COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework

Qualification Standard

for

Bachelor of Library and Information Science

The process of drafting this standard is described in the Introduction.

V21, incorporating comments from the National Standards and Review Committee

July 2020

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS SUB-FRAMEWORK

STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT: POLICY AND PROCESS

Introduction

National policy and legislative context

In terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, 67 of 2008, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) is the Quality Council (QC) for Higher Education. The CHE is responsible for quality assurance of higher education qualifications.

Part of the implementation of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) is the development of qualification standards. Standards development is aligned with the *nested approach* incorporated in the HEQSF. In this approach, the outer layer providing the context for qualification standards are the NQF level descriptors developed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in agreement with the relevant QC. One of the functions of the QC (in the case of higher education, the CHE) is to ensure that the NQF level descriptors 'remain current and appropriate'. The development of qualification standards for higher education, therefore, needs to take the NQF level descriptors, as the outer layer in the *nested approach*, into account. An ancillary function is to ensure that they 'remain current and appropriate' in respect of qualifications awarded by higher education institutions. This means that they need to be responsive to the distinctive features of each field of study.

A secondary layer for the context in which qualification standards are developed is the HEQSF. This framework specifies the types of qualification that may be awarded and, in some cases, the allowable variants of the qualification type. An example of variants is the provision for two variants of the Master's degree (including the 'professional' variant). Another example is the distinction, in the Bachelor's degree type, between the 'general' and 'professionally-oriented' variants. The HEQSF also specifies the purpose and characteristics of each qualification type. However, as indicated in the *Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education* (CHE, 2013), neither NQF level descriptors nor the HEQSF is intended fully to address, or indeed capable of addressing, the relationship between generic qualification-type purpose and the specific characteristics of that qualification type in a particular field of study. One of the tasks of standards development is to reconcile the broad, generic description of a qualification type according to the HEQSF and the particular characteristics of qualifications awarded in diverse fields of study and disciplines, as defined by various descriptors and qualifiers.

Framework for standards development

Development of qualification standards is guided by the principles, protocols and methodology outlined in the *Framework*, approved by the Council in March 2013. The focus of a standards statement is the relationship between the purpose of the qualification, the attributes of a graduate that manifest the purpose, and the contexts and conditions for the assessment of those attributes. A standard establishes a threshold. However, on the grounds that a standard also plays a developmental

role, the statement may include, as appropriate, elaboration of terms specific to the statement, guidelines for the achievement of the graduate attributes, and recommendations for above-threshold practice.

A qualification standard is a statement that indicates how the purpose of the qualification, and the level on the NQF at which it is awarded, are represented in the learning domains, assessment contexts, and graduate attributes that are typical for the award of the qualification. Qualification standards are not the same, in either scope or effect, like other modalities used for the establishment of standards in higher education, for example, resource allocation standards, teaching and learning standards, or standards used for the grading of individual students. Matters such as actual curriculum design, tuition standards and standards for resource allocation for a programme are the responsibility of the institution awarding the qualification. Nor does the standard prescribe the duration of study for the qualification. It establishes the level on the NQF on which it is awarded, and confirms the minimum number of credits as set by the HEQSF. The standard relates to all programmes leading to the qualification, irrespective of the mode of delivery, the curriculum structure, and whether or not a prior qualification at a lower or the same level on the NQF is a prerequisite.

The process of development

The aim of the standards development process is to explore the extent to which the principles, procedures, content and methodology of standards development meet the requirements of all relevant parties: the institutions awarding the qualifications, the CHE as quality assurer of the qualifications, the graduates of those qualifications; their prospective employers; and any relevant professional council or association. The standard is, therefore, cognisant of academic as well as professional interests, insofar as the latter apply.

The drafting of this standards statement is the work of a group of academic experts in the field of study, convened by the CHE. Members of the Standards Development Working Group participate in their individual capacity, not as representatives of any institutions or organisations. Members of the Group are listed in Annexure B.

The Group met on several occasions during 2016 -2019, and the standard statement has been through several iterations and revisions. The standard is cognisant of both academic and professional interests. A draft was disseminated to higher education institutions for comment. Responses, in general, endorsed the draft Standard, and any concerns and recommendations were considered. Where appropriate, amendments were incorporated, and a revised version has been endorsed by the Group.

