



NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

| in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (NQF - KSA)

Second Edition

1444 AH - 2023 AD

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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The Framework (second edition) was approved by the Board of Directors decision at the Education and Training Evaluation Commission No. 1/1/C11 D2 in its eleventh meeting (second session) on 9/ Jumada II/1444 AH, corresponding to 28/ March/2023 AD.

The first edition of National Qualifications Framework was revised to allow flexibility in accommodating various study systems, including (annual, semester, three-semester, and quarter systems, etc.). The revisions included defining the credits assigned and the actual hours, adding vocational and technical qualifications, linguistic review, and modifying related formulations.



INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia strives to build methodologically cohesive education and training systems by focusing on the benefits of advanced international practices and experiences in two fields: education and training. These are two fundamental pillars for sustainable development and the focal points for realizing the ambitious goals of its Vision 2030 and the programs extending from it. In the human capacity development program especially, the Vision serves as the cornerstone for national empowerment in terms of knowledge and skills acquisition, fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, and providing lifelong learning opportunities for all.

In accordance with Saudi Cabinet Decision No. 108 on 25/Oct/2018, Article 4 of Paragraph 11 on: "The preparation of the NQF that includes the rules, regulations, standards, descriptors, terms and conditions and special procedures for it. Its' implementation is approved and supervised by the Cabinet." The Education and Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC) developed The NQF for Saudi Arabia (NQF-KSA) to make its terms of reference a guide for education and training institutions while building, developing, and restructuring their qualifications, advancing it and preparing its' infrastructure. Additionally, connected to it from the perspective of employment are the familiarity with the national cadre and its' levels. This is done in order to be a guide for the assessment of institutions, educational and training programs and their accreditation. In preparing the framework, alignment with the Unified Saudi Classification of Educational Levels and Specializations 2020 AD and regulations related to education and training, including those issued by the Universities Affairs Council, has been taken into account.

The NQF constitutes a comprehensive structure for classifying qualifications, their advancement and organization and their placement into levels of complexity and depth of learning outcomes. Equally significant, the Framework provides a common language and a working reference for comparison purposes. Furthermore, it is also described as a functional tool to better facilitate the transfer of knowledge, skills, and values across the various work environments at both national and international levels. Notably, the NQF acts as a key nexus that reinforces and consolidates relationships between education and training on the one hand, and the practical and realistic requirements of the labor market and the future jobs on the other. This relationship functions in such an interactive approach where education and training respond to and accommodate the conditions, aspirations and capabilities of the society, while fulfilling the requirements of sustainable development in Saudi Arabia.



DEFINITIONS



National Qualification Framework for Saudi Arabia (NQF-KSA)

A comprehensive system for designing, developing, organizing, and placing qualifications within eight levels. It also provides a description of the learning outcomes at each level, according to the target knowledge, skills, and values.



Awarding Body

An authorized educational or training institution, founded for the purpose of developing, designing and awarding qualifications, and delivering educational and training programs, licensed by relevant authorities, and operating in light of national or international laws and regulations adopted in Saudi Arabia.



Learning and Training Domains

Fields and paths that consist of the knowledge, skills, and values that learners or trainees are expected to acquire in a specific program or targeted qualification level. Learning outcomes are built in light of these fields and paths.



Qualification Placement

The formal output of the learning or training process obtained by the graduate in the regular education system, e-learning, or distance education. It's issued in the form of a document (certificate, diploma, or degree) by a recognized educational and/or training institution.



Actual hours

The time that a learner or trainee spends in various learning or training activities. It represents the actual contact hours, such as lectures, exercises, laboratories, field training activities, or other equivalents based on the governing laws and regulations.



Framework Levels

Progressive levels that are based on the complexity level and the depth of learning outcomes of each level. They are represented in eight levels to accommodate the education and training qualifications in public education, technical and vocational training, and higher education sectors, including tertiary military education.



Distance Education

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) or other alternative tools like publications and work-sheets to pursue and manage educational processes synchronously and/or asynchronously, where the teacher/faculty member and the learner are not physically together.



Credit Hours

The time required for learning and acquiring a qualification, which is calculated by the number of instructional hours required to achieve the learning outcomes of a qualification (15) actual hours are calculated for (1) credit hour.



Qualification

The formal output of the learning or training process obtained by the graduate in the regular education system, e-learning, or distance education. It's issued in the form of a document (certificate, diploma, or degree) by a recognized educational and/or training institution.



Qualification Alignment

An alignment of qualification levels issued by educational or training institutions (mostly foreign) that are licensed by the relevant Saudi authorities with their comparable levels within the NQF.



Academic qualification

A qualification obtained by a graduate in a specific educational or academic field from a recognized educational institution, such as natural sciences and languages, etc.



Technical Qualification (Applied)

A qualification obtained by a graduate in a specific functional or professional field from a recognized educational or training institution, which focuses on the knowledge and practical procedural or applied skills necessary to perform the tasks of a specific job or profession, is known as a vocational qualification. Examples of fields that offer vocational qualifications include Tourism and Hotel Management, Maintenance and Production Techniques, etc.



Professional qualification

A qualification obtained by a graduate in a specific professional discipline from a recognized educational or training institution. It often focuses on the specialized knowledge and skills necessary to practice a specific profession and is one of the requirements for practicing that profession, such as Medicine and Engineering, etc.



Exit Point (Early Graduation)

Academic degree qualifications that are awarded before the completion of the requirements of a longer educational or training program. They are awarded to the learner or trainee by a recognized body if they achieve the target learning outcomes and meet the placement requirements for the specific level of the exit point award (early graduation). It is not equivalent to the original entry program.



Learning Outcomes

Description of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do which is represented in his/her behavior at the end of a specific educational or training program. They represent the outcome of the teaching, learning, or training processes.



Integration of different national qualifications in Saudi Arabia to ensure consistency and quality leading to further confidence among educational and training institutions.



Regulation of national qualifications by standardizing their planning, designing, and developing processes to unify standards across Saudi Arabia.



Realization of lifelong learning principles by recognizing various learning styles as a reference for the progress of individuals through education and training.

FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

The NQF aims to provide an integrated system that ensures a high quality level, ability to prepare a globally competitive citizen, and an international recognition of national qualifications, through:



Maintaining consistency of qualifications and outcomes in line with national trends, development requirements, and the future professions.



Facilitation of learners' nationally and/or internationally transition between educational and training sectors, and the labor market to help engage in the work environment and navigate the different pathways associated with their qualifications.



Creation of a common language among educational, training, and recruiting institutions to ensure clarity and easiness of understanding qualification levels among education, training, and recruiting institutions or employers.



FRAMEWORK IMPORTANCE

It's manifested in the following



A reference for designing and developing qualifications:

The NQF is a reference document that provides guidance to educational and training institutions as well as employers when planning, building, and developing qualifications. Employers rely on the NQF to identify the skills of qualified individuals.



Achieving valence and equality:

The framework aims to achieve equal opportunities for graduates of various education and training institutions by ensuring consistency of their outcomes. This aims to increase the confidence levels of graduates who wish to continue their studies in various educational or training institutions, while also promoting the equality principle. The framework strives to ensure that all individuals, including those with disabilities and the gifted, benefit from equal empowerment opportunities and reinforce lifelong learning and training opportunities.



Alignment with development and the labor market requirements:

framework is based on a system of knowledge, skills, and values that keep pace with national development requirements. This system is reflected in the learning outcome specifications, which ensure the comprehensive development of the national workforce in line with the requirements of the development and the need of labor market and future professions.



Increasing confidence in national capabilities:

The framework enhances employers' confidence in the level of graduates' knowledge, skills, and values, as well as the specifications required by the labor market.



International alignment:

The NQF is consistent with the main characteristics of other regional and international frameworks, in order to enhance its opportunity to align with those frameworks. This alignment is reflected in the achievement of common features and specifications that provide mutual reliability and offer graduates a wide range of opportunities for education, training, and employment at both national and international levels.



