate **per educational sector** which laws and regulations address the 10 articles of Annex IV of the 2017 EQF Recommendation.

Tables in Annex 2 demonstrate, per educational sector, in more detail per law and regulation what articles relate to the EQF Annex IV articles.

³⁹ <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/trb-2003-167.html>

A. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Quality assurance in Secondary Education (not including Senior Secondary Vocational Education and Training)

EQF RECOMMENDATION 2017 ANNEX IV	WOT ⁴⁰	WVO ⁴¹	Education Inspectorate ⁴²	CvE ⁴³ / SLOA ⁴⁴ / Decision on Final Exams ⁴⁵ / Regulation Exam programs ⁴⁶
1 Address the design of qualifications as well as application of the learning outcomes approach		X	X	X
2 Ensure valid and reliable assessment according to agreed and transparent learning outcomes-based standards and address the process of certification	X	X	X	X
3 Consist of feedback mechanisms and procedures for continuous improvement		X	X	
4 Involve all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the process	X			
5 Be composed of consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review	X		X	
6 Be an integral part of the internal management, including sub-contracted activities, of bodies issuing qualifications with an EQF level		X	X	
7 Be based on clear and measurable objectives, standards and guidelines	X	X	X	X
8 Be supported by appropriate resources	X		X	
9 Include a regular review of existing external monitoring bodies or agencies, carrying out quality assurance	X		X	
10 Include the electronic accessibility of evaluation results	X		X	

⁴⁰ WOT: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0013800/2018-08-01>

⁴¹ Inspection Framework Secondary Education WVO: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0002399/2018-08-01>

⁴² Onderzoekskader toezicht voortgezet onderwijs 2017: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0039788/2018-08-01>

⁴³ CVE: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0025364/2014-08-01>

⁴⁴ SLOA: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0034162/2016-08-12>

⁴⁵ Eindexamenbesluit VO: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0004593/2019-01-01>

⁴⁶ Regeling examenprogramma's VO <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0022061/2018-08-01>

B. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SENIOR SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Quality assurance in Senior Secondary Vocational Education and Training

EQF RECOMMENDATION 2017 ANNEX IV	WOT ⁴⁷	WEB ⁴⁸	Education Inspectorate ⁴⁹	Regulation qualification files Assessment framework SBB ⁵⁰
1 Address the design of qualifications as well as application of the learning outcomes approach	X	X	X	X
2 Ensure valid and reliable assessment according to agreed and transparent learning outcomes-based standards and address the process of certification	X	X	X	X
3 Consist of feedback mechanisms and procedures for continuous improvement		X	X	X
4 Involve all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the process	X	X	X	X
5 Be composed of consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review	X	X	X	
6 Be an integral part of the internal management, including sub-contracted activities, of bodies issuing qualifications with an EQF level		X	X	
7 Be based on clear and measurable objectives, standards and guidelines		X	X	X
8 Be supported by appropriate resources		X	X	
9 Include a regular review of existing external monitoring bodies or agencies, carrying out quality assurance	X			
10 Include the electronic accessibility of evaluation results		X	X	

⁴⁷ WOT: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0013800/2018-08-01>

⁴⁸ WEB: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0007625/2018-08-01>

⁴⁹ <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/07/13/onderzoekskader-2017-voor-het-toezicht-op-het-middelbaar-beroepsonderwijs>

⁵⁰ Regeling vaststelling modellen kwalificatiedossier, keuzedeel en toetsingskader kwalificatiestructuur mbo 2016
<https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0037661/2016-07-19>

C. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Quality assurance in Higher Education

EQF RECOMMENDATION 2017 ANNEX IV	WOT ⁵¹	WHW ⁵²	Education Inspectorate ⁵³	Assessment Framework NVAO ⁵⁴
1 Address the design of qualifications as well as application of the learning outcomes approach		X		X
2 Ensure valid and reliable assessment according to agreed and transparent learning outcomes-based standards and address the process of certification		X		X
3 Consist of feedback mechanisms and procedures for continuous improvement		X	X	X
4 Involve all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the process	X	X		X
5 Be composed of consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review	X	X	X	X
6 Be an integral part of the internal management, including sub-contracted activities, of bodies issuing qualifications with an EQF level	X	X		X
7 Be based on clear and measurable objectives, standards and guidelines	X	X	X	X
8 Be supported by appropriate resources	X	X	X	X
9 Include a regular review of existing external monitoring bodies or agencies, carrying out quality assurance	X		X	
10 Include the electronic accessibility of evaluation results		X	X	X

For more detail on the quality assurance of the **regulated** qualifications see also the description of the Dutch Education System in Annex 1.

⁵¹ WOT: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0013800/2018-08-01>

⁵² WHW: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0005682/2019-02-01>

⁵³ Onderzoekskader onderwijsinspectie Hoger Onderwijs: <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/onderwijssectoren/hoger-onderwijs/documenten/publicaties/2014/09/01/toezichtkader-hoger-onderwijs-2014>

⁵⁴ Beoordelingskader accreditatiestelsel hoger onderwijs NVAO https://www.nvaio.net/files/attachments/89/Beoordelingskader_accreditatiestelsel_hoger_onderwijs_Nederland_2018.pdf

7.5.2 Quality assurance arrangements for non-regulated qualifications

Concerning the **non-regulated qualifications**, quality assurance approach and arrangements are by definition not regulated by the ministry of OCW. However, the NCP NLQF has set quality assurance requirements for those non-regulated qualifications that are classified in the NLQF inter alia. These requirements are described in:

- 1 The owner of the qualification requesting for the classification of one or more qualifications needs to demonstrate in the *validity request* how the *organisation* is quality assured⁵⁵
- 2 The owner of the qualification requesting for the classification of one or more qualifications needs to demonstrate in the *classification request* how the quality assurance of the *qualification(s)* is (are) organised⁵⁶.
- 3 The classification request needs to demonstrate the following topics
 - the assessment methods;
 - the assessment tools, types of assessment being used;
 - that the qualification is being assessed by means of qualifying assessment;
 - how the qualifying assessment and the description of learning outcomes are consistent with one another;
 - what the assessments cover;
 - how the assessment covers the learning outcomes.

The following bodies are involved in the decision if the quality assurance of non-regulated qualifications complies with the NCP-NLQF requirements:

- The NCP-NLQF bureau
- Quality experts
- The Quality Committee
- The Validation Committee
- The Program Council

For a detailed description of the process see Annex 3: The NCP-NLQF chapter 2 and 3.

⁵⁵ <https://www.nlqf.nl/images/downloads/English2018/2-Validity-Application-Form-Manual-2018.pdf>

⁵⁶ <https://www.nlqf.nl/images/downloads/English2018/4-Classification-Application-Form-Manual-2018.pdf>

D. QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR NON-REGULATED QUALIFICATIONS CLASSIFIED IN THE NLQF

Quality assurance requirements for non-regulated qualifications classified in the NLQF

EQF RECOMMENDATION 2017 ANNEX IV	Validity Application Form and Manual ⁵⁵	Classification Application Form and Manual ⁵⁶
1 Address the design of qualifications as well as application of the learning outcomes approach	X	X
2 Ensure valid and reliable assessment according to agreed and transparent learning outcomes-based standards and address the process of certification	X	X
3 Consist of feedback mechanisms and procedures for continuous improvement	X	
4 Involve all relevant stakeholders at all stages of the process	X	X
Be composed of consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review	X	
5 Be an integral part of the internal management, including sub-contracted activities, of bodies issuing qualifications with an EQF level	X	
6 Be based on clear and measurable objectives, standards and guidelines	X	X
7 Be supported by appropriate resources	X	
8 Include a regular review of existing external monitoring bodies or agencies, carrying out quality assurance	X	
9 Include the electronic accessibility of evaluation results	X	X

The approach to quality assurance of non-regulated qualifications is also demonstrated by the following:

- The evaluation of the NCP-NLQF and its procedures demonstrated that the procedures used by the NCP-NLQF, especially where examination is concerned, are robust and more profound than the procedures of the NVAO.
- Both the Quality Committee and the Classification Committee have members that work with either the Inspectorate of Education or the NVAO.
- For reasons of transparency, understanding, comparability and continuous improvement the NCP-NLQF meets twice a year with the Inspectorate of Education and the NVAO. In these meetings different issues and cases related to classification and quality assurance of non-regulated qualifications are being discussed.
- A workshop with the NCP-NLQF, the Inspectorate and the NVAO has taken place, comparing the classification requirements and procedures of the NCP-NLQF with the assessment framework for accreditation in higher education. The main aim of this session was for the Inspectorate and NVAO to better understand and trust the classification of qualifications at level 5-8.

7.6 Criterion 6

CRITERION 6 as part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation	CRITERION 6 as agreed by the EQF AG in 2008	CHANGE 2008 – 2017
The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.	The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.	Added: ... that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice

➤ Statement of the Inspectorate of Education

The inspectorate of Education is the competent quality supervision authority for Education in the Netherlands, except for accreditation in Higher Education. The Inspectorate of Education declares that the description of quality assurance under criterion 5 is in line with national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.

Furthermore it declares that the 10 EQF principles on quality assurance specified in Annex IV of the EU Recommendation are clearly reflected in the documents as described under criterion 5 and in Annex 1 and 2, for all sectors where the inspectorate of education has a role to play.

The requirements for secondary education in the law on inspection (WOT), law on education and professional education (WEB) and the law on secondary education are reflected in the EQF principles. The regulation exam programmes for secondary education and the regulation qualification files and the assessment framework for senior secondary Vocational education and training are in line with the quality assurance criteria of EQF.

➤ Statement of the NVAO

The Dutch-Flemish accreditation Organisation NVAO is the competent accreditation organisation for the higher education sector in the Netherlands. The NVAO declares that the description of quality assurance in higher education as described under criterion 5 is in line with national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.

➤ Statement of the NCP-NLQF Program Council

The NCP-NLQF Program Council confirms herewith that the quality assurance requirements and procedures as described under criterion 5 are in line with national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice for non-regulated qualifications that are classified in the NLQF. Furthermore, procedures and validation for obtaining a classification of non-regulated qualifications in one of the levels of the NLQF/EQF meet the requirements of the criteria for quality assurance as stated the EQF recommendation of 2017.

7.7 Criterion 7

CRITERION 7 as part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation	CRITERION 7 as agreed by the EQF AG in 2008	CHANGE 2008 – 2017
The referencing process shall involve international experts and the referencing reports shall contain the written statement of at least two international experts from two different countries on the referencing process.	The referencing process shall involve international experts.	Added: ... and the referencing reports shall contain the written statement of at least two international experts from two different countries on the referencing process.

The NCP-NLOF has twice requested the following international experts to comment on the update of the referencing report:

- Dr John O'Connor, Head of Qualifications and Skills Policy, Quality and Qualifications Ireland
- Mr Wilfried Boomgaert, Ministry of Education and Training, Flemish Community of Belgium

The first general observations were requested and provided on a pre-final draft of the report in December 2018. The report was then refined, based on the comments received from both the international experts and national stakeholders.

The international experts then provided a statement on the extent to which the second draft report addresses the criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the European Qualifications Framework, as set out in Annex III of the 2017 Recommendation, in April 2019.

The following table summarises the conclusions of the international experts:

Criterion	Dr John O'Connor	Mr Wilfried Boomgaert
1	Addressed	Partially addressed
2	Addressed	Fully addressed
3	Addressed	Fully addressed
4	Addressed	Addressed but linked to some challenges
5	Addressed	Addressed
6	Addressed	Addressed
7	Addressed	Addressed
8	Addressed	Addressed
9	Addressed	Addressed
10	Addressed	Addressed

The experts' comments are integrally integrated in the report. The following section presents those comments in the following order:

- Comments on addressing the criteria by Dr John O'Connor, April 2019
- Comments on addressing the criteria by Mr Wilfried Boomgaert, April 2019
- General observations by Dr John O'Connor, December, 2018
- General observations by Mr Wilfried Boomgaert, December, 2018

7.7.1 Comments on the second draft report on the update of the referencing of levels of the NLQF to the levels of the EQF, April 2019.

Comments by the international experts on the extent to which the draft report addresses the criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the European Qualifications Framework, as set out in Annex III of the 2017 Recommendation.

Dr John O'Connor, Head of Qualifications and Skills Policy, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, 25 April 2019

Criterion 1:

The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Co-ordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.

✓ ***This criterion is addressed.***

The report sets out the extensive range of stakeholders central to the Dutch qualifications system and articulate their role in the development, implementation and governance of the NLQF. Additional detail is provided in the latest draft report on the nature and extent of engagement with the various stakeholders. While it would be helpful to know more about the quality of the engagement among the stakeholders involved in the updating process, criteria 1 does not require such information. Perhaps the verbal presentation in June could provide some further insights on the sense of ownership of the updated referencing report.

Criterion 2:

There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the level descriptors of the EQF.

✓ ***This criterion is addressed.***

There is a demonstrable conceptual similarity in the level descriptors in the NLQF and the EQF. Both sets of level descriptors are comparable. The evidence presented re-affirms that NLQF levels 1-8 are referenced to EQF levels 1-8. The operation of the NLQF level descriptors to classify qualifications has led to some refinement of the level descriptors, but not to the effect that unsettles the original EQF referencing alignments.

It is interesting that the qualifications frameworks in the Netherlands and also in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (also presenting updated reports in June 2019) include qualifications below EQF 1. This is perhaps unfortunate, given the particular needs of learners at these 'entry levels'.

Criterion 3:

The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

The report claims that learning outcomes referenced qualifications have become more pervasive within the Dutch qualifications system, as a consequence of the NLQF. Supports are in place enhance the capacity of qualifications designers to express qualifications in terms of NLQF derived learning outcomes. Evidence to support the intensity of learning outcomes implementation is weak in most countries, reported interest in achieved learning outcomes as distinct from expected learning outcomes, in this report, is timely and on the agenda of all those with an interest in the fidelity of EQF implementation. Sufficient detail on validation arrangements and the operation of credit systems in higher and vocational education and training is provided.

Criterion 4:

The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

The approach to establishing the relationship between regulated and non-regulated qualifications, and the NLQF is set out. The NLQF is intended to be an open and comprehensive NQF, similar to other countries with similar aspirations, this has necessitated the development of different pathways to the NQF for different qualifications. The challenge for all MS is to maintain parity of confidence in the different processes so that there is no second guessing or questioning of the levelling of a qualification. The report does not dodge these questions, particularly in connection with the classification of non-regulated qualifications. One might ask if there is a difference in the use of the terms 'included' and 'classified' in relation to the NLQF. Finally, from an international perspective, the term 'non-regulated' qualification can seem disparaging, the term 'non-formal qualifications' arguably is not much better, the EQF community might usefully consider how we classify qualification types and the labels we attach, in particular to qualifications that are offered in the public and in the private system.

Criterion 5:

The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles on quality assurance as specified in Annex IV to this Recommendation.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

The report sets out the national quality assurance arrangements, their associative legislative and institutional arrangements and typical norms and practices. For qualifications offered within the various subsystems, General, VET and higher education and for non-regulated qualifications included within the NLQF, transparent internal and external quality assurance procedures are in place, consistent with European norms. There are some useful tables in the report which illustrate the mapping between QA practices and principles set out in Annex IV.

Criterion 6:

The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

Criterion 7:

The referencing process shall involve international experts and the referencing reports shall contain the written statement of at least two international experts from two different countries on the referencing process.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

As one of the international experts, I am pleased to have been afforded the opportunity to comment on the report on the updating the referencing of the NLQF to the EQF. My engagement with the process has been desk based. The timelines for responding to the various iterations of this report, have been challenging but hopefully has not compromised my capacity to provide a considered set of observations and comments on the report.

Criterion 8:

The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing, and the evidence supporting it, shall be published by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall address separately each of the criteria. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

The NLQF-NCP led the production of the updated report under the direction and responsibility of the Ministry of OCW. As the central competent authorities, they have endorsed the report as a fair account of the Dutch qualifications system and the relationship with the EQF. Helpfully the report makes it clear that the updated referencing exercise has no bearing on the original Dutch QF-EHEA self-certification exercise.

Criterion 9:

Within 6 months from having referenced or updated the referencing report, Member States and other participating countries shall publish the referencing report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portal.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

Criterion 10:

Further to the referencing process, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and/or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, to the appropriate EQF level.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

Promotion of EQF levels on qualifications certificates, supplements and registers in the Netherlands is well advanced.

Mr Wilfried Boomgaert, Ministry of Education and Training, Flemish Community of Belgium, April 2019

Criterion 1:

The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Co-ordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.

✓ *This criterion is only partially addressed.*

The main stakeholders groups that were involved in the development and first referencing to the EQF were asked to provide feedback on the new draft report. It is not clear which feedback has been given by some stakeholders groups like Ministry of OCW, VSNU and NAUAS and two of them (SBB and SLO) gave only feedback on the state of play of education in The Netherlands in Annex 1.

A cross-referencing of the specific feedbacks and the relevant pages in the report where we can see reactions on these feedback would be very welcome. About this consultation process some additional information could be given on the method: the report is mainly referring to written feedback. Does this mean that there were no meetings organized where discussions between stakeholders groups could take place?

Criterion 2:

There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the level descriptors of the EQF.

✓ *This criterion is fully addressed.*

This report re-affirms that the descriptors for the NLQF levels 1-8 (even slightly adapted or refined since 2011) are clearly referenced to the descriptors of the EQF levels 1-8. Annex 4 is showing detailed evidence for that.

As international expert involved in the first referencing report, I take the opportunity to clarify the paragraph on the levelling of the VWO school leaving certificate. The 3 international experts at that time were open to accept the levelling of this VWO school leaving certificate on EQF level 5 – as proposed by the Committee Leijnse – under the condition of receiving evidence that a large part of the learning outcomes are situated on EQF level 5 and that eventually a shortening of a pathway in Higher Education was possible for people having this particular certificate. As the international experts didn't receive this evidence, they didn't support an EQF level 5 and neither did the EQF AG.

Criterion 3:

The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems.

✓ *This criterion is fully addressed.*

The Netherlands have a long tradition in using a learning outcomes approach for defining the programmes in general education (called attainment targets here) and VET (VMBO and MBO).

This report shows interest in making a distinction between 'achieved learning outcomes' and 'intended or expected learning outcomes'. Personally I agree with the statement of the NCP-NLQF on p.9 that focusing on the achieved learning outcomes of the learners is not in line with the EQF approach. This topic should be discussed further in the EQF Advisory Group.

The report gives sufficient information on validation arrangements and on the use of credit systems in higher education and vocational education and training.

Criterion 4:

The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent

✓ *This criterion is addressed but is linked to some challenges.*

Although the regulated qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes, these learning outcomes have not been used in 2011 as the main basis for referencing these regulated qualifications to the NLQF levels. The report formulates it as follows: "Qualifications regulated by the ministry of OCW are generically included in the NLQF. Meaning that each level of the education system has been referenced to a level of the NLQF." Since the introduction of the NLQF has strengthened the learning outcomes approach, this 'generic levelling approach' that was used in 2011 will surely come under pressure. See the demand reported by the MBO Council for giving some MBO level 4 qualifications a NLQF level 5. The main question is now if the learning outcomes approach

will become the dominant approach for both the levelling of non-regulated and regulated qualifications.

Consequently, this report focuses now on the procedure for the levelling of non-regulated qualifications to the NLQF. The ample information on this procedure shows clearly that the NLQF is working as an open and comprehensive NQF. The challenge now is to maintain confidence in the different processes for levelling regulated and non-regulated qualification.

