

NQF state of play



Liechtenstein 2020

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Overview

Stage of development: Activation stage

NQF linked to EQF: ✓

Scope of the framework:

NQF for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ) and NQF for higher education.

Number of levels:

Eight

Legal basis/stage of development:

Ordinance on the national qualifications framework of the Principality of Liechtenstein for VET qualifications (2017) (in German)
Qualifications framework for higher education (2013) and included in the Higher Education Act and in the Higher Education Ordinance (in German)

NQF/EQF website:

[Website](#)

Qualifications register/database:

[Supplements \(with NQF/EQF levels\)](#)

Introduction and context

Lichtenstein's education system is the responsibility of the State, which supervises State schools and private schools. The nine years of compulsory schooling (primary and lower secondary level) are followed for around 65% of young people in Liechtenstein by a basic vocational education and training (apprenticeship) with or without an integrated baccalaureate ([1]). Around 25% of students attend a general upper secondary baccalaureate (*Gymnasium*). A small percentage attend upper secondary specialised school programmes or they find a job in the workplace as semi-skilled workers. The structure of Liechtenstein's education system is characterised by the small size of the country, which makes it irrational to offer a complete education system at all levels. In vocational and professional education especially, but also in higher education programmes, cooperation networks have been established with neighbouring countries. Liechtenstein makes financial contributions in these sectors. Places to study at schools and universities are obtained with the help of arrangements with foreign ministries and departments; at upper secondary level, for example, the entire school-based part of the basic vocational education takes place in Switzerland. Liechtenstein contributes both directly (through shareholding) and indirectly (through participation in inter-cantonal finance agreements) to the running costs of these education institutions. In Austria it is primarily boarding schools and baccalaureate schools that are attended by Liechtenstein pupils. Liechtenstein has only a few higher education institutions. Around 70% of higher education students attend courses at a Swiss university or at a Swiss university of applied science; around 15% study at Austrian universities (Eurydice, 2020).

In 2011, the government laid the foundation for developing an integrating national qualifications framework for lifelong learning for Liechtenstein (NQFL), potentially covering all parts of education and training ([2]). From the beginning, the development of NQFL was closely coordinated with Switzerland, with whom Liechtenstein has established a common VET system.

In the first phase, the NQFL has been developed for formal education in higher education and vocational education. In 2013, a qualifications framework for higher education, defined in terms of learning outcomes in line with the qualifications framework in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA), was adopted and included in higher education law. It was

self-certified against the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in 2013 and forms an integral part of the NQFL. The national qualifications framework for vocational qualifications (NQFL-BBV) adopted on 19 December 2017 was paving the way to full implementation of the framework. As in Austria and Switzerland, general education is currently not included in the framework.

The NQFL was referenced to the EQF in October 2016, with the referencing report published in 2017.

Policy objectives

The NQFL, and certificate and qualification supplements, aim at improving the transparency and comparability of qualifications from Liechtenstein and referencing them to the EQF.

More specifically, the NQFL aims to (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.25):

- a. describe adequately the education system, improving the transparency, the clarity and the comparability of qualifications in VET, higher VET and higher education;
- b. support, in terms of labour market needs, an employer's assessment of the skills of vocational graduates from Liechtenstein and enable a similar process for graduates with qualifications from abroad;
- c. improve the employability of Liechtenstein-educated specialists and managers in the country and abroad.

In the longer term, NQFL is seen as a tool to support lifelong learning through better understanding of qualifications and learning opportunities, improved access to and participation in education and training, and valuing all learning outcomes, in formal, non-formal and informal settings.

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

The NQFL comprises eight levels. Competence-oriented descriptors detail the requirements for each level; these are closely aligned with the EQF descriptors, but also adjusted to suit specific national features. Level descriptors ([3]) are identical to those of the Swiss NQF-VPQ.

Table 1. **The main elements of the descriptors in NQFL-BBV**

Knowledge	Knowledge
	Understanding
Skills	Procedural skills
	Sensorimotor skills
Competences	Professional competences
	Personal competences: ● autonomy ● social competences ● leadership competences

Source: Adapted from Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein (2017).

Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. Knowledge refers to declarative knowledge and is further subdivided into knowledge and understanding. Skills refer to the capacity to apply knowledge and solve problems: a distinction is drawn between procedural and sensorimotor skills. Competences express application of knowledge and skills in the work context and are subdivided into professional and social competences.

All subsystems have taken important steps in implementing a learning outcomes approach, but to varying degrees. Learning outcomes already play an important accreditation role in higher education. In general education, standards were introduced in 2010 and subsequently tested for grades 3, 4, and 8. A competence-based approach is being strengthened in teaching and evaluation of general education. In line with

the amended VET law in 2008 ([4]), qualifications and curricula have been revised with a stronger focus on competences and equipping students with the competence to act (*Handlungskompetenz*) (Cedefop, 2016).

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

The legal basis for the national qualifications framework for vocational qualifications – *Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen des Fürstentums Liechtenstein für Abschlüsse der Berufsbildung* (NQFL- BBV) – is the decree adopted 19 December 2017 and put into force on 1 January 2018.

The NQFL is supervised by the Ministry of Education. The National Agency for International Educational Affairs (AIBA) ([5]) has been appointed the EQF national coordination point (NCP) to carry out administration and coordination tasks connected with the NQFL.

Supervision of vocational education and training is carried out by the Office of Vocational Training and Career Counselling ([6]). The educational part of dual training, vocational education at school and professional tertiary education are conducted at Swiss institutions and are therefore the responsibility of these authorities. In addition, the concept of VET includes an obligation of internal quality assurance for the providers of vocational training.

Responsible bodies in higher education are the Government and the higher education institutions themselves. The Government is the supervisory body of the higher education institutions and is supported by the [Office of Education](#) ([7]). Liechtenstein does not have its own agency of accreditation. The necessary accreditations and evaluations in connection with the granting or recognition procedures and quality assurance are formed in cooperation with foreign agencies (Eurydice, 2020).

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

[8]

No major changes have been made since the 2018 inventory on non-formal and informal learning. Validation approaches have been developed in initial VET and higher education, taking into account different target groups, responsibilities and methods. The Vocational Training Act determines that admission to any examination or qualification does not depend on undertaking specified education programmes; those who have at least five years' work experience can participate in the final examinations. The validation process in VET is based on a similar process to that developed by Switzerland, following a similar series of steps. However, due to the small size of the country, only the first step (information and advising) is performed in Liechtenstein; after that the candidates are referred to Switzerland.

Most development in higher education has occurred in the past five years. The Education Authority (*Schulamt*) regards development of the national qualifications framework for higher education (*Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen Fürstentum Liechtenstein für den Hochschulbereich*) (NQFL-HS) as an opportunity for anchoring lifelong learning more within higher education, and for improving validation and recognition of prior learning achieved outside the higher education system. The legal bases for admission to higher education have been formalised. The Law on higher education regulates the conditions and process of admission without a *matura* certificate ([9]) and limitation of crediting learning acquired outside the higher education system. It is possible to recognise non-formal and informal learning as a contribution to achieving a qualification, up to a maximum of one sixth of the necessary workload (European credit transfer and accumulation system credit points) for the whole qualification.

Standards used in VET and higher education for validation are those of existing programmes. The NQFL offers opportunities to integrate further non-formal and informal learning outcomes. However, the NQFL-BBV was adopted in 2017 with no plans to include non-formal and informal learning.

NQF implementation and impact

Liechtenstein has committed to an integrating national qualifications framework for lifelong learning for Liechtenstein (NQFL) (Ministry of Education (2017)). The first phase of implementation focuses on formal education in VET and HE, underpinned by two sectoral qualifications frameworks: one encompassing HE qualifications (NQFL-HS), adopted in 2013, and one for vocational education (NQFL-BBV), in force since January 2018. Having both sectoral frameworks integrated in the NQFL offers opportunities to integrate further non-formal and informal learning outcomes. General education qualifications are not included in the NQFL.

