

NQF state of play

 **Luxembourg 2020**

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Overview

Stage of development: Activation stage

NQF linked to EQF: ✓

Scope of the framework:

Comprehensive NQF including all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training.

Number of levels:

Eight

Legal basis/stage of development:

Law on the recognition of professional qualifications (2016) (in French) Regulation on the recognition of professional qualifications (2017) (in French)

NQF/EQF website:

✉ [Website](#)

Qualifications register/database:

✉ [Information on secondary education programmes](#)

✉ [Register of higher education diplomas](#)

Introduction and context

Public expenditure on education in Luxembourg as a percentage of GDP is around the EU average; it was further increased to support teachers and families during the school closure period linked to the Covid-19 pandemic ([1]). Strengths of the education and training system are a high rate of participation in early childhood education and care; tertiary education attainments among the highest in the EU (56.2% in 2019 compared to the EU average of 40.3%); a rate of employment of recent graduates also above the EU average; and a high percentage of adults participating in lifelong learning (19.1% in 2019 compared to the EU average of 10.8%). In contrast, levels of underachievement in reading, maths and science among 15 years old in the 2018 Programme for international student assessment (PISA) are significantly higher than EU averages: 29.3% in reading (compared to EU average 22.5%), 27.2% in mathematics (compared to EU average 22.9%) and 26.8% in science (compared to EU average 22.3%). This is strongly influenced by socioeconomic background and the ability of children to cope with the trilingual education in the country. The percentage of pupils leaving education and training early is low (7.2% in 2019) and there is virtually full employment of young secondary and tertiary graduates in Luxembourg. In 2019, the employment rate for 20-24 years old tertiary graduates was 94.2%, well above EU average of 85.0%. The employment rate among those with upper secondary or post-secondary (non-tertiary) education was also high (78.2% in 2019 against an EU average of 75.9%) (European Commission, 2020).

As a response to the European qualifications framework (EQF) initiative, the work on a national qualification framework (NQF) started in 2009. It was based on an initial government go-ahead and continued during 2010 and 2011, resulting in an eight-level comprehensive Luxembourg qualifications framework (*Cadre Luxembourgeois de qualifications*, CLQ)) covering all types and levels of qualification.

Policy objectives

The development and implementation of the EQF is seen as an opportunity to make explicit and transparent the existing education and training levels and the links between them. The initial scope of the framework, acting as a non-binding and a guiding framework for stakeholders, individuals, education and training providers and the labour market, has not changed (INFPC, 2019).

An important element in favour of the CLQ is the geographic and labour market location of Luxembourg. Being host to a large number of workers from neighbouring countries like Belgium, Germany and France, Luxembourg sees the development of the CLQ as a way to aid comparison and recognition. The high immigration rate and the large proportion of foreign workers make it necessary to pay attention to the coherence between the framework and those of the neighbouring countries. The adoption of the 2016 law on recognition of professional qualifications signals official commitment to the framework (Cedefop, 2020a; 2020b).

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

Luxembourg has introduced an eight-level reference structure. While the number of levels corresponds with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the descriptors reflect the national tradition and context. At each level, descriptors are differentiated according to knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes (*connaissances, aptitudes, attitudes*). While the level of detail is higher, the relationship to the EQF can be clearly identified. This is, for example, the case for the third (attitude) column which is based on the principles of responsibility, autonomy and context ([2]) as with the EQF ([3]). The CLQ level descriptors are included as annex of the regulation of 17 February 2017 on the recognition of professional qualifications; this establishes the CLQ as the main reference point to which foreign qualifications should be compared ([4]).

The decision to use the above concepts reflects gradual development of a learning-outcomes or competence-based approach in VET; the competence-based approach has a prominent position in VET reform. Use of learning outcomes (or *compétences*) in education and training has varied between subsectors; there is a different degree of implementation in different education and training systems, most advanced in compulsory and vocational training, particularly following the Law on VET reform, 2008 ([5]) and the amended Law on VET reform, 2019 ([6]). Competences for primary education are formulated in the *socle de compétences* (skills base) ([7]); whereas for secondary and VET education competences are elaborated in the *acquis d'apprentissage* (Cedefop, 2016).

Recent years have brought about a change; most qualifications are described through learning outcomes. In initial vocational education, all qualifications and programmes have been described using learning outcomes and can be accessed via the register of the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth ([8]).

