The German Qualifications Framework

for Lifelong Learning

adopted by the "German Qualifications Framework Working Group"
(AK DQR)

Status: 22 March 2011

I. Introduction

The German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (known by its German abbreviation of DQR) provides for the first time a framework which encompasses all qualifications within the German educational system across every field of education. In its capacity as a national implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the DQR accords due consideration to the specific characteristics of the German educational system and assists in achieving appropriate evaluation and comparability for German qualifications in Europe. The objective is to make equivalences and differences between qualifications more transparent and to use this as a vehicle for supporting permeability. The important aspect here is to achieve reliability via quality assurance and development and to promote the idea that qualifications processes should be based on learning outcomes ("outcome orientation"). This means that the DQR will act in the interests of affording the best possible level of opportunity by helping promote the mobility of learners and employees between Germany and other European countries. The objective is to foster and enhance access to and participation in lifelong learning and use of qualifications for everyone, including those who are disadvantaged or affected by unemployment.

The DQR has undergone a somewhat lengthy process of development. In October 2006, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) agreed to work together on the development of a German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (known by its German abbreviation of DQR).

Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council

The starting point for the present decision is the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which entered into force on 23 April 2008. This Recommendation encourages the member states to:

"1. use the European Qualifications Framework as a reference tool to compare the qualification levels of the different qualifications systems and to promote both lifelong learning and equal opportunities in the knowledge-based society, as well as the further integration of the European labour market, while respecting the rich diversity of national education systems;

2. relate their national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework by 2010, in particular by referencing, in a transparent manner, their qualification levels to the levels set out in Annex II, and, where appropriate, by developing national qualifications frameworks in accordance with national legislation and practice;

3. adopt measures, as appropriate, so that, by 2012, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and 'Europass' documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level;

4. use an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications, and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning in accordance with the common European principles agreed in the Council conclusions of 28 May 2004, paying particular attention to those citizens most likely to be subject to unemployment or insecure forms of employment, for whom such an approach could help increase participation in lifelong learning and access to the labour market;

5. promote and apply the principles of quality assurance in education and training set out in Annex III when relating higher education and vocational education and training

qualifications within national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework;“[1]

Development process

In embracing this recommendation, the primary objective of the BMBF and the KMK is to achieve appropriate alignment of qualifications acquired in Germany and to use this as a vehicle for enhancing the opportunities for our citizens on the European labour market. The BMBF and the KMK have established a joint “Federal Government/Federal States Coordination Group” for the German Qualifications Framework” (known by its German abbreviation of B-L-KG DQR), which has been commissioned with the task of managing the process of drawing up a proposal. This process involves stakeholders from general education, higher education and initial and continuing vocational education and training, the social partners and other experts from research and practice. This has essentially taken place within the “German Qualifications Framework Working Group” (known by its German abbreviation of AK DQR), the members of which have facilitated feedback on results to delegates’ home institutions and committees. Further Federal Government and federal state ministers with special responsibility and expertise within this area have been involved in the process along the way.

In February 2009, the AK DQR presented a DQR draft (comprising an introduction, matrix and glossary) to act as a discussion proposal for the second phase of development of the DQR[2]. This draft was piloted from May 2009. The results of the pilot phase were evaluated and proposed changes made to the matrix and glossary.

Structure of the DQR

The DQR represents the first comprehensive use of matrix for the alignment of qualifications. It extends *across educational areas* and acts as a considerable aid to navigation within the German educational system. For this purpose the DQR describes on eight reference levels professional and personal competences which direct the alignment of qualifications obtained in general education, higher education and vocational education and training.

The eight reference levels contained within the DQR each describe the competences required to obtain a qualification. They do not, however, map individual learning and occupational biographies. The term competence, constituting the heart of the DQR, depicts the ability and readiness of the individual to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and methodological competences and conduct himself or herself in a considered and individually and socially responsible manner. Competence is understood to refer to comprehensive action skills within this context.

Underlying educational concept

This means that, in line with the German understanding of education, the DQR is subject to a further educational concept even if the DQR, like the EQF, is expressly only focused on selected characteristics. Notwithstanding this, aspects such as reliability, precision, stamina and attentiveness, intercultural and interreligious competence, active tolerance and democratic patterns of behaviour and normative, ethical and religious reflectiveness act as constitutive elements for the development of action skills.

Underlying categories

The DQR differentiates between two categories of competence. These are “Professional competence”, subdivided into “Knowledge” and “Skills” and “Personal competence”, subdivided into “Social competence” and “Autonomy” (“four-column structure”). These analytical differentiations have been actioned in the full knowledge of the interdependence which exists between the various aspects of competence. Given the fact that the DQR

[1] Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, Strasbourg 23 April 2008

[2] Discussion Proposal for the Development of a German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning – drawn up by the “German Qualifications Framework Working Group”, February 2009

consistently makes mention of competence, any use of the modal verb "can" has been avoided throughout the DQR matrix.