The NQFL has reached activation stage, implementation structures are in place, main working methods and instruments being put in place and end-users being made aware of the existence of the NQF and related services. The NQF is a reference point for the use of learning outcomes and plays a role in improving transparency and comparability of qualifications at national and international levels. The NQF for higher education (NQFL-HE) is already operational.

An important characteristic of the NQFL is that levels 6 to 8 are also open to higher vocational qualifications awarded outside higher education as a separate strand next to higher education qualifications.

Figure 1. **Y-Model of NQFL**



Source: Ministry of Education (2017).

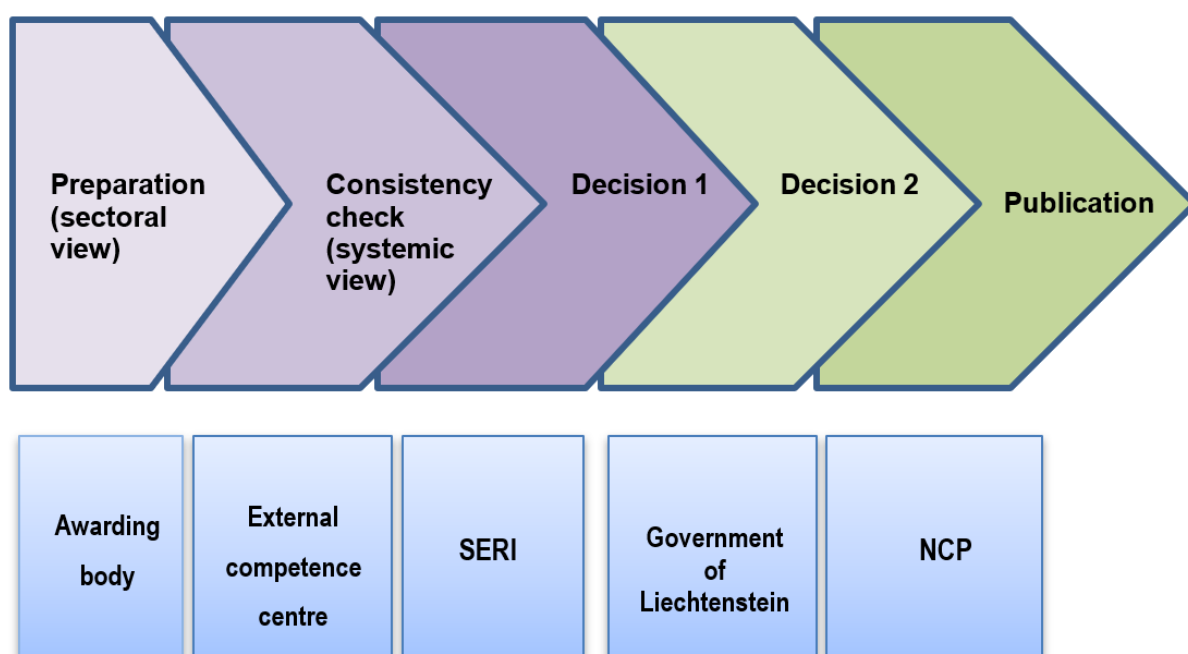
The process of assigning vocational and professional qualifications a level

is carried out by Switzerland. By February 2021 [a total of 588 formal vocational and professional qualifications had been attributed levels in Switzerland](#): 245 IVET qualifications, mostly distributed to levels 3 and 4; and 340 professional qualifications, at levels 5 to 7; and three to level 8. The process is expected to continue ([\[10\]](#)).

As defined in the ordinance on NQFL-BBV (Article 7), the Liechtenstein Government has to approve the inclusion and the level of a qualification, in a separate procedure, and can take into account those qualifications assigned by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) in Switzerland. So far, the Liechtenstein Government has approved 88 qualifications out of 120 ([NQFL website](#)).

Figure 2 outlines the main steps in the levelling process.

Figure 2. **Main steps of the levelling process**



Source: Ministry of Education (2017), p. 29.