Criterion 5:

The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles on quality assurance as specified in Annex IV to this Recommendation.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

The report sets out the national quality assurance arrangements, their associative legislative and institutional arrangements and typical norms and practices. The report includes a very significant claim 'For all levels in the NLQF quality assurance policies and procedures are in place.' The report shows in detailed tables how each quality assurance arrangement (and its legal basis) is compatible (or not) with the 10 QA principles of Annex IX of the 2017 EQF Recommendation.

It is not fully clear how the NLQF levels play a role today in internal and external quality assurance arrangements. But I guess that the future Law on the NLQF will be clear on that matter.

Minor remark. The situation of the QA in primary education is not completely clear, as only the Inspection framework secondary education is mentioned in the report. As mentioned in footnote 2 of Annex IV of the EQF Recommendation 2017, general education may be excluded from the common QA principles, depending on national circumstances, but the exclusion of primary education should be more explicitly mentioned in the report.

Criterion 6:

The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

Criterion 7:

The referencing process shall involve international experts and the referencing reports shall contain the written statement of at least two international experts from two different countries on the referencing process.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

Being one of the two international experts involved in the drafting of the update report, I thank the Dutch colleagues for giving me again the opportunity to comment on the draft update report, as has been the case for the 2011 referencing report.

This time my involvement was limited to giving comments on draft texts under high time pressure. We had no time left for having a meeting with the people drafting the text nor for meeting some main stakeholders.

Criterion 8:

The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing, and the evidence supporting it, shall be published by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall address separately each of the criteria. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

Criterion 9:

Within 6 months from having referenced or updated the referencing report, Member States and other participating countries shall publish the referencing report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portal.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

Criterion 10:

Further to the referencing process, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and/or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, to the appropriate EQF level.

✓ *This criterion is addressed.*

This is clearly 'work in progress'. Perhaps it should be made more transparent that at the moment VET Certificate Supplements mention already NLQF and EQF levels, while the VET certificates or diplomas don't in awaiting of the new Law on NLQF. For the other regulated qualifications the indication of the EQF level on diplomas will only be possible after the adoption of the law. A qualifications database or register is under development.

7.7.2 General observations on the first draft report on the update of the referencing of levels of the NLQF to the levels of the EQF, December 2018

Dr John O'Connor, Head of Qualifications and Skills Policy, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, 20 December 2018

It is important to recall that the NLQF is still relatively young, yet it has been subject to many reviews over the past years. The NLQF was first referenced to the EQF in 2011. Initial implementation arrangements were followed by two separate independent evaluations quickly followed, firstly an impact evaluation and secondly a concentrated exploration on the relevance of NLQF level 5 for VET and HE graduates. Early analytical exercises identified the absence of a statutory basis underpinning the NLQF, as problematic. The prospect of introducing legislation prompted two further public consultations and a third independent study on the way forward for the future development and consolidation of the NLQF. Subsequent engagement with social partners on the findings of the latest (2017) study have established consensus on the way forward for implementation, governance, promotion and regulation of the NLQF. The necessary legislative arrangements to put the NLQF on a statutory footing, are expected to be operational in early 2020. Few QFs will have been subject to the same degree of critical analysis, over a relatively short period of time, as the NLQF.

The policy intent that the NLQF be an open and comprehensive NQF is clear. The report details the operation of procedures for the inclusion of 'non-regulated' qualifications to be classified in NLQF terms. The demand for this service seems evident from the report. The report details how practice has informed the fine tuning of level descriptors (Annex 4) without having implications for the original NLQF-EQF alignment.

The report describes how the NLQF is becoming embedded in wider public policy on skills, qualifications and lifelong learning in the Netherlands. The proposed tracking of the use of NLQF in recruitment practices is commendable.

The report includes a frank assessment of challenges facing the NLQF. Notable in this regard and of interest to the wider EQF community are

- reported inconsistencies in EQF levels attached to similar qualifications offered in different MS;
- the acceptance of co-location of VET and Academic Qualifications at higher levels of the NLQF (Interestingly this challenge is framed in terms of classification based on learning outcomes).

The report opens up discussion on the relative importance of expected versus achieved learning outcomes when assigning a qualification to a level. This is an important and timely line of inquiry.

The report raises questions about the capacity, sustainability and authority of existing institutional arrangements to manage the NLQF, particularly as demand for NLQF services increases. Proposed legislative changes mark a potentially significant change to the nature and regulatory properties of the NLQF. One might ask why an updated referencing report might not have awaited the passage of the proposed legislative changes.

Notwithstanding this, there have clearly been sufficient developments of note in the past few years to justify an updated report at this time.

The report is, by and large, accessible and informative for readers familiar with general European developments skill, qualifications and quality assurance policy and practice. The appendices provide extensive detail on the Dutch education and training system and particularly useful commentary on the Dutch NCP-NLQF, its organisation, governance and function.

Mr Wilfried Boomgaert, Ministry of Education and Training, Flemish Community of Belgium, 24 December 2018

As stated on page 13, this report is an update of the referencing report 2011 and not a re-referencing of the NLQF to the EQF. Soon there will be a legal basis for the NLQF. One may wonder why the update is not waiting for the agreement of the Law on the NCP-NLQF, but it is up to the Dutch authorities to decide on the best timing for an update. Anyway, there is a lot to report. The NLQF was object of several studies and evaluations since the EQF referencing report of 2011. The Netherlands are also well advanced with their approach for the levelling of non-regulated qualifications to the NLQF on the basis of a well-elaborated procedure. One should notice that this category of qualifications is named ‘non-formal qualifications’ in many other Member States and that it concerns national sectoral qualifications that perhaps want some international exposure but not international sectoral qualifications.

The update report is giving a lot of information on the further implementation of the NLQF and focuses on the levelling and quality assurance of non-regulated qualifications. Information on the standing levelling of regulated qualifications (formal education) is limited although some challenges are mentioned. Only to mention one. The report is pointing to inconsistencies in EQF levels linked to similar qualifications in different Member States. The report goes not into detail, but after reading the report one could have the impression that one of the reasons for this inconsistency could be situated in The Netherlands, namely the fact that VET qualifications (MBO) with learning outcomes at EQF level 5 are still locked up in NLQF level 4 (equivalent to EQF level 4). This report is clearly opening discussions about the difference between intended and achieved learning outcomes, the parity of esteem between regulated and non-regulated VET qualifications and last but not least about the current attitude of the Dutch Higher Education sector claiming a kind of a ‘monopoly’ for the NLQF levels 5 to 8. Finally, the report is readable for non- qualifications experts thanks to the concise volume of the main text. Additional detailed information can be found in the Annexes.

7.8 Criterion 8

CRITERION 8 as part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation	CRITERION 8 as agreed by the EQF AG in 2008	CHANGE 2008 – 2017
The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing, and the evidence supporting it, shall	The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing	Added: .. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-

be published by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall address separately each of the criteria. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter.	and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately each of the criteria.	certification criteria of the latter.
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The referencing and update of the referencing report are executed by the NCP-NLQF under the responsibility and with involvement of the Ministry of OCW. The Ministry of OCW bears the final responsibility for the content of this report.

Main stakeholders have been involved in the update of the referencing report and have provided their statements. See for more detail criterion 1. Statements from main quality assurance bodies, the Inspectorate and NVAO, are positioned at criterion 6.

At the time of the first referencing the self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area had already taken place and to-day the department of higher education in the ministry has confirmed that no other self-certification has taken place. The comparison of the updated referencing report and the self-certification is out of scope of this report.

7.9 Criterion 9

CRITERION 9 as part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation	CRITERION 9 as agreed by the EQF AG in 2008	CHANGE 2008 – 2017
Within 6 months from having referenced or updated the referencing report, Member States and other participating countries shall publish the referencing report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portal.	The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.	The listing of member states including links to the completed referencing reports Changed into Within 6 months from having referenced or updated...shall publish the referencing report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portal

This update of the referencing report will be presented to the EQF Advisory Group and subsequently published on the dedicated European Portal.

Furthermore it will be published on the website NCP-NLQF and distributed among all stakeholders that have participated.

Other publication manners will be sought for example through an article in the NCP-NLQF newsletter that is distributed among its stakeholders.

7.10 Criterion 10

CRITERION 10 as part of the 2017 EQF Recommendation	CRITERION 10 as agreed by the EQF AG in 2008	CHANGE 2008 – 2017
Further to the referencing process, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and/or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, to the appropriate EQF level.	Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.	Slightly rephrased Added: qualifications registers Added: by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems

As regards to **regulated qualifications**, the indication of the EQF level on the diplomas will only be possible after the adoption of the law on the NLQF, currently under development. However, all qualifications files of the VET qualifications already carry a reference to an EQF level as well as all certificate supplements.

The guidelines for publishing Europass Diploma include an instruction on publishing a reference to the EQF, this results in an increasing amount of Diploma Supplements holding a reference to the EQF level. .

Non-regulated qualifications carry a reference to the NLQF and EQF level and are published through the register of the NCP-NLQF: www.nlqf.nl/register

A database/register for qualifications part of the NLQF is under development. The database/register will provide information on at least all required data fields as described in Annex VI of the 2017 EQF Recommendation.

Annex 1: Description of the Dutch education system

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Introduction

For the purpose of understanding, this Annex 1 of the up-dated referencing report provides the description of the Dutch education system as it is in 2018⁵⁷.

It first presents a diagram of the Dutch types of education. This is followed by a description of the compulsory education system and short descriptions of other types of education. Part 1 ends with a brief explanation of the accreditation of prior learning (APL) in the Netherlands.

The Dutch education system consists of different education sectors ranging from (pre)primary education to higher education (HE). It includes different kinds of education and training from compulsory education to courses and training offered to adults in the context of lifelong learning. Figure 4 below shows schematically how the different sectors and types are related to each other.

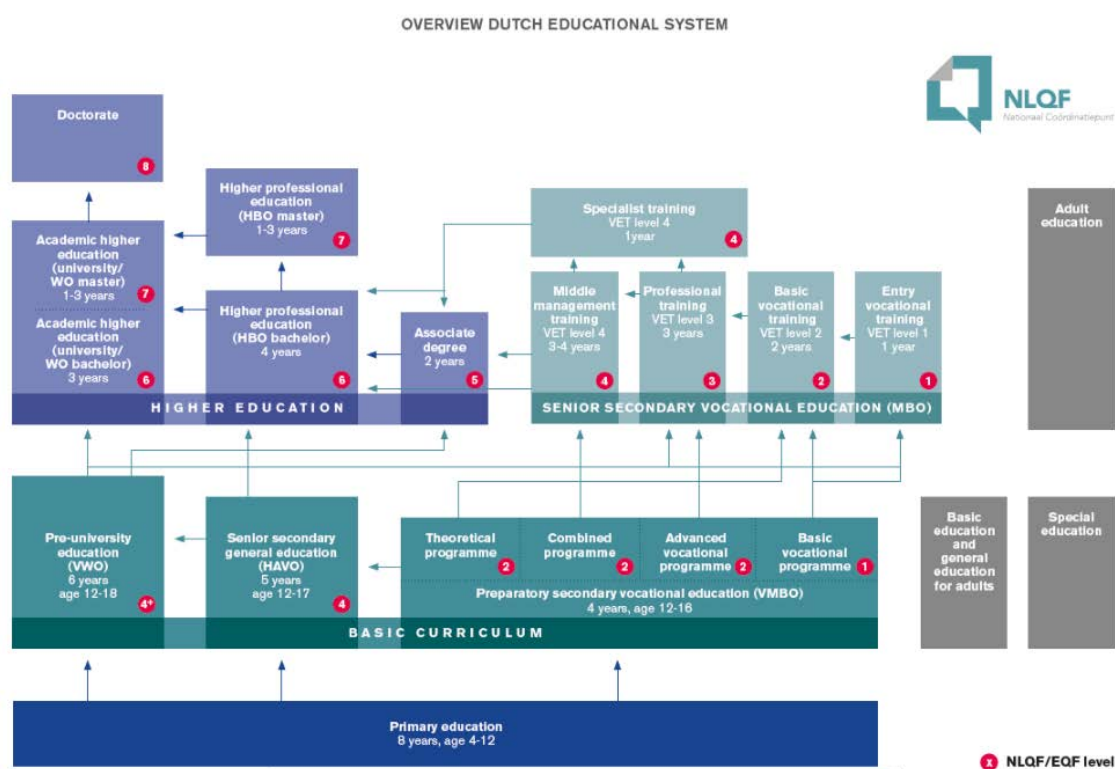


Figure 3: The Dutch education system

The following sections describe the system in more detail.

Section 1.1 describes the compulsory element in the Dutch system and section 1.2 describes primary education. Section 1.3 describes secondary general and pre-vocational education and is divided in several subsections: 1.4.1 until 1.4.5 describing some characteristics of secondary education whereas sections 1.4.6 until 1.4.7 describe the different types of general and pre-vocational education. Section 1.5 continues with explaining the VET system and 1.6 the system of Higher Education.

⁵⁷ The NCP-NLQF has described the system for the purpose of the referencing report. Other English descriptions of the Dutch education system are available inter alia on the following web-sites:
<https://www.s-bb.nl/education/dutch-educational-system>
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/netherlands_en
<https://www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/education-in-the-netherlands/>

1 Compulsory education and the 'Qualification Requirement'

Full-day school attendance is required in the Netherlands from the day a child turns 5 years old until the end of the school year in which it turns 16. However, with the aim of a successful entrance to the labour market, young people have to attend school until they turn 18 or have obtained a basic qualification, that is a qualification of upper secondary education (level 2 or above VET, HAVO or VWO). This is called the 'Qualification Requirement' and is governed by the Compulsory Education Act. It is one of a number of measures designed to combat early school leaving and to increase the chances of youngsters to enter the labour market. Early school leaving without a basic qualification before the age of 23 is reported to the Regional Reporting and Coordination Point (RMC). The RMC will then support the youngster in trying to find suitable (work-based) education or a job. Another measure is that without a basic qualification these youngsters are not eligible for social assistance benefit.

2 Childcare/early childhood education

Prior to primary school, children from 6-8 weeks to 4 years can stay at a kindergarten.

Playgrounds are meant for children from 2 to 4 years old.

In addition, there is early childhood education, focussed on children from 2,5 till 5 years old who are at risk of an educational disadvantage.

The municipalities are responsible for maintaining of the quality of the playgrounds.

3 Primary education⁵⁸

Primary education	
Target group/age	4–12 years
Options	Children who are unable to participate in primary education can attend dedicated special education
Access criteria	None
Transition to	Practical training, pre-vocational education, higher general secondary education and pre-university education
Providers	Primary schools: 6.806 ⁵⁹ , a decrease of 475 compared to 2012
Quality assurance and monitoring	Every year, the Inspectorate of Education monitors the quality of the schools. Based on a risk analysis and possible further research it will be determined how much control a school needs
Numbers	1.516.105 ⁶⁰ children a decrease of 92,522 compared to 2012

Primary schools provide primary (or basic) education to children aged 4–12 years.

Compulsory attendance is from the child's 5th birthday but children have a legal entitlement and can attend on voluntary basis as of the age of 4. Virtually all children attend primary school from age of 4. The first two years of primary school are pre-primary (ISCED 02) education. From age 6 children attend primary education in the same school. Children who are unable to participate in mainstream primary education may attend dedicated special education. Both types of education, mainstream and special education, are governed by the Law on Primary Education. The national Government establishes the quality requirements for primary education, and the Inspectorate of Education monitors the quality.

Every school must have a school plan describing the steps being taken to monitor and improve quality and indicating the school's policy on educational matters, staffing and internal quality assurance. The school plan needs to be updated every four years. Through this document, the school accounts its policies to the Inspectorate and the participation council. A school plan may cover one or more mainstream primary schools and special schools for primary education and one or more other schools which share the same competent authority (school board). It must be approved by the participation council.

The school prospectus, which must be updated every year, contains information for parents and pupils about the school's objectives, how it intends to achieve them and what it has achieved. It also gives details about the voluntary parental contribution and the rights and obligations of parents and pupils. The prospectus has to be approved by the parent members of the participation council before publication.

The right of complaint supplements the existing opportunities for participation in decision-making and the management of the school. The school board is obliged by law to draw up a complaints procedure. Every school must also have a complaints committee with an independent chairperson.

⁵⁸ Primary education is not included in the NLQF since it does not lead to a qualification.

⁵⁹ Source: <https://www.onderwijsincijfers.nl/kengetallen/primair-onderwijs/instellingenpo/aantal-instellingen>

⁶⁰ Source: <https://www.onderwijsincijfers.nl/kengetallen/primair-onderwijs/deelnemerspo/ontwikkeling-aantal-leerlingen>

At the end of primary education the school formulates for each pupil an advice for the most appropriate type of secondary education. The advice is based on the talents of a pupil, the pupil's learning achievements, the development during the entire primary school period and the concentration, motivation and perseverance of the pupil. A national assessment is mandatory for all schools. The advice may be upgraded based on the results of this assessment. Starting from school year 2014-2015 secondary schools have to base admission on this advice.

4 Secondary education – general characteristics

General aims and aims of the lower and upper years

Secondary education in the Netherlands has the aim to ensure that pupils can develop their talents as well as possible as part of a continuous learning trajectory and go on to appropriate follow-up education. Secondary education prepares young people for full participation in society and employment appropriate to their knowledge and skills.

When having finished primary school, pupils move to secondary education, which is divided into:

- 1 Practical education (5 years)
- 2 Four different tracks of pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO up to 4 years)
- 3 Senior general secondary education (HAVO, 5 years)
- 4 Pre-university education (VWO, 6 years)

Except for Practical training, secondary education in the Netherlands is split into foundation years and upper years.

The aims of the lower or foundation years of secondary school have been set down in 58 general attainment targets. They apply to all pupils. There are also a number of supplementary targets for modern languages which apply to the majority of pupils. School policy determines how the attainment targets are fleshed out at every level and for each method of learning.

The upper years of HAVO and VWO are also referred to as the Second Phase. The upper years in HAVO and VWO are general upper secondary education (ISCED 3). All the other years in VMBO and HAVO and VWO are lower secondary education (ISCED2). Practical training is also ISCED 2.

Type of secondary education	Foundation years	Upper Years
Pre-vocational education	Years 1 and 2	Years 3 and 4
Senior general secondary education	Years 1,2, and 3	Years 4 and 5
Pre-university education	Years 1,2 and 3	Years 4,5 and 6

The curriculum of the **foundation years** is for a large part defined at national level by 58 broadly defined mandatory national attainment targets, schools have an obligation to offer in all types of secondary education (except for practical education).

These 58 targets are set out in the following seven domains:

- Dutch
- English
- Numeracy and mathematics
- People and nature
- People and society
- Art and Culture
- Physical education

In addition, a part of the foundation years is the orientation on further study and profession, with attention for all kinds of professions and the education needed for these professions.

At the end of the second year of the foundation years each pupil receives a school recommendation stating which direction (VMBO, HAVO, VWO) a pupil can follow best.

- In case of a VMBO recommendation the advice often also indicates which professional direction would be most appropriate.
- In case of a HAVO or VWO recommendation the advice will include which of the 4 possible profiles will suit best: i) nature and technology; ii) nature and health; iii) economy and society; or iv) culture and Society.

