The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework

1. Background

The basis for an ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is derived from the ASEAN Charter signed by the ten ASEAN leaders in Singapore on 20 November 2007, where aspirations to become a single entity that is ASEAN Community was reinforced. The Charter aims to develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and life-long learning, and in science and technology, for the empowerment of the peoples of ASEAN and for the strengthening of the ASEAN Community and to enhance the well-being and livelihood of the peoples of ASEAN by providing them with equitable access to opportunities for human development, social welfare and justice.[1]

Also in 2007, the ASEAN Economic Blueprint (ASEAN 2007) was signed by member countries. It called for areas of cooperation, including the recognition of professional qualifications (ASEAN 2007). In addition to Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) in Engineering and Nursing that had been completed in 2005 and 2006 respectively, five additional MRAs were concluded between 2007 and 2009 in the fields of architecture, surveying, medical practitioners, dental practitioners and accountancy. Another important component of the blueprint was the creation of the free flow of skilled labour through 'harmonisation and standardisation' (ASEAN 2007:18), particularly in preparation for the ASEAN Economic Community 2015.

ASEAN is also linked to the Asia – Pacific region through cross membership of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN). As well, several ASEAN member statesthat participated in an APEC Mapping of Qualifications Frameworks[2]indicated in principle support for the concept of a regional qualifications framework.

Regional context

ASEAN member states[3]have a combined population of almost 600 million. There are considerable differences in the population levels, sizes of economies and levels of per capita income across countries. While there are labour flows between member statesthey are not as great as those of some other regions. Nevertheless ASEAN is a robust entity and has been active in building mutual economic and social cooperation between member countries.

The ASEAN region is typical of other global regions in the patterns of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) development across countries. Some countries have established comprehensive

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[1]Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (2007), Chapter I, Article 1, paragraph 10 and 11.
[2]Burke et al (2009).
[3]Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

NQFs, while others have a well established sectoral framework, and others are yet to develop or implement qualifications frameworks.

Within this context the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework aims to accommodate different types of NQFs that are at different stages of development, ranging from those that are initial conceptual proposals to those that are fully developed, functioning NQFs.

Chronological development of the AQRF

The initial draft of the concept proposal for the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Frameworkwas developed through the Project on Education and Training Governance: Capacity Building for National Qualifications Frameworkswhich was part of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) Economic Cooperation Work Programme (ECWP), specifically under ECWP's services component. This draft concept proposal was considered during the 1st AANZFTA Joint Committee Meeting in May 2010 in Manila and approved inter-sessionally in July 2010.

The draft concept proposal of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework was provided to ASEAN participantsprior the AANZFTA Qualifications Reference Framework Forum held in late April 2011.[4] The feasibility of a regional common reference framework was discussed in a broad sense, but no decisions were made by the participants regarding the preferred construction or features of the regional common reference framework or what might be the clear purposes for a framework. The draft version of the concept proposalwas enhanced and refined following discussions with the ASEAN memberstates at the AANZFTA Forum and at in country workshops.

Established in 2012, a multi-sectoral Task Force on ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework (TF-AQRF) comprising officials from ASEAN ministries of trade in services, labour/manpower development, education, other relevant ministries and qualification agencies was tasked to develop the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF). Representatives of Australia and New Zealand were non-voting Members of the TF-AQRF.

In October 2012, a workshop as well as a taskforce meeting was convened to facilitate discussion of design options within the scope of the concept paper for the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and make it possible to agree to a final design by ASEAN Member States. Further refinements to the model were undertaken as a result of this workshop and taskforce meeting.

In March 2013, another workshop was convened as well as a taskforce meeting to facilitate discussion of design options within the scope of the concept paper for the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and make it possible to agree to a final design by the ASEAN Member States. Members discussed the model ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and requested refinements prior to in country consultations.

In November 2013 a draft version of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework was provided for discussion formember statesat a workshop, in preparation of a final design.

At its 4th Meeting in March 2014, the TF-AQRF finalised the text for ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework.

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[4]Bateman et al (2011).

2. Structure

Scope

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, a common reference framework, functions as a device to enable comparisons of qualifications across ASEAN member states.