QUALIFICATION TITLE

Bachelor of Library and Information Science

QUALIFICATION TYPE AND VARIANT

Bachelor's degree *(Professional)*

BACHELOR'S DEGREE: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

There are two types of Bachelor's Degrees, namely general and professionally-oriented Bachelor's Degrees. Both types of degree may be structured as a 360-credit qualification with an exit at level 7 or as a 480-credit qualification with an exit at level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework.[1]

The 480-credit Bachelor's Degree at NQF level 8 has both a higher volume of learning and greater cognitive demand than the 360-credit degree at level 7 and should prepare students to be able to undertake Master's level study by providing them with research capacity in the methodology and research techniques of the discipline.

The primary purpose of both the general and the professional Bachelor's Degree is to provide a well-rounded, broad education that equips graduates with the knowledge base, theory and methodology of disciplines and fields of study, and to enable them to demonstrate initiative and responsibility in an academic or professional context. Both the 360- and 480-credit Bachelor's Degrees may require students to undertake research in a manner that is appropriate to the discipline or field of study to prepare them for postgraduate study.

The general Bachelor's Degree emphasises general principles and theories as preparation for entry into general employment or for a postgraduate programme. The professional Bachelor's Degree prepares students for professional training, post-graduate studies or professional practice in a wide range of careers. Therefore it emphasises general principles and theory in conjunction with procedural knowledge in order to provide students with a thorough grounding in the knowledge, theory, principles and skills of the profession or career concerned and the ability to apply these to professional or career contexts. The degree programme may contain a component of work-integrated learning.

(*Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework*, CHE, 2013)

[1] See below, NQF level and credits.

STANDARD FOR BACHELOR OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE (BLISc)

PREAMBLE

The discipline of library and information science converges the fields of librarianship and information science. The core of the discipline is the collecting, organising, managing and disseminating of information and knowledge. The multidisciplinary Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLISc) prepares its students for the dynamic and multi-faceted library and information services (LIS) profession, whose mission is to provide access to information and support the creation of new knowledge across all levels of society. The LIS profession demands a broad education that develops well-rounded and intellectually curious graduates who can respond to and adapt to the information needs and knowledge creation of their communities in the digital age. The range of qualifications in the field of library and information science offered in South Africa is currently in flux. Within the prevailing situation, there is a need for a qualification producing high-level professional competence with an appropriate knowledge base, emerging authority and accountability. Taking this required level into account and the complexity of knowledge and skills involved, the qualification needs to be a Bachelor degree with an exit level on NQF 8 with a minimum of 480 credits.

The BLISc is guided by the transformative vision for South Africa (SA) as set out in developmental policy documents such as the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 which looks forward to a "dynamic and connected information society and a vibrant knowledge economy that is inclusive and prosperous" (National Planning Commission, 2012: 190). The NDP identifies certain strategies necessary to achieve this vision by 2030 such as: improving early childhood development and the broader education system, upliftment programmes for rural women and unemployed youth, extending speedy broadband access, and establishing hubs of innovation and knowledge. LIS professionals are critical role-players in these plans. Library and information science education must, therefore, produce dynamic innovative graduates who can contribute effectively to this national project.

The human rights of freedom of expression and access to information are central to the LIS profession. Section 19 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts the "freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers". Sections 16 and 32 of South Africa's Bill of Rights similarly proclaim that everyone has "the freedom to receive or impart information or ideas" and promote "the right of access to any information held by the state and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights." As the Library and Information Services Transformation Charter (2014: viii) points out, entrenching the right to universal access to information and their right to know is about redressing the unequal power relations of our past. Access to information is more than a basic freedom right; it is, as well, an instrument of other economic, social and cultural rights. LIS professionals operate in a variety of contexts, for example, public libraries, corporations, universities, schools, research councils, government departments and health services. These all have their own user communities and specific demands. Nonetheless, the mission to facilitate universal access to information and knowledge is fundamental to all LIS.

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) have irrevocably changed the LIS landscape. Library and information services in the emergent knowledge economy are no longer defined by books and artefacts but rather by learning and knowledge (Lankes, 2016: 18). Dynamic library and information science education must capacitate the profession to take on leadership in the constantly evolving information ecology of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. As information brokers and partners in knowledge creation, LIS professionals need to "adapt readily to the rapidly changing information environment and drive the adoption of innovative new content, programs, services and technologies" (Australian Library & Information Association, 2016: 3).

The multimodality of communication in the 21st century does not negate the traditional leadership role of LIS in nurturing literacy and a reading culture. The on-going challenges facing literacy education in schools suggest a need for dynamic reading programmes for children and youth.

