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NHEQF Guidelines

All about NHEQF:

(Excerpts from the Draft NHEQF policy)

- The NEP 2020 envisages the formulation of expected learning outcomes for all higher education programmes.
- It states that "A National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) will be formulated" and "it shall be in sync with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) to ease the integration of vocational education into higher education."
- Additionally, it points out that "higher education qualifications leading to a degree/diploma/certificate shall be described by the NHEQF in terms of such learning outcomes."
- The Policy also envisages the setting up of facilitative norms for issues, such as, credit transfer, and equivalence, through the NHEQF.
- The NEP 2020 also mandates relevant agencies, "to identify specific skills that students must acquire during their academic programmes, with the aim of preparing well-rounded learners with 21st century skills."

What is a Quality Framework?

A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is an instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which would integrate and coordinate the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive qualification framework.

It is a way of **structuring existing and new qualifications**, which are defined by learning outcomes reflecting the graduate profile/attributes, programme learning outcomes and course learning outcomes: i.e., statements of what the learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do and demonstrate on the successful completion of an approved programme of study/learning.

The National Qualification Framework helps to:

1. improve the transparency of individual qualifications through the defined learning outcomes;
2. enhance the understanding of the education and training systems;
3. promote credit accumulation and transfer within and between programmes of study;
4. provide an instrument of accountability of the education and training systems;

5. make education and training systems more demand-focused and user friendly;
6. reduce the 'mismatch' between education and the labour market ; and
7. facilitate the recognition of prior learning.

Qualification specifications are general statements of the typical achievement of learners who have been awarded a qualification on successful completion of a programme of study leading to the award of qualifications such as a Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, and Doctoral degree.

Competency-based education and training, and outcome-based learning constitute important aspects of a Qualifications Framework (QF). In the context of the Qualifications Framework, the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes acquired/possessed by the individual student are more important than the mode(s) of acquiring them. It helps the employers compare the diverse nature of qualifications through certain performance criteria that are to be considered while deciding on the learning outcomes for competency -based education and training.

India recognized the need for NQF both for general education and for vocational education and training (VET). The Ministry of Labour and Employment developed the National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) and the Ministry of Human Resource Development the Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF). These two frameworks were considered and used while developing the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) notified in 2013.

NHEQF: National Higher Education Qualifications Framework:

- The NHEQF is an instrument for the development, classification, and recognition of qualifications along a continuum of levels from 5 to 10, with levels 1 to 4 of the National Skills Qualification s Framework (NSQF) covering school education.
- Each level is structured based on the defined learning outcome s, i.e., statements of what the learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do on the successful completion of an approved programme of study/learning at a specified level.
- Students on completion of the chosen programme (s) of study under the NHEQF must possess and demonstrate the graduate profile/attributes defined in terms of the expected learning outcomes, whether they were

acquired through one mode of learning or the other, or through a combination of different modes of learning such as direct in-person/face- to-face instruction, open and distance learning, online education, and hybrid/blended modes.

Characteristics and purposes of NHEQF:

The fundamental premise underlying the NHEQF is that higher education qualifications such as a certificate, diploma and degree are awarded based on the demonstrated achievement of learning outcomes and academic standards expected of graduate s of a programme of study .

It is a way of structuring existing and new qualifications, define d by expected learning outcomes which are used as reference points for formulating qualification specifications/descriptors. They provide general guidance for articulating the essential learnings associated with a programme of study and course s within that programme of study.

The NHEQF represents a comprehensive framework that classifies qualifications based on a set of performance criteria, approved nationally and comparable with international quality standards. It specifies qualification types and framework levels and the expected learning outcomes corresponding to these qualification types.

Qualification type refers to the broad discipline-free nomenclature such as a Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor's degree, Master's Degree, and Doctoral Degree used in the NHEQF to describe each category of NHEQF qualification. Each qualification is aligned to an academic credit system based on the attainment of defined learning outcomes and the academic workload of students who complete the chosen programme(s) of study.