Methodological competence is understood as a transversal competence and for this reason is not separately stated within the DQR matrix.

A standardised structure has been stipulated for the description of the eight reference levels within the DQR.

Level indicator			
Structure of requirements			
Professional competence		***Personal competence***	
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Social competence**	**Autonomy**
Depth and breadth	Instrumental and systemic skills, judgement	Team/leadership skills, involvement and communication	Autonomous responsibility/ responsibility, reflectiveness and learning competence

The attached glossary contains explanatory definitions of the key terms used.

Equivalence of qualifications rather than homogeneity

When using the DQR matrix, consideration needs to be accorded to the fact that each reference level maps *equivalent* qualifications rather than *homogeneous* qualifications. Formulations are in strict accordance with the principle of inclusion. This means that characteristics already described at a lower level are not mentioned again at the subsequent higher levels unless enhancement takes place. Notwithstanding this, the knowledge and skills contained within the description of professional competence at each higher reference level do not necessarily in every case include the knowledge and skills encompassed within the respective level below.

In allocating qualifications to the DQR all *formal* qualifications of the German system of general education, higher education and vocational education and training – including continuing education in each case – are to be included. Competences acquired through non-formal or informal learning should equally be taken into consideration in the DQR. These are extremely significant areas in both quantitative and qualitative terms. But it is also all the more important given that, against the background of a looming shortage of skilled workers, validation and recognition of competences obtained in non-formal and informal learning and at work is urgently needed. As part of the DQR development process recommendations on the inclusion of non-formally and informally acquired competences in the DQR have already been drawn up, which describe the clarification processes and stages of work that still have to be implemented. These form a basis for the next steps[3].

No effect on access entitlements

All stakeholders and responsible parties involved are in agreement that the alignment of the qualifications within the German educational system to the reference levels of the DQR should *not* replace the existing system of access qualifications. Achieving a certain reference level of the DQR does not provide automatic entitlement to access the next level. The achievement of a reference level has also not been considered in conjunction with the implications for collective wage agreements and laws relating to remuneration.

3 Amendment agreed by the German Qualifications Framework Working Group on 19 June 2012.

Relationship to Higher Education Qualifications Framework

Alignment takes place in accordance with the principle that each qualifications level should always be accessible via various educational pathways. The DQR is compatible with the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications (HQR). With regard to the requirements and competences described, levels 6, 7 and 8 of the German Qualifications Framework correspond to levels 1 (Bachelor level), 2 (Master level) and 3 (Doctorate level) of the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications (cf. Annex).

The implementation of the DQR provides Germany with an opportunity to further embrace the principle that the important thing is what someone can do, not where he or she has learned to do it. The overall effect of the DQR will be to strengthen lifelong learning.
The rules for the alignment of qualifications acquired in Germany to the levels of the DQR will be specifically developed and stipulated in a handbook.

II. DQR matrix

Level 1			
Be in possession of competences for the fulfilment of simple requirements within a clear and stably structured field of study or work. Fulfilment of tasks takes place under supervision.			
Professional competence		**Personal competence**	
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Social competence**	**Autonomy**
Be in possession of elementary general knowledge. Have an initial insight into a field of study or work.	Be in possession of cognitive and practical skills required to carry out simple tasks in accordance with pre-stipulated rules and to evaluate the results of such tasks. Establish elementary correlations.	Learn or work together with others, obtain and exchange information verbally and in writing.	Learn or work under supervision. Appraise own actions and the actions of others and accept learning guidance.

Level 2			
Be in possession of competences for the professional fulfilment of basic requirements within a clear and stably structured field of study or work. Fulfilment of tasks takes place largely under supervision.			
Professional competence		**Personal competence**	
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Social competence**	**Autonomy**
Be in possession of basic general knowledge and basic professional knowledge with a field of study or work.	Be in possession of basic cognitive and practical skills required to carry out tasks within a field of study or work, evaluate the results of such tasks in accordance with pre-stipulated criteria and establish correlations.	Work within a group. Accept and express general feedback and criticism. Act and react in accordance with the given situation with regard to verbal and written communication.	Learn or work in a responsible manner and largely under supervision within familiar and stable contexts. Appraise own actions and the actions of others. Use pre-stipulated learning guides and request learning guidance.