For public involvement and information, the NQFL website (*Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen Fürstentum Liechtenstein*) was established in spring 2013, providing information and updates ([\[11\]](#)).

Liechtenstein doesn't have a fully fledged qualifications database or register yet. On the NQFL website there is a section, diploma supplement, where vocational qualifications are registered with links to supplements including the NQFL and EQF levels ([\[12\]](#)). These levels are indicated on certificates/diplomas and supplements in initial VET and higher education.

NQFL plays an important role for comparability and transparency of qualifications with the other European countries. It also supports the recognition of foreign qualifications, as Liechtenstein recruits 50% of their workers from the neighbouring countries (European Commission and Cedefop 2020).

Education providers particularly benefit from greater transparency. With its focus on competences, the NQFL supports transparent descriptions of expected learning outcomes in programmes and assessment and can thus make an important contribution to quality assurance in education. As the education market is international, EQF and NQFL also open up new options for international offers and cooperation in education (AIBA).

Referencing to the EQF

The NQFL was referenced to the EQF in October 2016 and the referencing report was published in 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Important lessons and future plans

An evaluation of the NQFL is not yet planned as the framework is quite new. An analysis, however, is foreseen after the framework has been used for some time.

As a next step, Liechtenstein intends to print the NQFL level on certificates and diplomas, including the link to the homepage, hoping to make the NQFL more visible.

Liechtenstein is following developments in non-formal and informal in the neighbouring countries very closely.

Main sources of information

- The National Agency of International Education Affairs (AIBA) is the EQF NCP: <https://www.aiba.li/>
- NQFL website is available at: <http://www.nqfl.li/>
- Ministry of Education (2017). *The EQF referencing report for the Principality of Liechtenstein*. <https://europa.eu/europass/sl/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf>

National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	Advanced federal diploma for higher education (tertiary federal examination) (Eidgenössisches Diplom (Höhere Fachprüfung))	8
7	Advanced federal diploma for higher education (tertiary federal examination) (Eidgenössisches Diplom (Höhere Fachprüfung))	7
6	Advanced federal diploma of higher education (tertiary federal examination) (Eidgenössisches Diplom (Höhere Fachprüfung)) Standard level for this type of a qualification. Advanced federal diploma of higher education issued by a college of higher education (Diplom HF ausgestellt von einer Höheren Fachschule) Standard level for this type of a qualification. Federal diploma of higher education (tertiary federal examination) (Eidgenössischer Fachausweis (Berufsprüfung))	6
5	Federal diploma of higher education* (tertiary federal examination) (Eidgenössischer Fachausweis (Berufsprüfung)) Federal VET diploma (three- or four-year dual VET programmes) (Federal VET diploma (three- or four-year dual VET programmes)) Eidgenössisches Fähigkeitszeugnis (drei-und vierjährige duale Berufsbildung))	5
4	Federal VET diploma (three- or four-year dual VET programmes) (Eidgenössisches Fähigkeitszeugnis (drei-und vierjährige duale Berufsbildung)) Standard level for this type of a qualification.	4

3	Federal VET certificate (two-year VET programmes) (Eidgenössisches Berufsattest (zweijährige Berufsausbildung)) Standard level for this type of a qualification.	3
2	(not available)	2
1	(not available)	1

Acronyms

AIBA	National Agency for International Education Affairs
EQF	European qualifications framework
NQFL	national qualifications framework for Liechtenstein
NQFL-BBV	Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen des Fürstentum Liechtenstein für Abschlüsse der Berufsbildung [national qualifications framework for vocational education]
NQFL-HS	Nationaler Qualifikationsrahmen Fürstentum Liechtenstein für den Hochschulbereich [national qualifications framework for higher education]
NQF-VPQ	Swiss national qualifications framework for vocational and professional education and training
SERI	Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation [State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation]
VET	vocational education and training

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[URLs accessed 19.2.2021]

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Related content

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Liechtenstein - European inventory of NQFs 2020

European inventory of NQF



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