The main purposes of the NHEQF are to:

- Provide an integrated national framework for recognizing and accrediting qualifications offered by different types of institutions engaged in higher education, including vocational education and training, and technical/professional education in India.
- Furnish higher education providers with the points of reference when setting and assessing academic standards, designing curricula, teaching-learning - assessment strategies, and periodic review of programmes.
- Enable prospective students, parents, higher education providers, employers, and other stakeholders to understand the nature and level of the expected

learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, attitude s, values and competencies) and defined graduate attributes/ profile associated with the qualifications concerning higher education.

- Assist in the identification of potential progression pathways from one level of education to the higher level of education, including through multiple entry, exit and re-entry points/ options, particularly in the context of lifelong learning.
- Help ensure confidence of the public in higher education qualifications and academic standards by facilitating public understanding of the defined learning outcomes, graduate attributes/profile and academic achievements expected of students completing specific programmes of study.
- Maintain national standards and international comparability of learning outcomes and academic standards to ensure global competitiveness, and to facilitate student mobility.
- Support the development and maintenance of pathways which provide access to qualifications and assist people to move between different education and training sectors and between those sectors and the labour market.
- Support individuals' lifelong learning goals and process by providing the basis for their progression in education and training and gaining recognition for their prior learning and experiences.
- Guide quality assurance arrangements for education and training offered by higher education institutions.
- Support and enhance the national and international mobility of graduates and work e rs through increased recognition of the value and comparability of the qualifications concerning higher education in India.

Types and nomenclature of qualifications:

Table 1: Types of qualifications and qualification title / nomenclature

Type of qualification	Qualification title / nomenclature and programme duration
Undergraduate Certificate	Undergraduate Certificate (Field of study/discipline). Programme duration: First year (first two semesters) of the undergraduate programme, followed by an exit 10-credit bridge course(s) lasting two months, including at least 6- credit job-specific internship/apprenticeship that would help the graduates acquire job-ready competencies required to enter the workforce.
Undergraduate Diploma	Undergraduate Diploma (Field of study/discipline). Programme duration: First two years (first four semesters) of the undergraduate programme, followed by an exit 10- credit bridge course(s) lasting two months, including at least 6-credit job-specific internship/apprenticeship that would help the graduates acquire job-ready competencies required to enter the workforce.

Type of qualification	Qualification title / nomenclature and programme duration
Bachelor's degree	Bachelor of (Field of study /discipline) Programme duration: First two years (first four semesters) of the undergraduate programme, followed by an exit 10- credit bridge course(s) lasting two months, including at least 6-credit job-specific internship/apprenticeship that would help the graduates acquire job-ready competencies required to enter the workforce. Examples: • Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com.), Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA). Programme duration: Three years (six semesters).

	• Bachelor of Engineering (B.E), Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech.) Programme duration: Four years (eight semesters).
Bachelor's degree (Honours / Research)	Bachelor of (Field of study/discipline) (Honours/Research). Programme duration: Four years (eight semesters).
Post Graduate Diploma	Post-Graduate Diploma in (Field of study/discipline). Programme duration: One year (two semesters) in the case of those who exit after successful completion of the first year (two semesters) of the 2-year master's programme, followed by an exit 10-credit bridge courses lasting two months, including at least 6-credit job-specific internship/apprenticeship that would help the graduates acquire job- ready competencies required to enter the workforce.
Master's degree	Master of (Field of study/discipline). Programme duration: Two years (four semesters) for those who have obtained a 3-year/6-semester bachelor's degree, or one year (two semesters) in the case of those who have obtained a 4-year/8-sem ester Bachelor's (Honours/ Research) degree. Examples • Master of Business Administration (MBA). Programme duration: Two years (Four semesters) after obtaining a Bachelor's degree). • Master of Technology (M.Tech.) Programme duration: Two years (four semesters) after obtaining a Bachelor's degree in engineering/technology.