Level 3			
Be in possession of competences for the autonomous fulfilment of technical requirements within a field of study or field of occupational activity which remains clear whilst being openly structured in some areas.			
Professional competence		**Personal competence**	
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Social competence**	**Autonomy**
Be in possession of extended general knowledge or extended professional knowledge within a field of study or field of occupational activity.	Be in possession of a spectrum of cognitive and practical skills for the planning and processing of technical tasks within a field of study or field of occupational activity. Evaluate results in accordance with criteria which are largely pre-stipulated, provide simple transfers of methods and results.	Work within a group and occasionally offer support. Help shape the learning or working environment, present processes and results to the appropriate recipients of such information.	Learn or work autonomously and responsibly including within contexts which are less familiar. Appraise own actions and the actions of others. Request learning guidance and select various learning aids.

Level 4			
Be in possession of competences for the autonomous planning and processing of technical tasks assigned within a comprehensive field of study or field of occupational activity subject to change.			
Professional competence		**Personal competence**	
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Social competence**	**Autonomy**
Be in possession of deeper general knowledge or theoretical professional knowledge within a field of study or field of occupational activity.	Be in possession of a broad spectrum of cognitive and practical skills which facilitate autonomous preparation of tasks and problem solving and the evaluation of work results and processes according consideration to alternative courses of action and reciprocal effects with neighbouring areas. Provide transfers of methods and solutions.	Help shape the work within a group and the learning or working environment of such a group and offer ongoing support. Justify processes and results. Provide comprehensive communication on facts and circumstances.	Set own learning and work objectives, reflect on and assess such objectives and take responsibility for them.

Level 5			
Be in possession of competences for the autonomous planning and processing of comprehensive technical tasks assigned within a complex and specialised field of study or field of occupational activity subject to change.			
Professional competence		**Personal competence**	
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Social competence**	**Autonomy**
Be in possession of integrated professional knowledge within a field of study or integrated occupational knowledge within a field of activity. This also includes deeper, theoretical professional knowledge. Be familiar with the scope and limitations of the field of study or field of occupational activity.	Be in possession of an extremely broad spectrum of specialised, cognitive and practical skills. Plan work processes across work areas and evaluate such processes according comprehensive consideration to alternative courses of action and reciprocal effects with neighbouring areas. Provide comprehensive transfers of methods and solutions.	Plan and structure work processes in a cooperative manner, including within heterogeneous groups, instruct others and provide well-founded learning guidance. Present complex facts and circumstances extending across professional areas in a targeted manner to the appropriate recipients of such information. Act in an anticipatory manner in considering the interests and requirements of recipients.	Reflect on and assess own learning objectives and learning objectives set externally, undertake self-directed pursuit of and assume responsibility for such objectives, draw consequences for work processes within the team.

Level 6			
Be in possession of competences for the planning, the processing and the evaluating of comprehensive technical tasks and problems set and be in possession of competences for autonomous management of processes within subareas of a scientific subject or within a field of occupational activity. The structure of requirements is characterised by complexity and frequent changes.			
Professional competence		**Personal competence**	
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Social competence**	**Autonomy**
Be in possession of broad and integrated knowledge including knowledge of basic scientific principles and the practical application of a scientific subject as well as a critical understanding of the most important theories and methods (corresponding to level 1 – Bachelor level – of the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications) **or** be in possession of broad and integrated occupational knowledge including current technical developments. Be in possession of knowledge for the further development of a scientific subject **or** of a field of occupational activity. Be in possession of relevant knowledge at interfaces to other areas.	Be in possession of an extremely broad spectrum of methods for the processing of complex problems within a scientific subject (corresponding to level 1 – Bachelor level – of the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications), further fields of study **or** field of occupational activity. Draw up new solutions and evaluate such solutions including according consideration to various criteria even in circumstances where requirements are subject to frequent change.	Assume responsibility in working within expert teams **or** show responsibility in leading[4] groups or organisations. Instruct the technical development of others and act in an anticipatory manner in dealing with problems within the team. Present experts with arguments for and solutions to complex professionally related problems and work in conjunction with such experts on further development.	Define, reflect on and assess objectives for learning and work processes and structure learning and work processes autonomously and sustainably.

[4] This encompasses companies, government authorities or non-profit making organisations.

Level 7			
Be in possession of competences for the processing of new and complex professional tasks and problems set and be in possession of competences for autonomous management of processes within a scientific subject or within a strategically oriented field of occupational activity. The structure of requirements is characterised by frequent and unpredictable changes.			
Professional competence		**Personal competence**	
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Social competence**	**Autonomy**
Be in possession of comprehensive, detailed, specialist and state-of-the art knowledge in a scientific subject (corresponding to level 2 – Master level – of the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications) **or** be in possession of comprehensive occupational knowledge in a strategically oriented field of occupational activity. Be in possession of extended knowledge in adjoining areas.	Be in possession of specialised technical or design concept skills relating to the solution of strategic problems in a scientific subject (corresponding to level 2 – Master level – of the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications) **or** in a field of occupational activity. Consider alternatives even in circumstances where information is incomplete. Develop and use new ideas or procedures and assess such ideas and procedures according consideration to various evaluation criteria.	Assume responsibility for leading groups or organisations within the scope of complex tasks set and present the results of the work of such groups or organisations. Promote the technical development of others in a targeted manner. Lead divisionally specific and cross-divisional debates.	Define objectives for new applications or research oriented tasks reflecting on possible societal, economic and cultural implications, deploy appropriate means and tap autonomously into own knowledge for the purpose.