Inclusive socio-economic growth in a participatory and deliberative democracy depends on an "informed public", a concept with several dimensions. It implies equal access to information infrastructure, technologies, resources and networks. Another dimension to "being informed" is critical literacy and information literacy. The need for information literacy, the capacity to seek out information, assess its value, and use it to make decisions, is highlighted by the pervasiveness of misinformation and disinformation. In a developing society information literacy education must accompany the provision of physical and virtual information infrastructure and is what distinguishes LIS from other public ICT services. Through their literacy and information literacy programmes, LIS enable not only access to and consumption of information and knowledge but the creation and production of knowledge as well (Garrido & Wyber, 2017: 93). BLISc graduates thus must be prepared to take on strong teaching roles.

The BLISc qualification repositions the LIS profession within the context of the socio-developmental agenda of South Africa. Graduates need to think strategically and collaborate with partners across the LIS ecosystem and related learning disciplines.

PURPOSE

The BLISc degree prepares students for entry into the LIS profession. It provides a comprehensive education that develops well-rounded graduates with:

- a critical understanding of the conceptual and contextual knowledge of library and information science including relevant theories, concepts, principles and ethics;
- knowledge of at least one discipline other than LISc, of sufficient breadth and depth to provide a coherent range of concepts and theories that enable the graduate to apply them in situations relevant, and contributing, to enhanced professional practice;
- relevant competencies and skills for conventional and emerging roles in library and information services;
- the capacity to conduct research using appropriate methodologies in response to the information needs and challenges within professional and relevant societal and cultural contexts;

- the ability to be responsive to and function effectively and efficiently within rapidly changing technological and digital environments; and
- the ability to apply, as reflective library and information services practitioners, and ethical approach to knowledge acquisition;
- the ability to provide effective library and information services in a socially responsible manner.

NQF LEVEL AND CREDITS

The exit level of the qualification is NQF level 8. The minimum number of credits allocated to the qualification is 480 credits, with a minimum of 120 credits at level 8.

The 480 credit qualification includes credit-bearing work-integrated learning (WIL), which provides for the practical application of knowledge and skills in professional sites of practice.

STANDARD FOR THE AWARD OF THE QUALIFICATION

The qualification may be awarded when the qualification standard has been met or exceeded. The purpose and level of the qualification will have been achieved when the following attributes are evident. A Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLISc) graduate displays the NQF level 8 holistic knowledge of core areas and generic attributes including critical and analytical thinking, problem-solving, transfer of knowledge and skills from familiar to unfamiliar contexts, ability to work independently and in groups, interpersonal skills, and awareness of the need for lifelong learning, on-going information literacy, time management and self-management.

Knowledge

The knowledge includes specific core areas as well as other discipline-specific areas. The BLISc graduate has sound knowledge and understanding of core knowledge areas, a coherent selection of which is at the exit level.

Discipline-specific knowledge other than library and information science contributes a significant component of the qualification. The inclusion of disciplinary knowledge other than library and information science in the BLISc provides a satellite disciplinary knowledge base, which enhances graduates' understanding of library and information science and broadens their perspectives.

Core areas of knowledge

1. Foundational knowledge

The graduate has a strong foundation in the purpose and history of library and information science, library and information services and the library and information services profession. This includes an

understanding of the position and role of the library and information services sector, with its interconnected subsectors, in the broader information and knowledge ecosystem.

The graduate has insight into the theories that underlie the library and information science discipline and that infuse the BLISc programme, as well as the need to understand and promote the ethics of information and its appropriate and accountable use.

The graduate understands the ethical, legal and policy issues that impact on the LIS sector in SA.

2. Selection, acquisition and organisation of information resources

The graduate has sound knowledge and understanding of the distinct types of metadata; of theories, principles and practice of selection; acquisition and collection management of information resources; concepts, genesis, methods, tools, issues and trends in metadata creation and management; subject organisation and bibliographic control along with internationally-recognised standards; tools and platforms used for organisation and management of library and information resources.

3. Information access, retrieval and reference work

The graduate understands the structure and functioning of information retrieval systems and reference services, processes of information retrieval and the underlying theories and models.

4. Library ICTs

The graduate has specialised computer literacy and knowledge of job-specific technologies, web-based tools, integrated library management systems, software and applications for best user experience, and is responsive to the technology trends that impact library and information services, including the process of digitising, preserving and providing online access to a variety of materials and resources.

The graduate is conversant with the process of digitisation and preservation. and providing online access to a variety of materials and resources.

5. Management of library and information services

The graduate has knowledge of management principles to ensure effectively and efficiently managed library and information resources and services in a variety of information environments. This should include knowledge of strategic and financial planning, managing the library's human resources and physical facilities.