Doctoral degree	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

NHEQF Levels:

Table 2: Higher education qualifications at different levels on the NHEQF

NHEQF Level	Examples of higher education qualifications located within each level
Level 5	Undergraduate Certificate. Programme duration: First year (first two semesters) of the undergraduate programme.
Level 6	Undergraduate Diploma. Programme duration: First two years (first four semesters) of the undergraduate programme.
Level 7	Bachelor's Degree. Programme duration: First three years (Six semesters) of the four-year undergraduate programme
Level 8	Bachelor's Degree (Honours/Research). Programme duration: Four years (eight semesters).
Level 8	Post-Graduate Diploma. Programme duration: One year (two semesters) for those who exit after successful completion of the first year (two semesters) of the 2-year master's degree programme
Level 9	Master's degree. Programme duration: Two years (four semesters) after obtaining a Bachelor's degree.
Level 9	Master's degree. Programme duration: One year (two semesters) after obtaining a Bachelor's degree Honours / Research).
Level 10	Doctoral degree

Expected Graduate Attributes:

Type of learning outcomes	The Learning outcomes descriptors
Learning outcomes that are specific to disciplinary / interdisciplinary areas of learning	Graduates should be able to demonstrate the acquisition of:
	a comprehensive knowledge and coherent understanding of the chosen disciplinary /interdisciplinary areas of study in a broad multidisciplinary context, their different learning areas, their linkages with related fields of study, and current and emerging developments associated with the chosen disciplinary / interdisciplinary areas of learning.
	procedural knowledge required for carrying out professional or highly skilled work/tasks related to the chosen field(s) of learning, including knowledge required for undertaking self-employment initiatives, and knowledge and mindset required for entrepreneurship involving enterprise creation, improved product development, or a new mode of organization.
	skills in areas related to specialization in the chosen disciplinary / interdisciplinary area(s) of learning in a broad multidisciplinary. context, including wide-ranging practical skills, involving variable routine and non-routine contexts relating to the chosen field(s) of learning.
	capacity to extrapolate from what has been learnt, and apply acquired competencies in new/unfamiliar contexts, rather than merely replicate curriculum content knowledge, to generate solutions to specific problems.
Generic learning outcomes	Complex problem -solving: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the capability to: • solve different kinds of problem s in familiar and non-familiar contexts and apply the learning to real-life situations.
	Critical thinking: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the capability to: • apply analytic thought to a body of knowledge, including the analysis and evaluation of policies, and practices, as well as evidence, arguments, claims, beliefs and the reliability and relevance of evidence,

	• identify relevant assumptions or implications; and formulate coherent arguments, • identify logical flaws and holes in the arguments of others, • analyse and synthesize data from a variety of sources and draw valid conclusions and support them with evidence and examples.
	Creativity: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the ability to: • create, perform, or think in different and diverse ways about the same objects or scenarios, • deal with problem s and situations that do not have simple solutions, • innovate and perform tasks in a better manner, • view a problem or a situation from multiple perspectives, • think 'out of the box' and generate solutions to complex problems in unfamiliar contexts. Communication Skills: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the skills that enable them to: • listen carefully, read texts and research papers analytically and present complex information in a clear and concise manner to different groups/audiences, • express thoughts and ideas effectively in writing and orally and communicate with others using appropriate media, • confidently share views and express herself/himself, • construct logical arguments using correct technical language related to a field of learning, work/vocation, or an area of professional practice, • convey ideas, thoughts and arguments using language that is respectful and sensitive to gender and other minority groups.
	Analytical reasoning/thinking: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the capability to: • evaluate the reliability and relevance of evidence. • identify logical flaws and holes in the arguments of others. • analyse and synthesise data from a variety of sources. • draw valid conclusions and support them with evidence and examples and addressing opposing viewpoints.