The pupil does not have to follow the school's recommendation. However the host school must take into account the advice of the school of origin from primary education. With the introduction of broadly defining the attainment targets, schools have been given the opportunity to make substantive choices in the education programs. The school determines the further elaboration of the national attainment targets and is allowed to cluster them and to organise them in subjects, projects, learning areas, a combination of these or, for example, competency-based education. This way schools can adapt the national attainment targets to each school type and level to their context and teachers can make better use of their expertise and tailor their lessons to the needs of the pupils. Parents, pupils and staff have a voice in determining the approach taken by the school through participation in a school's council.

For the **upper years** at national level subject-specific, learning outcomes based examination programs are developed for each of the school types. They are elaborated more in detail compared to the attainment targets for the lower years but still leave room for schools to make their own choices and define the framework for their education.

Based on research showing that the quality of some aspects of the use of the Dutch language and numeracy was decreasing a set of reference levels for both Dutch language and numeracy have been introduced. These reference levels are descriptions of knowledge which pupils and students ought to have, ordered in an increasing level of difficulty, from primary to secondary and vocational education. The reference levels have been renewed in school year 2013-2014 and have since then served as a standard for the examination programs for the Dutch language of schools and for the numeracy test in secondary education. The literacy and numeracy levels remain an important point of attention to the Dutch Government.

Examination

The school leaving examination of secondary education is divided in two parts:

- school examination, covering 50% of the learning outcomes;
- national examination covering 50% of the learning outcomes.

The national examination *program*, approved by the Education Minister defines per subject whether the learning outcomes are tested in the national- or in the school examination.

A *national examination syllabus*, also approved by the Minister, specifies for the national examination the content (learning outcomes), the number of tests and their length. At the end of the course all pupils must pass the same national written examination for each course.

Each school develops every year a *school examination syllabus* defining the content (learning outcomes) of the school examination, including when it takes place, how marks are calculated, the weighting allocated to tests, and opportunities to re-sit them. Schools are required to send their school examination syllabus to the Inspectorate of Education every year.

Quality assurance

Pupils and their parents must be confident that their school provides education of appropriate quality. The Schools Inspectorate of Education therefore monitors the quality of education for VMBO, HAVO and VWO. The Inspectorate of Education uses a dedicated framework for the different education sectors, also using the learning outcomes of NLQF and EQF.

The monitoring is risk-based, that is the Inspectorate of Education performs every year a risk analysis to determine if there is any reason to believe that a school lacks quality. Inspectors visit the boards of the schools and some of the schools.

If the analysis indicates *no risk* then the school is submitted to a so-called 'basic supervision'.

If the analysis indicates *possible risk*, the school will be required to provide additional information. The Inspectorate of Education will examine the nature and background of the perceived risk and a more detailed analysis is carried out of both the additional information provided and the original information gathered. If this leads to a positive result, that is the school shows a high enough level of quality, the Inspectorate of Education will return to basic supervision. This approach leads to a tailored quality assurance.

As far as the quality assurance of examination is concerned, the inspectors ensure that the national examination runs as it is supposed to. In some cases the Inspectorate of Education may take measures, such as declaring the examination of a candidate or a school invalid. Post-examination monitoring by the Inspectorate of Education also takes place, using the examination data, or by checking whether schools have determined the right result for each pupil. The school board is responsible for the quality of education at the school, the financial situation and the compliance with the laws and regulations. The board is accountable for the school's results. The findings of each inspectorate are public.

Numbers

A total number of 985.513⁶¹ pupils attended secondary schools in 2017 of which 29.583 in Practical training. Since for a substantial share of pupils the choice for (the level of) VMBO, HAVO and VWO is made at the end of the foundation years all pupils in the foundation years are counted together. The numbers of pupils in secondary education in 2017 are:

Practical education	Foundation years	Vmbo BL (years 3-4)	Vmbo KL (years 3-4)	Vmbo GL (years 3-4)	Vmbo TL (years 3-4)	Havo (years 3-5)	Vwo (years 3-6)
29.583	400.049	39.839	60.267	29.028	86.057	166.974	173.716

Switching between programs in secondary education

Students have the right, under certain conditions, to switch from one program to another. For example, if the level of VWO turns out to be too high for a student. Another example is students, after obtaining their HAVO diploma, decide to do a pre-university education (VWO) program. in order to be allowed to enter a research university.

The conditions under which students have the right change program are not all determined by general rules but also depend on factors like the content of the curricula.

Legislation

The Law on Secondary Education identifies the position for all types of secondary education, including adult education, to both the preceding and the subsequent education within the Dutch education system. Vocational Education and Training is regulated by a separate law.

⁶¹ Source: <https://www.onderwijsin cijfers.nl/kengetallen/voortgezet-onderwijs/deelnemersvo/leerlingen>

5 Secondary education: Practical Education

Secondary education: Practical Education	
Target group/age	12-17
Options	Pupils in practical education follow their own combination of subjects in both in theory and practice. The specific combination is defined in a personal development plan. Learning, working, taking care of oneself, citizenship and leisure are important aspects
Access criteria	A declaration of admissibility drawn up in close cooperation between the primary school and the school for practical education demonstrates the pupil has a learning deficit of three years or more on two of the following domains: insightful calculation; reading comprehension; technical reading; spelling, of which one of the domains must be insightful calculation or reading comprehension
Transition to	VET, labour market and society
Providers	Schools for secondary education
Examination	Students completing practical training receive a school diploma in practical training
Quality assurance and monitoring	There is an annual monitoring of schools and their boards regarding compliance with legislation, regulations and accountability requirements and learning outcomes
Numbers ⁶²	29.583

Pupils for whom obtaining a qualification in one of the learning pathways of pre-vocational secondary education is too ambitious can attend Practical Education. During the five-year practical education, the pupil is guided through work placements, theory and practical subjects to enter the labour market, with or without supplementary training. In addition, practical education, is also aimed at allowing pupils to develop competencies that they need after school in areas such as living, citizenship and leisure activities.

The lessons in practical education focus on:

- theoretical education on an individual basis;
- professional practice, such as practical training and supervised internship;
- lifesaving/daily life skills training with assignments such as shopping, cooking, DIY jobs and traveling independently;
- personality formation/personal development, so that students know what they are good at and are stronger in their shoes;
- workforce/work related skills training: learning the skills and skills needed to be a good employee.

Pupils run an internship to prepare them well for work. Many schools for practical training offer numerous courses related to industry.

The individual development plan largely determines the learning path of the student. In this plan, for example, the goals and the sector choice of the student are indicated. The plan also shows which sector related courses the student can choose. The school prepares

⁶² Source: <https://www.onderwijsincijfers.nl/kengetallen/voortgezet-onderwijs/deelnemersvo/leerlingen>

this learning route together with the pupil and parent(s)/caretaker(s). The plan is updated approximately 2 to 3 times a year.

Most students spend 5 years at a school for practical education. In addition to a certificate and/or school diploma, pupils also obtain diplomas from sector programs. After practice, half of the pupils enter the labour market. Some of the pupils continue to VET.

6 Secondary education: Pre-vocational education (VMBO)

Secondary education: Pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO)		
Target group/age	12-16	
Options: pathways	Basic vocational pathway (VMBO–bb) Advanced vocational pathway (VMBO–kb) Combined vocational and theoretical pathway (VMBO–gl) Theoretical pathway (VMBO–tl)	
Options: sectors	Health and Welfare Engineering Economy Green sector ¹	
Access criteria	Primary school	
Transition from-to	VMBO–bb	VET level 1 or 2, vmbo kb
	VMBO–kb	VET level (2) ⁶³ , 3 or 4. vmbo –gl, vmbo-tl
	VMBO–gl	Higher general secondary education level 3 or 4
	VMBO–tl	
Providers	Schools for secondary education	
Examination	School examinations + Central examinations	
Quality assurance and monitoring	Annual monitoring of the board and sometimes schools by the Schools Inspectorate of Education regarding compliance with legislation, regulations and accountability requirements	
Numbers ⁶⁴ (upper years)	VMBO-bb: 39.839 VMBO-kb: 60.267 VMBO-gl: 29.028 VMBO-tl: 86.057	

All VMBO learning pathways are four-year routes. The first two years, the *foundation years*, of pre-vocational secondary education, are general and common to all pathways. The pupils learn about all sorts of subjects and explore their interests and abilities. After the foundation years each pupil chooses one of the four pathways for the third and fourth year, *the upper years*.

The four learning pathways range from practical to theoretical, but have a common part. The learning pathways are distinguished by the time spent on the general-courses and the vocational program.

Basic vocational pathway (VMBO-bbl)	Pupils attend a vocational program for an average of 12 hours per week and take an exam in 4 general subjects. A diploma of this pathway gives access to a VET level 2 program. This pathway is meant for pupils who are more practically orientated.
Advanced vocational pathway (VMBO-kbl)	Pupils attend a vocational program for 12 hours per week and take an exam in 4 general subjects. It prepares pupils for specialist and middle-management training courses of secondary VET.

⁶³ Moving to level 2 is possible but not the most appropriate way

⁶⁴ Source: <https://www.onderwijsin cijfers.nl/kengetallen/voortgezet-onderwijs/deelnemersvo/leerlingen>

Combined vocational and theoretical pathway (VMBO-gl)	Pupils attend a vocational program for 4 hours per week and take an exam in 5 general subjects. The combined vocational and theoretical pathway also prepares pupils for specialist and middle-management training in the VET, but it is more theoretical than VMBO kbl.
Theoretical pathway (VMBO-tl)	Pupils take an exam in 6 general subjects; they do not take an exam in a vocational program. The theoretical pathway, like VMBO-kbl and VMBO-gl prepares pupils for entry into VET. In addition, students who complete this pathway can progress to senior general secondary education (HAVO).

The vocational program of all of these pathways consists of a *core profile course* composed of four modules, and a selection of *elective courses*. The pathways are offered for the sectors and profiles as mentioned in the table below. The table also shows the amount of elective courses available for each profile:

Sector	Profile	Vocational Elective courses
Health and Welfare	Health and Welfare	12
Engineering	Construction, living environment and interior	19
	Production, installation and energy	17
	Mobility and transport	12
	Media, design and ICT	12
	Maritime and technique	15
Economy	Economy and Entrepreneurship	8
	Products and services	7
	Hospitality, Bakery and Tourism	8
Green sector ⁶⁵	Green sector	13

The *common elements*, the *core profile* and the *elective courses* define the curriculum of the pupils as in the table below:

	VMBO bb VMBO kb	VMBO-gl	VMBO tl
Common elements	Dutch, English, Social studies, Physical education, Arts		
Core Profile general subjects	Year 3: 2 Year 4: 2	Year 3: 2 Year 4: 5	Year 3: 2 Year 4: 7
Core Profile vocational modules • 50% of the vocational program	4 modules	2 modules	None

⁶⁵ The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for secondary vocational and higher education in the green sector as of study year 2017-2018, taking over from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food

	VMBO bb VMBO kb	VMBO-gl	VMBO tl
Elective courses vocational subjects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is possible to elect courses from another vocational profile • 50% of the vocational program 	A minimum of 4 courses	A minimum of 2 courses	None
Elective courses general subjects	none	1	2
School specific subjects	yes	yes	yes

7 General secondary education (HAVO and VWO)

General secondary education (HAVO and VWO)	
Target group/age	12-18 years
Options	Senior secondary general education (HAVO) Pre-university education (VWO)
Access criteria	HAVO: primary school or VMBO-tl The last one gives access to HAVO class 4 VWO: primary school or HAVO. The last one gives access to VWO class 5 Admission to HAVO and VWO is based on the recommendation given by the school for primary education
Transition to	HAVO: professional Bachelor program, Associated Degree or the labour market (the last one rarely happens) VWO: Bachelor of arts/science, Associated Degree or the labour market(the last one rarely happens)
Providers	Schools for secondary education
Quality assurance and monitoring	Annual monitoring of the board and sometimes schools by the Schools Inspectorate of Education regarding compliance with legislation, regulations and accountability requirements
Numbers ⁶⁶ (upper years)	HAVO: 166.974 VWO: 173.716

General secondary education comprises two types of education:

- The HAVO, with a duration of 5 years, prepares pupils to progress to universities of applied sciences (HBO), to take an Associate Degree or a Bachelor degree.
- The VWO, with a duration of 6 years, prepares students to progress to universities to a Bachelor degree. Some students choose to transit to universities of applied sciences or a Bachelor degree and rarely for an Associate Degree.

From the fourth year on (upper years) in HAVO and VWO, pupils choose a particular combination of subjects: a 'profile choice'. This profile choice is designed to enable a smooth transition between secondary education and higher education. Students can choose one of the following four profiles:

Profile	Main subjects	Profile	Main subjects
Natural Sciences and Technology	Advanced mathematics Natural sciences Chemistry	Economy and Society	Economics Advanced mathematics Mathematics History and geography
Natural Sciences and Health	Biology Physics/geography Advanced mathematics Mathematics Chemistry	Culture and Society	A modern foreign language Culture and arts History Mathematics Economics

⁶⁶ Source: <https://www.onderwijsin cijfers.nl/kengetallen/voortgezet-onderwijs/deelnemersvo/leerlingen>

Each profile comprises of 6 (HAVO) or 7 (VWO) mandatory subjects and 1 or 2 subjects from the elective subjects offered by the school.

Students do have the possibility to choose more subjects and even on a higher level, which will be mentioned on their diploma's. Moreover specific profiles are offered by some of the schools like bi- lingual and specific technical programs. Currently we notice a growing interest of students to combine two profiles in order to enlarge the possibilities for further studies and future work in the labour market.

8 Senior secondary Vocational education and training (MBO)

Senior secondary Vocational education and training (MBO)			
Target group/age	From 16 years onwards		
Options	4 levels:	VET levels 1 (lower secondary), 2, 3 and 4	
	2 pathways:	The school-based pathway (BOL) Work-based pathway (BBL)	
Access criteria	VET level 1 Entry Vocational Training	The student does not meet the requirements for admission to a VET level 2, 3 or 4 program;	
	VET level 2 Basic Vocational Training	Diploma VMBO basic vocational program Proof of transition HAVO or VWO year 3 to year 4 Diploma VET level 1	
	VET level 3 Professional Training	Diploma VMBO advanced vocational, combined- or theoretical program Proof of transition HAVO or VWO year 3 to year 4 Diploma VET level 2	
	VET level 4 Middle management	Diploma VMBO advanced vocational, combined- or theoretical program Diploma VET level 2 and 3	
	VET Level 4 Specialist training	Diploma VET level 3 in a relevant field of study	
Transition from/to	VET level 1	VET level 2 The labour market	
	VET levels 2 or 3	The next higher positioned VET level The labour market	
	VET level 4	Associate degree program, Bachelor program (universities of applied sciences) The labour market	
Providers	43 Regional education colleges (ROCs and AOCs) 11 Specialised colleges 105 Recognised private providers		
Examinations	Institutional examinations for the Dutch language (the introduction of partly central examinations has recently started)		
Quality assurance and monitoring	The Inspectorate of Education monitors the quality of education and the quality of examinations within VET for both public and private providers		
Numbers		BBL	BOL
	Green	4.800	19.100
	All other sectors	102.900	359.60

General description of VET

VET prepares students for both work and further education. It also promotes general education and personal development with the aim of full participation in society. The link to the labour market and society is very important in all VET programs. To ensure this link, VET schools have extensive contacts with the regional business community, municipalities and social organisations.

On completion of a VET program, students who wish to continue their education may progress to further education in VET. Students with a VET level 4 qualification can enter universities for applied sciences.

Forty percent (40%) of the Dutch workforce hold a VET diploma and every year more than 0.5 million people opt for a program in VET.

VET programs are offered for four sectors:

- Engineering and construction
- Health, welfare, culture and sport
- Economics, business, ICT and hospitality
- Environmental studies and food

Programs are offered by providers throughout the country. VET is offered by ROCs, AOCs, specialised colleges and private providers.

- ROCs are large regional education providers offering programs at all levels and focus on three of the four sectors.
- AOCs provide training for the sector Environmental studies and food, including courses in the areas of plants, animals, green design and environment.
- Specialist colleges focus on training for one professional branch, for example, graphic design or shipping.
- Private providers do not receive public funding, but are recognised for (some of) their courses by the Minister of Education Culture and Sciences.

VET Levels

VET is offered at four levels. Programs vary between 1 and 4 years. After the introduction of the Dutch National Qualifications Framework (NLQF) specific level descriptors for each VET level have been developed. The main characteristics of each level are described in the table below:

VET level 1: Entry Vocational training:	
What	After completion of the qualification the student can carry out simple tasks under supervision.
Duration	Programs last one year
Access to	The VET level 1 diploma provides access to VET level 2
VET level 2: Basic Vocational training	
What	After completion of the qualification the student can carry out executive tasks, and be responsible for his own job.

Duration	Programs last 1 or 2 years.
Access to	The VET level 2 diploma provides access to VET level 3 The VET level 2 diploma provides also access to VET level 4. Not all professions have and level 3 and level 4 The VET level 2 diploma is considered to be an entry qualification for the labour market
VET level 3: Professional training	
What	After completion of the qualification the student can account for his/hers activities to colleagues and can monitor and guide activities of others. He is able to draft work presentation.
Duration	Programs last 2- 3 years.
Access to	The VET level 3 diploma provides access to VET level 4 The VET level 3 diploma provides access to the labour market
VET level 4 Middle management training	
What	After completion of the qualification the student can deal with responsibilities, in executive, formal and organisational sense. The student can work out procedures.
Duration	Programs last 3–4 years
Access to	The level 4 diploma middle management provides access to higher professional education The level 4 diploma provides access to the labour market
VET level 4 Specialist training.	
What	After completion of the qualification the student can deal with responsibilities, in executive, formal and organisational sense. The student can work out procedures.
Duration	Programs last 1 year. The specialist training is intended for students who already have obtained a VET level 3 diploma for the same profession or professional category.
Access to	The level 4 diploma specialist training provides access to higher professional education. The level 4 diploma provides access to the labour market.

Qualifications files and the use of learning outcomes

The qualifications in VET are organised in a VET qualifications framework. The framework is composed of *qualifications files* with one or more qualifications. All occupations accessible with a VET qualification are defined in such a qualification file through a description of the occupation, the key activities and what someone should know and be able to do to perform in the occupation. The qualifications file describes what a student should know and be able to do in order to get a diploma. It specifies the knowledge, skills and competences for each of the qualifications part of that file.

The agency SBB is the responsible organisation for maintaining the VET qualifications framework. The SBB is an agency where vocational education and training and labour market actors co-operate at national, sectoral and regional level.

The SBB has the following legal tasks:

- Maintaining the VET qualifications framework.
- Accrediting and monitoring organisations offering work-based learning.

- Providing information on labour market trends, work based learning placements and apprenticeships, and the efficiency and relevance of training programs.

The SBB advises the minister of Education, Culture and Science on the connection between VET and the labour market.

Labour market actors can request for the development or change of qualifications. This request is to be approved by one of the seven Sector Units of SBB. In case a screening of the request by the relevant Sector Unit results in a positive advice the request is forwarded to the independent Review Council of the SBB. This Council checks if the necessary pre-defined requirements are met. Upon a positive decision the qualification can be developed or changed. This is done by representatives/experts of labour market and education and training. The draft qualification file must be approved by subsequently the Assessment Council, The relevant Sector Unit and the Board of SBB. Finally it will be approved by the Ministry of OCW and formally become part of the qualifications framework. Following approval by the Minister, the dossier is entered in the Central Register for VET (CREBO).

In 2018, 177 qualifications files with a total of 519 qualifications were registered in CREBO.