6. Scholarly communication infrastructure and services

The graduate has knowledge and understanding of current trends, practices and models in scholarly communication; formal and informal means of scholarly communication; data curation and

preservation for managing research data; open repository services; copyright and licensing and intellectual property issues; and, assessing the quality, use and impact of scholarly resources.

7. Reading, literacies and learning

The graduate understands interlinked areas in literacy and information literacy including multimodal literacies (such as media, data and digital literacies); reader development; and literary and scholarly publishing and knowledge production systems.

As an information literacy educator, the graduate is able to inculcate a culture of reading and develop in LIS users the abilities, practices and dispositions included in the concepts of literacy, information literacy and lifelong learning.

8. Research methodology

The graduate has knowledge of research strategies, paradigms, frameworks, approaches, analysis, presentation and dissemination of research findings, and is able to demonstrate that knowledge through the production of basic research and through the ability to identify, collate, catalogue, retrieve and disseminate the research production of others.

Applied Competences and Skills

1. Application of knowledge

By applying the core theories underpinning the discipline, the graduate is able to critically interpret, analyse and explain the history and legislative framework of LIS in SA, its developmental mission, and the relationship of LIS with interconnected sectors in the broader information and knowledge ecosystem.

The graduate, through an understanding of the ethics of information acquisition and dissemination, is able to promote its appropriate and accountable use.

2. Selection, acquisition and organisation of information resources

The graduate is able to apply collection management principles, tools and policies in the selection and acquisition of information resources in diverse formats and mediums, as well as to apply metadata management, subject organization and bibliographic control of such information resources.

3. Information access, retrieval and reference work

By applying underlying theories and models of information retrieval systems and information behaviour, the graduate is able to critically interpret the function, structure and functionalities of such systems, effectively retrieve information, discuss underlying theories and models, and deliberate on and provide appropriate services. The graduate is able to synthesize search results from multiple information resources for reliability, accuracy, currency and other criteria.

4. Library ICTs

Grounded in computer literacy and general IT proficiency, the graduate is responsive to technology trends that impact on library and information services, and able to apply relevant specialised computer skills and knowledge of integrated library management systems, job specific technologies, web-based tools, software and applications for best user experience. This includes the ability to digitize, preserve and provide online access to a variety of materials and resources.

5. Management of library and information services

The graduate is able to use management theories, principles and strategies to manage staff (including the development of staff capacity), physical resources and financial resources. This includes the ability to develop policies, innovative methods and solutions, to provide direction to facilitate quality library and information services customer care in diverse communities, and to evaluate the quality of library and information service.

6. Scholarly communication services

The graduate is able to engage with stakeholders on issues relating to effective communication of research/scholarly output; apply information technology skills to a technology-driven scholarly communication landscape, and support knowledge producers in assessing quality and visibility of research output.

7. Reading, literacies and learning

The graduate is able, in collaboration where necessary with subject experts, to plan strategies to build a reading culture in a developing and culturally diverse society, plan interventions and programmes that will assist library users of various age, language and special needs groups to develop as enthusiastic, critical readers and lifelong learners. The graduate is also able to apply learning theories and instructional design principles in developing information literacy education programmes for different user groups in collaboration with relevant role players. In applying these abilities, the graduate demonstrates wide reading in a range of genres and shows an understanding of the various interests and needs of reader groups and information users.

8. Research methodology

The graduate is able to adopt strategies for designing library and information science research, using appropriate research techniques to undertake projects for a user or organisational needs for service evaluation and impact assessment, including the ability to use quantitative, qualitative and mixed

research methods to collect, analyse and report on data. The graduate is able to apply appropriate ethical frameworks for research and to disseminate and communicate research findings to professional and non-professional audiences and readership.

9. Interpersonal skills

The graduate has appropriate communication skills, including presentation, workshop facilitation, collaboration, negotiation, customer focus, and the ability to work as a member of a team.

CONTEXTS AND CONDITIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

Practical application of acquired knowledge and skills in relevant contexts is a crucial component for the full achievement of the graduate attributes specified for the award of the degree, as such application will contextualise and deepen graduates' theoretical knowledge and capacitate them to apply it in their workplaces. In the context of a variety of educational approaches to Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) (see Guidelines below), such practical application is credit-bearing and is supervised and assessed by suitably qualified and experienced personnel.