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework addresses education and training sectors[5] and the wider objective of promoting lifelong learning.

Purpose

The purpose of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is to enable comparisons of qualifications across member statesthat will:

- Support recognition of qualifications
- Encourage the development of qualifications frameworks that can facilitate lifelong learning
- Encourage the development of national approaches to validating learning gained outside formal education
- Promote and encourage education and learner mobility
- Promote worker mobility
- Lead to better understood qualifications systems
- Promote higher quality qualifications systems.

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework will support and enhance each country's national qualifications framework or qualifications system while providing a mechanism to facilitate comparison, transparency and higher quality qualification systems. This is achieved through:

- a process of peer learning across countries, for example in design and operation of qualification systems
- a better understanding of acountry'squalification system, for example by making it clearer to those in other countries
- through applying quality processes used in other countries.

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework will link the ASEAN NQFs or qualification systems and become a part of the ASEAN's mechanism for recognition of its qualifications against other regional qualifications systems.

Principles

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is based on agreed understandings between member states and invites voluntary engagement from countries. The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework by design aims to be a neutral influence on national qualifications frameworks of ASEAN member states.The aim is to make national qualifications systems explicit according to the

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[5]Education and training incorporates informal, non formal and formal learning. Formal learning includes but is not limited to post compulsory schooling, adult and community education, TVET and higher education.

ASEAN Qualifications Reference Frameworkand does not require changes to national qualifications systems. The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Frameworkrespects the member statesspecific structures and processes which are responsive to national priorities.

The process for endorsing the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework shall be by mutual agreement by the memberstates.

Countries will be able to determine when they will undertake the processes of referencingtheir qualification framework, system or qualification types and quality assurance systems against the framework.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance is a component of quality management and is 'focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled'[6]. In relation to training and educational services, 'quality assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in educational services provided by training providers under the remit of relevant authorities or bodies'. Quality assurance activities are established by the 'relevant authorities or bodies to ensure that educational services satisfy customer requirements in a systematic, reliable fashion'[7].

To promote quality assurance of education and training across the region, the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is underpinned by a set of agreed quality assurance principles and broad standards related to:

- The functions of the registering and accrediting agencies
- Systems for the assessment of learning and the issuing of qualifications
- Regulation of the issuance of certificates.

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework requires countries to refer to one or more established quality assurance frameworksas the basis for the agreed quality assurance principles and broad standards.

These frameworks are to be used as the benchmark for evaluating the quality assurance systemsfor the relevanteducation and training sectors.

The referencing process will require that member states describe their education and training quality assurance systems.

3. Components of the Framework

Learning outcomes

Globally there has been a shift to learning outcomes beingthe basis of national qualification frameworks and regional common reference frameworks. Learning outcomes emphasise 'the results

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[6]AS/NZS ISO 9000:2006: Quality management systems—Fundamentals and vocabulary, p. 9.
[7]Bateman et al (2009), p. 8.

of learning rather than focusing on inputs such as length of study',[8]and support the transfer of qualifications, including credit transfer and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is a hierarchy of levels of complexity of learning which use learning outcomes as the metric for the hierarchy. To use other measures such as duration of programmes is not a feasible option. Thus the descriptors in the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework aims to fuse learning outcomes to facilitate comparisons of and links between qualifications and qualifications systems across the member states.

It follows that to facilitate the linking of national qualifications framework levels against the levels in the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, national qualifications frameworks or qualifications systems should have qualifications 'demonstrably based on learning outcomes'. For national qualifications frameworks that are not based on learning outcomes, the referencing process and report should demonstrate progress towards a learning outcomes based approach.

Level descriptors

The level descriptors of the ASEAN Qualification Reference Frameworkaim toprovide a reference point for the levels in national qualification frameworks and national qualification systems.

To facilitate the referencing processing the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is based on broad level descriptors. The Framework includeseight levels of complexity of learning outcomes, expressed as descriptors.

The level descriptors include the notion of competencewhich is the ability that extends beyond the possession of knowledge and skills. It includes:

- Cognitive competence involving the use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially
- Functional competence (skills or know-how), those things that a person should be able to do when they work in a given area
- Personal competence involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation
- Ethical competence involving the possession of certain personal and professional values[9].