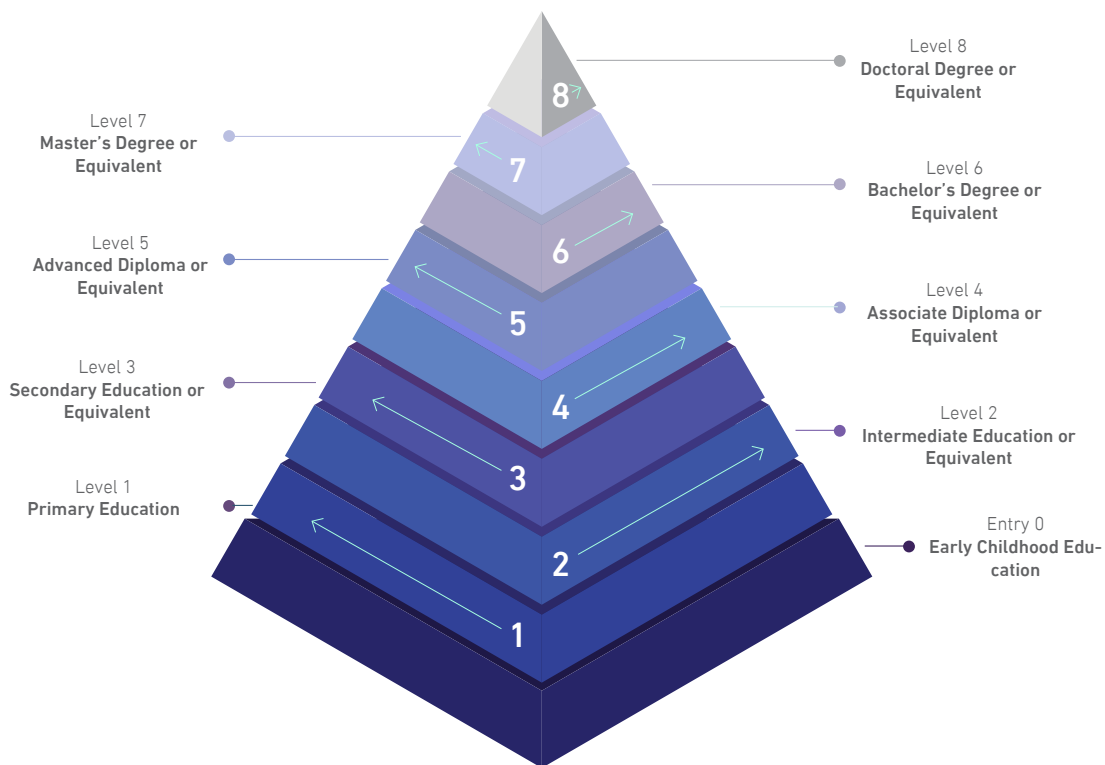
Comparing qualifications tool:

The NQF is a tool for comparing relevant qualifications issued by all official educational and training institutions in Saudi Arabia with their international counterparts. This enhances individuals' opportunities to move between different educational institutions and achieve mutual recognition of qualifications.



FRAMEWORK LEVELSI

The Levels are tiered vertical pathways categorized according to the breadth and depth of learning domains and their accumulation in educational programs. The levels start at an entry level and ending at level 8. Each level has a specific scope and depth, as they cover public, technical and vocational training, higher education, practical, civil, and military education sectors. Each level represents a progression of learning outcomes includes descriptors of the associated knowledge, skills, and values. The individual levels collectively form the NQF matrix of levels.



The National Qualifications Framework Levels



LEARNING & TRAINING DOMAINS

The Levels are tiered vertical pathways categorized according to the breadth and depth of learning domains and their accumulation in educational programs. The levels start at an entry level and ending at level 8. Each level has a specific scope and depth, as they cover public, technical and vocational training, higher education, practical, civil, and military education sectors. Each level represents a progression of learning outcomes includes descriptors of the associated knowledge, skills, and values. The individual levels collectively form the NQF matrix of levels.



According to the following:



Knowledge and Understanding

This includes the knowledge and understanding of the graduate/learner/trainee in the areas of learning, work, or profession in the following:

- Extensive deep knowledge and understanding of facts, concepts, principles, theories, processes, and procedures in the area of learning, training, work, or profession.
- Description of knowledge depth and type which can be general, specialized or multi-disciplinary.
- Description of knowledge breadth which can range from covering a single topic to multi-disciplinary areas.
- Description of knowledge complexity which refers to a combination of type, depth, and breadth of knowledge.



Values, Autonomy, and Responsibility

Involve what a graduate/learner/trainee represents in terms of principles, standards and ethics that direct success in the areas of life, work, or profession. They include:

- National values, and the desirable professional and human ethics.
- Managing continued self-learning and autonomy.
- Cooperation, teamwork and taking responsibility.



NQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Levels

1

Level 1 - Primary Education



Knowledge and Understanding

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have:

- Basic factual and procedural knowledge in general subjects,
- General foundational knowledge for everyday life and further learning,
- Knowledge and understanding of simple facts, ideas, concepts and the common tools and materials and their uses in everyday life.



Values, Autonomy, and Responsibility

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level, within simple, familiar and highly structured contexts, will be able to:

Values and Ethics

- Demonstrate simple awareness and understanding of values and ethics required to carry out basic tasks and deal with everyday life aspects including citizenship and the sense of belonging.

Autonomy and Responsibility

- Demonstrate the desire to learn or work with limited autonomy,
- Punctually carry out basic routine activities under direct supervision,
- Participate with colleagues in carrying out simple assigned tasks with limited responsibility,
- Demonstrate concern for personal health and hygiene.



Skills

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have basic cognitive, practical and physical, and communication and ICT skills to perform the following:

Cognitive Skills

- Apply foundational knowledge in familiar contexts, in everyday life.
- Identify and solve problems in simple, familiar, and highly structured contexts, in everyday life issues or field of study.
- Employ basic intuitive and logical thinking in simple and familiar contexts in the fields of study.

Practical and Physical Skills

- Use common basic tools and materials in everyday life to deal with simple and familiar practical activities, safely.
- Carry out simple, familiar, and highly structured practical tasks based on well- defined procedural guidelines.

Communication and ICT Skills

- Apply basic literacy, listening and speaking skills for participation in everyday life.
- Carry out simple arithmetic operations in familiar contexts,
- Use familiar digital technology tools and applications to obtain and process information, and to support learning and communication with others based on well-defined and highly organized guidelines.



Knowledge and Understanding

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have:

- A range of basic factual and procedural knowledge in a field of study or work.
- Basic knowledge and understanding of a range of simple facts, ideas, tools, materials, and/or terminology, relevant to a field of study or work.



Values, Autonomy, and Responsibility

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level, within simple, familiar and structured contexts, will be able to:

Values and Ethics

- Represent the values and ethics required for dealing with others and life related matters, and demonstrate awareness and understanding of citizenship, belonging, and empathy with others.

Autonomy and Responsibility

- Plan for learning or work, and make simple decisions with limited autonomy.
- Punctually carry out major activities under direct supervision.
- Participate with colleagues in carrying out defined tasks with limited responsibility, and lead some activities.
- Demonstrate care for health and emotional aspects, and basic social relations.



Skills

The graduate at this level will have a range of basic cognitive, practical, and physical, and communication and ICT skills to perform the following:

Cognitive Skills

- Apply basic knowledge in familiar contexts, in a field of study or work.
- Systemically solve problems in simple, familiar, and structured contexts, in the field of study or work.
- Employ basic thinking methods in simple and familiar contexts, in the field of study or work.

Practical and Physical Skills

- Use safely and effectively basic tools and materials to deal with simple and familiar practical activities,
- Carry out a range of simple, familiar, and structured practical tasks and activities based on well-defined procedural guidelines, in the field of study or work.

Communication and ICT Skills

- Communicate in written, verbal and non-verbal forms (in Arabic – and another language) to express a range of ideas, information, and emotions to others in familiar contexts,
- Carry out arithmetic operations in simple and familiar contexts,
- Use a range of standard digital technological and ICT tools and applications to obtain and process information, and to support and reinforce learning and communication with others based on well-defined and organized guidelines.

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Level 3 - Secondary Education or Equivalent



Knowledge and Understanding

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have:

- A range of factual and procedural knowledge relevant to a field of study or work.
- Basic theoretical and technical knowledge and understanding within a discipline or field of work.
- Basic knowledge and understanding of a range of facts, concepts, principles, tools, materials, and/or terminology relevant to a certain discipline or field of work.
- Basic knowledge of research and inquiry methodologies.



Values, Autonomy, and Responsibility

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level, within moderately complex and familiar contexts, will be able to:

Values and Ethics

- Demonstrate commitment to social values, public morals, laws, and exhibit responsible citizenship, consideration, and coexistence with others.

Autonomy and Responsibility

- Plan for self-development, organize study or work tasks, and make decisions regarding learning and /or tasks, with some autonomy.
- Perform and complete major tasks and activities under limited supervision.
- Work collaboratively and assume some responsibility while managing small groups to achieve common goals.
- Exhibit concern for health, emotional, and social aspects.



Skills

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have a range of basic cognitive, practical and physical, and communication and ICT skills to perform the following:

Cognitive Skills

- Apply basic theoretical and technical knowledge in familiar contexts within a field of study or work.
- Solve problems in moderately complex and familiar contexts, in a field of study or work.
- Apply critical and creative thinking, in moderately complex and familiar contexts, in a field of study or work.
- Exercise basic techniques of inquiry in familiar issues and/or problems.