Level 8			
Be in possession of competences for the obtaining of research findings in a scientific subject or for the development of innovative solutions and procedures within a field of occupational activity. The structure of requirements is characterised by novel and unclear problem situations.			
Professional competence		**Personal competence**	
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Social competence**	**Autonomy**
Be in possession of comprehensive, specialised, systematic state-of-the art knowledge in a research discipline and contribute towards the expansion of knowledge within the specialist discipline (corresponding to level 3 – Doctorate level – of the Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications) **or** be in possession of comprehensive occupational knowledge in a strategically and innovation oriented field of occupational activity. Be in possession of appropriate knowledge at the interfaces to adjoining areas.	Be in possession of comprehensively developed skills relating to the identification and solution of novel problems set in the areas of research, development or innovation within a specialised scientific subject (corresponding to level 3 – Doctorate level – of the Qualifications Framework for German Higher ducation Qualifications) **or** in a field of occupational activity. Also design, implement, manage, reflect on and evaluate innovative processes including in cross-activity areas. Evaluate new ideas and procedures.	Lead groups or organisations from a position of responsibility in complex or interdisciplinary tasks whilst activating the areas of potential within such groups or organisations. Promote the professional development of others in a targeted and sustained manner. Lead cross-specialist debates and introduce innovative contributions to specialist professional discussions including in international contexts.	Define objectives for new complex applications or research oriented tasks reflecting on possible societal, economic and cultural implications, select appropriate means and develop new ideas and processes.

III. DQR glossary

The main terms used in the DQR are explained below.

- The **ability to act as part of a team** is the ability to cooperate on the achievement of goals within a group.
- **Autonomous responsibility** designates the ability and endeavour to make appropriate decisions in various situations and to act without outside assistance.
- **Autonomy** describes a person's ability and readiness to act in an independent and responsible manner, reflect on the own actions and on the actions of others and to develop his or her own action skills further.
- **Breadth** refers to the number of areas contained within general, occupational or technical knowledge associated with a > *Qualification*.
- **Communication** designates the exchange of information aimed at conveying understanding between persons, in groups and in organisations.
- **Competence** within the DQR describes the ability and readiness of the individual to use knowledge, > *Skills* and personal, social and methodological competences and to behave in a considered, individual and socially responsible manner. Competence is understood in this sense as comprehensive action skills.
  The DQR presents competence within the dimensions of > *Professional competence* and > *Personal competence*. > *Methodological competence* is understood as a cross-sectional competence and for this reason is not separately stated within the DQR matrix. (By way of contrast, the EQF describes competence only in terms of the assumption of responsibility and autonomy.)
- **Complexity** designates the property of a > *Requirements structure* in which consideration needs to be accorded to a multitude of factors exerting a reciprocal effect and in which the *Solution of* > *Problems* demands the matching of individual partial aspects and of the overall context within an iterative process.
- **Depth** of knowledge designates the degree of penetration of an area of general, occupational or technical knowledge.
- **Field of occupational activity** describes a > *Work area* in which a person is in gainful employment.
- A **field of study** is an area in which > *Competences* are acquired or developed further and which is defined in terms of a characteristic > *Requirements structure*, e.g. a > *Scientific subject*.
- **Innovation** is understood to mean the practical implementation of ideas into new products, services, processes, systems and social interactions.
- **Instrumental skills** are applied skills deployed in respect of ideas, theories, methods, tools, technologies and devices.
- The ability of **involvement** makes it possible to engage constructively in the further development of environmental conditions within a > *Field of study or work.*
- **Judgement** is the ability to compare learning or work processes and their results against relevant yardsticks and carry out an evaluation on this basis.
- **Knowledge** describes the body of facts, principles, theories and practice within a > Field of study or work as the result of learning and understanding.