The level descriptors do not make explicit reference to personal competence or ethical competence. However, personal competence and ethical competence are valued by ASEAN Member States as they contribute to the capacity of people to know things, act skilfully, work effectively in different settings, and to show responsibility and accountability. Personal competence and ethical competence includes attributes such as attentiveness, intercultural awareness, active tolerance and acceptance of diversity. These attributes could be included in individual National Qualifications Frameworks.

The level descriptors include two domains:

- Knowledge and skills
- Application and Responsibility.

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[8]EQF (2008).
[9]Coles &Werquin (2006), p. 23.

The Knowledge and Skills domain includes the various kinds of knowledge such as facts and theories as well as the skills used, such as practical and cognitive skills.

The Application and Responsibility domain definesthe context in which the knowledge and skills are used in practice; as well as the level of independence including the capacity to make decisions and the responsibility for oneself and others.

The level descriptors assume that the learning outcomes are cumulative by level, in other words one level assumes that the knowledge, skills and conditions at one level include those at the lower levels. In addition, the domains must be read together to give a true indication of level.

	Knowledge and skills	Application and Responsibility
	Demonstration of knowledge and skills that:	*The contexts in which knowledge and skills are demonstrated:*
Level 8	• is at the most advanced and specialised level and at the frontier of a field • involve independent and original thinking and research, resulting in the creation of new knowledge or practice	• are highly specialised and complex involving the development and testing of new theories and new solutions to resolve complex, abstract issues • require authoritative and expert judgment in management of research or an organisationand significant responsibility for extending professional knowledge and practice and creation of new ideas and or processes.
Level 7	• is at the forefront of a field and show mastery of a body of knowledge • involve critical and independent thinking as the basis for research to extend or redefine knowledge or practice	• are complex and unpredictable and involve the development and testing of innovative solutions to resolve issues • require expert judgment and significant responsibility for professional knowledge, practice and management
Level 6	• is specialisedtechnical and theoretical within a specific field • involve critical and analytical thinking	• are complex and changing • require initiative and adaptability as well as strategies to improve activities and to solve complex and abstract issues
Level 5	• is detailedtechnical and theoretical knowledge of a general field • involve analytical thinking	• are often subject to change • involve independent evaluation of activities to resolve complex and sometimes abstract issues
Level 4	• is technical and theoretical with general coverage of a field • involve adapting processes	• are generally predictable but subject to change • involve broad guidance requiring some self direction, and coordination to resolve unfamiliar issues
Level 3	• includes general principles and some conceptualaspects • involve selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	• are stable with some aspects subject to change • involve general guidance and require judgment and planning to resolve some issues independently.
Level 2	• is general and factual • involve use of standard actions	• involve structured processes • involve supervision and some discretion for judgment on resolving familiar issues
Level 1	• is basic general • involve simple, straightforward and routine actions	• involve structured routine processes • involve close levels of support and supervision

Credit or amount of learning

There is no specification for credit or amount of learning defined in the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework. However, such a measure could facilitate comparisons across member states that iscomplementary with the goals of regional qualifications frameworks. Countries could develop a credit or amount of learning measure within their own National Qualifications Framework and utilise this measure for recognition purposes.

Linking national qualifications frameworks

The components of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework are used to establish a relationship between its levels and thoseof the country'squalifications framework (NQF) or systems. This is referred to as *referencing* and is covered in detail in the next section.

4. Referencing

Referencing

The implementation of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework requires all member states to implement a common process, a referencing process.

TheASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework referencing process will:

- For those countries with a NQF, identify in a broad sense the best fit of levels of the national frameworks to that of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
- For those countries without a NQF, identify for national qualification types or for key qualifications, the best fit to the level of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
- Include confirmation that the accrediting and registering agencies meet agreed quality principles and broad standards.

To facilitate mutual trust, the referencing report undertaken by each ASEAN country will confirm that itsquality assurance systems and implementation of quality assurance strategies meet the agreed quality assurance principles and standards, or if this confirmation is not possible, the referencing process and report should demonstrate progress towards a meeting these principles and standards.