Upon request of the Ministry of OCW SBB has just finished a major reform of the VET qualifications framework, in close collaboration with all stakeholders.

REVISION OF THE VET QUALIFICATIONS STRUCTURE

The VET qualifications files have been revised in 2015 with the following aim

- Fewer qualifications in the qualification structure, to be achieved by bundling and preventing overlap, but also by clustering related qualifications.
- Standardisation of the language of the qualification structure by applying a uniform conceptual framework.
- Attention to feasibility, including improved feasibility of organisation and financing, of education and examination at school and for organisations offering work-based learning.
- 'Sustainability': qualifications must retain their validity for a few years and be flexible in quickly translating labour market developments into educational programs.

The qualifications files have been revised on three points:

- A program now consists of a *basic component*, a *profile component* and an *elective component*. This has created more consistency within the files.
- A number of files were clustered in a different way. For schools this provides a basis for a more effective organisation of the education and it leads to more employable workers on the labour market.
- The description of the requirements that VET students must meet in order to obtain a diploma, for example what knowledge and skills are required, is improved.

This has led to clearer and thinner qualification files.

A VET program consists of a *basic component*, a *profile component* and an *elective component*. The qualification file describes the *basic component* and one or more *profile parts*.

The *basic component* contains the generic subjects Dutch language, arithmetic and career and citizenship. For VET level 4 qualifications it also contains English. The basic component also contains the common elements that apply to all qualifications in the file: core tasks, work processes, professional knowledge, skills and attitudinal aspects.

The *profile part(s)* describe(s) the specific parts to each qualification.

For each qualification *elective components* have been developed. Education providers have a choice in the elective components they have on offer. They also can allow the students to choose elective components that are not connected to the qualification.

Examination

A diploma can only be issued to a student when he or she has demonstrated through exams he or she masters the required learning outcomes as described in the qualification file.

VET providers are responsible for the examination of the students. To this end providers have to install Examination Commissions that are responsible for the organisation and quality of the exams. The learning outcomes described in the qualifications files are leading for the examination. Vet providers can either develop their own exams and or purchase them with certified external exam providers. In any case VET providers have to demonstrate that they use valid exams and have involved labour market actors.

In 2015 central exams for exams the Dutch language are introduced, now followed by central exams English.

QUALITY OF EXAMINATION

The quality of the examination must be beyond doubt. For this reason, the minister of Education Culture and Sciences, the association for VET (MBO raad) and the Association for private providers (NRTO) in 2015 signed an agreement in order to improve the quality of the examination in VET through:

- Common development of instruments for examination, validation of examination products and agreements concerning the quality;
- Strengthening the examination commissions (at provider level responsible for the quality of examinations) and a more structural implementation of quality assurance;
- Continuing training for those who are involved in the examination process.

The responsibility for the implementation of the agreements lies with the schools: they ensure that the examinations meet the set requirements and the quality of the processes is properly safeguarded by the examination boards.

A commonly used kind of examination is the aptitude test which may use simulations, employment tests and observations of work activities to see whether students possess the necessary competences. Practical assessments in which students manage a project or complete a practical assignment are also commonly used.

Quality assurance

General approach

- VET providers decide on how they organise their education and examination.
- The Inspectorate of Education monitors if the legal requirements are met, ensuring that students receive at least basic quality education. Furthermore, the Inspectorate of Education stimulates further improvement of the quality of education.

The Inspectorate of Education monitors both public and private providers offering regulated qualifications. The monitoring is composed of several elements:

- 1 **Every year**, the Inspectorate of Education checks with each provider whether the quality of education and or financial management is at risk. They form their opinion based on analysis of a set of data composed of:
 - educational results;
 - financial key figures;
 - personnel and material costs;
 - student population development;
 - administrative structure;
 - available safety studies;
 - the results of satisfaction surveys.
- 2 **A four-yearly analyses** is performed at the level of the board and of the education programs
 - quality assurance and financial management;
 - research is performed to determine whether the board has a correct image of the training;
 - in depth analysis of the quality of programs that are possibly at risk;
 - at the request of the board or program management, an investigation into 'good education' can be performed.

The following questions are central to the four-year research at boards and programs:

- Is there sufficient insight into the quality of education and is there a focus on improving the quality of education?
- Is there a professional quality culture and does it function transparently and with integrity?
- Is there an active communication about the own performance and developments of the board and the training?
- Is the financial management sound?

The result of the four-yearly research determines the intensity of the follow-up research.

Quality assurance of exams

Exams and certification have to meet pre-defined quality standards laid down in the 2017 quality framework. The quality assurance of exams is part of the *four-yearly* research by the Inspectorate of Education. Based on information from a discussion with the Board of the provider and on the basis of already available information the Inspectorate designs a research plan. This plan describes which areas and standards will be investigated. In case Examination and Certification are part of this plan, it is specified which standards from the 2017 quality framework will be investigated. The starting point for this investigation always is the providers Examination Committee(s) that is (are) responsible for the qualification(s) under investigation.

The need for investigation of the examination and certification can also be based on the identified risks. This can be done independently of the four-yearly research.

The relationship with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET)

EQAVET enhances the quality of VET and supports individual Member States in promoting and monitoring continuous quality improvement of VET at both system level and institutional level. In the Netherlands the national approach to QA was developed independently of EQAVET and is compatible with the EQAVET framework. Both use a model derived from the so-called 'Deming Circle' containing four phases: plan, do, check and act.

The EQAVET framework consists of indicative descriptors and indicators; all EQAVET indicators are being used in the Netherlands (2 are partially used).

The Dutch NRP EQAVET has contributed to increasing the emphasis on a culture of quality. The Dutch NRP has just published the draft version of her working program for 2019 and 2020; the working program is set up in close cooperation with her stakeholders that are member of her advisory group comprising of representatives from VET, namely the Ministry of OCW, the Council for vocational and adult education (MBO Raad), the Quality Network of VET providers (Quality Network), the Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour market (S-BB), the association of private education providers (NRTO), the organisation of unions (FNV), Employers organization (VNO/NCW), the Youth Organisation for Vocational Education (JOB) and the Inspectorate of Education.

The VET law mandates VET providers to set up a quality assurance system. They are relatively free to design and implement their own system, but they have to meet nationally set quality standards and ensure regular quality assessments that include the arrangements in place for teacher training⁶⁷.

External reviews of public and private VET providers are conducted by the Inspectorate of Education. Since August 2017, the inspectorate has increased the use of information about the quality that is given by the provider and then triangulates this information with the views of teachers, students and companies.

⁶⁷ https://www.eqavet.eu/Equavet2017/media/Documents/2-NL_final_Template-for-updating-info-on-the-EQAVET-website.pdf

VET providers regularly assess the progress and achievement of the goals set for education programmes and use this to identify areas of improvement (the evaluation and review stage of the EQAVET quality cycle). Providers are also required to have authorities and responsibilities for QA clearly defined, sufficiently communicated and embedded in the organisation. Special focus is on independent assessment of the quality and the involvement of stakeholders.

In terms of planning, VET providers have to formulate sufficient specific and measurable goals for education in a structured manner, based on the institution's mission and strategic policy. Sufficient continuity in teaching and management staff is important. VET providers are obliged to maintain a sufficiently functioning dialogue regarding quality with internal stakeholders and persons responsible as well as with external stakeholders. This dialogue comprises accountability regarding the quality provided and its improvement

Legislation

VET is regulated by the Law Education and Vocational Training, the WEB. This law regulates the various forms of vocational education.

9 Education for adults

Education for adults	
Target group/age	<p>Basic education: People with a minimum age of 18 years that have not obtained enough reading, writing, numeracy or digital skills, to participate in society, VET and or the labour market.</p> <p>General secondary education for adults (vavo): People with a minimum age of 18 years that have not obtained a diploma in general secondary education. Also dropouts from general secondary education (with prerequisites).</p>
Options	<p>Basic education 1, 2 and 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dutch language level 1, 2 and 3 • Dutch as a second language level 1, 2 and 3 • Mathematics level 1 and 2 • Digital skills level 1 and 2 <p>VAVO -VMBO-tl, VAVO -HAVO VAVO -VWO</p>
Transition to	<p>Basic education may lead to VET</p> <p>VAVO may lead to VET and HE</p>
Providers	<p>Regional Education Colleges (ROC's) for VAVO. Different types of providers for basic educations like ROC's, libraries, welfare organisations</p>
Examinations	<p>Basic education: depends on the type of education</p> <p>VAVO: Same as for initial education</p>
Quality assurance and monitoring	<p>Basic education: Municipality</p> <p>VAVO: Inspectorate of Education</p>
Numbers ⁶⁸	<p>Basic education: unknown</p> <p>VAVO: 9.393</p>

General description

Within adult education two types of education are provided:

- Basic Education for Adults (Volwasseneneducatie) at levels 1, 2 and 3.
- General Secondary Education for Adults (VAVO) at levels 4, 5 and 6.

Basic education for adults is meant for adults (native and migrants) who are out of the compulsory schooling age and have an educational disadvantage. Education is aimed at teaching basic skills in reading, writing, digital and arithmetic to equip people to participate in society and or embark on vet education or a training course in preparation for entry to the labour market. It covers the following subjects:

- Dutch language and arithmetic, aimed at basic literacy and the starting level for vocational education.

⁶⁸ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/...vavo/evaluatie-nieuwe-bekostiging-voor-het-vavo.pdf>

- Dutch as a second language (NT2) I and II, leading to the qualification in Dutch as a second language, as referred to in the Decree on State Examinations in Dutch as a Second Language.
- Dutch as a second language, aimed at basic proficiency in the Dutch language.
- Dutch as a second language, aimed at basic literacy.

The duration of the programs depends on the entry level of the adult. The focus of the programs is mainly the Dutch language, which can be the native language (reading and writing) or a second language. There is also a focus on numeracy and computer skills,. Participants must be aged over 18 years. Education programs may be linked to vocational education.

Municipalities which receive public funding are obliged to purchase their basic education courses.

General secondary education for adults (VAVO) programs correspond to initial general secondary education: VMBO-tl, HAVO and VWO. General secondary education for adults is different from VMBO-tl, HAVO and VWO in that a participant may combine subjects studied individually over time to receive a diploma. Furthermore, VAVO providers may grant exemptions and may issue certificates per course, so that only those subjects still needed, together with the previous results, lead to one diploma. Initial education does not have the possibility to issue certificates per subject. The examinations for the diploma in higher general secondary education for adults are the same as in initial education.

Quality assurance

Adult education is monitored by the municipalities. In case they purchase formal basic education the Inspectorate of Education, department VET and adult education monitors the quality of education. For the examinations of VAVO the same rules apply as in the Law on Secondary Education and the frameworks of the Inspectorate of Education.

Legislation

Adult education is governed by the Law on Education and Professional Education (WEB).

10 Higher education (HE)

Higher Education	
Target group/age	From 17 years onwards
Options	Associate degree, Bachelor, Master or Doctorate
Access criteria	VET, HAVO or VWO. For the Bachelor program and Associate Degree program at universities of applied sciences a VET, HAVO, or VWO diploma is required. For the Bachelor program at universities a pre-university diploma is required. The admission to some courses require some subjects to have been part of the exam of VET, HAVO or VWO.
Transition to	Associate degree, Bachelor, Master, Professional Doctorate in Engineering, Medical Specialist, Doctorate. All qualifications give access to the labour market.
Providers	Universities for applied sciences Universities
Examinations	The providers are responsible for examination
Quality assurance and monitoring	The Inspectorate of Education for HE monitors the quality assurance and the compliance with the Law on Higher Education and Scientific research. The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) is responsible for the accreditation of all associate, bachelor and master degrees. Accreditation is a prerequisite for recognition of the diplomas by inclusion in the national register for higher education CROHO.
Numbers	> 725.000 students in government funded HEI's

General description

Programmes of higher education in the Netherlands are fully compatible with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) offered in the so called three cycle system leading to internationally recognised titles: Bachelor (first cycle), Master (second cycle) and Doctor (third cycle). In addition to these cycles The Netherlands offer programs leading to the Associate degree. All programs have to be accredited by the NVAO.

First cycle

Students who want to access a training at the universities of applied sciences need to possess a VET, HAVO or VWO diploma. Entry to a university normally requires a VWO diploma. Another way to enrol in the First Cycle is by means of a colloquium doctum (entrance assessment). This can be used by potential students of 21 years or older who do not meet the formal entry requirements.

Second cycle

The Bachelor degree gives access to Master programs and Master degrees. The Master program takes 1-3 years.

Third cycle

Education of the third cycle is only offered by universities. The most important requirement for a third cycle degree is the completion of a thesis based on original research and defended in public. All universities can provide the PhD. Besides the PhD the three universities for engineering offer a 2-year (technical) design program (professional doctorate of engineering) for which, after the Master program, more knowledge should be acquired and personal assignments in a number of engineering fields should be completed. The graduates receive the degree Professional Doctorate in Engineering (PDEng). The training of medical specialists is the responsibility of the competent authority in a university hospital.

Associate Degree (2 years)

The associate degree program was introduced as a two-year program (short cycle) linked to a professional bachelor's degree with the Quality in Diversity Higher Education Act of 1 September 2013. However, the Associate Degree Introduction Act of 1 January 2018, established the associate degree as an **independent program**, next to the Bachelor's and Master's programs. Associate degree programs can now formulate independent learning outcomes and focus on a specific professional field, without being limited by the link with a bachelor program. This resulted a wider variety of programs and therefore more choice for the students. As of the academic year 2018- 2019, students can choose from 150 new associate degree programs. Existing associate degree programs have been converted to independent AD programs.

The prior education requirement for admission to an associate degree program is a VET level 4, HAVO or VWO diploma. This training is therefore ideally suited for VET level -4 graduates who want to continue studying, but who take a 4-year bachelor's degree program too long. The AD training also offers opportunities for training and retraining adults and workers in the context of lifelong learning. Individual exemptions are possible, this is at the discretion of the examination committee of the associate degree program. The Board of Examiners decides per student whether an exemption for a specific subject can be given on the basis of his or her knowledge and skills.

Associate degree students who complete the course successfully can enter the labour market. Associate degree graduates also have the possibility to transfer to a bachelor's degree program. An associate degree graduate wishing to transfer to a professional bachelor's degree program, can complete the professional bachelor's program in shortened time. Depending on the kinship between the completed associate degree program and the professional bachelor program the student wishes to continue/can do the remaining study load of up to 120 credits (two years) will be shortened.

The associate degrees (AD) are offered by universities of applied science. If desired the university of applied science can, after approval of the Ministry of OCW, cooperate with VET providers. The university of applied science has to provide at least half of the education, including the graduation phase and the final exam. In special cases, the minister may allow the university of applied sciences to provide less than half of the education itself. See also Article 7.8a of the WHW. The university of applied science is responsible for the quality of the entire associate degree program, including for the part that is carried out at the VET provider.

Higher Education Providers

Higher Education in the Netherlands is offered by two types of providers:

Universities of applied sciences (HBO) include comprehensive and specialised universities in fields such as agriculture, arts and teacher education. Universities of applied sciences can offer Associate Degree, HBO Bachelors and sometimes HBO Masters programs. A total of 37 Universities of applied sciences currently receive central government funding. The Ministry of Economic Affairs is responsible for funding three of these, which provide agricultural and environmental education.

Research Universities (WO) include general universities, universities specialising in engineering and agriculture and the Open University. Universities offer Academic Bachelors and Academic Master programmes. The national government funds 18 research universities. These include the Open University for distance learning, four theological or humanist universities, three universities of technology, and Wageningen University. The latter is funded by the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

Units of Learning outcomes

With the aim to improve the system the Ministry of OCW has started pilots to make higher education more flexible. In the pilots, universities of applied sciences may abandon their regular educational programs. Instead, units of learning outcomes are determined in which is described what students must know and should be able to do. These units do not describe how the associated program should look like.

The results of these pilots should offer benefits for students and employers.

- Students get more authority and control over the design of their education.
- Adult students, who already have work experience can get credits for the learning outcomes that he already has mastered. This makes the training more efficient and often shorter.
- The training can better meet the wishes of employers. This can relate to the content of the training or to the time that the student needs for the study. This means less costs.

Transition within HE

Within HE, a student can either switch to a different level or to another type of HE: for example, after the first year of a professionally oriented program at a university of applied science (the propaedeutic) to university education or vice versa.

Since 2013/2014 universities no longer automatically have to accept students enrolling a -bachelor program with a diploma of a propaedeutic of a university of applied science. Universities are allowed to use additional entry requirements and assessments.

Since January 2018 the Associate degree programs have a separate, independent status in laws and regulations on Dutch HE. Until then the Associate degree programs had an

experimental status and formally were part of a Bachelor degree program. Under the new law the Associate degree still consists of 120 ECTS and there are still possibilities for students to continue in Bachelor degree programs. Depending on the 'fit' between the Associate degree and Bachelor degree program, the remaining Bachelor degree program will consist of 120-180 ECTS.

Quality assurance

The quality of each program in HE is monitored by the accreditation system based on learning outcomes as formulated in the Dublin descriptors. The system is managed by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). The NVAO is a bi-national public accreditation organisation in both regions established by a treaty between the Netherlands and Flanders to ensure the quality of HE in both jurisdictions.

The NVAO monitors Dutch and Flemish HE and independently ensures the quality of HE in The Netherlands and Flanders by assessing programmes and providing a quality mark: accreditation. It also contributes to improving the quality of HE and it promotes the positioning of HE from both national and international perspectives. Only NVAO-accredited programs are recognised by the Government and receive funding. But there are also NVAO-accredited programs that are offered by private HEI's that don't receive government funding.

The Dutch and Flemish ministers monitor the functioning of NVAO and the Dutch Inspectorate of Education monitors the Dutch accreditation system as a whole. Agreements are made between the Inspectorate of Education, NVAO and the Ministry of OCW Culture and Science.

In addition to the monitoring by the NVAO, the Inspectorate of Education ensures that HE takes account of i) the law in the delivery of education, ii) the applicability of admission criteria, iii) the administration of examinations and iv) the awarding of diplomas. The Inspectorate of Education also oversees the board's and the council's compliance with the laws.

At the request of the Education Minister, the Inspectorate of Education investigates specific aspects of HE, for example, the functioning of the Bachelor–Master structure, attention paid to specific groups of students, as handicapped people and migrants, the entry and transfer of students in engineering programs and the quality of examinations.

International HE framework

An important outcome of the Bologna process is the development of a 'Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area' (the QF-EHEA). This comprehensive reference framework provides a general structure for the qualifications of the EU Member States which have committed to the Bologna Declaration. The participating Member States aimed to develop national qualifications frameworks in HE in which the levels of the national system would relate to the level descriptors of the EQF. The Netherlands was

one of the first countries to draw up a national framework of this kind. It has been evaluated by the *Verification Committee* of independent international experts and has been shown to be compatible with the overarching QF-EHEA.

In the past years the former Education Minister took new measures to improve the quality of universities of applied sciences. Some of those measures are 1) all teachers should have at least a Master degree, 2) a system of national examinations, and 3) a strengthening of the role of the Inspectorate of Education. The current Education Minister announced that new performance agreements will be made with all government funded HEI's.

Legislation

The Law on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) provides for regular evaluation of the quality of the programs offered by HEIs. As far as possible the evaluation of an HEI is carried out in cooperation with other HEIs and also includes evaluation by independent experts and by students. The results are public. The monitoring is regulated through accreditation.