- **Leadership skills** designate the ability to act in a targeted and constructive manner within a group or organisation to steer and guide others and exert an influence on their behaviour.
- **Learning competence** is the ability to obtain a realistic picture of one's own competence development and to take appropriate steps to progress competence development further.
- **Learning guidance** designates the support of learning processes via the illustration of targets and learning tools. The ability and readiness both to use learning guidance offered and to offer learning guidance oneself are important aspects of > *Personal competence*.
- **Learning outcomes** describe what learners know, understand and are able and ready to do on completion of a learning process. The DQR describes learning outcomes which have been bundled to form > *Competences*.
- **Methodological competence** describes the ability to be guided by rules when acting. This may also include the considered selection and development of methods. > *Professional competence* and > *Personal competence* each incorporate methodological competence.
- **Occupational knowledge** is a combination of knowledge of facts, basic principles and theories and practical knowledge within a field of activity of relevance to the labour market and particularly refers to knowledge of possible procedures and approaches to be adopted.
- **Personal Competence** is also referred to as human competence and encompasses > *Social competence* and > ***Autonomy***. It describes a person's ability and readiness to develop further and to shape his or her own life in an autonomous and responsible manner within the respective social, cultural or occupational context.
- **Problem solving** is the achievement of a desired target status. Problem solving (in contrast to *Fulfilment of a > Task*) requires the autonomous specification of the starting situation needing to be overcome (problem definition) and demands the identification and in certain circumstances also the development of methods suitable for the achievement of the goal.
- **Professional competence** encompasses > *Knowledge* and > *Skills*. It constitutes the ability and readiness to process tasks and problems in an autonomous, professionally appropriate and methodical manner and to evaluate the result.
- **Professional knowledge** describes knowledge of facts, rules and/or justifications.
- **Reflectiveness** includes the ability to deal with changes, to learn from experiences and to think and act critically.
- **Responsibility** designates the ability and readiness to contribute in a self-directed manner towards the structuring of processes whilst considering the possible consequences.
- **Scientific subject** indicates a professional specialisation rather than a subject of study and also encompasses creative and artistic areas.
- **Skills** describe the ability to apply > *Knowledge* and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. As in the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
- **Social competence** describes a person's ability and readiness to work together with others in a target oriented manner, understand the interests and social situations of others, deal with and communicate with others in a rational and responsible way and be involved in shaping the world of work and the lifeworld.
- **Specialisation** designates the development of a deeper expertise in subareas of a > *Field of study or work* where a certain breadth of control or mastery has already been achieved.

- **Strategy orientation** characterises fields of occupational activity in which a crucial role is played by the target definition of processes and organisational units.
- The **structure of requirements** within a > *Field of work or study* contains essential information for the alignment of a > *Qualification* to a reference level. This is described in terms of the characteristics of complexity, dynamics, necessary > *Autonomy* and ability to innovate.
- **Systemic skills** are targeted at generating something new. They are conditional on > *Instrumental skills* and require an ability to assess complex correlations and deal with these adequately.
- **Task, fulfilment of,** is the achievement of a defined and desired target status using familiar and stipulated methods. This is delineated from the *Solution to a > Problem*.
- **Theoretical professional knowledge** describes > *Professional knowledge* including knowledge of the main theories of a subject.
- **Qualification** describes a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved > *Learning outcomes* to given standards.
- A **work area** is a field of practical application of > *Competences* and is defined in terms of a characteristic > *Structure of requirements*.

The following terminology is used to describe the DQR.

- **Descriptors** are the texts contained within the individual matrix fields of the DQR. They describe the characteristics of competences at a certain level (e.g. “Skills at level 5”).
- The **competence categories** used in the DQR are > *Professional competence* – sub-divided into > *Knowledge* and > *Skills*, and > *Personal competences*, sub-divided into > *Social competence* and > *Autonomy*. Reference is made to various sub-categories for alignment to the levels. In the case of knowledge, these sub-categories are > *Depth* and > *Breadth*, in the case of skills > *Instrumental skills*, > *Systemic skill* and > *Judgement*, in the case of social competence > *Team/leadership skills*, > *Involvement* and > *Communication* and in the case of autonomy > *Autonomous responsibility*, > *Responsibility*, > *Reflectiveness* and > *Learning competence*.
- The **level indicator** provides a summary of the characteristics of the requirements structure within a field of study or work, within a scientific subject or within a field of occupational activity.
- The **levels** align competences in accordance with complexity and the dynamics of the respective fields of study and work. The DQR is not an ordinal scale with steps of the same scope. Arithmetic operations such as the calculation of averages are not possible.

Annex

Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications

(Produced by the German Rectors' Conference, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and adopted by the Standing Conference on 21 April 2005)

Foreword

The development of a national Qualifications Framework

The aim of the Bologna Process is to create a system of transparent and comparable higher education qualifications. The introduction of a two-tier study structure is an important instrument to this end. There is wide-reaching consensus among the countries who have committed to the Bologna Process as regards the quantitative requirements for Bachelor's and Master's degrees (Bachelor's degree 180-240 ECTS credits, Master's degree 60-120 ECTS credits), the nomenclature of the two study levels (Bachelor's and Master's degrees, or corresponding national designations), and certain fundamental principles (employability, internationalisation, etc.). One challenge for the future shape of the European Higher Education Area is achieving general agreement on the qualifications profiles to be attained for specific degrees, and universally understandable designations (standard terminology).