Practical and Physical Skills

- Select and use safely and effectively a range of tools and materials to deal with moderately complex and familiar practical activities.
- Carry out moderately complex and familiar practical tasks and procedures, based on specified guidelines, in a field of study or work.

Communication and ICT Skills

- Effectively express a range of ideas, information, and emotions through written, verbal (in Arabic – and another language), and non-verbal communication with others in familiar contexts.
- Carry out mathematical operations in moderately complex and familiar contexts.
- Use a wide range of digital technological and ICT tools and applications to obtain, generate, process, and analyze data to reinforce learning and communication with others.



Knowledge and Understanding

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have:

- Basic theoretical and technical knowledge and understanding with some depth in a discipline or field of work.
- Basic specialized knowledge and understanding of various facts, concepts, principles, processes, techniques, practices, tools, materials, and/or terminology relevant to a certain discipline or field of work.
- Basic knowledge of research and inquiry methodology.



Values, Autonomy, and Responsibility

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level, within moderately complex and unfamiliar contexts, will be able to:

Values and Ethics

- Demonstrate awareness of values and ethics associated with professional practices in a discipline or work, and exhibit responsible citizenship, and consideration, and coexistence with others.

Autonomy and Responsibility

- Manage individual learning and working, work towards achieving goals and plans, and take decisions regarding learning and /or tasks based on specified evidence, with moderate autonomy,
- Manage major tasks and activities related to the discipline and/or work under indirect supervision,
- Collaborate with diverse work teams, supervise tasks with moderate responsibility, and work to achieve common goals.
- Demonstrate ability to manage health, psychological, and social aspects.



Skills

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have a range of basic cognitive, practical and physical, and communication and ICT skills to perform the following:

Cognitive Skills

- Apply and adapt theoretical and technical knowledge in specific and unfamiliar contexts in a specialist area related to a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.
- Resolve specific issues and problems in moderately complex and unfamiliar contexts in a specific discipline, professional practice, or field of work.
- Apply critical and creative thinking, in moderately complex and unfamiliar contexts, in a specific area within a discipline or field of work.
- Conduct research or investigations on unfamiliar issues and/or problems.

Practical and Physical Skills

- Select and use specific processes, techniques, tools, instruments, and/or materials to deal with moderately complex and unfamiliar practical activities.
- Carry out moderately complex and unfamiliar practical tasks in a specific discipline, professional practice, or field of work.

Communication and ICT Skills

- Communicate in a variety of forms to transfer specialized knowledge and skills to a group of audience.
- Use and interpret numerical data and graphical representations in moderately complex and unfamiliar contexts in a specific specialization, or field of work.
- Employ and adapt a broad range of standard digital technological and ICT tools and applications to search, process, combine, and analyze information and data.

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Level 5 - Advanced Diploma or Equivalent



Knowledge and Understanding

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have:

- A range of theoretical and technical knowledge and understanding with a focus in one or more areas related to specialization, professional practice, or field of work.
- A range of specialized knowledge and understanding of various facts, concepts, principles, techniques, practices, tools, materials and/or terminology relevant to a certain discipline or field of work.
- Basic knowledge of research methodology and inquiry techniques.



Values, Autonomy, and Responsibility

The graduate at this level, within moderately complex and unfamiliar contexts, will be able to:

Values and Ethics

- Adhere to the values and human and professional ethics associated with professional practices in a discipline or work, and demonstrate responsible citizenship, and consideration, and coexistence with others.

Autonomy and Responsibility

- Manage self-learning or work, set and work to achieve goals, and take decisions regarding learning and /or tasks based on different types of evidence, with moderate autonomy.
- Manage tasks and activities related to specialization and/or work under indirect supervision.
- Collaborate and lead teamwork to perform a range of tasks with moderate responsibility, and work effectively towards achieving common goals.
- Reinforce health, psychological and social aspects.



Skills

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have a range of specialized cognitive, practical and physical, and communication and ICT skills to perform the following:

Cognitive Skills

- Use and adapt a range of theoretical and technical knowledge in specific and unfamiliar contexts, in a specialist area related to a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.
- Resolve issues and problems, in moderately complex and unfamiliar contexts In an area of specialization, related to a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.
- Apply critical thinking and foster creativity in practical solutions, in moderately complex and unfamiliar contexts, related to a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.
- Plan and conduct research or investigations on specialized unfamiliar issues and/or problems.

Practical and Physical Skills

- Select and adapt specialized processes, techniques, tools, instruments, and/or materials to deal with moderately complex and unfamiliar practical activities.
- Perform moderately complex and unfamiliar practical tasks in a specific discipline, professional practice, or field of work.

Communication and ICT Skills

- Appropriately communicate to demonstrate knowledge comprehension, knowledge transfer, and specialized skills to a range of audiences.
- Analyze and interpret numerical data and use graphic representations in moderately complex and unfamiliar contexts related to a discipline or field of work.
- Use various digital technological and ICT tools and applications to search, process, and analyze a variety of information and data.



Knowledge and Understanding

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have:

- A broad in-depth integrated body of knowledge and comprehension of the underlying theories, principles, and concepts in one or more disciplines or fields of work.
- In-depth knowledge and comprehension of processes, materials, techniques, practices, conventions, and/or terminology.
- A broad range of specialized knowledge and understanding informed by current developments of a discipline, profession, or field of work.
- Knowledge and comprehension of research and inquiry methodologies.



Values, Autonomy, and Responsibility

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level, within various complex contexts, will be able to:

Values and Ethics

- Demonstrate commitment to values, standards, and human and professional ethics and represent responsible citizenship, and coexistence with others.

Autonomy and Responsibility

- Effectively plan for and achieve academic and/or professional self-development, assess own learning and performance, and autonomously make decisions regarding self-development and/or tasks based on convincing evidence.
- Autonomously and professionally manage tasks and activities related to the discipline and/or work,
- Collaborate responsibly and constructively on leading diverse teams to perform a wide range of tasks while playing a major role in planning and evaluating joint work,
- Participate effectively in developing field of specialization and society.



Skills

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have a broad range of advanced cognitive, practical and physical, and communication and ICT skills to perform the following:

Cognitive Skills

- Apply integrated theories, principles, and concepts in various contexts, related to a discipline, profession, or field of work.
- Solve problems in various complex contexts in one or more disciplines or fields of work.
- Use critical thinking and develop creative solutions to current issues and problems, in various complex contexts, in a discipline, profession or field of work.
- Conduct inquiries, investigations, and research for complex issues and problems.

Practical and Physical Skills

- Use and adapt advanced processes, techniques, tools, instruments, and/or materials in dealing with various complex practical activities.
- Carry out various complex practical tasks and procedures related to a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.

Communication and ICT Skills

- Communicate effectively to demonstrate theoretical knowledge comprehension and transfer of knowledge and specialized skills, and complex ideas to different audience,
- Use mathematical operations and quantitative methods to process data and information in various complex contexts, related to a discipline or field of work,
- Select, use, and adapt various basic and specialized digital technological and ICT tools and applications to process and analyze data and information and to support and enhance research and/or projects.



Knowledge and Understanding

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have:

- Deep and specialized body of knowledge and understanding covering theories, principles, and concepts in main areas of a discipline, profession, or field of work
- Knowledge and accurate understanding of processes, materials, techniques, practices, conventions, and/or terminology relevant to a certain discipline, profession, or field of work.
- Advanced knowledge and understanding of recent developments in one or more disciplines, areas of practice, or professions,
- Knowledge and understanding of a range of established and specialized research and/or inquiry techniques of in a discipline, profession, or field of work.



Values, Autonomy, and Responsibility

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level, within complex and advanced contexts, will be able to:

Values and Ethics

- Demonstrate integrity and professional and academic values when dealing with various issues.

Autonomy and Responsibility

- Initiate professional planning for learning and/or work, professional development, monitor learning and performance, and participate in academic and/or professional strategic decisions with high autonomy.
- Effectively manage specialized tasks and activities in a discipline, work, or field of practice with high autonomy.
- Effectively collaborate and participate in research or professional projects or groups, undertake leadership roles, and take high responsibility for the work.
- Contribute to reinforcing the quality of life for the society



Skills

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have a range of advanced and specialized cognitive, practical and physical, and communication and ICT skills to perform the following:

Cognitive Skills

- Apply specialized theories, principles, and concepts in advanced contexts in a discipline, profession, or field of work.
- Solve problems in complex and advanced contexts in a discipline, profession, or field of work.
- Critically assess, review, and reflect on key concepts, principles, and theories; and provide creative solutions to current issues and problems in complex and advanced contexts, in a discipline, profession, or field of work.
- Conduct advanced research or professional projects using specialized research and inquiry methodologies in a discipline, profession, or field of work.