Accreditation frameworks have been drawn up for this purpose and programs are assessed and re-assessed every six years. Assessment of HEIs and accreditation of programs are carried out by NVAO. Their processes include the evaluation of learning outcomes, checks on qualification levels, and the regulation of examinations. The data on all accredited programs are stored in the Central Register of Higher Education (CROHO). Privately funded but accredited programs are also registered in CROHO; students can receive study funding for any accredited program.

In July 2018 the Government adopted a new law 'Accreditatie op maat' (tailor made accreditation): accreditation procedures should be diminished.

11 Special education – education for pupils with special needs

The Netherlands has an inclusive school system. Almost all pupils attend a school.

Special education covers different forms of education:

- Special education/special secondary education
- Special schools for primary education
- Practical education

Next to mainstream primary education and secondary education, there are schools for special primary education and school for special (secondary) education. These schools are meant for pupils who need orthopedagogical and orthodidactical support.

For pupils who have not obtained their diploma on VMBO, nor with long extra help, there is practical training. This special form of education prepares pupils for a place on the labour market. Special primary education is meant for all children who need orthopedagogical or orthodidactical help. They attend a special school for primary education.

By law, individual schools have the obligation to provide students who require extra support with the most appropriate schooling. If a school cannot offer the necessary support, there is an obligation for that school to find a school that can offer the necessary support. In order to fulfil this obligation, school authorities must offer tailor-made educational solutions in the framework of the school alliances. Those solutions can be offered in mainstream or (secondary) special education.

Both mainstream schools and (secondary) special schools are working together in regional school alliances for either primary or secondary education. The school alliances are responsible for organising and (partially) funding the extra educational support in their schools. There are 152 school alliances. The schools for (secondary) special education fall under the Expertise Centres Act and are divided into four categories:

- Category 1: schools for the visually impaired or for children with multiple disabilities including visual impairment. Most visually impaired pupils attend mainstream schools, with special facilities and support.
- Category 2: schools for hearing impaired children and children with communication disorders (due to hearing, language or speech difficulties or autism) or for children with multiple disabilities including hearing, language or speech impairment.
- Category 3: schools for physically and/or intellectually impaired children and children with a chronic physical illness, such as epilepsy.
- Category 4: schools for children with mental or behavioural disorders, including schools attached to pedagogical institutes.

Schools for special education are obliged to prepare their pupils for either a mainstream school for secondary education or one of the three pathways in secondary special education.

These three pathways are connected with the outflow destination of the pupils after secondary special education:

- centres for day-care activities;
- labour market;
- (mainstream) vocational or higher education.

Legal provisions and provisions for quality assurance are the same as for primary education.

12 Private education and lifelong learning

Landscape of private education

Private education is the largest provider of lifelong learning in The Netherlands. Lifelong learning is a European indicator for which new figures appear annually. These figures are based on the Labour Force Survey (EBB, a survey that collects information about the labour market and related characteristics of people, such as educational participation and the highest level of education. In this index number, annual figures are included for persons aged 25 to 65 years. According to this survey the Netherlands has with 19,1 percent of adults between 25 and 26 years old the highest participation in lifelong learning, opposed to an average of 10,9 percent for Europe 28.

Private providers make a substantial contribution to the promotion of (sustainable) employability and the retention of older workers in the workplace. More than 1.3m people participate in private education. 84% of workers and job seekers engaging in post-initial training do so in private education with only 16% learning in a publicly-funded institution.

79% of the programs offered in private education are work-related. A program is work-related if it is attended for the following reasons: to keep updated (an obligation on the employer's side), to get promotion, to move to another job, and to strengthen employability.

There are 50 private HEIs and 100 private VET providers in The Netherlands. In total there are 16.000 providers offering education and training programs in the Netherlands. Programs may lead to diplomas and degrees which are formally accredited by the Education Minister and private providers have the right to conduct the examinations. 3,4 Billion Euros per annum are spent on training in the private sector. The Dutch Association for private training and education providers (NRTO) plays an important role, on behalf of their members, in placing private training and education on the policy agenda.

Quality assurance

Private education providers accredited by the Education Minister comply with the quality rules and requirements of funded providers. In addition, professional and industry sectoral associations have formulated their own quality codes. NRTO members sign the Code of Conduct for Training and Education and are also obliged to use the Terms and Conditions as drawn up by the NRTO and the consumer organisation, 'Consumentenbond'. In case of a dispute the consumer or the training and education agency can make use of an out-of-court dispute resolution scheme (known as De Geschillencommissie). Any agency aspiring to become a member of the NRTO is assessed by the NRTO Committee on Quality. Today the NRTO has her own quality mark. An external committee is controlling the quality. The quality mark is a condition to become member of the NRTO. An evaluation is made of the degree of compliance with the requirements of the Code of Conduct. The Committee on Quality also investigates any indications of poor quality which

they are aware of. Finally, the NRTO carries out an annual survey of all members on the degree of compliance to varying aspects of the code.

Among the members of the association you can find: BEPRO (education and training for the process industry), IVA (education and training in the automotive industry), NCOI (one of the largest providers of distance learning), and Schoevers (education and training for secretariat and professions to support management).

13 Accreditation of prior learning (EVC)

Introduction

With accreditation of prior learning (in Dutch: EVC), an individual can validate the knowledge, skills and competences, which he or she has gathered over time. These competences can be acquired in various ways through formal, non-formal and informal learning. An EVC procedure gives a picture of an individual's knowledge, skills and competences against a chosen (qualification) profile. To guarantee the civil effect of EVC a (qualification) profile with recognised standards is used. These include all regulated qualifications in VET and HE. In addition, sector qualifications requested and developed by branches of an occupational area can function as EVC standards.

There are great differences between validation processes in different countries. Specific characteristics of EVC in the Netherlands are:

- Evaluation and recognition of skills always takes place along the line of a national standard.
- EVC is an open market: public as well as private education and training providers can be recognised as EVC providers.
- EVC is orientated to the labour market (career development) as well as to education and training (to shorten the education programme).
- Everyone can follow an EVC procedure. There are no specific target groups;
- An EVC procedure always ends with a certificate of experience.
- The use of EVC is financially supported by tax measures for the employers as well as for individuals.

The EVC procedure and results

An EVC procedure consists of the following steps:

Intake

During the intake phase the EVC candidate receives information concerning the EVC process. Together with the candidate the targets of the EVC procedure are set and an EVC agreement is signed by both parties. An EVC procedure has as its point of departure one specific standard.

Drafting the portfolio

The candidate fills in – under the supervision of a coach – his/her portfolio, including evidence of the knowledge, skills and/or competences acquired. Demonstrating the achieved skills can also take place in another way, e.g. through a criterion-orientated interview or on the basis of research at the workplace.

Judgement

The assessor (a professional reviewer) gives a judgment if the candidate complies with the given criteria for the chosen standard based on the evidence in the portfolio.

Certificate of Experience

The final result of an EVC procedure is always a certificate of experience written by the assessor. This describes what the candidate knows and can do in relation to the chosen standard and how this is proofed.

Quality assurance

In 2006 a covenant between stakeholders was signed to increase the accessibility, secure the quality, promote the use and ensure the transparency of EVC. The covenant partners included representatives of employers' and workers' organisations, the Ministry of OCW, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the umbrella organisations of providers of VET and HE and representatives of the private education sector.

To monitor progress on these goals, an EVC Quality Code (Kwaliteitscode EVC) was developed by the covenant partners. All providers in the Netherlands must comply with this code. EVC providers are controlled periodically by assessment agencies to receive an accreditation for a specific standard.

By the end of 2009 the Government had taken the initiative to give a quality impulse to EVC. In relation with this initiative the policy regulation 'Afgifte EVC-verklaringen' ('Delivery of EVC certificates') was published in April 2010, based on the EVC Quality Code. The policy regulation includes the 'up-or-out' principle. This means that only those providers of EVC providing the required quality will remain in the system. A consequence is that for an organisation which loses its recognition as an EVC provider, the procedures for EVC by the provider concerned are no longer tax-deductible. Besides the formal regulation, EVC providers are supported by the EVC Action Plan, which is implemented by the EVC Knowledge Centre. Besides a style guide for writing the experience certificate, the Centre also offers training courses on different issues in running EVC processes.

In 2016 a change in policy occurred. The Government decided that EVC as an instrument could be used by the formal education institutes to shorten the educational program for those candidates wanting to go for a formal diploma. Because the goal is a formal diploma, this use of EVC instruments is without writing an experience certificate. Validating experience is not the end of the track for the candidate.

Social partners decided to build a separate EVC route for candidates with a labour market target: proving that a candidate developed competences in a non-formal and or informal way which they would need to prove when changing jobs.

A new covenant was agreed in which the government and the social partners agreed to promote EVC in collective labour agreements (cao's) and to make it possible that candidates with a certificate of experience have the possibility to enter an education programme. The exam committee is in charge to decide on accepting the certificate of experience and the individual duration of the educational programme. This is the so called bridge function between EVC and aiming for a diploma.

The National EVC Knowledge Centre (NKC-EVC) is appointed by the social partners. There is no funding and the financial position of the NKC-EVC is depending on the EVC-Institutes and EVC-procedures. The new knowledge centre is responsible for acknowledging new EVC-standards, recognising EVC Institutes and to secure the quality of EVC. A new quality code 'EVC-Kwaliteitscode 2.0' was introduced. There is an EVC-advisory board in which the social partners and the government participate. The covenant is agreed on for a period of five years.

Because there are two separate routes (the labour market route with EVC institutes and EVC being used as an instrument by educational institutes) the number of recognised EVC institutes reduced significantly and the number of formal EVC procedures reduced significantly.

The labour market and the employers had to get used to the new situation. In the former periods it was normal that having completed EVC procedure, candidates went to an education provider to receive the formal diploma. In the new situation this bridge function is becoming less common. Candidates having their professional competences of an educational standard recognised through EVC still have to sit exams for languages and math. This is only possible if there is a formal agreement between the EVC institute and the education provider. This explains why less EVC procedures were taken since 2016.

The labour market has created an alternative for the formal diploma: the introduction of 'het vakbekwaamheidsbewijs' (prove of craftsmanship) based on APL-standards and the 'het competentiebewijs' (prove of competence) based on a competence standard introduced by the NKC-EVC.

A new balance has to be realised and much has to be done on communication to make this new system known to the labour market. EVC is meant to respond to actual problems on the labour market: people with experience can in a short time get their competences recognised and for those who have to move to a different sector, due to the economic situation, it is an instrument to prove their competences also for a different sector.

Five components of the EVC Quality Code

The five components of the EVC Quality Code over time remained the same:

1 *Objective EVC*

The purpose of EVC is to reveal, appreciate and recognise specific competences. The recognition of prior learning is a value in itself and contributes to employability. EVC leads in many cases to further personal career development.

2 *Rights*

EVC meets the needs of the individual. Rights and commitments are clearly articulated and assured.

3 *Research*

Procedures and instruments are reliable and based on recognised standards. 'Trust' is a key word. Trust has to do with well-defined standards, civil effects and clear information about how assessments are conducted and what arguments conclusions are based on.

4 *Assessors and supervisors*

Assessors and supervisors are competent, independent and impartial. Independence and impartiality are key factors in the assessment and are embedded in the roles and responsibilities of the assessors. It is important to avoid confusion of roles.

Impartiality can be strengthened through training and participation in learning networks.

5 *Quality*

The quality of the EVC process is secured and constantly improved. The qualities of the EVC procedure and of the instruments used during the procedure are assured through the quality arrangements. There are regular evaluations, following which results are incorporated into actions to secure improvements

Annex 2: Dutch quality assurance arrangements versus the 10 criteria in Annex IV of the 2017 EQF Recommendation

Quality assurance arrangements for qualifications classified in the NLQF		
General		EQF Annex IV
All qualifications classified in the NLQF are subject to quality assurance.		Headline
The quality assurance of regulated qualifications is ruled by several acts, governmental degrees, regulations, supervisory frameworks and actors. The way quality assurance is organised is different for each educational sector. However, there is one overarching law, The Education Inspectorate Act (Wet op het onderwijstoezicht WOT). This act inter alia establishes the Inspectorate of Education, its tasks and jurisdiction.		Headline
The Education Inspectorate Act (WOT⁶⁹)		EQF Annex IV article
One of the main tasks of the Inspectorate is to enhance the development, and more specifically the quality, of education and governance of providers falling under its jurisdiction defined in educational laws (WOT article 3ab1), including providers of primary education, secondary education and Vocational Education <i>and Training</i> . These include those providers that are recognised but not funded by the Government.		5,9
In <i>Higher Education and Fundamental Research</i> the tasks of the Inspectorate are limited to enhance the development, and more specifically the quality of the structure and organisation of higher education, including the system of <i>accreditation</i> (WOT article 3ab4).		9
The Inspectorate audits the providers based on supervisory frameworks established by the Minister of OCW. The Inspectorate formulates a proposal for these supervisory frameworks, consulting representatives of the educational sectors and other stakeholders. (WOT article 13).		4
The Inspectorate publishes the results of its audits. (WOT article 21).		10
Quality assurance in Secondary Education (not including Senior Secondary Vocational Education and Training)		
The Education Inspectorate Act (WOT)		EQF Annex IV article
Article 3.1b1 and d	Tasks of Inspectorate in Secondary Education.	5
Article 11	Regular audits of the Inspectorate are based inter alia on the school plan (formulated by the competent authority of the provider).	5

⁶⁹ WOT: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0013800/2018-08-01>

Quality assurance in Secondary Education (not including Senior Secondary Vocational Education and Training)		
Article 13	The Inspectorate proposes, after consultation of educational stakeholders, a supervisory framework, to be established by the Minister.	4,5
Article 15f	The Inspectorate supervises the quality of the College for Tests and Exams.	5
The Secondary Education Act ⁷⁰ (Wet op het voortgezet onderwijs WVO) The overarching act for this sector. Relevant articles in the Act are listed below. The explanatory text enlightens the aim of the article and is NOT a word for word translation but explains the relevant essence of the article.		EQF Annex IV
Article 11b	A general administrative regulation ⁷¹ sets national attainment targets with the aim for students to acquire knowledge, skills and competences.	1
Article 11c	The competent authority of the provider develops the curriculum based on the national attainment targets.	1
Article 23	The competent authority is responsible for the quality of education including managing a quality assurance system.	6
Article 24	The competent authority describes in a school plan inter alia the quality assurance policy of the provider	6
Article 24	The competent authority is accountable to inter alia parents, internal supervisors and the government.	3
Article 29	All students are entitled to sit final examination. This can be a <i>national exam</i> , a <i>school exam</i> or a combination of both. Those successful receive a diploma or certificate. Exams include the Dutch Language and Arithmetic, both according to nationally set standards.	2
Article 29.4 and 5	Governmental decrees set rules for the <i>national exams</i> . This governmental decree also sets the <i>exam programs</i> , including, if relevant, the required levels for the Dutch language and Arithmetic.	2
Supervisory framework for secondary education ⁷² (Inspectorate of Education)		EQF Annex IV article
Article 3.3.	Education Process: (basic quality) inter alia: The education the provider offers is based on the national attainment targets and covers the exam programmes. The provider describes its educational process in the school plan.	1
Article 3.2 OP8	Basic quality: De provider assures the quality of assessment. During the education students are tested minimum on the knowledge and skills of the core topics of the profile.	2
Article 3.2 KA1	Quality assurance. The competent authority has set a system for quality assurance leading to a continuous improvement of education. The system of quality assurance is based on the quality circle and addresses inter alia content and assessment. The system is described in the school plan.	3
Article 2.1:	The inspectorate assesses the basic quality of a provider, based on public accountability of the provider. Basic quality means the legal	2

⁷⁰ WVO: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0002399/2018-08-01>

⁷¹ Besluit Kerndoelen VO <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0019945/2012-12-01>

⁷² Onderzoekskader toezicht voortgezet onderwijs 2017: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0039788/2018-08-01>

Quality assurance in Secondary Education (not including Senior Secondary Vocational Education and Training)		
	requirements. In addition the Inspectorate assesses the quality ambitions of the provider, based on the school plan drafted by the competent authority of the provider.	
Decision on Final Exams in Secondary Education ⁷³ (Eindexamenbesluit VO)		EQF Annex IV article
	Sets legal provisions for final exams in secondary education.	2
Article 7	The Minister sets exam programs for each of the types of secondary education and educational pathways. These exam programs contain at least for each subject a description of the content of the and which part of the content will be part of the national exam and which part will be part of the school exam.	2
Article 52	Sets the rules for the end results and certification	2
Act on College for Tests and Exams ⁷⁴ (Wet College voor toetsen en examens, CVE)		EQF Annex IV article
Article 2	The CVE inter alia sets for the national exams, the amount of tests, the content, their duration and type, according to the exam program.	5
Regulation Exam Programs Secondary Education ⁷⁵ (Regeling examen programma's VO)		EQF Annex IV article
Article 7	The Minister sets exam programs including the description or the scope for each exam subject and including which part of the scope will be part of national examination.	2
Article 7	The competent authority of the provider sets exam regulations and a program for tests and exams	2
Act on grants for national educational support 2013 ⁷⁶ (SLOA)		EQF Annex IV article
Article 2	Foundation SLO is responsible for several tasks including the development of the national attainment targets.	1
Article 3	Foundation Cito is responsible for the development for several tasks including the development of national examination of vmbo, havo and vwo	2

Quality assurance in Senior Secondary Vocational Education and Training		
The Education Inspectorate Act (WOT)		EQF Annex IV article
Article 3.1b1, 1b3 and d	Tasks of Inspectorate in VET, including enhancing the quality of the Samenwerkingsorganisatie beroepsonderwijs bedrijfsleven (SBB). SBB is the government agency responsible for several tasks including development and management of the VET qualifications framework and VET qualification files.	5

⁷³ Eindexamenbesluit VO: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0004593/2019-01-01>

⁷⁴ CVE: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0025364/2014-08-01>

⁷⁵ Regeling examenprogramma's VO <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0022061/2018-08-01>

⁷⁶ SLOA: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0034162/2016-08-12>

Article 13	The Inspectorate proposes, after consultation of educational stakeholders, a supervisory framework, to be established by the Minister.	4,5
Article 15 l, m, n	SBB	1,2,9
Act on Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education: WEB⁷⁷; (funded and not-funded recognised providers and SBB)		EQF Annex IV article
Article 1.3.6	The competent authority of the provider inter alia is responsible for a system of quality assurance. It assures regular assessment of the quality of education is provided, involving independent experts and stakeholders, as much as possible in cooperation with other providers, and also including the opinion of students. The results of the assessment are public.	4, 6, 10
Article 1.5.1	A ministerial regulation defines the following tasks of the SBB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a developing and maintaining a national qualification structure for VET according to set requirements including being relevant for the labour market and international developments, inter alia by making proposals to Our Minister for the qualification files referred to in WEB Article 7.2.4, second paragraph. b contributing to the efficient and targeted use of public funds through the development of proposals, which vocational training courses are eligible for funding from the National Treasury, c promoting the quality of vocational training, d developing and adopting of quality criteria for vocational training places and the assessment of companies and organisations that provide vocational training on the basis of these criteria at least once every four years and the publication of an overview of companies and organizations that meet these criteria, e ensuring as much as possible the availability of a sufficient number of companies and organizations of sufficient quality that provide practical training, f conducting research to support the tasks mentioned in this article, and g performing additional activities to promote the link between education and the labour market. 	1,2,4,7
Article 2.5.3 and 2.5.4	The competent authority of the provider has to spend government funding efficiently and lawfully	8
Article 2.8.3	The competent authority of the provider has to manage the financial resources in such a way that proper exploitation and the survival of the institution are ensured	8
Chapter 7	Sets definitions, rules and regulations for education and training regarding content, process, exams, certification, quality assurance, international level comparison	1,2,3,5,6,7