In the Berlin Communiqué (September 2003) the European education ministers agreed to "elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile." They also undertook to "elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area". This European Framework can only define general qualifications. Acceptance of the European Framework will depend on whether it provides added value as regards the desired transparency. Itisintended, therefore, to

- bring together the national Qualifications Frameworks, which form the core of the European framework,
- guarantee the transparency of an increasingly diversified higher education system and take account of the need for comprehensibility by students and employers, and
- describe the diversity of qualifications in Europe.

What is a Qualifications Framework?

A Qualifications Framework is a systematic description of the qualifications offered by the education system of a particular country. It incorporates:

- a general description of the qualifications profile of a graduate holding the corresponding degree,
- a list of the desired learning outcomes,
- a description of the competences and skills which the graduate should possess, and
- a description of the formal aspects of a training level (workload in terms of ECTS credits, admission criteria, designation of the degrees, formal entitlements). Previously German degree programmes were described above all in terms of course contents, admission criteria and duration of study. A Qualifications Framework, however, enables their description in terms of the qualifications which graduates should have acquired once they have successfully completed the degree. This reflects the shift from an input focus to an output focus, and is intended to promote the transparency of the education system.

A Qualifications Framework serves the following goals:

1. Increased transparency, comprehensibility and improved comparability of the degree programmes on offer – both national and international – by
   - ➢ clearly setting out the qualification profiles,
   - ➢ defining entry and exit points, and overlaps between study and training processes,
   - ➢ clarifying alternative educational processes, the relative positioning of qualifications to each other and the possibilities for development in the education system.

2. Improved information for prospective students and employers.

3. Support for evaluation and accreditation
   - ➢ by defining reference points.

4. Simpler curriculum development
   - ➢ by providing a reference framework which must be completed specific to the subject.

5. Greater comparability of qualifications in the European and the international context.

Explanation of the current draft

The present Qualifications Framework focuses initially on higher education and also describes interfaces with vocational training. Building on this first fundamental classification, in the coming years the Qualifications Framework is to be developed for other sectors of the education system (particularly vocational training and continuing education).

Guidelines

In drawing up the Qualifications Framework particular importance was attached to the following guidelines:

a) Compatibility with a European Qualifications Framework

The debate on a national Qualifications Framework was closely coordinated with the developments at European level and the establishment of other national Qualifications Frameworks. Compatibility with a European Qualifications Framework is a key goal.

b) Subject-independent descriptors

The subject-specific structure of the Qualifications Framework resides in the subjects and higher education institutions. To this end, the Qualifications Framework is to be viewed as a reference framework.

c) Descriptors independent of higher education institution type

The Qualifications Framework does not distinguish fundamentally between *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) on the one hand and universities and equivalent higher education institutions on the other. The different educational objectives of these types of higher education institution should not, however, be challenged, but should be harnessed for the development of the new structures.

d) Involvement of all relevant groups

In order to generate broad acceptance for the Qualifications Framework, feedback was sought from all stakeholders concerned (faculty and departmental conferences, students, employers and employees, accreditation agents) right from the development phase.

Explanation of the categories

The division into categories was undertaken in accordance with the Tuning Project, a transnational project which for a number of years has addressed the description of subjectspecific qualifications. The Dublin Descriptors, developed by the Joint Quality Initiative, were also employed as an additional reference point. Learning outcomes are included in both of the categories selected here (knowledge and understanding, and ability). The category *Knowledge and understanding* describes the competences acquired with regard to subjectspecific knowledge acquisition (specialist competence). The category *Ability* covers the competences which enable a graduate to apply knowledge (methodological competence), and to perform a knowledge transfer. Communicative and social competences are also included in this category.

International initiatives

- Joint Quality Initiative (informal network for quality assurance and accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's programmes; Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom) => Dublin Descriptors (definition of qualifications to distinguish between Bachelor's and Master's programmes)
- European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA)
- Tuning Project 2001 – 2004 => (generic und subject-related competences)
- Bachelor-Master GenericQualification Initiatives
- EUA Master degrees survey (AndrejsRauhvargers, Christian Tauch, September 2002)
- NARIC-ENIC Meeting, January 2003, Brussels, on issues relating to recognition of the new qualifications
- Transnational European Evaluation Project (TEEP), 2002-2003, coordinated by ENQA (development of criteria for transnational external evaluation)

Other Qualifications Frameworks

- DanishQualifications Framework
- IrishQualifications Framework
- UK Qualifications Framework
- ScottishCreditandQualifications Framework

Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications

NB: This draft is restricted initially to higher education qualifications. In future it is to be extended to cover the overall school system and the vocational training and lifelong learning sectors.