In secondary VET, development of programmes (in cooperation with chambers) is based on the occupational profile ([9]), on the training profile ([10]) and on the training programme based on the training profile which:

- a. defines the learning outcomes for each competence and regroups

- them by learning domain;
- b. organises the learning domains and outcomes in modules and credits;
- c. for curriculum, determines the content of the different modules (INFPC, 2019).

The VET Law of 2008, which lays down the basic objectives of vocational education and training and which also covers the main aspects of quality assurance, was amended in June 2019 and entered into force July 2019 ([11]). In agreement with the professional chambers, the technical adaptations are introduced to improve sustainably the quality of vocational training. The amended law incorporates into the Labour code provisions relating to apprenticeship contracts and the internship agreements that are provided for in the 2008 law; it also makes certain clarifications and amendments. The law provides that a first extension of the apprenticeship contract for one year is granted automatically if the apprentice needs it to complete his or her training and that a second extension of up to one year may be granted if the parties to the contract agree (Article L. 111-8 (2)).

Further work on standards and training profiles based on explicit learning outcomes will support coherence between qualifications and CLQ levels.

Higher education is organised in courses lasting one semester, each constituting assessable modules allocated credit points (European credit transfer and accumulation system). These courses are increasingly defined and described using learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are included in the new law on the organisation of the University of Luxembourg ([12]), which lays down that each programme requires specific objectives, based on the acquisition of certain knowledge, competences and transversal skills. Further, the obligation to define learning outcomes is also included in the 2010 Grand-Ducal decree ([13]) on the organisation of short-cycle programmes and related student graduation.

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The formal adoption of the CLQ as a lifelong learning tool is still under discussion at political level and by different stakeholders. With the adoption of the law on recognition of professional qualifications, however, the CLQ was established as the formal reference point for recognition of professional qualifications acquired outside Luxembourg ([14]).

The development and implementation of the CLQ is being coordinated by the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth, which also acts as national contact point (NCP) for EQF in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. As the bodies responsible for formal qualifications, both of these ministries (in conjunction with the bodies mentioned below) are responsible for quality assurance of the relevant qualifications. Apart from the NCP's natural connection with the Ministry of Higher Education, which ensures the link with all the parties involved, including the university, there is also a link with the social partners. Consultation and active involvement of the various parties concerned has benefitted from this centralised situation (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014).

Although the overall framework responsibilities have not been laid down, there are clear responsibilities for qualifications at different CLQ levels. Qualifications referenced at levels 1 to 4 are the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth ([15]), while at levels 6 to 8 they are the responsibility of the Ministry for Higher Education and Research; at level 5 they are the responsibility of the Ministry for National Education, Children and Youth together with the Chamber of Trades for the master craftsperson's diploma (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training; Ministry of Higher Education and Research, 2014). Social partner involvement is a core principle in VET policy; the professional chambers ([16]) are independent policy institutes and with the 2008 reform their role is reinforced (Cedefop, 2019). Chambers act as partners for official consultation and are directly associated with the legislative and executive procedure of the Grand Duchy.

The Department for Coordination of Educational and Technological Research and Innovation (SCRIPT) – under the authority of the education ministry – and its School Quality Development Agency (Agence pour le

Développement de la Qualité Scolaire, ADQS) are responsible for quality assurance of school education (INFPC, 2018). External evaluation of the education system is outsourced to the University of Luxembourg. A National Observatory of School Quality ([17]) was also created in January 2018 at the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth to report on the school system; it produces findings based on research and recommendations (Cedefop, 2020).

Quality assurance in higher education uses external evaluation, as there is no national quality assurance agency. Instead, the Ministry of Higher education and Research has outsourced the process to foreign agencies and experts. The University of Luxembourg is evaluated every four years ([18]), with the focus of evaluation alternating between research and learning and teaching. The Minister of Higher Education and Research commissions a foreign EQAR-registered agency to perform the institutional evaluation ([19]). The 2009 law ([20]) on the organisation of higher education provides for external quality assurance of private higher education institutions and their programmes, as well as the short-cycle programmes of secondary schools. Private higher education institutions and their programmes are also evaluated every five years by a foreign EQAR-registered ([21]) agency commissioned by the Minister of Higher Education and Research ([22]). Short-cycle programmes offered by secondary schools are evaluated by an expert group nominated by the Minister of Higher Education and Research, which is an ENQA ([23]) affiliate member. For both foreign private higher education institutions and their programmes, and for short-cycle programmes in secondary schools, only accredited programmes and institutions are officially recognised by the State.