⁷⁷ WEB: <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0007625/2018-08-01>

Article 7.4.8-1	The competent authority of the provider has to ensure good i) organisation, ii) quality of the education program and iii) examinations	1,2
Article 7.2.1-2	The competent authority of the provider has to organise the curriculum corresponding to the requirements of the qualification file and its relevant elective components.	1
Article 7.2.7-1	The competent authority of the provider has to implement the curriculum in a way it enables the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the qualification and its relevant elective component, within the set study duration	1,2
Article art. 1.3.6, art. 2.5.4, art. 6.1.3a, art. 7.4.8 -2, chapter 8a, art.9.1.4	The competent authority of the provider has to inform and be accountable to: students and parents, the participants 'council, possibly the parents' council, the works council, the supervisory board and the government	10
Supervisory framework for secondary vocational education and training⁷⁸ (Inspectorate of Education)		EQF Annex IV article
OP3	The didactic approach is tailored to the level of the qualification and enables students to learn and develop. It creates a balance between work based learning and learning at the providers.	1,7
OP7	The preparation, implementation and supervision of work based learning are effective	1,7
ED1	<i>Quality assurance of assessment and certification:</i> The exam committee assures proper examination and certification. The exam committee determines objectively and expertly whether a student meets the conditions for obtaining a diploma, a certificate or a statement of the provider. The exam committee monitors analyses the quality of the examination instruments, the assessment, rating and certification, and supervises the implementation of improvement measures where appropriate. The exam committee guarantees the expertise of the persons involved in all phases of the examination. The professional field is involved in the examination. The exam committee draws up an annual report on the exam quality per study program on the basis of the examination standards and its activities. The independent and expert functioning of the exam committee is sufficiently guaranteed by the competent authority.	2,3,4,6,7,8,10
ED2	The exam instruments cover the requirements of the qualification. This also applies to the requirements of the optional component(s) of the study program of the student. The types of exams are tailored to the exam content. The exam instruments have an appropriate task complexity. The set of instruments allows for balanced valuation and does justice to the core tasks, work processes and other requirements from the qualification file and	1,2,7

⁷⁸ <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/documenten/rapporten/2018/07/13/onderzoekskader-2017-voor-het-toezicht-op-het-middelbaar-beroepsonderwijs>

	those of the optional components. The pass mark is at the level at which the student meets the requirements. The assessment instructions allow for objective assessment.	
ED3	The exam conditions and ratings are equivalent for students. The conditions do justice to the context of the future profession; parts of the exam take place in (real) professional practice. The assessment yields reliable results, takes place professionally and is aimed at an appropriate balance in required knowledge, attitude and skills. The design of the exam, the planning of the exam periods, the assessment method and the procedure for appeals and objections are available to participants in time and are transparent and unambiguous for all concerned.	1,2,7
OR1	The provider achieves results with its students that are at least in accordance with the set norm.	1,2
KA1	The competent authority and the provider maintain a system of quality assurance. This system of quality assurance relates to the quality of education and at least pays attention to the educational process, the examination and certification, the educational results and the maintenance of the competence of the personnel. The competent authority and the provider regularly assess the quality of education and involve independent experts and stakeholders. The competent authority and the provider set testable goals and regularly evaluate whether these goals are being achieved. The results are available in an accessible manner. The causes of any inadequate quality of education are analysed and improvements are made where necessary. The organisation of the provider and the division of responsibilities make a functioning system of quality assurance possible.	1,2,3,5,6,8,10
KA2	The competent authority and the provider act with a professional quality culture and function transparently and with integrity.	6
KA3	The competent authority facilitates the possibility of contradiction by, among others, the supervisory board, the works council and the participants' council. The competent authority and the provider involve internal and external experts and stakeholders, in particular industry, in policy development and in assessing the quality of education and are open to their proposals. The competent authority reports at least annually on the goals and results it achieves. The competent authority reports to the internal supervisor, the government and stakeholders in an accessible manner	3,4,10
FB1	The provider is financially sound and can meet its financial obligations in the short and longer term.	8
FB2	The competent authority spends the education funding in such a way that it adequately benefits the ambitions formulated in the policy regarding effective education and the development of all students	8

Regulation for setting the models for the qualification files and elective parts and the assessment framework for the VET qualification structure 2016⁷⁹		EQF Annex IV article
Part 1, 2, 3	The qualification file, the optional part, representation information to the qualification file.	1, 2
Assessment Framework VET Qualifications framework⁸⁰ (SBB)		EQF Annex IV article
Chapter 2	Criteria for the qualification structure, qualifications files and optional components	1, 4
Chapter 3	The process of ascertaining compliance with the criteria	2, 7, 3

Quality assurance in Higher Education		
The Education Inspectorate Act (WOT)		EQF Annex IV article
Article 3 b, c and d, article 12a Article 6,9 WHW	Tasks of the Inspectorate in Higher Education, in close cooperation with the Dutch Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO): assessment and improvement of the quality of HE, including finance, efficiency, continuity and compliance with laws and regulations.	5,6,8
Article 13	The Inspectorate of Education for HE, develops, after consultation of educational stakeholders, an accreditation framework, to be established by the Minister.	4,5,7
Article 21.1	The inspectorate publishes its reports in the 5 th week after their adoption	10
Act on Higher education and Scientific Research (WHW)⁸¹		EQF Annex IV article
Article 1.18 Article 5.13	The competent authority of the provider of higher education ensures that, as far as possible in cooperation with other institutions, a regular assessment is made (including through visitation based on self-evaluation) also by independent experts, of the quality of the institution's activities. The assessment is partly based on the students' assessment of the quality of the institution's education. The part of the assessment carried out by independent experts is made public by the institution's board. The results of previous assessments are included in the assessment.	3,4,10
Article 2.5.2 2.6.5, 2.6.6	The minister of OCW can set conditions to the funding of research at universities, related to quality assurance.	8
Article 5.5.1 and 5.5.5	The Minister of OCW sets the funding of the accreditation body on a yearly basis as well as the fees the providers of higher education have to pay for their accreditation.	8
2.9.2	The competent authority on a yearly basis submits a report to the Minister of OCW of the institution. This reports inter alia describes the intended policy with regard to the quality and quality assurance.	5,6,7

⁷⁹ Regeling vaststelling modellen kwalificatiedossier, keuzedeel en toetsingskader kwalificatiestructuur mbo 2016
<https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0037661/2016-07-19>

⁸⁰ <https://www.s-bb.nl/onderwijs/kwalificeren-en-examineren/themas-rond-kwalificeren-en-examineren/herziening>

⁸¹ <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0005682/2019-02-01>

Quality assurance in Higher Education		
Article 5.2	An accreditation body is responsible for the accreditation of new and existing programmes offered by providers of higher education accreditation of internal quality assurance of providers of higher education, on request of these providers and development of an accreditation framework	5,7
Article 5.3	This article sets minimum requirements for the accreditation framework and its development process, including the required approval of the Minister of OCW.	7
Article 5.7 And article 5.12	In case of new and existing programs the accreditation framework inter alia needs to address <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o the desired and if relevant the achieved level of the programme o the method of assessment, testing and examination of the students o internal quality assurance with the aim of continuous improvement The result of the accreditation is published	1,2,5,6,7,10
Article 5.10.4	The accreditation body i) reports to the competent body of the higher education provider of the new program and ii) publishes the report.	10
Article 5.13	The competent body of the provider of higher education publishes the result of the visitation containing the recommendations for further development of the program.	10
Article 5.23 – 5.28	The accreditation of internal quality assurance that is performed on request of the providers, has to address: the providers vision of the quality of its education; the design and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance of the provider; the policy pursued in the field of personnel and facilities; and the facilities that promote accessibility and feasibility for students with a functional disability. This accreditation is based on a recommendation of experts among which at least one student. The accreditation organisation publishes the report.	4,6,8,
Article 7.3 and 7.4	A program is a coherent whole of study components, aimed at achieving well-defined objectives in the field of knowledge, insight and skills that the person completing the study program must have. Each program is completed by an exam and is expressed in credits (1 full time year study is equivalent to 60 credits and 1680 study hours)	1,2
Article 7.10 - 7.12	The competent body of the provider of higher education is responsible for the organisation of tests and exams. The competent body of the provider of higher education appoints an exam committee for each program or group of programs. The members are selected on the basis of their	1,2

Quality assurance in Higher Education		
	<p>expertise in the field of the relevant program or group of programs. The exam committee determines objectively and expertly whether a student meets the conditions set by the education and examination regulations with regard to the knowledge, insight and skills required for obtaining a degree as referred to in Article 7.10a. The exam committee inter alia also is responsible for the quality and process of the exams.</p> <p>Each test or exam comprises an examination of the knowledge, insight and skills of the examinee and is rated.</p> <p>An exam committee issues certificates as proof of successfully passed exams when the competent authority has declared that procedural requirements have been met. The requirements</p>	
Assessment framework HE⁸² (Education Inspectorate)		EQF Annex IV article
Page 4	The inspectorate of education assesses and enhances the quality of the higher education system	3
Page 4	The inspectorate To assesses and enhances the Dutch accreditation system	3,9
Page 4	The inspectorate assesses and enhances financial regularity, efficiency and continuity of the funded providers of HE	8
Page 4	The inspectorate executes incidental investigation at providers in the event of serious complaints or signs related to compliance with law and regulations;	5
Assessment framework NVAO⁸³		EQF Annex IV article
Introduction	<p>The accreditation framework inter alia is based on following principles:</p> <p>A peer review system is the best method to verify quality.</p> <p>The framework is based on respect for the autonomy of the institutions that bear primary responsibility for their quality.</p> <p>A panel of independent and authoritative experts enters into an open dialogue with the provider regarding quality.</p> <p>The providers self-evaluation report informs the panel on the providers reflective cycle to assure and continually improve its quality: from vision, aims and objectives to implementation, from evaluation and results to improvement and development.</p> <p>The assessment framework ties in with the criteria set down in the Dutch Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines - ESG). It sketches the criteria underpinning the quality assurance system of the Dutch higher education sector</p> <p>The assessment framework has been established following consultations with the umbrella organisations for publicly funded and private universities, universities of applied sciences,</p>	4,5,6,7

⁸² <https://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/onderwijssectoren/hoger-onderwijs/documenten/publicaties/2014/09/01/toezichtkader-hoger-onderwijs-2014>

⁸³ https://www.nvao.net/files/attachments/.89/Beoordelingskader_accreditatiestelsel_hoger_onderwijs_Nederland_2018.pdf

Quality assurance in Higher Education		
	quality assessment agencies, student organisations, employers' organisations, and unions, with input from many parties involved in educational practice.	
1.2 Accreditation of internal quality assurance	Standard 1: Philosophy and Policy The provider has a broadly accepted educational philosophy and pursues a corresponding policy focused on the internal quality assurance of its education	5,6
	Standard 2: Implementation The institution realises its educational philosophy in an effective manner, which is demonstrated by appropriate policy actions and processes, particularly relating to staff, student assessment, services and facilities, and students with a functional impairment.	8
	Standard 3: Evaluation and Monitoring The provider systematically evaluates whether the intended policy objectives relating to educational quality are achieved. Relevant stakeholders are involved in this process.	3,4,5
	Standard 4: Development The institution has a focus on development and works systematically on the improvement of its education.	3
1.5	The NAVO publishes the final report on its website	10
3.3/4.3 Accreditation of programs	Standard 1: Intended learning outcomes The intended learning outcomes tie in with the level and orientation of the study program and are geared to the expectations of the professional field, the discipline and international requirements.	1
	Standard 2: Orientation The curriculum enables students to master appropriate (professional or academic) research and professional skills.	1
	Standard 3: Content The content of the curriculum enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes,	1
	Standard 4: Learning environment The design of the curriculum encourages study and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.	1
	Standard 5: Intake The curriculum ties in with the qualifications of the incoming students	1
	Standard 6: Staff The staff is qualified for the realisation of the curriculum in terms of content and educational expertise. The team size is appropriate.	8
	Standard 7: The accommodation and infrastructure are sufficient for the realisation of the curriculum	8
	Standard 8: Tutoring	8

Quality assurance in Higher Education		
	Students receive appropriate tutoring (including students with a functional impairment). The information provision of the programme is adequate.	
	<p>Standard 9: Quality assurance</p> <p>The program has an explicit and widely supported quality assurance system in place. It promotes the quality culture and has a focus on development</p> <p>The program organises effective periodic feedback that supports the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Existing programs implement appropriate improvements based on the results of the previous assessment. Within the institution, those responsible are held to account regarding the extent to which the program contributes to the attainment of the institution's strategic goals. Quality assurance ensures the achievement of the intended learning results. The program committee, examination board, staff, students, alumni and the relevant professional field are actively involved in the program's internal quality assurance. The program's design processes, its recognition, and its quality assurance are in keeping with the ESG. The program publishes accurate, reliable information regarding its quality, which is easily accessible to the target groups.</p>	1,2,3,4,5,6,10
	<p>Standard 10: Assessment</p> <p>The student assessments are valid, reliable and sufficiently independent. The quality of interim and final examinations is sufficiently safeguarded and meets the statutory quality standards. The tests support the students' own learning processes</p>	2
	<p>Standard 11: Learning Outcomes</p> <p>The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is demonstrated by the results of tests, the final projects, and the performance of graduates in actual practice or in post-graduate programs.</p> <p>The program must describe how it tests the achievement of the exit level.</p>	1

Annex 3: The Dutch National Coordination Point NLQF

1 The start of the National Coordination Point – NCP-NLQF

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union recommended, in the EQF Recommendation of 2008, Member States to support the referencing of qualifications systems to the EQF by the establishment of an National Qualifications Point (NCP).

According to this recommendation this NCP should be given the tasks of:

- referencing the national qualifications levels to the levels of the EQF;
- referencing in a transparent way and by publishing the results;
- ensuring access to information for stakeholders on how national qualifications via the national qualification systems are related to the EQF;
- maintaining and evaluating the national qualifications framework and thus the referencing to the EQF;
- encouraging the participation of all stakeholders regarding the referencing with the EQF.

During the development of the NLQF the tasks of the Dutch NCP were executed within OCW.

As explained above, the development of the NLQF was in the first instance performed by an expert group involving all relevant stakeholders, chaired by OCW. Before adopting the proposal the Minister of OCW asked a Committee under chairmanship of Prof. Leijnse (hereafter referred to as the NLQF-EQF Committee) to evaluate, among other things, whether the NLQF was a correct and complete representation of the qualification levels existing in the Netherlands and whether the link between NLQF and EQF was correct. The Committee's advice to the Minister of OCW among others included advice on classification of *three types of qualifications*:

- 1 Qualifications regulated by laws of the three Ministries (diplomas) should be generically classified at NLQF levels. This classification forms an integral part of the NLQF.
- 2 All specific regulated qualifications (e.g. qualification profiles, program profiles, diplomas) for which the competent body considers that the generic classification does not correspond to the actual learning outcomes to be achieved, can, at the request of the competent body, be evaluated and classified at the appropriate level in accordance with a set procedure⁸⁴.
- 3 All 'other qualifications' should be evaluated and classified at the appropriate level of the NLQF by the NCP-NLQF, at the request of the competent body.

This implies that the NCP-NLQF classifies on request of a competent body, non-regulated qualifications. It is vital that international and national social partners, trade and industry, education and trainings providers and individual learners can rely on the classification of qualifications at the different levels of the NLQF. This places demands on the NCP-NLQF regarding the procedures to be used and on the quality of the competent bodies and the qualifications themselves.

⁸⁴ This process has up to the writing of this report not yet been effectuated.

For the NCP-NLQF to carry out these tasks expertly and with authority, and to ensure neutrality, the organisation of the NCP-NLQF has to be positioned independent of training providers, the organisations responsible for courses and qualifications on the one hand and of regulating Ministries on the other hand. This dual independence was and is considered necessary to guarantee the objectivity of the classification of qualifications at the various levels and to foster trust.

This led the NLQF-EQF Committee to recommend to position the NCP-NLQF outside of the Ministry of OCW, and for the NCP to

- a be an autonomous organisation, independent of education and training providers, education and training sectors, and the government;
- b possess deep expertise in education and training, including international education and training, and also to make extensive use of existing expertise in The Netherlands;
- c have teams of experts in the various fields of qualifications;
- d establish detailed procedures for the evaluation and classification of qualifications and for appeals;
- e be able to communicate clearly and efficiently with stakeholders, both national and international.

These recommendations were taken up by the Minister of OCW in her policy response to the advice of the committee (with due observance of a few comments) and the NLQF became a reality, although not (yet) regulated by the ministry of OCW.

In line with the recommendations of the 'Leijne Committee' OCW positioned the NCP-NLQF as of 1 October 2012 at the Dutch EVC⁸⁵ Knowledge Centre. The activities of this Knowledge Centre were at that time carried out by CINOP Foundation on behalf of OCW. The main tasks of the NCP-NLQF are to organise and manage the classification of non-regulated qualifications (upon request of their owners) including the registration of the qualifications, and to communicate and inform stakeholders on the NLQF. The activities are funded by: i) a grant of the Ministry of OCW, Culture and Science, ii) a grant of the European Commission and iii) revenues from classification of 'non-regulated qualifications'.

In its starting phase the NCP focused on developing procedures and formats for the classification of 'non-regulated qualifications' in the NLQF, developing profiles for- and recruitment of the necessary experts, testing procedures and criteria with stakeholders and providers of 'non-regulated qualifications', developing information material including the website and users' guides.

Many meetings took place with stakeholders, potential applicants for classification, presentations in conferences including a final conference for all potential organisations interested in using NLQF (150 participants).

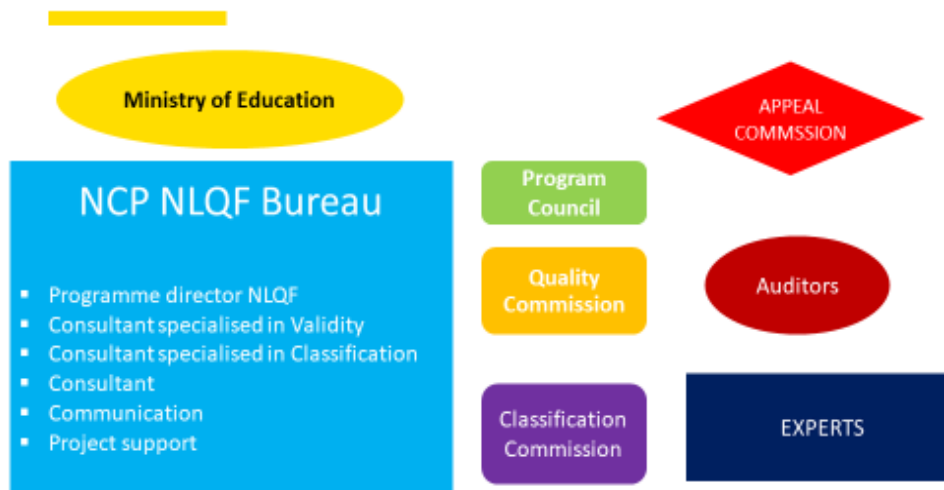
From 2014 until 2016 the NCP-NLQF, the EVC Knowledge Centre and the NCP ECVET were jointly managed as the Dutch *Long Life Learning Partnership*. In 2016 OCW decided no longer to fund the EVC Knowledge Centre. Validation activities with the aim of education were transferred to education providers. Validation with the aim of progression on the

⁸⁵ EVC is the Dutch approach to the validation of formal, non-formal and informal prior learning

labour market became an activity of a private organisation. As of that moment the NCP-NLQF continued as an independent entity with a public task as part of the CINOP Foundation. The Ministry of OCW, Culture and Science subsidises the NCP-NLQF. The legal status of the NCP-NLQF as an independent organisation will be addressed by the upcoming law on the NLQF.