Degree system in the European Higher Education Area		
Degree levels	Formal aspects	Qualifications conferred by higher education institutions Higher education degrees and *Staatsexamina* (State examinations)[5]
1st level: Bachelor's level	Degrees at Bachelor's level: 3, 3.5 or 4 years' full-time study or 180, 210 or 240 ECTS credits; All degrees qualify graduates to apply for Master's degrees	B. A.; B. Sc.; B. Eng.; B.F.A., B. Mus, LLB *Diplom (FH)* [*Diplom* degree awarded by a university of applied sciences], *Staatsexamen* [State examination]
2nd level: Master's level	Degrees at Master's level: normally 5 years' full-time study or 300 ECTS credits; in multi-cycle degree programmes 1, 1.5 or 2 years or 60, 90 or 120 ECTS credits at Master's level; Types of Master's degrees: more practice-oriented, more research-oriented, artistic profile, teaching career profile; all degrees qualify graduates to apply for a doctorate[6]	M.A., M. Sc., M. Eng., M.F.A., M. Mus., LLM, etc. *Diplom (Univ.)* [*Diplom* degree awarded by a university], *Magister*, *Staatsexamen* [State examination] Non-consecutive Master's and Master's programmes which are designed for continuing education[7]
3rd level: Doctoral level	(Degrees generally build on a Master's-level degree, i.e. 300 ECTS credits or more)[8]	Dr., Ph.D.

[5] See list in Annex 1. *Staatsprüfungen* [State examinations] are as a rule assigned to the second level of study; however the following special rules apply: degree programmes leading to a *Staatsprüfung* cover a standard study period of 3 years (primary school or primary level and lower secondary level teaching careers, which may be assigned to the 1st level of study) to 6.5 years (medicine); this is equivalent to 180 - 390 ECTS credits.

[6] For artistic degree programmes at Kunst- und Musikhochschulen (Universities of Art/Music) this entitlement applies only under certain conditions.

[7] The degree designations for non-consecutive Master's and Master's programmes which are designed for continuing education are not prescribed and are not limited to the given degree designations, e.g. MBA.

[8] Particularly qualified holders of a Bachelor's degree or a Diplom (FH) degree [Diplom degree awarded by a university of applied sciences] may also be admitted directly to doctoral studies.

Level 1: Bachelor's level (180, 210 or 240 ECTS)

<table>
<tr><th>Knowledge and understanding</th><th>Ability (developing knowledge)</th><th>Formal aspects</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Extending knowledge:

Graduates' knowledge and understanding build on the level of the higher education entrance qualification and extend significantly beyond this.

Graduates have proven their broad and integrated knowledge and understanding of the scientific principles of their field of learning.

Consolidating knowledge:

Graduates have a critical understanding of the key theories, principles and methods of their degree programme and are able to consolidate their knowledge vertically, horizontally and laterally. Their knowledge and understanding corresponds with the state of specialist literature, but should, at the same time, include some consolidated areas of knowledge of the current state of research in their field of learning.</td><td>Graduates have acquired the following competences:

Instrumental competence:

- They can apply their knowledge and understanding to their occupational or professional context and can develop and advance solutions to problems and arguments in their subject area.

Systemic competences:

- They can collect, assess and interpret relevant information, in particular on their degree programme;
- They can draw scientifically-founded conclusions that consider social, scientific and ethical insights;
- They can independently organise advanced learning processes.</td><td rowspan="2">Admission requirements:

- higher education entrance qualification (see Annex 2)

- in accordance with the regulations of the Länder on admission to higher education for vocationally qualified applicants without a higher education entrance qualification[9]

Duration:

(incl. thesis) 3, 3.5 or 4 years (180, 210 or 240 ECTS credits)

Degrees at Bachelor's level represent the first qualification for entry into a profession.

Postgraduate options:

Master's level programmes (outstanding results can even lead directly to Doctoral level programmes), other continuing education options

Transferring from vocational education and training:

Qualifications and competences acquired outside higher education institutions and proven by examination can, on</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Communicative competences:

- They can formulate specialised positions and</td></tr>
</table>

	solutions to problems and can defend these through argument; - They can discuss information, ideas, problems and solutions with specialists and non-specialists; - They can take on responsibility in a team.	starting a degree programme at a particular higher education institution, be credited on the basis of an equivalence testing procedure to the amount corresponding to the requirements of the respective degree programme[10].