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

[24]

The development of validation systems in Luxembourg has been closely related to the national lifelong learning strategy ([25]). Legislation recognises an individual right to benefit from the validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning (under some conditions) ([26]). This process is known as 'validation of prior experiential learning' or *validation des acquis de l'expérience* (VAE) and has been operational since 2010 ([27]). The current legal framework on validation consists of several laws, covering secondary technical and vocational education, advanced technician diplomas and the University of Luxembourg. VAE arrangements are in place for formal qualifications awarded through the 'general secondary education' system in Luxembourg (including technical and vocational education, to be distinguished from 'classical secondary education', not covered by VAE) ([28]), post-secondary non-tertiary education qualifications, such as master craftsperson certificates, and higher education qualifications (both short-cycle degrees and qualifications awarded by the University of Luxembourg). Since 2016, new legal provisions ([29]) guarantee the right to individualised guidance to VAE candidates for qualifications under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education.

Vocational and technical qualifications can be acquired through validation. An exception is the secondary general school leaving certificate (*Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires générales*, DFESG) that cannot be acquired through validation. In higher education, qualifications at levels 6 to 8, only parts of qualifications or modules can be recognised through validation. Any type of prior experiential learning relevant to the targeted qualification, whether it is the result of formal, non-formal or informal learning activities in the education and training sector, the labour market or the third sector, can be used to apply for validation.

The Ministry of National Education takes responsibility for the implementation of VAE in relation to secondary level vocational and technical qualifications as well as master craftsperson certificates.

The Ministry for Higher Education holds general responsibility for higher education validation arrangements, but VAE procedures are

decentralised, with a key role played by the short-cycle higher education providers (*lycées*) for the advanced technician diplomas and the University of Luxembourg for bachelor, master and PhD programmes. The new law on the University of Luxembourg, affecting VAE, came into force on 1 August 2018.

The small size of the country aids informal coordination between different validation stakeholders. Validation is a regular topic of discussion, with changes to the legislative framework on validation and improvements in the provision of orientation and guidance to validation candidates being considered. The value of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal contexts is largely accepted in Luxembourg. This is due to the high value attributed to lifelong learning and to the consensual political culture, with social partners and stakeholders involved in the validation process (Houot, 2016).

Changes are expected in the coming years, creating an overarching legal framework with general principles for validation for all sectors.

NQF implementation and impact

The Luxembourg NQF is an eight-level outcome-based comprehensive framework, including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education (VET, general education, higher education); it has reached activation stage. Implementation structures are in place. The framework has an important role in improving transparency and comparability of qualifications and is established as the formal reference point for recognition of foreign professional qualifications. It is a reference point for the use of learning outcomes and is also used as reference point for renewal of qualifications and programmes. It is known to a certain number of actors in education and the labour market, but disseminating CLQ on a wider level and to larger target groups is the key challenge for the next period.

When the work started in 2009, development and implementation of the EQF was originally seen as an opportunity to make explicit the existing education and training levels and the relationships between them. This was considered important not only for qualifications users (to support lifelong learning for individuals and to enable employers to see the relevance of qualifications), but also for education and training providers. The explicit levels of learning outcomes introduced by the framework are expected to function as a reference point for curriculum development and may help to improve overall consistency of education and training provision.

Implementation of the CLQ was slow during 2013-14, partly reflecting the lack of a clear legislative basis and an agreed strategy shared by all stakeholders on how to proceed. The adoption, in November 2016, of a law on recognition of professional qualifications, established the CLQ as the formal reference point for recognition of foreign professional qualifications. This integration into the legislative structure signals official commitment to the framework and represents an important step towards full implementation.

The ENIC-NARIC ([30]) has been using the CLQ since 2016 as a reference point for the registration/recognition of foreign diplomas. The procedure for obtaining formal recognition of a higher education diploma acquired in another country is described on the portal for lifelong learning ([31]).

A comprehensive national database or register of qualifications has not yet been set up and there are no relevant developments in this regard.