2 The NCP-NLQF organisation

Structure organisation NCP NLQF



The NCP-NLQF has the following structure:

Bureau NCP-NLQF

- Programme director NLOF
- Consultant specialised in Validity
- Consultant specialised in Classification
- Consultant
- Communication
- Project support

The Bureau is supported by the following independent external groups:

- Experts for evaluation of classification requests (15)
- Auditors for validation site visits (4)
- The Quality Commission
- The Classification Commission
- Programme Board
- Appeal Commission

The Committees and the Board are each composed of 1 representative of the labour market, 1 representative of regulated education and 1 representative of non-regulated education and training. The Committees and Board are nominated for a maximum of two times four years.

The functioning of committees and board is laid down in a regulation.

3 Classification of non-regulated qualifications

As of the start of the NCP-NLOF owners of a non-regulated qualification can submit an application to have it classified in the NLOF. To this end standard forms and procedures have been developed and are published on the website. (<https://nlqf.nl/english>) The classification of non-regulated qualifications is composed of three stages i) a validity assessment ii) a classification award iii) re-evaluation.

Stage 1 Validity assessment

Desk research

The validity assessment ensures that the organisation is eligible for a classification application. This ensures that only trustworthy organisations can indicate an NLOF/ EQF level on certificates and diplomas. The assessment evaluates the legal personality, the ownership of the qualification, the continuity of the organisation and the organisation's examination and quality assurance processes.

Validation site visit

The Validity assessment desk research is complemented by a validation site visit of half a day to verify the research findings.

In case the quality assurance process of the owner of the qualifications is externally validated by a quality assurance organisation approved by the Programme Council the site visit will not take place. *Limited quality assurance assessment.*

In case the quality assurance of the organisation is externally validated by the quality assurance organisations of formal qualifications being the *Inspectorate of Education* and the *NVAO*, a limited quality assurance assessment is performed by the NCP-NLOF in the process of validation of an organisation.

For sake of efficiency the NCP-NLOF compared the content and processes of other quality assurance bodies with the scope of quality assurance in the field of examination. This needs to be at least equal to the scope of the Inspectorate of Education and the NVAO and fit the purpose and scope of the NLOF.

In case quality assurance is performed by other organisations that are accepted by the NCP-NLOF this also results in a limited quality assurance assessment.

At the time of writing this report three other quality assurance bodies/procedures are being accepted by the NCP-NLOF for a limited quality assurance assessment in the process of validation of the organisation i) *ISO 9001:2008/2015* ii) the *INK (EFQM)* model when including an external audit and iii) *Stichting Examenkamer*⁸⁶.

The NCP-NLOF recently has accepted the *NRTO quality label*⁸⁷ as being valid. Since the quality label does not cover all the quality assurance criteria a limited quality assurance

⁸⁶ <http://www.examenkamer.nl/index.php/examenkamer/visie-en-missie>

⁸⁷ https://www.nrto.nl/partnerorganisaties/kwaliteitslabels_en_keurmerken/keurmerk/kwaliteitseisen-nrto-keurmerk/

assessment will need to take place covering the missing elements. In practice this assessment will be more comprehensive than the existing limited quality assurance assessment but less so than the full quality assurance assessment

Validity decision

The validity assessment is performed by the Quality Commission, supported by the bureau and auditors for validation site visits. The result is an advice to the Programme Council who then accepts or rejects the validity of the organisation.

Validity period

This result of the validity assessment is valid for six years. During these six years, the owner can submit qualification(s) for classification.

Stage 2 Classification award

Classification request

If the validity of an organisation is assessed positively and accepted by the Programme Board, the applicant can have their qualifications classified in the NLOF. The applicant justifies the level of the qualification on the basis of learning outcomes via self-evaluation, using the dedicated forms and procedures.

Best-fit approach

The best-fit method is applied for this evaluation. This means that all descriptors are reviewed individually and the level that best fits the qualification is then determined. For example: a qualification may equate to level 5 in terms of problem-solving skills but only level 4 in relation to knowledge. Ultimately, the evaluations per descriptor are combined into a single evaluation of the level of the entire qualification.

Classification award decision

Two or three independent experts assess the application and the supporting documents and formulate an advice to the Classification Commission., Based on this information the Classification Commission discusses each file and issues a recommendation to the Programme Council. The Programme Council accepts or rejects the allocated level.

Register and validity period

In case of acceptance the classified qualification is added to the NCP-NLOF register. The classification is valid for 6 years.

Stage 3 Re-evaluation

One year before the validity period expires the Bureau informs the owner of the registered qualification of the timing and procedure for re-evaluation of both, the Validity Assessment and the Classification award. The re-evaluation procedure will be based on the original application together with possible major changes that are reported to the NCP.

Re-evaluation validation

The organisation is to provide information on the developments in the processes and procedures of assessments and quality assurance in the past six years. In case of changed procedures the organisation has to provide detailed information supported by evidence. What has changed, why and how.

Validity decision

The Quality Commission evaluates the documents and advises the Programme Council to reject or approve a new validity period of 6 years. In case of a positive decision this is indicated in the register.

The classification of the non-regulated qualifications is at the cost of owner of the qualification. Currently the rates for the limited validity assessment is € 1.000,- excl. VAT, the cost of the extended validity assessment is € 7.500,- excl. VAT. The classification award costs € 2.500,- excl. VAT for each qualification. Rate re-evaluation of validity €1.000,-. Rate for re-classification of a qualification € 1.000,-.

4 Information and Communication

The NLQF is not yet regulated by law and therefore the NLQF levels are not yet displayed on diplomas. To overcome this issue the NCP-NLOF organises several information and communication activities directed to the main stakeholders.

Register

The NCP-NLOF maintains and publishes a register of non-regulated qualifications that are classified in the NLQF and provides links to registers of regulated qualifications.

Conferences

The NCP-NLOF has organised a conference for all relevant stakeholders at the start of its existence in 2012. It was attended by around 300 stakeholders from government, education and training, labour market and lifelong learning organisations.

The NCP-NLOF has organised a conference 'Fit for the future' for its five year existence in 2017. The topics discussed were connected to lifelong learning and the contribution of the NLQF. It was attended by around 140 stakeholders from government, education and training, labour market and lifelong learning organisations

Information sessions and Support sessions

- The NCP-NLOF organises four information sessions per year to inform owners of non-regulated qualifications on the advantages and possibilities of classifying their qualifications in the NLQF. Each session is focussed on a specific target group, for example professional organisations and or economic sectors.
- The NCP-NLOF organises sessions to support providers of non-regulated qualifications in completing the files for their request.

Other

- Targeted visits to Members of Parliament, employers' associations and trade unions, potential providers of non-regulated qualifications, branch organisations and large companies e.g. Coca Cola.
- Publication of evaluations and research (Ockham IPS and NIDAP)
- Website and info e-mail address
- Leaflets
- Newsletter
- You tube video explaining the NLQF and its functioning
- Contribution to conferences of other organisations

Annex 4: The NLQF Level Descriptors

The NLQF experts, the Quality Commission, the Classification commission and the Programme Board, apply the NLQF descriptors when classifying not by OCW regulated qualifications. The experiences of these groups led to the need to slightly change the level descriptors and add a clarification. These changes should improve the common understanding of the descriptors. The following pages present in three columns the 2012 version of the level descriptors, the new version and the clarifications. The changes are indicated in bold. The new descriptors will be implemented as of 1st of January 2020.

1 Context

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
Entry level	A well-known and stable daily living environment	A well-known and stable daily living environment	
1	a familiar daily living or working environment	A familiar daily living and or working environment	For both level 1 and level 2 it is important that the living and or working environment can be recognised. There is no difference in the context between level 1 and 2.
2	A familiar daily living or working environment	A familiar daily living and or working environment	
3	A familiar but changeable living or working environment	A familiar but changeable living and or working environment	At level 3 the recognisable context can be changeable.
4	A familiar but changeable living or working environment, and in an international environment	A familiar but changeable living and or working environment, also international	An international context, among which intercultural aspects, can play a role at level 4 and onwards. For example, a Dutch company operating at international level will require that its employees can relate and communicate with clients or colleagues with a different language or culture and or go on business trips abroad. It is about exchange of information and cooperation, face to face and or in written form . Some sectors have an international context per se like trade and ICT. Therefore the learner should be able to apply knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy belonging to level 4 and onwards, when relevant , also in an international context. When classifying a qualification, the
5	An unknown but changeable living or working environment, and in an international environment	An unknown but changeable living and or working environment, also international	
6	An unknown but changeable living or working environment, and in an international environment	An unknown but changeable living and or working environment, also international	
7	A unknown but changeable living or working environment with a high degree of uncertainty, including an international environment	An unknown, changeable living and or working environment with a high degree of uncertainty, also international	
8	A unknown but changeable living or working environment with a high degree of uncertainty, and in an international environment	An unknown changeable living and or working environment with a high degree of uncertainty, also international	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
			<p>international context should be considered from the point of view of the practitioner. If an international context is relevant, among which intercultural aspects might play a role, the following substantiation can be used: <i>“International aspects play a role in the following way”</i>. It than should be explained what aspects are international or intercultural.</p>

2 Knowledge

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
Entry level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possess basic knowledge of simple facts and ideas related to the living environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possesses basic knowledge of simple facts and views related to the living environment 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possess basic knowledge of simple facts and ideas related to an occupation or a knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possesses basic knowledge of simple facts and views related to an occupation and or a knowledge domain 	It is sufficient if one recognises the relation with (parts of) an occupation and or knowledge domain.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possess basic knowledge of facts and ideas, processes, materials, means and concepts of and related to an occupation or a knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possesses basic knowledge of facts and views, processes, materials, means and basic concepts of- and related to an occupation and or a knowledge domain 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possess knowledge of materials, means, facts, core concepts, simple theories, ideas, methods and processes of and related to an occupation or a knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possesses knowledge of materials, means, facts, concepts, simple theories, methods processes, trends and developments of and related to an occupation and or a knowledge domain 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possess broad and specialised knowledge of materials, means, facts, abstract concepts, theories, ideas, methods and processes of and related to an occupation or a knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possesses broad and specialised knowledge of materials, means, facts, abstract concepts, theories, methods processes, trends and developments of and related to an occupation and or a knowledge domain 	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess broad, specialised and in-depth knowledge of an occupation or a knowledge domain • Possess detailed knowledge of some professions or knowledge domains and an understanding of a selected range of basic theories, principles and concepts • Possess limited knowledge and understanding of some important current topics/issues and specialties related to the occupation or knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses broad, specialised and or in-depth knowledge of an occupation and or a knowledge domain • Possesses detailed knowledge of some occupations and or knowledge domains and an understanding of a limited range of basic theories, principles and concepts • Possesses limited knowledge and understanding of some important current topics, issues and or specialties related to the occupation and or knowledge domain 	<p><i>Understanding</i> stands for recognising and or comprehending things.</p>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess an advanced, specialised knowledge of and critical insight into, theories and principles of an occupation, knowledge domain or broad field of science • Possess broad, integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope and the most important fields and boundaries of the occupation, knowledge domain or broad field of science • Possess knowledge and understanding of some important present-day issues, topics and specialties related to the occupation, knowledge domain or broad field of science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses advanced, specialised knowledge of, and critical insight into, theories and principles of an occupation, knowledge domain and or broad field of science • Possesses broad, integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope of the most important fields and boundaries of an occupation, knowledge domain and or broad field of science • Possesses knowledge and understanding of some important present-day issues, topics and specialties related to an occupation, knowledge domain and or broad field of science 	<p><i>Insight</i> is beyond <i>understanding</i>. <i>Insight</i> stands for being able to comprehend knowledge and the cohesion between different things.</p>

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess very specialised and advanced knowledge of an occupation, knowledge domain or field of science and at the interface between the different professions, knowledge domains and fields of sciences • Possess a critical understanding of a range of theories, principles and concepts, including the most important relating to the occupation, knowledge domain or field of science • Possess extensive, detailed knowledge and critical understanding of some important current issues, topics and specialties related to the occupation, knowledge domain or field of science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses particular specialised and advanced knowledge of an occupation, knowledge domain and or field of science and at the interface between the different occupations, knowledge domains and or fields of science • Possesses a critical understanding of a range of theories, principles and concepts, including the most important ones of an occupation, knowledge domain and or field of science • Possesses extensive, detailed knowledge and critical understanding of some important current issues, topics and specialties related to an occupation, knowledge domain and or field of science 	<p>Concerns applying knowledge that can be professionally and or scientifically oriented. It may therefore occur that the <i>knowledge</i> described in the learning outcomes is not scientifically oriented.</p> <p>To be able to substantiate level seven for this descriptor, demonstration of the higher level of abstraction of knowledge is needed</p>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess the most advanced knowledge of an occupation, knowledge domain or field of science and at the interface between the different occupations, knowledge domains or fields of science • Possess knowledge acquired by personal research or work, leading to an important contribution to development in a vocational and scientific field • Possess a critical insight into a vocational or scientific field, including a critical understanding of the most important and current theories, principles and concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses the most advanced knowledge of an occupation, knowledge domain and or field of science and at the interface between the different occupations, knowledge domains and or fields of science • Possesses knowledge acquired by personal research or work, leading to an important contribution to development in a vocational and or scientific field • Possesses a critical insight into a vocational and or scientific field, including a critical understanding of the most important and current theories, principles and concepts 	

3 Skills

Applying knowledge

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
Entry level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduce and apply the knowledge Carry out simple and familiar (professional) tasks automatically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduces and applies the knowledge Carries out simple and familiar (professional) tasks automatically 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduce and apply this knowledge Carry out simple and familiar (professional) tasks automatically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduces and applies the knowledge Carries out simple and familiar (professional) tasks automatically 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduce and apply this knowledge Carry out simple (professional) tasks with the help of selected standard procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduces and applies the knowledge Carries out simple (professional) task supported by selected standard procedures 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduce and apply this knowledge Recognise the limitations of existing knowledge in professional practice or in the knowledge domain and take action to address this Carry out (professional) tasks requiring tactical and strategic insight by making own choices from, and in combination with, standard procedures and methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduces and applies the knowledge Recognises the limitations of his or her own existing knowledge in professional practice and or in the knowledge domain and takes action to address this Carries out (professional) tasks requiring tactical insight by making own choices from, and in combination with, standard procedures and methods 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduce, analyse and apply this knowledge Evaluate and integrate data and develop strategies to carry out various (professional) tasks Recognise the limitations of existing knowledge in professional practice or in the knowledge domain and take action to address this Analyse and carry out relatively complex (professional) tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reproduces, analyses and applies the knowledge Evaluates and integrates data and develops strategies to carry out various (professional) tasks Recognises the limitations of his or her own existing knowledge in the professional practice and or knowledge domain and takes action to address this Analyses and carries out (professional) tasks 	(Professional) tasks with limited complexity are e.g. situations in which multiple interests are at stake or where one needs to deal with players with contradicting interests or different opinions

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproduce, analyse and apply the knowledge in a range of contexts in order to solve problems related to the occupation or knowledge domain • Use procedures in a flexible and inventive way • Recognise the limitations of existing knowledge in professional practice or the knowledge domain and take action to address this • Analyse and carry out complex (professional) tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproduces, analyses and applies the knowledge in a range of contexts, in order to solve problems related to an occupation and or knowledge domain • Uses procedures in a flexible and inventive way • Recognises the limitations of his or her own knowledge and of existing knowledge in professional practice and or the knowledge domain and takes action to address this • Analyses and carries out complex (professional) tasks • Critically analyses the result of current applied research 	<p>Complex (professional) tasks are tasks for one should have a clear overview of all stakeholders, all actors and influencing factors in a given situation and be able to deal with these insights. One needs a level of overview, skills and insight to be able to apply this knowledge act ad hoc, and adequately without needing procedures. Being flexible and inventive is a requirement at level 5, demonstrating the higher complexity compared to level 4. The result of current applied research also can comprise publications in professional journals.</p>

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproduce, analyse and apply the knowledge, in different contexts in a way that demonstrates a professional and scientific approach to the occupation or knowledge domain • Apply complex specialised skills based on the results of research • Complete applied or fundamental research, under supervision, based on methodological knowledge • Critically evaluate and combine knowledge and insights of a specific domain. • Recognise the limitations of existing knowledge in professional practice or in the knowledge domain and take action to address this • Analyse and carry out complex professional or scientific tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproduces, analyses and applies the knowledge, also in different contexts in a way that demonstrates a professional and or scientific approach to the occupation and or knowledge domain • Applies specialised skills, among which critical analytical skills, to the results of applied research • Completes with guidance successfully applied research based on methodological knowledge • Develops and deepens arguments • Evaluates and combines critically knowledge and insights of a specific domain • Signals the limitations of his or her knowledge of the professional practice and or of the existing knowledge in the knowledge domain, and takes action to address this • Analyses critically and carries out complex professional and or scientific tasks 	<p>Level 6 requires critical analytical skills to be able to apply/translate/interpret results of research (possibly executed by others) to the own context.</p>

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproduce, analyse, integrate and apply the knowledge in a range of contexts. Use it to handle complex matters • Use this knowledge as the basis of original ideas and research • Use acquired knowledge at a high level of abstraction. Think conceptually. Develop and deepen arguments • Complete, independently, fundamental research based on methodological knowledge • Provide an original contribution to the development and application of ideas, often in the area of research • Recognise the limitations of existing knowledge in professional practice or in the knowledge domain and at the interface between the different professions or knowledge domains and take action to address this • Analyse and carry out complex professional or scientific tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproduces, analyses, integrates and applies professional and scientific knowledge in a range of contexts, and uses it to handle complex matters. • This knowledge is the basis of original ideas and research • Uses the acquired knowledge at a higher level of abstraction. Thinks conceptually. Develops and deepens arguments • Successfully completes, independently, fundamental research based on methodological knowledge • Provides an original contribution to the development and application of ideas, often in the context of research • Recognises the limitations of own knowledge and or of existing knowledge in professional practice, in the knowledge domain and or at the interface of different professions and or knowledge domains and takes action to address this • Evaluates and carries out complex professional or scientific tasks 	<p>Concerns applying professional and or scientific knowledge. It therefore may happen that scientific knowledge is not demonstrated in the learning outcomes of the qualification where it concerns applying knowledge.</p> <p>To be able to substantiate level 7 for this descriptor, the demonstration of the higher level of abstraction is needed.</p>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproduce, analyse, integrate and apply this knowledge in an authoritative way and use this knowledge to handle complex matters in a range of contexts • Use this knowledge as the basis of original ideas and research • Use acquired knowledge at a high level of abstraction. Thinks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproduces, analyses, integrates and applies knowledge in an authoritative way, also in other contexts, and handles complex matters • This knowledge is the basis of original ideas and research • Uses acquired knowledge at a high level of abstraction. Thinks 	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
	<p>conceptually. Develops and deepens arguments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute through original research to move the boundaries of knowledge by an extensive amount of work, of which a part deserves national or international approved publication. Recognise the limitations of existing knowledge in professional practice or in the knowledge domain or field of science at the interface between the different professions or knowledge domains and take action to address this Analyse and carry out complex professional or scientific tasks 	<p>conceptually. Develops and deepens arguments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully completes independently complex fundamental research based on methodological knowledge Contributes to the change of boundaries of knowledge through original research with an extensive amount of work, of which a part deserves national or international approved publication Recognises the limitations of own knowledge and or existing knowledge in professional practice, in the knowledge domain and or field of science and at the interface between the different professions or knowledge domains, and takes action to address this Analyses, evaluates and carries out complex professional or scientific tasks, and can execute these ad hoc. 	