The referencing process requires that eachcountry sets up anational referencing panel of key stakeholders. This panel is to include at least one international representative[10], plus an additional observer from one of the other ASEAN member states.

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[10]The international expert could be external to the ASEAN member states or internal to the ASEAN member states but the international expert should not be a representative of the referencing country or the observer's country. The international expert representative should play an active role in the referencing process.

A country may embark on a referencing process to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Frameworkin a selective and staggered manner according to national priorities (and resources), but the strength of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Frameworkand therefore its usefulness will depend on comprehensive trusted referencing processes.

The referencing process includes a single report that is approved by major stakeholders. To facilitate mutual understanding referencing reports will utilise the relevant terms in the Glossary.

TheASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework includes detailed referencing guidelines to inform and guidethe referencing process (Refer to **Annex 1**).

Setting a target date is important as the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework cannot function as a tool for comparing qualifications frameworks and qualifications until a critical mass of countries have completed the process.

Common approaches

Operation of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework will raise questions and issues for member states and these will need to be refined on the basis of external expertise, briefing papers and guidance, as well as decisions about common approaches.

Key terms

Member states have considered the range of terms used within the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and have considered definitions for each of them. Refer to **Annex2**: Glossary.

Communicating the framework

Member states are strongly encouraged to adopt measures, as appropriate, so thatall newqualification certificates and related documentsissued by the relevant authorities contain a clear reference,by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework level.

Member states are also encouraged to provide access to information and guidance to stakeholderson how national qualifications and systems relate to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework. This needs to be part of a comprehensive communication for the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework.

Annex 1: Referencing procedure

The Referencing procedure aims to:

- Describe a common structure for linking NQFs to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF).
- Ensure that the linking process undertaken is robust and transparent way.
- Provide a common reporting structure for the referencing reports.

Using criteria to reference to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework

The main part of any referencing process is the description of how each national qualifications framework or qualification system[11]links to the level structure of the AQRF. The consistency of this process as it is carried out in different countries is critically important for the integrity of the AQRF. The transparency of the process in each country is also critically important for the way people in other countries to understand and trust the outcomes of the referencing process. To help optimise consistency and to make the process of referencing transparent it a set of criteria have been agreed by the ASEAN member states.

The criteria cover areas that are important for consistency and trust.

Referencing criteria

	Criterion	Additional information
1	The structure of the education and training system is described.	The essential structure of the system covering ages, stages and pathways of education and training, including formal, non-formal and informal learning should be described in outline. Linkages between these pathways and major progressions should be clear. If possible some general statistics should be included.
2	The responsibilities and legal basis of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the main public authority responsible for the referencing process	Different countries have different institutional structures. It is necessary to take into account all of the bodies that have a legitimate role in the referencing process and to clarify (for international readers) their roles. Bodies with these types of functions are generally considered as having such legitimate role: • those responsible for governing the processes through which nationally recognised qualifications are designed and awarded;

[11]Not all countries have a defined and explicit qualifications framework; some countries have NQFs that cover some of the education sectors (general school education, Vocational Education and Training – Initial VET and Continuing VET, Higher Education, Adult Education) but not others. Where there is no framework covering important qualifications it is necessary to show how these qualifications link to a specific level of the AQRF.

	Criterion	Additional information
		• those bodies that support the labour market relevance of education and training;
		• those in charge of quality assurance in relation to design and award of nationally recognised qualifications;
		• those managing and maintaining a qualifications framework (if in existence);
		• those responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications and providing information on national qualifications; and
		• representatives of institutions awarding qualifications; and
		• representatives of those using qualifications (employers, learners).
3	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 qualifications that exist in the country are described in terms of the education provision in the country and how they are located in an NQF where one exists. Allocating specific qualifications to an NQF level brings meaning to the NQF level for citizens and, through the referencing process, to the AQRF level. It is therefore critically important for the referencing process that the way a qualification is located at an NQF level is described in full and examples are provided that illustrate how the rules governing the process are applied. The NQF level of all the major qualifications (or types) needs to be evident in the report.
4	There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the AQRF.	A clear statement of the agreed relationship between the national qualifications system and the AQRF levels is made. Where an NQF exists the levels in the national framework should be used. The procedure for matching of levels needs to be described in detail; this procedure should be robust and transparent, probably including a careful explanation of assumptions, approximations and professional judgements.
5	The basis in agreed standards of the national framework or qualifications system and its qualifications is described.	Where possible these standards should be based on the principle of learning outcomes. They should include achievement standards, credit arrangements and other methods of validation where these are available.
6	The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system are described. All of the	Referencing reports need to explain the main national quality assurance systems that operate in the education, training and qualification system. Other quality assurance measures that could be addressed include, for example, qualification requirements for teachers and trainers,