Practical and Physical Skills

- Use advanced and specialized processes, techniques, tools, instruments, and/or materials to deal with complex and advanced practical activities.
- Carry out complex and advanced practical tasks and procedures in specialized areas related to a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.

Communication and ICT Skills

- Communicate in various forms to disseminate knowledge, skills, research results, and innovations related to a discipline or field of work to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- Process data and information quantitatively and/or qualitatively in complex and advanced contexts related to a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.
- Select, use, and adapt advanced digital technological and ICT tools and applications to process and analyze a variety of data and information sets to support and advance leading research and/or projects related to a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.



Knowledge and Understanding

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have:

- A deep specialized structure of knowledge and advanced understanding in a field of study or work, where advanced information and specialized theories, leading principles, and concepts necessary to create new and leading knowledge including interaction between fields and disciplines.
- Comprehensive accurate knowledge and understanding of various processes, materials, techniques, practices, conventions, and/or terminologies relevant to a discipline, profession, or field of work.
- Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of recent developments and emerging issues and challenges in one or more disciplines, areas of practice, or professions, ,
- Current advanced knowledge acquired from original research and scientific activities considerably contribute in developing a specialized discipline, profession, or field of work.



Values, Autonomy, and Responsibility

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level, within highly complex and new contexts, will be able to:

Values and Ethics

- Demonstrate high levels of integrity and human professional and academic values while dealing with emerging ethical and professional issues, research, and knowledge.

Autonomy and Responsibility

- Continuously develop professional experiences, taking strategic, academic, and professional decisions autonomously.
- Efficiently manage specialized tasks and activities in a discipline, work, or field of practice, with substantial autonomy,
- Collaborate and participate professionally and proactively leading groups in various research and/or professional projects while assuming full responsibility for the work.
- Reinforce professional relationships, a knowledge-based society, and quality of life.



Skills

The graduate/learner/trainee at this level will have a range of highly advanced cognitive, practical, and physical, and communication and ICT skills to perform the following:

Cognitive Skills

- Apply leading theories, principles, and concepts in highly complex contexts in a discipline, profession, or field of work.
- Solve key and advanced problems in highly complex contexts, in a discipline, profession, or field of work.
- Evaluate, integrate, and critically review and reflect on emerging concepts, principles, and theories; and develop creative and innovative solutions to emerging and highly challenging and complex issues and problems in one or more disciplines, areas of practice, or professions.
- Develop, adapt, and implement highly advanced research or inquiry methodologies to generate original knowledge that significantly contributes to a discipline, profession, or field of work.

Practical and Physical Skills

- Use novel and highly advanced processes, techniques, tools, instruments, and/or materials to deal with highly complex, emerging, and challenging practical activities in one or more specializations.
- Carry out a range of highly advanced and advanced complex practical tasks and procedures related to a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.

Communication and ICT Skills

- Communicate in numerous forms to disseminate and promote original knowledge and new insights, and to conduct scientific and professional dialogue with peers, specialized groups, and the society at large.
- Process, interpret, and employ quantitative and/or qualitative data in highly complex and new research, projects, or innovations related to a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.
- Apply and adapt highly advanced and current digital technological and ICT tools and applications to support and reinforce research and innovations in a discipline, professional practice, or field of work.



QUALIFICATIONS TYPES BY DOMAINS

Qualifications vary between academic, applied, vocational, or technical in line with the requirements of the development, the labor market, future jobs, and keeping pace with renewable knowledge and rapid continuous changes imposed by the knowledge and technical transformations on the work environments. These qualifications can be in a specific discipline or can be interdisciplinary encompassing learning and training domains from different disciplines. For this purpose, the NQF identifies two types of qualifications:



Primary Qualification

A qualification associated with formal education and recognition. It represents a comprehensive, integrated package of learning outcomes that include knowledge, skills, and values which qualify learners/trainees to enter the labor market or to continue learning or training (e.g., secondary school certificate, or a bachelor degree certificate).



Additional Qualification

A qualification encompassing an integrated package of learning outcomes of knowledge, skills, and values, but to lower levels of depth and breadth than a major qualification. This type of qualification is often used for purposes of meeting job performance requirements or bridging to pursue further learning and training in later stages, or for career mobility purposes. It can be built upon in light of an approved evaluation approach (e.g., additional diplomas of various levels).

Additional qualifications originate from a number of basic specialized programs based on a scientific basis representing a single discipline. They could also be inter-disciplinary programs based on a scientific base that are shared between many specializations and cannot be achieved through a single discipline. They can be considered as standalone programs.



KEY QUALIFICATION LEVELS

All levels of qualifications approved by the NQF-KSA have been classified for all sectors of education and training, including general education, higher education, and both civil and military technical and vocational training. (See Appendix B).



DETERMINATION OF CREDIT HOURS (ACCREDITED UNITS)

The **credit hours (units) in the NQF** represent a unit of measurement for the amount of time required for learning or training, whether it is regular (traditional), online or distance learning or training. The credit hours are calculated through the number of contact hours required to achieve the learning outcomes of a qualification. It is transferable and equivalent at the national and international levels based on the guidelines and regulations approved by the relevant authorities, in a way that enhances opportunities for mobility and progress between the education, training and work sectors. The credit hours are described as follows:

- The academic load represents the total approved credit hours (units) that the learner or trainee is allowed to register, and the minimum and maximum levels are determined according to the guidelines and regulations governing education and training institutions.
- The total number of credit hours (units) for each course or program is an indication of the expected amount of learning or training expected from learner/trainee to achieve the learning/training outcomes. They are linked to the number of notional actual studying hours (contact hours) for the different learning activities, such as lectures, activities, workshops, and laboratories, field training activities, electronic learning, etc. in accordance with the regulations and guidelines organizing it.
- One credit hour (unit) in the NQF is calculated as (15) actual hours, or its equivalent, according to the guidelines and regulations approved by the relevant authorities.
- The academic year reflects the approved period of time that the learner or trainee spends during the study year. It may be in the semester system (two semesters) or the three-semester system, with the exception of the summer semester, or the quarter system (four semesters), or the educational or training units' system, or its equivalent flexible systems in accordance with the regulations and guidelines organizing it.
- The duration of the academic year and the number of weeks in the semesters in education and training are determined on a full-time sabbatical basis, or its equivalent, in accordance with the regulations and guidelines organizing it.

QUALIFICATIONS ACCORDING TO DEGREES AFTER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Associate Diploma

An Associate Diploma is awarded upon successful completion of a minimum of 24 credit hours (units) after secondary level education or its equivalent. It could be a continuation of general education after the secondary level education. It takes one full-time academic year, or its equivalent to complete in accordance with the regulations and guidelines organizing it. It is designed to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for employment in an administrative or vocational fields that require limited specialized experience. This degree is considered a qualification by itself. It can also be considered as a basis for subsequent studies to obtain a higher qualification. Moreover, it could be granted as an exit point (early graduation) when designing some intermediate or advanced diplomas or bachelor programs.

Intermediate Diploma

This degree is awarded upon the successful completion of a minimum of (60) credit hours (units) after the secondary level or its equivalent. It usually takes (2) years of study in two full-time academic years of study, or the part-time equivalent in higher education in accordance with the regulations and guidelines organizing it.. An “Intermediate diploma” degree is designed to develop the knowledge and skills needed for employment in administrative fields, or professional supporting fields. This qualification leads to the attainment of general and theoretical knowledge fundamentals that constitute the scientific background required for further pursuing a bachelor’s degree it could also be designed as an exit point (early graduation) within designing some bachelor programs.

Advanced Diploma

This degree is awarded upon the successful completion of a minimum of (72) credit hours (units) after the secondary level or its equivalent. It is usually achieved after spending three full-time academic years, or the part-time equivalent in higher education in accordance with the regulations and guidelines organizing it. This qualification leads to the attainment of general fundamental theoretical knowledge and skills that represent the required scientific background for a specific professional field. This qualification is usually awarded for a field of specialization that does not require a bachelor’s degree it can also be awarded as an exit point (early graduation) within bachelor’s programs design. The learning outcomes of this qualification are similar to those of an intermediate diploma, with a difference in the duration of the program and the number of the approved credit hours (units).

Bachelor's Degree

This degree is awarded upon the successful completion of a minimum of (120) credit hours (units) after obtaining the secondary education certificate or its equivalent. It is usually achieved after spending (3-4) full-time academic years or the part-time equivalent in higher education, in accordance the guidelines and regulations of the relevant authorities. The duration of the program varies according to the nature of the specialty. Passing, (120) credit (unit) is usually the minimum requirement in most specialties. However, some specialties require completing more credit units, but the qualification remains with the same title and level. Credit hours (units) are registered in the academic transcript of the student to document the amount of additional learning for these specialties, with the exception of some professional specialties that require (6) or more full-time years of study and passing at least (180) credit, such as professional bachelor's degree of some medical specialties etc.