	Research-related skills: The graduates should be able to demonstrate: • a keen sense of observation, inquiry, and capability for asking relevant/ appropriate questions, • the ability to problematize, synthesize and articulate issues and design research proposals, • the ability to define problem s, formulate appropriate and relevant research questions, formulate hypotheses, test hypotheses using quantitative and qualitative data, establish hypotheses, make inference based on the analysis and interpretation of data, and predict cause-and-effect relationships. • the capacity to develop appropriate methodology and tools of data collection, • the appropriate e use of statistical and other analytical tools and techniques, • the ability to plan, execute and report the results of an experiment or investigation, • the ability to acquire the understanding of basic research ethics and skills in practicing /doing ethics in the field/ in personal research work, regardless of the funding authority or field of study.
	Coordinating/ collaborating with others: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the ability to: • work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams, • facilitate cooperative or coordinated effort on the part of a group, • act together as a group or a team in the interests of a common cause and work efficiently as a member of a team.
	Leadership readiness/qualities: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the capability for: • mapping out the tasks of a team or an organization and setting direction. • formulating an inspiring vision and building a team that can help achieve the vision, motivating and inspiring team members to engage with that vision. • using management skills to guide people to the right destination.

	'Learning how to learn' skills: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the ability to: • acquire new knowledge and skills, including 'learning how to learn' skills, that are necessary for pursuing learning activities throughout life, through self - paced and self-directed learning aimed at personal development, meeting economic, social, and cultural objectives, and adapting to changing trades and demands of workplace, including adapting to the changes in work processes in the context of the fourth industrial revolution, through knowledge/ skill development/reskilling. • work independently, identify appropriate resources required for further learning, • inculcate a healthy attitude to be a lifelong learner.
	Digital literacy and skills: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the capability to: • use ICT in a variety of learning and work situations, • access, evaluate, and use a variety of relevant information sources, • use appropriate software for analysis of data.
	Multicultural competence: The graduates should be able to demonstrate: • the acquisition of knowledge of the values and beliefs of multiple cultures and a global perspective to honour diversity, • capability to effectively engage in a multicultural group/society and interact respectfully with diverse groups, • capability to lead a diverse team to accomplish common group tasks and goals.

	Value inculcation: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge and attitude that are required to: • embrace and practice constitutional, humanistic, ethical, and moral values in life, including universal human values of truth, righteous conduct, peace, love, nonviolence, scientific temper, citizenship values, • practice responsible global citizenship required for responding to contemporary global challenges, for enabling learners to become aware of and understand global issues and to become active promoters of more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable societies, • formulate a position/argument about an ethical issue from multiple perspectives and use ethical practices in all aspects of one's work, • identify ethical issues related to work, and follow ethical practices, including avoiding unethical behaviour such as fabrication, falsification or misrepresentation of data, or committing plagiarism, and adhering to intellectual property rights, • recognize environmental and sustainability issues and participate in actions to promote sustainable development. • adopt objective, unbiased, and truthful actions in all aspects of work.
	Autonomy, responsibility, and accountability: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the ability to: • apply knowledge, understanding and/or skills with an appropriate degree of independence relevant to the level of the qualification, • work independently, identify appropriate resources required for a project, and manage a project through to completion, • exercise responsibility and demonstrate accountability in applying knowledge and/or skills in work and/or learning contexts appropriate for the level of the qualification, including ensuring safety and security at work places.

	Environmental awareness and action: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the acquisition of and ability to apply the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required to take appropriate actions for: • mitigating the effects of environmental degradation, climate change and pollution, • effective waste management, conservation of biological diversity, management of biological resources and biodiversity, forest and wildlife conservation, and sustainable development and living. • Community engagement and service: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the capability to participate in community-engaged services/ activities for promoting the well - being of the society.
	Empathy: The graduates should be able to demonstrate the ability to identify with or understand the perspective, experiences, or points of view of another individual or groups, and to identify and understand other people's emotions.

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