Criterion	Additional information
bodies responsible for quality assurance state their unequivocal support for the referencing outcome.	accreditation and external evaluation of providers or programmes, relationship between bodies responsible for quality assurance from different levels and with different functions. A range of competent quality assurance bodies are important to the referencing process, such as the following but not limited to: • the government ministries; • qualifications bodies, particularly those with national oversight of the system or of the major sectors (general, vocational, higher education) but also those bodies that assess learning, validate non-formal and informal learning, issue awards and certificates; • quality assurance bodies such as those that set standards for learning in general, vocational and higher education and those that evaluate institutions or programmes; • bodies that set occupational, vocational and educational standards in a country or employment/education sector; • bodies that manage the development and implementation of NQFs, especially the NQFs that regulate standards in sectors and nationally; and • bodies that disburse public funds to learning institutions and require compliance with quality criteria. Benchmarks for evaluating quality assurance processes for all education and training sectors may be based but not limited to the following quality assurance framework: • East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework (includes the quality principles, agency quality standards and quality indicators) • the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) Guidelines of Good Practice for Quality Assurance [12] • ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education[13]

[12] Requirements for full member.
[13] Requirements for full member.

	Criterion	Additional information
7	The process of referencing has been devised by the main public authorityand has been endorsed by the main stakeholders in the qualifications system	A statement describing the management process used to provide a valid, reliable and trusted outcome of referencing.
8	People from other countries who are experienced in the field of qualifications are involved in the referencing process and its reporting.	The referencing process should clarify the relationship between the AQRF and the national qualifications system for a person without particular understanding of the qualifications system concerned. To support this process a person or persons from another country is involved in the referencing process to act as an adviser and supporter of the referencing process. The advice of the foreign person should be given with a view to optimising the trust in use of the AQRF as an instrument for transparency. There is no obligation on the part of the host country to accept the advice of the foreign person. The referencing report should state who was involved and explain why these experts were invited and how they were involved in the process (roles, activities) and at what stage and how their feedback was taken into account.
9	One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies and shall address separately and in order each of the referencing criteria	Whatever the scope of the referencing process this report should be written by the competent bodies in consultation with stakeholders and agreed by them. The single report should contain all relevant information on the results of the referencing of national qualifications levels to the AQRF and refer to further resources for evidence if necessary. There should be no supplementary or minority view reports
10	The outcome of referencing is published by the ASEAN Secretariat and by the main national public body	In order to make public the process of referencing and its outcome.
11	Following the referencing process allcertification and awarding bodies are encouraged to indicate a clear reference to the appropriate AQRF level on new qualification certificates, diplomas issued.	In order to show that the AQRF is a force for cooperation and mobility of direct relevance to citizens of ASEAN.

Structure of the referencing report

The report should include:

1. Information on the state of the report – a short statement that specifies the basis for the report (for example, is it a first version or an up-dated one) or how long it will be valid.
2. Executive summary – a short overview of the results of the referencing process and, in particular, a summary of the information related to the eleven criteria and procedures.
3. Description of the national qualifications system and the NQF – a short presentation of the national qualifications system (including quality assurance, pathways, access to programs, etc.) and the NQF (design features, aims and functions, stage of the development process) – the description should focus on information relevant for understanding the answers to the eleven criteria and procedures.
4. Background information – a short description of the process for preparing the report (referencing process).
5. The eleven criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the AQRF – the main part of the report, addressing each criterion separately.
6. Further information – a short presentation of, for example, plans, intentions and next steps regarding the NQF development and implementation, challenges expected or already met in this process, the expected impact of the AQRF implementation (What will change on a national level?), any intentions for evaluating and revising the decisions presented in the referencing report.
7. Annexes - for example, list of institutions or experts involved in the preparation of the report, examples of qualifications (that will also be presented at the AQRF portal), statements from national stakeholders and/or international experts, relevant legal texts[14].