Higher Diploma

This degree is awarded upon the successful completion of a minimum of (24) credit hours (units) after obtaining a bachelor's degree, usually achieved after spending a minimum of two full-time semesters or equivalent in higher education. Programs leading to this qualification aim to provide learners with advanced academic, applied or professional learning to improve their professional knowledge and professional skills. It usually includes a set of advanced courses related to a specific professional specialization and may require the completion of a primary or secondary project. A graduate from higher diploma can further pursue master's degree, and this might require completing additional theoretical or applied learning. It could also be an exit point (early graduation) for designing a master's degree program.

A higher diploma is considered equivalent to a professional master's degree (1), or to an executive or applied master's degree program that can be completed within one year or requires the completion of 24 credit hours (units).

Master's Degrees

This qualification requires passing at least (24) credit hours (units) of postgraduate courses in programs that follow the method of studying courses only, or courses in addition to submitting a project, a thesis, or graduate research, the credit hours of which are not less than (6) units, or passing at least (30) credit hours of postgraduate courses in programs that follow the study of courses of a professional nature, and it takes a period of no less than two academic years on a full-time basis or equivalent, after obtaining a bachelor's degree or its equivalent.

The master's qualification is equivalent to the Professional Master qualification (2), the Executive, or Applied (in terms of the qualification level), it takes two academic years or equivalent and requires passing (30) credit hours. The educational or training institution may put forth additional conditions for pursuing a doctorate degree.

The master's qualification is also equivalent in terms of the qualification level to the bachelor's qualification in professional disciplines that require at least six years of study after secondary education and passing at least (180) credit hours, or a professional doctorate (11) in the specialization or equivalent such as medical specializations that take two academic years or equivalent and require passing (30) credit hours. The educational or training institution may put forth additional conditions for pursuing a professional doctorate degree.

Doctoral Degree

This degree is awarded upon the successful completion of a minimum of (30) hours (units) of advanced courses, after obtaining an master's degree. It takes a minimum of three academic years, or equivalent on a full-time basis.

The doctoral qualification is equivalent in level to a research doctorate which focuses on independent research in a specific field plus courses, and to a professional doctorate (2) that depends on application in the minor specialization of a specific field, which requires passing (12) credit hours. Obtaining this qualification takes a period of no less than (3) academic years, and some professional doctoral qualifications (2) require obtaining a 6-year professional bachelor's qualification or a master's degree, or a professional doctorate (1) in the field of specialization or its equivalent. In this case, the educational or training institution may put forth additional requirements for completing this degree.

¹ The first degree of a professional doctorate bears a doctoral title, but it is equivalent in complexity to the seventh qualification level (i.e. Master's degree). It requires a bachelor's degree in a specific discipline and focuses on the application in a specific field, such as "Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.), Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), and others.



EXIT POINT (EARLY GRADUATION) FROM EDUCATIONAL OR TRAINING PROGRAMS

The NQF, allows for flexibility regarding successful and continuous transition across educational and training levels, as well as promoting continuing education and training. There are specific guidelines and procedures for establishing exit points (early graduation) to award certificates and qualifications for a specific degree halfway towards academic, applied, or vocational programs (e.g. intermediate diploma qualification is considered as an exit point (early graduation) in an undergraduate program). These degrees may be awarded to learners after meeting the intended learning outcomes and the placement requirements of a specific level.

Qualifications given at exit point (early graduation) are not equivalent to the original scientific level of the program, but it is considered a recognition that learners have achieved the required knowledge, skills and values that qualify them for a specific academic or vocational level, which is determined during the initial design or development of the educational or training program with the following regulations:

1. Specification of exit points (early graduation) is an integral part of the program design.
2. Define the level of the qualification of an exit point (early graduation) and the title of the certificate awarded according to the NQF guidelines to stand as an independent and recognized qualification in accordance with the regulations and guidelines governing it.
3. Allow the student/trainee who are joining the program on the basis of an early exit point (early graduation) award to complete the program's final qualification degree if she/he meets the academic and GPA requirements.



GENERAL QUALIFICATION PLACEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Placement of national qualifications in the education or training sectors requires that the qualification meets certain requirements. The NQF has identified six general placement requirements for qualifications. They include:

1



Official Approval

The awarding institution should grant official approval from the relevant educational or training authority.

2



Stakeholder Engagement

The programs leading to qualifications should be designed and reviewed in consultation with stakeholders, employers, and experts in the field.

3



Qualification Objectives

Qualifications should have specific objectives, to explain the actual need for the design and delivery of the qualification.

4



Qualification Title

An appropriate qualification title should be used to clearly specify the type of qualification and its specialty.

5



Qualification Components

They should include the qualification title, level, area of specialty, learning outcomes, minimum credit hours, and years of study.

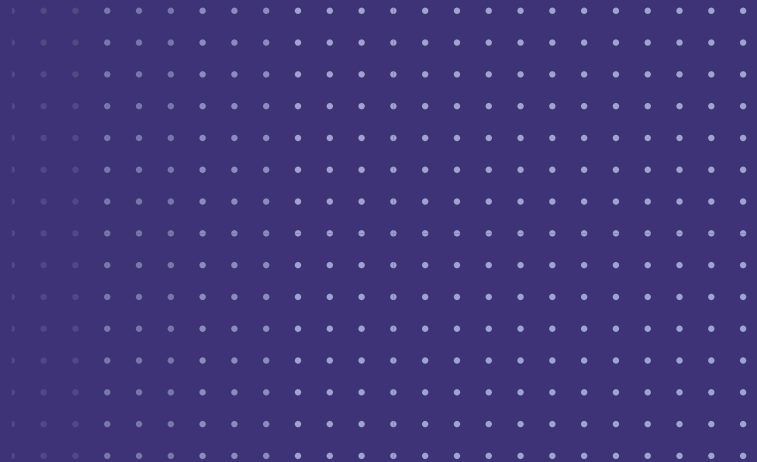
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Learning Outcomes Assessment

Clear and measurable evaluation and assessment criteria should be used to assess students'/trainees' achievement of program learning outcomes for the education and training programs.

Appendices



Appendix (A)

Placement requirements for academic degrees in the NFQ according to the qualification types

Academic degrees are placed in the NQF in accordance with the general requirements for placement page (See page 27). The credit hour in the framework is calculated according to the following guidelines:

- The study load represents the total credit hours (units) that the learner or trainee is allowed to register. The minimum and maximum study loads are determined according to the regulations and guidelines of the relevant education or training institution,
- The number of credit hours specified for each educational or training course or program is an indicator of the learning or training amount expected to obtain the qualification. It is related to the number of learning hours spent by the learner or trainee in various learning or training activities such as: lectures, exercises, laboratories, field training activities in accordance to the regulations and guidelines of the relevant education or training institution,
- One credit hour (unit) in higher education is equal to (15) hours or equivalent according to the regulations and guidelines of the relevant education or training institution,
- The contact hour refers to the amount of actual time spent by the learner/trainee in the different learning/training activities in higher education. It refers to the actual contact hours. The contact theoretical or clinical hour is not less than (50) minutes, whereas the contact practical or field hour is not less than (100) minute,
- The academic year refers to the approved time that the learner spends studying during the year. It can be divided into two or three semesters (excluding the summer semester), or into quarter system (four semesters). In some cases, the academic year is offered through educational and training units' system, or their equivalent, as part of flexible systems in accordance with the regulations and guidelines of the relevant education or training institution.