Currently there are two registers in place: information on secondary education programmes, including VET ([32]) and the register of national higher education diplomas ([33]).

NQF and EQF levels are not yet included on certificates and diplomas in Luxembourg. However, NQF and EQF levels are included on certificate supplements in VET, and the ministry requests the inclusion of levels on diploma supplements in higher education; they are already included in some higher education diploma supplements. Some qualifications awarded outside formal education and training also include NQF/EQF levels (European Commission and Cedefop, 2020).

Some qualifications in Luxembourg posed challenges in terms of levelling. The vocational aptitude diploma (*Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle*, DAP) that can be acquired through apprenticeships has been assigned to the CLQ/EQF level 3, and the master craftsman qualification ([34]) to CLQ/EQF level 5 (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018). This is different in the frameworks of the German-speaking countries where these types of qualification were referenced to EQF levels 4 and 6 respectively (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).

Referencing to the EQF

Luxembourg referenced its qualifications levels to the EQF and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in June 2012; a referencing report was published in 2014.

Important lessons and future plans

While a solid basis for the NQF has been established in Luxembourg, implementation slowed following the referencing to the EQF in 2012. This was caused by the lack of a clear legal basis and some uncertainty among stakeholders over the role to be played by the CLQ at national level. Adoption of the 2016 law on recognition clarified the position of the CLQ at national level and provided the basis for development towards a more advanced operational status. Discussions continue on strengthening the role of CLQ as a lifelong learning tool, though no political decision has been taken yet. This includes the development of procedures for inclusion of qualifications from outside formal education and training system and considerations on setting up a comprehensive national database of qualifications. Started as a systematic description of qualifications from the formal education and training system (with the same standards being used also for validation of non-formal and informal learning), the CLQ may open to qualifications awarded outside the formal system, to address the high number of citizens holding unofficial and non-recognised certificates and diplomas. To accomplish this, specific approaches to accreditation and quality assurance of these qualifications, and to their inclusion in the framework, are being considered (Cedefop (2020), National qualifications frameworks developments in Europe 2019). However, there are no plans for evaluations, updates or further development of the NQF in Luxembourg for the time being.

Main sources of information

- The Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth acts as EQF NCP:

<http://www.men.public.lu/fr/index.html>

- CLQ/EQF web page: <https://www.lifelong-learning.lu/Detail/Article/Comprendre/le-cadre-luxembourgeois-des-qualifications/en>
- Information on secondary education programmes: <https://portal.education.lu/programmes/Home>
- Register of higher education diplomas:

http://www.mesr.public.lu/enssup/registre_des_titres/index.html

- Ministry of Higher Education and Research; Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth (2014). *Report on referencing the Luxembourg qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area.* <https://europa.eu/europass/sl/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf>

National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	Doctoral diploma (Phd) (Doctorat) Certificate following specific training course in medicine (Diplôme de formation spécifique en médecine générale)	8
7	Master diploma (Master)	7
6	Bachelor diploma (Bachelor)	6
5	Master craftsman diploma (Brevet de maîtrise) Advanced technician diploma (Brevet de technicien supérieur) Specialised advanced technician diploma (Brevet de technicien supérieur spécialisé)	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires) Technical secondary school leaving certificate (Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires techniques) Technician diploma (Diplôme de technicien)	4
3	Vocational aptitude diploma (Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle - DAP) Certificate attesting completion of middle cycle technical secondary education (Certificat de réussite du cycle moyen de l'enseignement secondaire technique) Certificate attesting completion of five years secondary education (Certificat de réussite de 5 années d'enseignement secondaire)	3
2	Vocational capability certificate (Certificat de capacité professionnelle - CCP)	2

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**Certificate attesting completion of lower cycle,
technical secondary education (Certificat de
réussite du cycle inférieur de l'enseignement
secondaire technique)**

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Acronyms

ADQS	School Quality Development Agency
BTS	<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur</i> [Advanced technician diploma]
CLQ	Cadre Luxembourgeois des qualifications, CLQ (Luxembourg qualifications framework)
DAP	<i>Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle</i> [Vocational aptitude diploma]
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance for Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European qualifications framework
NQF	national qualifications framework
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework for the European higher education area
VAE	<i>validation des acquis de l'expérience</i> [validation of non-formal and informal learning]
VET	vocational education and training

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Related content

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European inventory of NQF



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