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[14] EQF 2011, EQF-Ref project, accessed www.EQF-Ref.eu on 7/10/2012, p 40.

Annex 2: Glossary

Accreditation	The official approval of achievement standards, including qualification or unit(s) of a qualification, usually for a particular period of time, as being able to meet particular requirements defined by an accrediting agency.
Accredited qualifications	Qualifications which have been granted approval by an accrediting agency or organisation as having met specific requirements or standards of quality.
Accrediting agency	Accrediting agencies are those competent bodies (such as national qualifications agencies, national accreditation agencies, official review boards or other nationally approved bodies or agencies with the responsibility to approve qualifications) that manage program and qualification accreditation under national legislation. Accrediting agencies function within a quality assurance system.
Achievement standards (in education and training)	Statement approved and formalised by a competent body, which defines the rules to follow in a given context or the results to be achieved. A distinction can be made between competency, educational, occupational, assessment, validation or certification standards: • competency standard refers to the knowledge, skills and/or competencies linked to practising a job; • educational standard refers to statements of learning objectives, content of curricula, entry requirements and resources required to meet learning objectives • occupational standard refers to statements of activities and tasks related to a specific job and to its practise; • assessment standard refers to statements of learning outcomes to be assessed and methodology used; • validation standard refers to statements of level of achievement to be reached by the person assessed, and the methodology used; • certification standard refers to statements of rules applicable to obtaining a qualification (e.g. certificate or diploma) as well as the rights conferred[15].
ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework	The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, a common reference framework, functions as a device to enable comparisons of qualifications across ASEAN member states.

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[15]CEDEFOP (2011), p. 109.

Certifyingand/or awarding body	Body issuing qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas or titles) formally recognising the achievement of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) of an individual, following an assessment and validation procedure[16].
Competence	Competence is an ability that extends beyond the possession of knowledge and skills. It includes: i) <u>cognitive competence</u> involving the use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially; ii) <u>functional competence</u> (skills or know-how), those things that a person should be able to do when they work in a given area; iii) <u>personal competence</u> involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation; and iv) <u>ethical competence</u> involving the possession of certain personal and professional values[17].
Credit	Credit describes the value of an amount of learning. It can be transferred to a qualification from learning achieved from formal, informal and non formal settings. Credit can be allowed to accumulate to predetermined levels for the award of a qualification. The processes involved in valuing credit, transferring credit and accumulating credit are governed by rules in a credit framework[18].
Education Sectors	Education Sectors refer to the main subgroups within education and training e.g. schools, technical and vocational education, and higher education.
Informal learning	Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective[19].
Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes are clear statements of what a learner can be expected to know, understand and/or do as a result of a learning experience.
Level descriptor	A general statement that summarises the learning outcomes appropriate to a specific level in a qualifications framework. Level descriptors are usually grouped in domains of learning.

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[16]CEDEFOP (2011), p. 10 & 11.

[17]Coles &Werquin (2006), p. 23.

[18]Adapted from Coles &Werquin (2006), p. 23.

[19]CEDEFOP (2011), p. 54.

Lifelong learning	All learning activity undertaken throughout life, which results in improving knowledge, know-how, skills, competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons[20].
National Qualifications Framework	Instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria or criteria for levels of learning achieved. This set of criteria may be implicit in the qualifications descriptors themselves or made explicit in the form of a set of level descriptors. The scope of frameworks may be comprehensive of all learning achievement and pathways or may be confined to a particular sector, for example initial education, adult education and training, or an occupational area. Some frameworks may have more design elements and a tighter structure than others; some may have a legal basis whereas others represent a consensus of views of social partners[21].
Non-formal learning	Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view[22].
Programme	The arrangements made for the teaching and learning of a body of knowledge, set of skills and of wider competences. A learning programme can lead to a qualification.
Provider	An organisation that plans and delivers education/training and assessment services that often leads to the award of qualifications or components of qualifications.
Qualification	Qualificationis a formal certificate issued by an official agency, in recognition that an individual has been assessed as achieving learning outcomes or competencies to the standard specified for the qualification title, usually a type of certificate, diploma or degree. Learning and assessment for a qualification can take place through workplace experience and/or a program of study. A qualification confers official recognition of value in the labour market and in further education and training[23].
Qualifications Framework	Instrument for development and classification of qualifications (at national or sectoral levels) according to a set of criteria (such as using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes[24].