The following is an illustration of the minimum years and hours for qualifications, the conditions for joining them, and the requirements for their placement according to levels:

Minimum years and hours for qualifications and entry requirements*

Levels	Qualification types	Minimum number of years	Minimum credit hours (units)	minimum notional hours	Enrollment conditions
8	Ph.D. by courses and thesis or equivalent	3	30 hours for courses + a thesis or a research project	450	Obtaining a master's degree or equivalent
	Ph.D. by thesis or equivalent	3	12 hours + independent research in a specific field	450	Obtaining a 6-year professional bachelor's degree, or master's degree, of a professional doctorate 1 in the specialty field, or their equivalent
	Professional (2) Doctorate or equivalent	3	12 hours + independent research or application in a specific professional field	450	
7	Master's degree or equivalent with a thesis or project	2	24 hours + 6 credit hour thesis or project	360	Obtaining a bachelor's degree or equivalent
	Master's or equivalent in course system	2	30	450	Obtaining a bachelor's degree or equivalent
	Professional Master (2) or Professional Doctorate (1) or equivalent	2	30	450	Obtaining a bachelor's degree or equivalent
	Professional bachelor's degree or equivalent	6	180	2700	Obtaining a Secondary education qualification or equivalent
6	Higher Diploma / Professional or Applied Master (1)	1	24	360	Obtain a bachelor's degree or equivalent
	Bachelor's degree or equivalent	3	120	1800	Obtaining a Secondary education qualification or equivalent
5	Advanced Diploma or equivalent	3	72	1080	Obtaining a Secondary education qualification or equivalent
	Intermediate Diploma or equivalent	2	60	900	
4	Associate Diploma or equivalent	1	24	360	Obtaining a Secondary education qualification or equivalent
3	Secondary education or equivalent	3	–	–	Obtaining an Intermediate education qualification or equivalent
2	Intermediate education or equivalent	3	–	–	Obtaining a Primary education qualification or equivalent
1	Primary education	6	–	–	Entering public education condition in accordance with the regulations governing it
Enter	Early Childhood Education	–	–	–	–

* Accordance with the Saudi classification of educational levels and specializations

** Summer semester is excluded from the academic year

Doctoral Degree or Equivalent Eighth Level

1. Academic, research, or Doctoral Qualification or Equivalent *



Placement Requirements

Completion of a minimum of (30) credit hours (units) of coursework along with a thesis, or a minimum of (12) credit hours (units) with a thesis and some courses in research and professional doctorate (2), based on minor specialty requirements.

The study duration to obtain the qualification is at least (3) study years.

The target learning outcomes (knowledge, understanding, skills, and values) are at the eighth level.

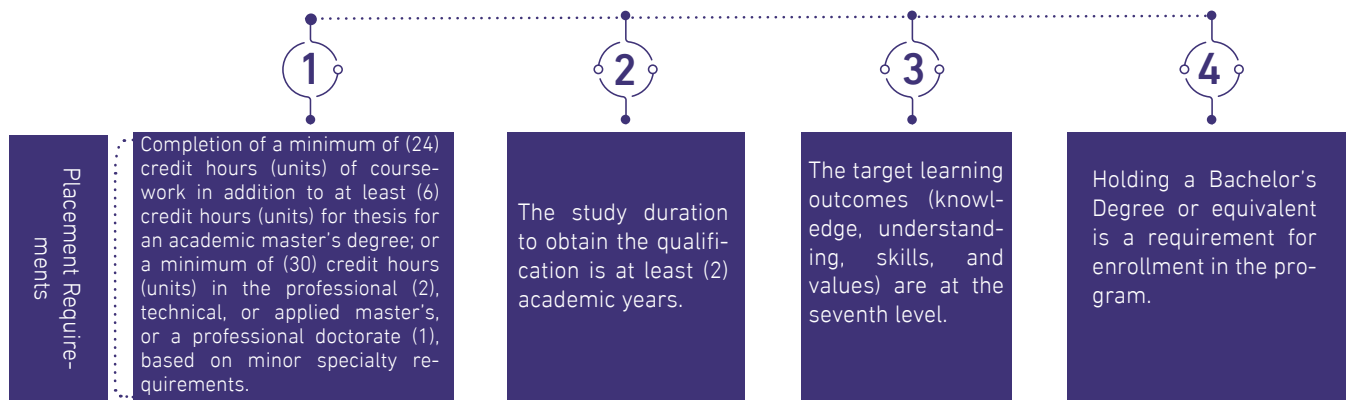
Holding a Master's Degree qualification or equivalent is a requirement for enrollment in the program.

2. Any other qualification that meets the learning outcomes and requirements for the eighth level may be placed at that level, as approved by the relevant authorities in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

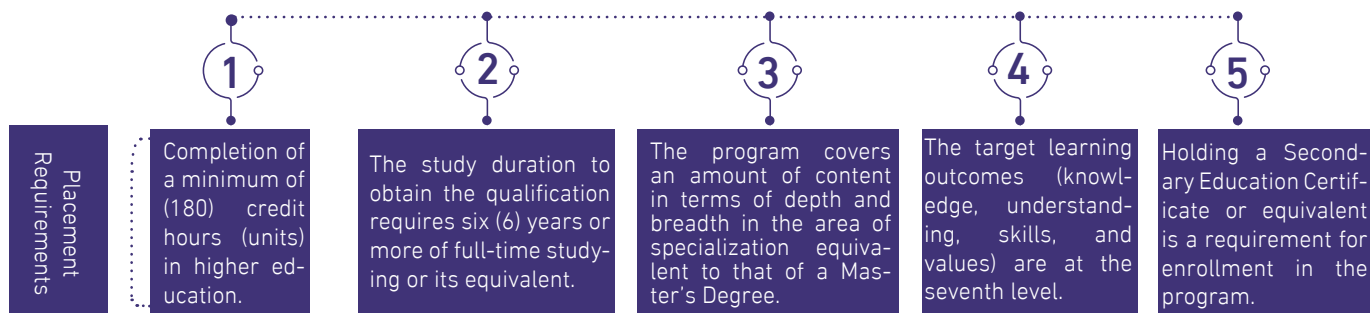
(*) or equivalent means qualifications that are equivalent to qualifications in terms of level eighth, may have the same name, but their varies type (academic - research - professional - applied technology) or has another name, but they meet the requirements of level eighth.

Master's Degree or Equivalent Seventh Level

1. Master qualification or equivalent, or professional doctorate (1) or equivalent



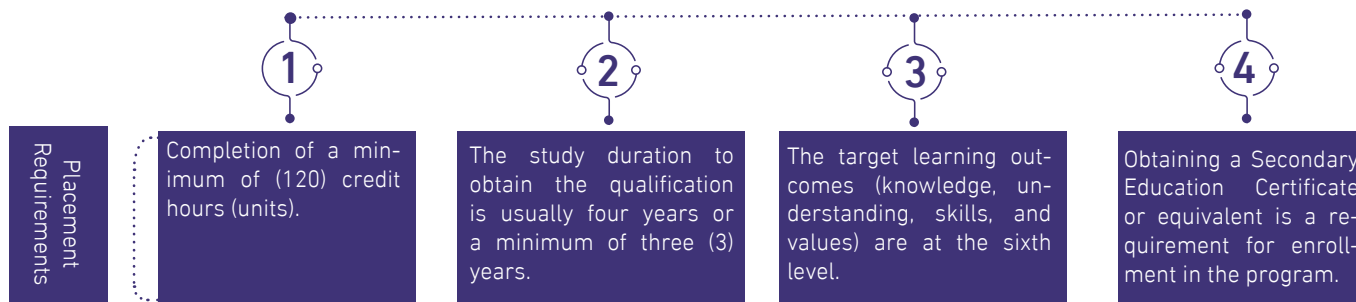
2. Professional Bachelor qualification of six (6) years or more, requiring specialized or professional study equivalent in complexity to the level of a Master's Degree according to the following:



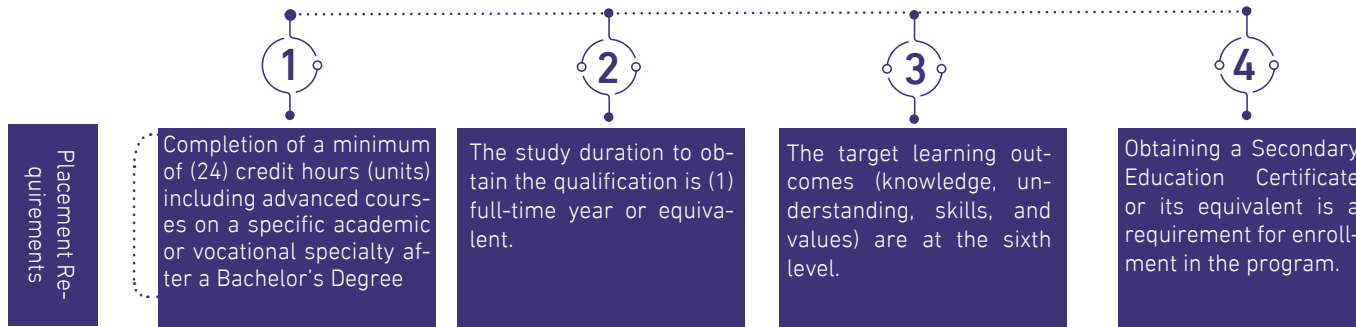
3. Any other qualification that meets the learning outcomes and requirements for the Seventh level may be placed at that level, as approved by the relevant authorities in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent Sixth Level