Adequate teaching and learning and physical resources are available to implement effective assessment activities, which, in order to achieve the particular purpose of the qualification, include:

a. an adequate student:staff ratio;
b. adequate access to resources such as a library, IT and e-resources in order to meet the problem-solving and research attributes of the qualification.

A variety of assessment methods and types, including summative and formative assessment, is used. Assessment opportunities occur regularly throughout the course of study. Assessment includes authentic problem-solving either in real life work contexts or simulated teaching and learning activities by staff appropriately qualified to effect meaningful assessment. Students engage in some independent research that is assessed.

Regular and constructive feedback is given by assessors to enable graduates to achieve the problem-solving, research, literacy and communication and other relevant lifelong learning skills for the attainment of the qualification.

AWARD OF THE QUALIFICATION

The qualification may be awarded when the qualification standard has been met or exceeded.

PROGRESSION

A level 8 Bachelor's Degree with 480 credits may also meet the minimum requirement for admission to a cognate Master's Degree. Entry into these qualifications is usually in the area of specialisation or the discipline taken as a major in the Bachelor's Degree. A qualification may not be awarded for an early exit from a Bachelor's degree. (Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework: 33).

GUIDELINES

Universal access means that everyone has the right to seek, receive and impart information. This includes respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, such as fostering access to local content in accessible languages; quality education for all, including lifelong and e-learning; diffusion of new media and information literacy and skills, and social inclusion online, including addressing inequalities based on skills, education, gender, sexual orientation, age, race, ethnicity, and accessibility by those with disabilities (UNESCO 2015).

Professional sites of practice (for example, academic libraries, public libraries, corporate resource centres, etc.) refer to sites where the student has an opportunity for practical application of acquired LIS knowledge and skills, including an appropriate range of core knowledge areas, under the guidance of a suitably qualified professional practitioner.

Information retrieval systems and services include databases, aggregator and discovery services in a variety of contexts, internet search tools, social media mining and traditional reference resources (regardless of format and means of access).

Metadata includes descriptive, structural, administrative, reference and process metadata as well as metadata management through standard systems, principles and methods of organising information resources using subject recognition(classification), descriptive representation (cataloguing), and verbal subject description (e.g. indexing and abstracting).

Scholarly communication refers to the creation, publication, dissemination and preservation for future use, of research/scholarly output. Scholarly communication includes peer-reviewed journals, digital repositories, open publishing of journals and books, open education resources, open data, open science

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) refers to an educational approach that aligns academic and workplace practices for the mutual benefit of students and workplaces. Examples include action-learning, apprenticeships, cooperative education, experiential learning, inquiry learning, inter-professional learning, practicum placements, problem-based learning, project-based learning, scenario learning, service-learning, team-based learning, virtual or simulated WIL learning, work-based learning, work experience, and workplace learning.

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ANNEXURE A

NQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS – NQF Level 8

a. Scope of knowledge, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate knowledge of and engagement in an area at the forefront of a field, discipline or practice; an understanding of the theories, research methodologies, methods and techniques relevant to the field, discipline or practice; and an understanding of how to apply knowledge in a particular context.

b. Knowledge literacy in respect of which a leaner is able to demonstrate the ability to interrogate multiple sources of knowledge in an area of specialisation and to evaluate knowledge and processes of knowledge production

c. Method and procedure, in respect of which a leaner is able to demonstrate an understanding of the complexities and uncertainties of selecting, applying or transferring appropriate standard procedure, processes or techniques to unfamiliar problems in a specialised field, discipline or practice.

d. Problem-solving, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to use a range of specialised skills to identify, analyse and address complex or abstract problems drawing systematically on the body of knowledge and methods appropriate to a field, discipline or practice

e. Ethics and professional practice, in respect of which a leaner is able to demonstrate the ability to identify and address ethical issues, based on critical reflection on the suitability of different ethical value systems to specific contexts.

f. Accessing, processing and managing information, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to critically review information gathering, synthesis of data, evaluation and management processes in the specialised context in order to develop creative responses to problems and issues

g. Producing and communicating information, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to present and communicate academic, professional or occupational ideas and texts effectively to a range of audiences, offering creative insight, rigours interpretations and solutions to problems and issues appropriate to the context.

h. Context and systems, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to operate effectively within a system, or manage a system based on an understanding of the roles and relationships between elements within the system.

i. Management of learning, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability t apply, in a self-critical manner, learning strategies which effectively address his or her professional and ongoing learning needs and the professional and ongoing learning needs of others

j. Accountability, in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate the ability to task full responsibility for his or her work, decision-making and use of resources, and full accountability for the decisions and actions of others where appropriate.