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[20]CEDEFOP Glossary (2011), p. 67.

[21]Coles &Werquin (2006) p. 22.

[22]CEDEFOP Glossary (2011) p.71.

[23]Coles &Werquin(2006)p. 21 & 22.

[24]CEDEFOP Glossary (2011) p. 82.

Qualifications system	Qualifications system includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalising national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, quality assurance processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent. One feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit framework of qualifications[25].
Quality assurance	Quality assurance is a component of quality management and is 'focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled'[26]. In relation to education and training services, quality assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in the design, delivery and award of qualifications within an education and training system. Quality assurance ensures stakeholders interests and investment in any accredited program are protected.
Quality assurance framework	A set of principles, guidelines, tools and standards that act as a reference for guiding the consistent application of quality assurance activities.
Quality indicators	Formally recognised figures or ratios used as yardsticks to judge and assess quality performance[27].
Quality principles	Overall intentions and direction of a quality framework or an organisation with regard to quality assurance.
Quality standards	Technical specifications which are measurable and have been drawn up by consensus and approved by an organisation recognised at regional, national or international levels. The purpose of quality standards is optimisation of input and/or output of learning[28].
Quality assurance system	Quality assurance system includes all aspects of a country's activity related to assuring the quality of education and training. These systems include the following elements: • clear and measurable objectives and standards, guidelines for implementation, including stakeholder involvement, • appropriate resources, • consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external

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[25] Coles &Werquin(2006), p. 22.

[26] AS/NZS ISO 9000:2006: Quality management systems—Fundamentals and vocabulary, p. 9.

[27] CEDEFOP Glossary (2011), p. 88.

[28] CEDEFOP Glossary (2011), p. 96

	review, • feedback mechanisms and procedures for improvement, • widely accessible evaluation results.
Referencing	Referencing is a process that results in the establishment of a relationship between the national qualifications framework and that of a regional qualifications framework.
Regional qualifications framework	A broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region. A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country.
Registering agency	Registering agencies are those competent bodies responsible for approving education and training providers e.g. national qualifications agencies, official review boards or other nationally approved bodies or agencies. Registering agencies function within a quality assurance system.
Registration of providers	Registration processes include formal acknowledgement by a registering agency that a provider meets relevant quality standards. Under NQFs it is usual for a provider to be registered in order to deliver and assess accredited programs and issue awards. Some agencies differentiate between the two processes, e.g.: • formal acknowledgement that the provider meets key generic standards • formal acknowledgement that the provider meets specific standards related to the provision of teaching, learning and assessment of a specific program. For the purpose of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, registration of providers is the term used for both processes.
Standard (in education and training)	Statement approved and formalised by a competent body, which defines the rules to follow in a given context or the results to be achieved. Also refer to Achievement Standards.
Transparency	The degree to which a qualifications system can be understood by users. It depends on theclarity of the meaning of a qualification (outcomes, content, levels, standards, awards). It implies the exchange of information about qualifications in an accessible way within and outside the country of award. When transparency is achieved, it is possible to compare the value and content of qualifications at national and international level.

Validation of learning outcomes	Confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against pre-defined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of achievement standards, including qualification or unit(s) of a qualification. Validation typically leads to certification[29]. This includes the notion of recognition of prior learning or accreditation of prior learning.

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[29]Adapted from CEDEFOP (2011), p. 125.

ACRONYMS

AANZFTA – ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area

APEC – Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

APQN - Asian Pacific Quality Network

AQAN – ASEAN Quality Assurance Network

ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations

EQF - European Qualifications Framework

INQAAHE – International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

MRAs - Mutual Recognition Arrangements

NQF – National Qualifications Framework

TVET – Technical and Vocational Education and Training

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