1. Bachelor qualification or equivalent:



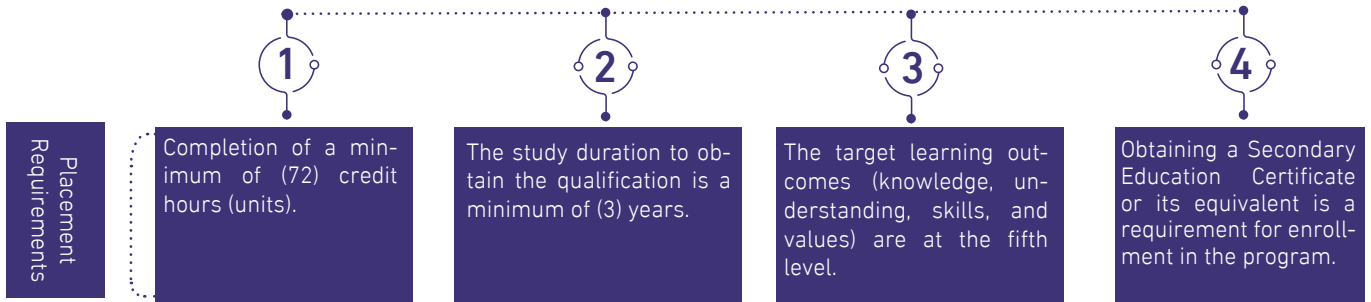
2. Higher diploma qualification or equivalent, or a professional master (1) qualification or equivalent:



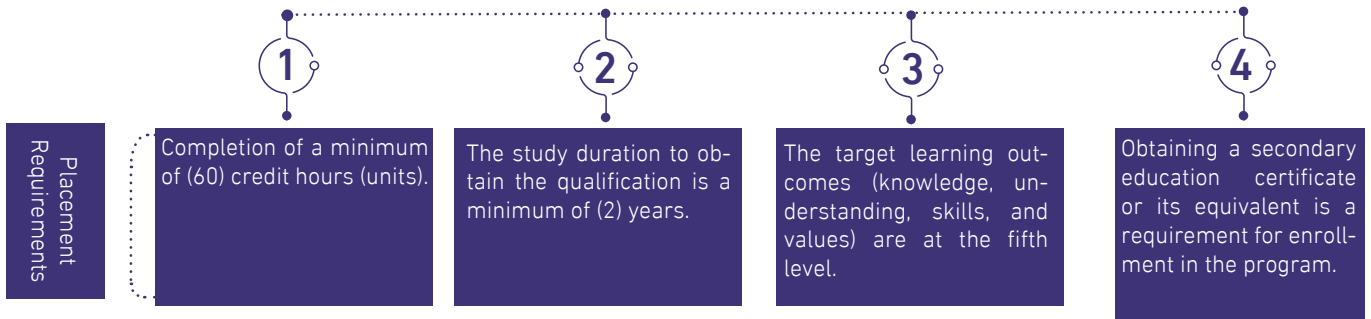
3. Any other qualification that meets the learning outcomes and requirements for the sixth level may be placed at that level, as approved by the relevant authorities in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

Intermediate Diploma or Equivalent Fifth Level

1. Advanced Diploma Qualification or equivalent



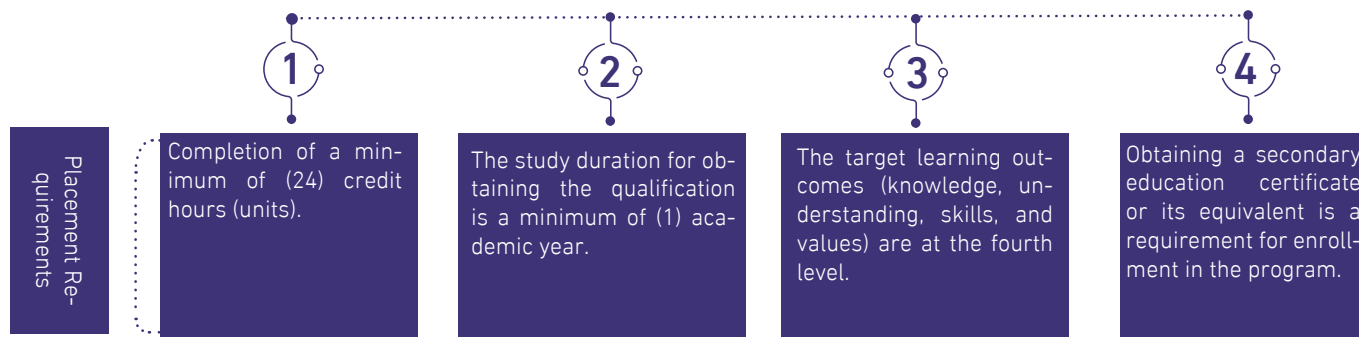
2. Intermediate Diploma Qualification or equivalent



3. Any other qualification that meets the learning outcomes and requirements for the fifth level may be placed at that level, as approved by the relevant authorities in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

Associate Diploma or Equivalent Fourth Level

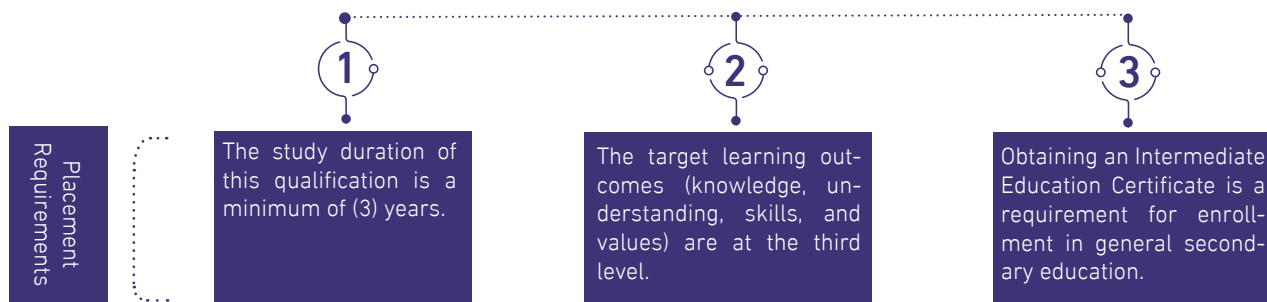
1. Associate Diploma Qualification or equivalent



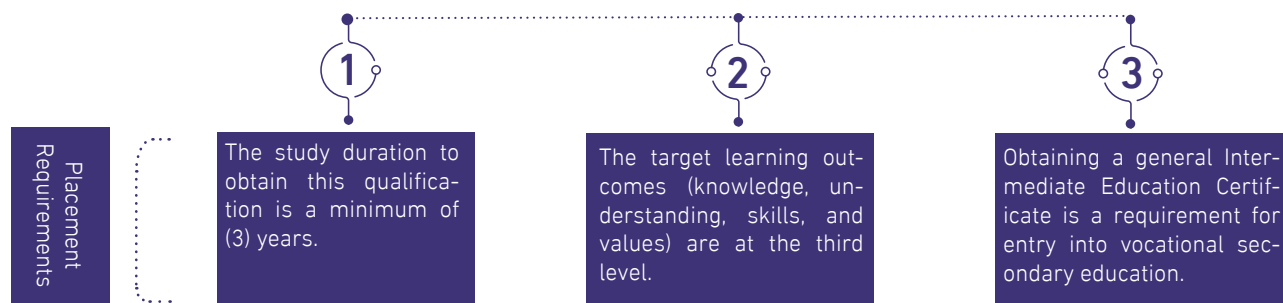
2. Any other qualification that meets the learning outcomes and requirements for the fourth level may be placed at that level, as approved by the relevant authorities in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

Secondary Education or Equivalent Third Level

1. Secondary Certificate qualification in General Education



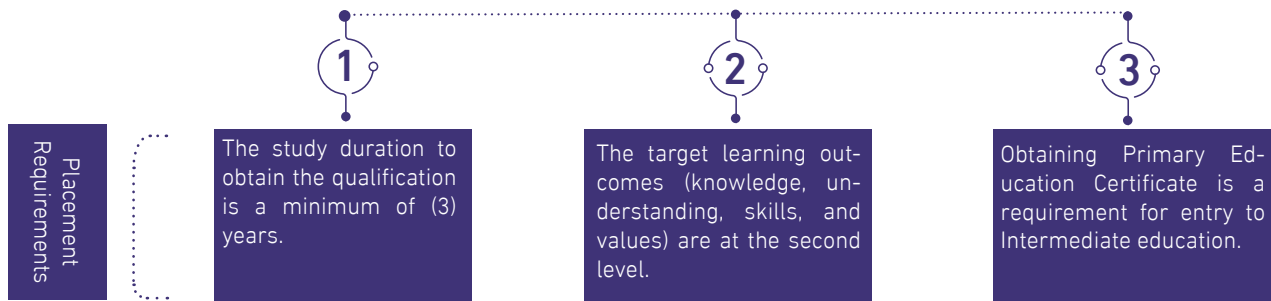
2. Secondary Certificate qualification in Vocational Education