Problem-solving skills

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
<i>Distinction between the levels is defined by i) the complexity of the problem and ii) the required problem solving skills</i>			
Entry level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and solve simple problems in daily life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises and solves simple problems in daily life 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and solve simple problems in professional practice or in the knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises and solves simple problems in professional practice and or in the knowledge domain 	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and systematically solve simple problems in professional practice or in the knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises simple problems in professional practice and or in the knowledge domain Systematically solves these problems based on existing procedures and guidelines 	Because the cause of <i>simple problems</i> at NLQF level 2 in general is singular and easy to oversee it is adequate to systematically solve the problem and to execute professional tasks with help of <u>standard procedures</u>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and systematically solve complicated problems in professional practice or in the knowledge domain by selecting and using appropriate data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies complicated problems caused by multiple factors, in the professional practice and or knowledge domain. Systematically solves these problems using existing procedures and guidelines to identifying and using appropriate data 	Because the <i>compound problems</i> at NLQF level 3 in general have multiple causes, solving these problems requires taking into account multiple procedures and guidelines.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, analyse and systematically solve relatively complicated problems in professional practice or in the knowledge domain in a creative way by selecting and using appropriate data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinguishes and analyses fairly complex and unpredictable problems caused by several unequal factors, in the professional practice and or knowledge domain Solves these problems systematically and in a creative way, using existing procedures and guidelines and own solutions by identifying and using data. 	The fairly complex, unpredictable problems at NLQF level 4 are also caused by several unequal factors. Because of the unpredictability, being creative is needed in addition to a systematic approach using existing procedures and guidelines to solve these problems. The distinction between level 3 and 4 lies also in the fact that at level 4 the problems need not only to be recognised but also analysed.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, analyse and solve complex problems in professional practice or in the knowledge domain in a creative way by selecting and using relevant data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies and analyses complex and unpredictable problems in professional practice and or in the knowledge domain and solves these in a creative, flexible and inventive way by selecting and using data 	The problems at level 5 and up are complex. Solving these problems require the ability to ignore existing frameworks, procedures and guidelines. One

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and analyse complex problems in professional practice or in the knowledge domain and solve these problems in a tactical, strategic and creative way by selecting and using relevant data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies and analyses complex and unpredictable problems in professional practice and or in the knowledge domain and solves these problems in a tactical, strategic and creative way by selecting and using data 	<p>should be able to solve the problem without using a predefined plan, but by using ones creativity, flexibility and inventiveness. From level 5 and up the risks of failure is increasing.</p>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and analyse complex problems in professional practice or in the knowledge domain or field of science and solve the problems in a tactical, strategic and creative way Contribute to a (scientific) solution of complex problems in professional practice or in the knowledge domain or field of science by identifying and using data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies and analyses unpredictable complex problems in professional practice and or in the knowledge domain and solves these problems in a tactical, strategic and creative way Contributes to a (scientific) solution of complex problems in professional practice and or in the knowledge domain by identifying and using data 	
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and analyse complex problems in professional practice or in the knowledge domain or field of science and solve the problems in a tactical, strategic and creative way Contribute to a (scientific) solution of complex problems in professional practice or in the knowledge domain or the field of science by identifying and using data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies and analyses very complex and unpredictable problems, often with a high risk of failure, in professional practice and or in the knowledge domain and solves the problems in a tactical, strategic and creative way Contributes to a (scientific) solution of complex and unpredictable problems in professional practice and or in the knowledge domain by identifying and using data 	

Learning and Development skills

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
<i>It concerns realising one's own development as a professional. Skills related to the development of a company, organisation, colleagues and work are described in the descriptor Responsibility and Independence</i>			
Entry level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on personal development under supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works with guidance on personal development Formulates own personal learning objectives with guidance 	Starting professionals always need guidance to support their development. <i>Autonomy</i> at the lower levels concerns the formulation of own personal learning objectives but with support and through receiving feedback
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work under supervision on personal development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works with guidance on personal development Formulates with guidance own personal learning objectives 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask support for personal development after reflecting on and evaluating personal (learning) results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receives support for personal further development after reflecting on and evaluating own (learning) results 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask support for further personal development after reflecting on and evaluating personal (learning) results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks support for further personal development after reflecting on and evaluating own (learning) results 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake personal development by reflecting on and evaluating personal (learning) results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realises personal development on request, where necessary with support, through self-reflection and external- and self-evaluation of own (learning) results 	At level 4, one reflects independently, on the initiative of a manager, teacher etc. At level 4 and onwards one achieves own targets and personal development
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake personal development by reflecting on and evaluating personal (learning) results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realises personal development, on one's own initiative and if needed on one's own request with support, by reflecting on and evaluating own (learning) results 	At level 5 and onwards reflection takes place on personal initiative.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake personal development by reflecting on and evaluating personal (learning) results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realises personal development on one's own initiative, by reflecting on and evaluating personal (learning) results 	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake personal development which it mostly autonomous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realises personal development, mostly autonomous and based on intrinsic motivation 	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake personal development and engineering technological, social or cultural progression in society which is mostly autonomous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realises personal development, mostly autonomous and based on intrinsic motivation Ensures technological, social and or cultural progression in society 	<p>objectives, be intrinsically motivated.</p> <p><i>Ensuring progression</i> at level 8 is related to the designer and specialist who are really inflicting progress in society, and contribute to the development of others.</p>

Information skills

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
Entry level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain and process information on simple facts and ideas related to the living environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtains and processes information on simple facts and views related to the living environment 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain and process information, simple facts and ideas related to the occupation or knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtains and processes information, simple facts and ideas related to the occupation and or knowledge domain 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain and process basic information – i.e. facts, ideas, processes, materials, means and concepts of and related to the occupation or knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtains and processes basic information concerning facts, ideas, processes, materials, means and concepts of and related to the occupation and or knowledge domain 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain, process and combine information on materials, means, facts, core concepts, simple theories, ideas, methods and processes of and related to the occupation or knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtains, processes and combines information on materials, means, facts, core concepts, simple theories, trends and developments, methods and processes of and related to the occupation and or knowledge domain 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain, process and combine broad and specialised information on materials, means, facts, abstract concepts, theories, ideas, methods and processes of and related to the occupation or knowledge domain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtains, processes and combines broad and specialised information on materials, means, facts, abstract concepts, theories, trends, developments, methods and processes of and related to the occupation and or knowledge domain 	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain, process, combine and analyse broad, in-depth and detailed information on a limited range of basic theories, principles and concepts of and related to the occupation or knowledge domain, as well as limited information on some important current subjects and specialities related to the occupation or knowledge domain, and present this information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtains, processes, combines and analyses broad, in-depth and detailed information on a limited range of basic theories, principles and concepts of and related to the occupation and or knowledge domain, as well as limited information on some important current subjects and or specialities related to the occupation and or knowledge domain, and presents this information 	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically collect and analyse in a responsible way broad, in-depth and detailed professional or scientific information on a limited range of basic theories, principles and concepts of and related to the occupation or knowledge domain, as well as limited information on some important current issues, topics and specialties related to the occupation or knowledge domain and present this information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically collects and analyses in a responsible way broad, in-depth and detailed professional and or scientific information on a limited range of basic theories, principles and concepts of and related to the occupation and or knowledge domain, as well as limited information on some important current issues, topics and specialties related to the occupation and or knowledge domain and presents this information 	<p>At level 6 one is supposed to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> read, understand, interpret and use scientific documentation. execute applied and practice-oriented research apply critical-analytical skills
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically collect and analyse in a responsible way broad, in-depth and detailed scientific information on a range of theories, principles and concepts of and related to the occupation, knowledge domain, or field of science, as well as limited information on some important current subjects and specialties related to an occupation, knowledge domain, or field of science, present this information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically collects and analyses in responsible way broad, in-depth and detailed scientific information on a range of theories, principles and concepts of and related to a professional and or knowledge domain as well as information on some important current subjects and specialties related to an occupation and or knowledge domain and presents this information in a scientific way 	<p>At level 7 one is supposed to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> execute detailed scientific research present information in a scientific way apply evaluation skills

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically collect and analyse in a responsible and broad way in-depth and detailed scientific information about a range of theories, principles and concepts of and related to the occupation, knowledge domain, or field of science, as well as selected information on some important current subjects and specialties related to the occupation, knowledge domain, or field of science, and present this information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically collects and analyses in a responsible and broad way in-depth and detailed scientific information about a range of theories, principles and concepts of and related to the occupation and or knowledge domain, as well as selected information on some important current subjects and specialties related to the occupation and or knowledge domain, and presents this unique information in a scientific way 	At level 8 it concerns unique cases.

Communication skills

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
<p><i>Peers</i> stand for people the function at the same level <i>Relevant other</i> stands for classmates, fellow students, customers, family, relatives and persons involved <i>Conventions</i> also include courtesies</p>			
Entry level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate with peers using conventions which are relevant to the context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other using conventions which are relevant to the context 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate with peers, supervisors and clients, appropriately to the context, using conventions which are relevant to professional practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other, appropriately to the context, using conventions that are relevant to professional practice. Listens and understands 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate with peers, supervisors and clients, appropriately to the context, using conventions which are relevant to professional practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other, appropriately to the context, using conventions that are relevant to professional practice. Listens, understands and asks for explanation 	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate with peers, supervisors and clients, appropriately to the context, using conventions which are relevant to professional practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other, appropriately to the context, using conventions that are relevant to professional practice. Explains and gives instructions 	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate with peers, supervisors and clients, appropriately to the context, using conventions which are relevant to professional practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other, appropriately to the context, using conventions that are relevant to professional practice. Explains and gives instruction. Convinces and negotiates. 	
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate in a targeted way with peers, supervisors and clients, appropriately to the context, using conventions which are relevant to professional practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates in a targeted way with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other, appropriately to the context, using conventions that are relevant to professional practice. Adjusts communication to the objective and target group. 	<p><i>Targeted</i> stands for having a nuanced view of the circumstances and adapting communication accordingly. One adapts the type of message and the target group with possibly the same objective.</p> <p>The higher the level the more targeted the communication is required to be. More objectives and interests can play a role</p>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate in a targeted way with peers, specialists and non-specialists, supervisors and clients, appropriately to the context, using conventions which are relevant to professional practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates in a targeted way with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other, specialists and non-specialists, supervisors and clients, appropriately to the scientific and professional community, using conventions which are relevant. Applies communication to the objective and the target group. 	<p>Communicating with specialists and non-specialists is the distinction compared to level 5</p>

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate in a targeted way with peers, specialists and no specialists, supervisors and clients, appropriately to the context, using conventions which are relevant to the professional field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates in a targeted way with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other, specialists and non-specialists, and clients, appropriately to the scientific and professional community, using conventions which are relevant. Adjusts communication to the objective and the target group. 	
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate in a targeted way with peers, specialists and non-specialists, supervisors and clients, the wider scientific community and society as a whole, appropriately to the context, using conventions which are relevant to the professional field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicates in a targeted way with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other, specialists and non-specialists, and clients, the wider scientific community and society as a whole, appropriately to the context, using conventions which are relevant. Adjusts communication to the objective and the target group. 	

4 Responsibility and Independence

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
<p><i>Peers</i> can be understood people functioning at the same level <i>Relevant other</i> can be understood as classmates, fellow students, clients, family, relatives and or other involved</p>			
Entry level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with peers Have, under supervision, limited responsibility for the results of simple routine tasks or study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works in a well-known and stable daily living environment with peers, colleagues superiors and or relevant others Carries, with guidance, limited responsibility for the results of own simple routine tasks and or study 	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with peers, supervisors and clients Under supervision, take responsibility for the results of simple tasks or study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works in a familiar daily living and or working environment with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant others Carries, with guidance, responsibility for the results of simple and defined own tasks and or study 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with peers, supervisors and clients Take responsibility for the results of simple tasks or study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works in a familiar daily living and or working environment with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant others. Carries responsibility for the results of simple and defined own tasks and or study 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with peers, supervisors and clients Take responsibility for the results of defined tasks or study Take shared responsibility for the results of the routine work of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works in a familiar but changeable living and or working environment with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant others Carries responsibility for the results of defined own tasks and or study Shares responsibility for the results of the routine work or study activities of others 	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with peers, supervisors and clients • Take responsibility for the results of own activities, work or study • Share responsibility for the results of activities and work of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other in a familiar but changeable living and or working environment, also international • Carries responsibility for the results of own activities, work and or study • Shares responsibility for the results of the routine work or study activities of others • Shares responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of activities and or works of others 	
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with peers, supervisors and clients • Take responsibility for the results of own activities, work or study • Take shared responsibility for the results of activities and work of others and the management of processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with peers, colleagues, supervisors and or relevant other in an unknown but changeable living and or working environment, also international • Carries responsibility for the results of own activities, work and or study. • Shares responsibility for the results of activities and works of others and for the management of unpredictable processes 	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with peers, specialists and non-specialists, supervisors and clients • Take responsibility for the results of own work or study and for the results of the work or study of others • Take shared responsibility for the management of processes and the professional development of people and groups • Collect and interpret relevant data with the objective of forming an opinion based on considerations of relevant social, professional, scientific and ethical aspects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with peers, colleagues, specialists and non-specialists, supervisors and or relevant other, in an unknown but changeable living and or working environment, also international • Carries responsibility for the results of own activities, work and or study and for the work results of others. • Shares responsibility for the management of unpredictable processes and professional development of people and groups. • Collects and interprets relevant data with the objective of forming an opinion based on considerations of relevant social, professional, scientific and ethical aspects 	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with peers, specialists and non-specialists, supervisors and clients • Take responsibility for the results of own work or study and for the results of the work or study of others • Take responsibility for the management of complex processes and the professional development of people and groups • Formulate judgements based on incomplete and limited information, taking into account social, scientific and ethical responsibilities related to the application of own knowledge and judgements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with peers, colleagues, specialists and non-specialists, supervisors and or relevant other, in an unknown but changeable living and or working environment with a high degree of uncertainty, also international • Carries responsibility for the results of own activities, work and or study and for the work results of others • Carries responsibility for the management of unpredictable processes and professional development of people and groups • Formulates opinions based on incomplete and or limited information, taking into account social, scientific and ethical responsibilities related to the application of own knowledge and opinions 	

Level	2012	2020	Clarification 2020
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with peers, specialists and non-specialists, supervisors and clients, the wider scientific community and society as a whole • Take responsibility for the results of own work or study and for the results of the work of others • Take responsibility for the management of complex processes and the professional development of people and groups • Draft, develop, carry out and apply with academic integrity a complex fundamental research process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with peers, colleagues, specialists and non-specialists, supervisors and or relevant other and society as a whole in an unknown but changeable living and or working environment with a high degree of uncertainty, also international • Carries responsibility for the results of own activities, work and or study and for the work results of others • Carries responsibility for the management of unpredictable processes and professional development of people and groups • Conceives, designs, implements and adapts a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity 	

Annex 5: Glossary

AOC	<p>College for Vocational Education and Training for the Agricultural sector</p> <p>AOC's provide education in the field of nutrition, nature and the environment. They often also provide pre-vocational education and training (vmbo) and have close ties with agricultural higher education.</p>
BBL	<p>Work-Based Pathway in secondary vocational education and training</p> <p>Pathway, offering a combination of work and study. A participant in the bbl often has an employment contract with an employer. An agreement is concluded between the school, student and the training company.</p>
BOL	<p>School-Based Pathway in secondary vocational education and training</p> <p>This pathway offers full day education with practical internships, whereby the minimum hours of practical education varies per course. For the practical internships an agreement is concluded between the school, student and the training company.</p>
CREBO	<p>Central Register for regulated Vocational education and Training Qualifications</p> <p>A systematic collection of data about vocational training qualifications and associated training and examination institutions recognised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science</p>
CROHO	<p>Central Register of Higher Education</p> <p>A register that contains data from past and current by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science regulated higher education programs.</p>
CvTE	<p>College for Test and Exams</p> <p>Body responsible, on behalf of the government, for the quality and level of central exams and tests in the Netherlands.</p>
ECTS	<p>European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System</p> <p>A credit tool of the European Higher Education Area for making studies and courses more transparent. It helps students to move between countries and to have their academic qualifications and study periods abroad recognised.</p>
ECVET	<p>European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training</p> <p>A technical framework for the transfer, recognition and (where appropriate) accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification.</p>
EQF	<p>European Qualification Framework</p> <p>A translation tool that helps communication and comparison between qualifications systems in Europe. Its eight common European reference levels are described in terms of learning outcomes: Knowledge, Skills and Responsibility and autonomy.</p>
EVC	<p>Recognition of previously acquired Competences</p> <p>An approach to make visible, by means of an experience certificate, what knowledge, insights and experiences have been gained in educational, work or private context.</p>

FNV	Netherlands Trade Union Confederation The largest trade union in the Netherlands.
HAVO	Senior General Secondary Education
HBO	Higher Professional Education
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education ISCED is the international reference classification for organising education programs and related qualifications by levels and fields.
MBO	Secondary Vocational Education and Training (VET)
NCP	National Coordination Point
NLOF	Netherlands Qualifications Framework
NOC*NSF	Dutch Olympic Committee* Dutch Sport Federation The overall coordinating Dutch sports organization that also functions as the Dutch national Olympic committee and national Paralympic committee.
NRTO	Dutch association for private education providers
NVAO	The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders A quality assurance agency that safeguards the quality of recognised higher education in the Netherlands and Flanders.
OCW	Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
QA	Quality assurance
QF-EHEA	The overarching framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area The framework comprises the short cycle, the first cycle, the second cycle and the third cycle generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the short cycle, first and second cycles.
ROCs	Regional Education College Providers of secondary vocational education and adult education.
SBB	The agency SBB is the responsible organisation for maintaining the framework and files of regulated VET qualifications. The SBB is an agency where vocational education and training and labour market actors co-operate at national, sectoral and regional level.
SLO	Organisation with the responsibility for designing and updating qualifications in primary and secondary education.
SLOA	Act on rules of subsidising of National Educational Support Activities
VAVO	General Secondary Education for Adults General Secondary Education for people with a minimum age of 18 years that have not obtained a diploma in general secondary education.
VET	Vocational Education and Training (MBO)
Vmbo	Pre-Vocational Education
VNO-NCW	Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers The largest employers' organization in the Netherlands. VNO-NCW represents the common interests of Dutch business, both at home and abroad and provides a variety of services for its members.

VSNU	Association of Universities The association and main advocate for the 14 Dutch universities (276.713 students), represents its members' interests to government, politics and civil society.
VWO	Pre-university Education
WHW	Act on Higher education and Scientific Research
WO	Academic education
WOT	Education Regulation Act
WVO	The Secondary Education Act