Level 2: Master's level (300 ECTS credits, after a Bachelor's level degree 60, 90, 120 ECTS credits)

Knowledge and understanding	**Ability (developing knowledge)**	**Formal aspects**
Extending knowledge: Master's graduates have a proven level of knowledge and understanding that normally builds on the Bachelor's level and significantly consolidates or extends this. They are able to define and interpret the special features, limits, terminologies and schools of thought in their field of learning. Consolidating knowledge: Their knowledge and understanding form the basis for the development and/or application of independent ideas. This may be more practice-oriented or more research-oriented. They have a broad, detailed and critical understanding of the latest state of knowledge in one or more special areas.	Graduates have acquired the following competences: Instrumental competence: - They can also apply their knowledge and understanding as well as their problem-solving skills to new and unfamiliar situations that lie in a broad or multidisciplinary context relating to their academic subject. Systemic competences: - They can integrate knowledge and handle complexity; - They can make scientifically-founded decisions and draw conclusions, also on the basis of incomplete or limited information, and in so doing can consider social, scientific and ethical insights that also derive from the application of their knowledge and their decisions; - They can independently acquire new knowledge and ability; - They can carry out independent scientific or applied research projects in a largely self-directed and/or autonomous manner.	Admission requirements: For degree programmes leading to a first degree (*Diplom, Magister, Staatsexamen*): - higher education entrance qualification - in accordance with the regulations of the Länder on admission to higher education for vocationally qualified applicants without a higher education entrance qualification[11] For Master's level: first higher education qualification providing qualification for a profession at not less than Bachelor's level, plus additional admission requirements to be laid down by the higher education institution Duration: - for Master's programmes 1, 1.5 or 2 years (60, 90 or 120 ECTS credits) - for degree programmes leading to a first higher education qualification 4, 4.5 or 5 years, incl. thesis (240,

		270 or 300 ECTScredits) -for degree programmes leading to a *Staatsexamen*[12] <u>Postgraduate options:</u> Doctorate, continuing education options <u>Transferring from vocational education and training:</u> Notwithstanding the requirement for a first higher education qualification providing qualification for a profession, qualifications and competences acquired outside higher education institutions and proven by examination can, on starting a degree programme at a particular higher education institution, be credited on the basis of an equivalence testing procedure to the amount corresponding to the requirements of the respective degree programme[13].
	<u>Communicative competences:</u> - They can communicate their conclusions, the underlying information and their reasons to specialists and non-specialists both clearly and unambiguously on the basis of the state of research and application; - They can discuss information, ideas, problems and solutions at a scientific level with specialists and non-specialists; - They can take on lead responsibility in a team.	

Level 3: Doctoral level
300 ECTS +

Knowledge and understanding	**Ability (developing knowledge)**	**Formal aspects**
Extending knowledge: Doctoral graduates have a systematic understanding of their research field and have mastered the skills and methods used in research in this field They have a comprehensive knowledge of the relevant literature. Consolidating knowledge: By presenting a scientific paper or thesis they have made an independent contribution to research that is capable of extending the borders of knowledge and can stand up to national or international review and examination by experts and specialists in the field.	Doctoral graduates have acquired the followingcompetences: Instrumental competence: - They can independently design and carry out significant research projects with scientific integrity. Systemic competences: - They can independently identify scientific questions and issues; - They can critically analyse, develop and synthesise new and complex ideas; - They can advance the social, scientific and/or cultural progress of a knowledge society in an academic or non-academic professional environment. Communicative competences: - They can discuss findings and results from their special fields with colleagues, and can communicate these to an academic public as well as to the general public; - They can lead a team.	Admission requirements: *Master (Univ., FH)* [Master's degree awarded by a university, Master's degree awarded by a *Fachhochschule* (university of applied sciences)], *Diplom (Univ.)* [*Diplom* degree awarded by a university], *Magister, Staatsexamen* [State examination], outstanding Bachelor's degree or outstanding *Diplom (FH)* [*Diplom* degree awarded by a university of applied sciences] Additional admission requirements are set by the faculty.

Annex 1

Overview: *Staatsexamen* [State examinations]

- Primary school or primary level teaching careers (6-7 semesters)
- General teaching careers at primary level and at all or individual lower secondary level school types (7-9 semesters)
- Teaching careers at all or individual lower secondary level school types (7-9 semesters)
- Upper secondary level (general education subjects) or *Gymnasium* teaching careers (9 semesters)
- Upper secondary level (vocational subjects) or vocational school teaching careers (9 semesters)
- Special educational teaching careers (8-9 semesters)
- Law (9 semesters)
- Medicine (13 semesters)
- Dentistry (11 semesters)
- Veterinary medicine (11 semesters)
- Pharmacy (8 (-9) semesters)
- Food chemistry ((8-) 9 semesters)

Annex 2

Overview: Higher education entrance qualifications

- *AllgemeineHochschulreife* [general higher education entrance qualification]

- *FachgebundeneHochschulreife* [qualification entitling holder to study particular subjects at a higher education institution]

- *Fachhochschulreife*[qualification entitling holder to study at a *Fachhochschule*(a university of applied sciences)] (can be for a particular subject or degree programme)

- Land-law regulated options for admission to higher education for vocationally qualified applicants without a higher education entrance qualification