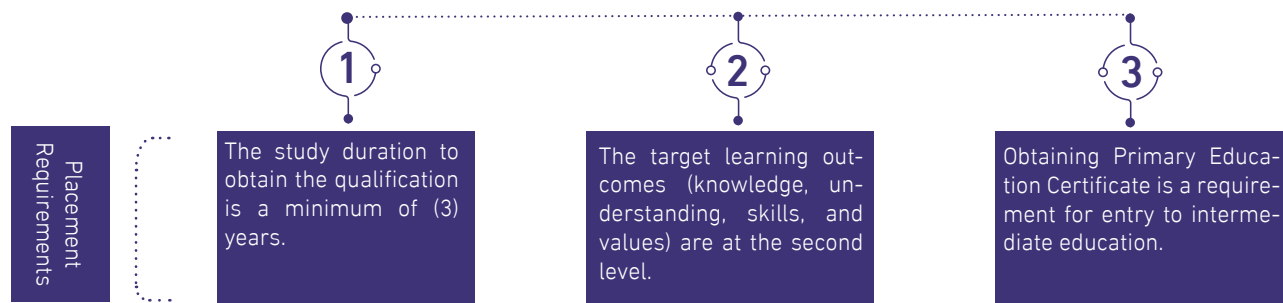
3. Any other qualification that meets the learning outcomes and requirements for the third level may be placed at that level, as approved by the relevant authorities in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

Intermediate Education or equivalent | Second Level

1. Intermediate certificate qualification in general education



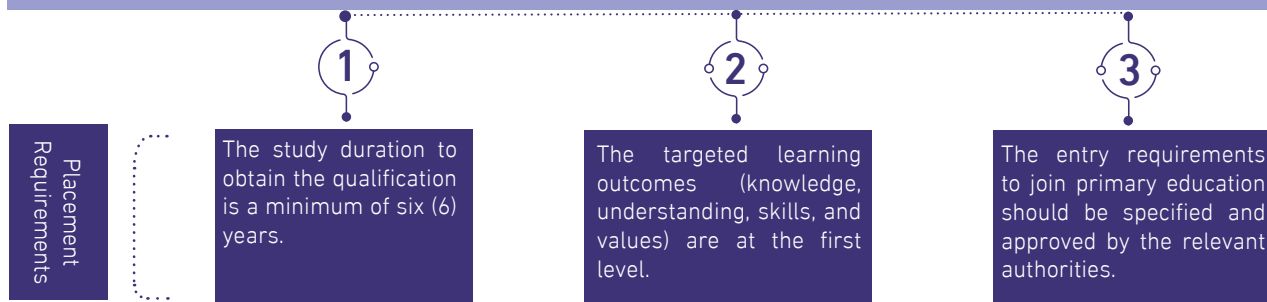
2. Intermediate certificate qualification in vocational education



3. Any other qualification that meets the learning outcomes and requirements for the second level may be placed at that level, as approved by the relevant authorities in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

Primary Education or equivalent I First Level

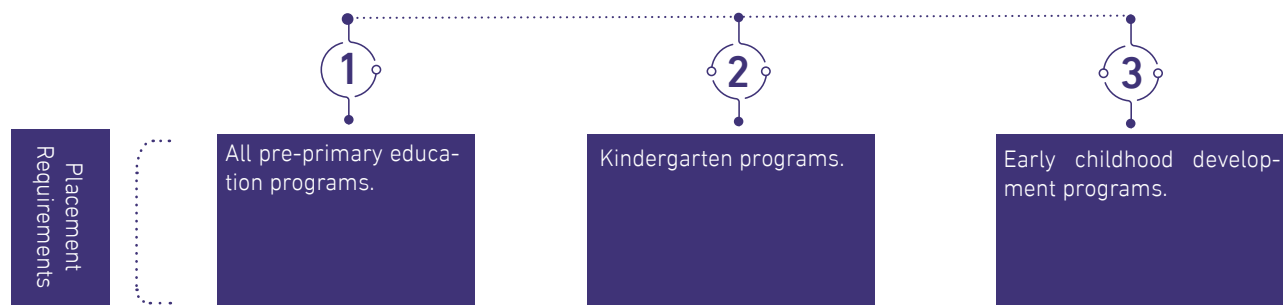
1. Primary certificate qualification in general education



2. Any other qualification that meets the learning outcomes and requirements for the first level may be placed at that level, as approved by the relevant authorities in accordance with applicable regulations and guidelines.

Early Childhood I entry (0)

This level is considered an entry point, and includes:





Appendix (B)

Key Qualifications Levels in Education and Training in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Levels	Public Education	Higher Education	Vocational & Technical training	Military Education
8	-	Doctorate or equivalent	-	Doctorate or equivalent
7	-	Master or equivalent	Master or equivalent	Master or equivalent
6	-	Bachelor or equivalent	Professional or Technical / Applied Bachelor degree or equivalent	Bachelor or degree or equivalent
5	-	Advanced diploma or equivalent	Professional or Technical/ Applied Advanced Diploma or equivalent	Professional or Techni- cal/ Advanced Diploma or equivalent
		Intermediate diploma or equiv- alent	Professional or Technical/ Applied Intermediate Diploma or equivalent	Professional or Techni- cal/ Applied Inter- mediate Diploma or equivalent
4	-	Associate diploma or equivalent	Professional or Technical/ Applied Associate Diploma or equivalent	Professional or Techni- cal/ Applied Associate Diploma or equivalent
3	secondary education	-	Vocational secondary educa- tion or equivalent	-
2	intermediate educa- tion	-	Vocational intermediate edu- cation or equivalent	-
1	Primary education	-	-	-
(0) Entry	Early Childhood	-	-	-



Appendix (C)

ALIGNMENT OF (NQF-KSA) LEVELS AND INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION (ISCED)



(NQF-KSA)



ISCED Classification

Qualification	Levels	Qualification	Levels	ISCED Code	Qualification Type
Doctoral Degree or Equivalent	8	Doctoral Degree or Equivalent	8	Doctorate	844
Master's Degree or Equivalent/ 6-Year Professional Bachelor's Degree	7	Master's Degree or Equivalent	7	Master's Degree	747
				Bachelor's Degree (6) years	746
Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent	6	Bachelor's Degree or Equivalent	6	Higher Diploma (1) year	667
				Academic Bachelor,s Degree (5) years	646
				Vocational Bachelor,s Degree (5) years	656
				Bachelor's Degree (3-4) years	645
Intermediate Diploma or Equivalent	5	Short-Term Higher Education	5	Academic Diploma	544
				Vocational Diploma	554

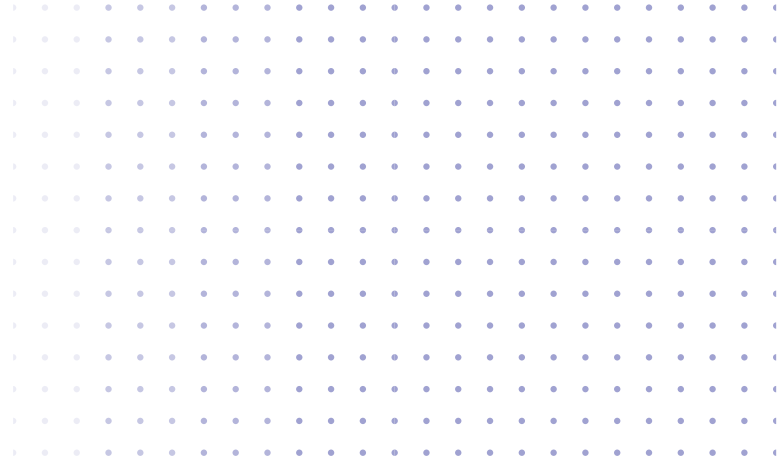


(NQF-KSA)



ISCED Classification

Qualification	Levels	Qualification	Levels	ISCED Code	Qualification Type
Associate Diploma or Equivalent	4	Post-Secondary Non-Higher Education	4	General Associate Diploma	444
				Vocational Associate Diploma	454
Secondary Education or Equivalent	3	Second Stage of Secondary Education	3	General Secondary Education	344
				Vocational Secondary Education	354
Intermediate Education or Equivalent	2	First Stage of Secondary Education	2	General Intermediate Education	244
				Vocational Intermediate Education	254
Primary Education or Equivalent	1	Primary Education	1	Primary Education	100
Pre-School and Early Childhood	Entry (0)	Pre-Primary Education	02	Pre-Primary Education	020
		Early Childhood Development	01	Early Childhood Development	010



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