

Qualification types

A qualifications framework is a formalised structure that is aimed at creating a single integrated national framework for learning achievements. Different qualifications frameworks exist throughout the world, and is designed to ensure the provision of continuing, demand and quality based education and training and for the workplace. Currently frameworks exists in several countries, including Australia, Barbados, the United Kingdom, India, Ireland, Kenya and New Zealand.

The South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was created to:

- o facilitate access to and mobility/progression within education and training pathways
- o enhance (and standardise) the quality of education and training
- o accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education and training opportunities

The South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a system of integrated qualifications that consists of three related sub-frameworks:

<p>General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF)</p>	<p>This framework focuses on basic education, clearly distinguishing between two distinct groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) children and adolescents acquiring a basic education in schools b) adolescents and adults focussing on adult basic education and training (ABET) or needs a school-leaving certificate <p>This framework is aimed at preparing learners in a broad, general way for further learning mainly determines the structure for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications.</p> <p>This framework focusses on qualifications on NQF levels 1 – 4.</p>
<p>Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)</p>	<p>The HEQSF was implemented in 2014 as a revision of the original Higher Education Qualification Framework (2008). The HEQSF is the backbone/framework that all academic programmes offered by higher education institution (including Stellenbosch University) must adhere to. It describes the</p>



	<p>minimum requirements, nomenclature regulations and a shared terminology that aims to ensure quality assurance in the entire academic offering in HE. Should we consider curricula a new programme or amending a current programme, we need to be aware of the parameters we can move within and the requirements we need to meet for a programme to be accredited/to still be eligible.</p> <p>The framework consists of 11 qualification types which are mapped onto six exit levels on the NQF. Some levels have more than one qualification type. All qualifications offered via this framework has to be approved by the Department of Higher Education (DHET), accredited by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and registered by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).</p> <p>This framework focusses on qualifications on NQF levels 5 – 10.</p>
<p>Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF)</p>	<p>This framework focusses on trade and occupational education. Each of these qualifications are required to consist of three components: knowledge, practical skills and work experience and is required to have an external summative assessment.</p> <p>This framework focusses on qualifications on NQF levels 5 – 10.</p>

Each of the qualification frameworks consists of the main qualification types, their descriptors and qualifiers and recognises credits as a measure of the learning required for each qualification type. Additionally, guidelines are provided in each frameworks for the naming of qualifications (nomenclature) and progression within the sub-framework.



Figure 1 is a visual representation of the different qualification frameworks and the exit levels of each of the qualification types.

National Qualifications Framework				
Level	Sub-framework and qualification types			
10	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework	Doctoral Degree	*	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
		Doctoral Degree (Professional)	*	
9		Master's Degree	*	
		Master's Degree (Professional)	*	
8		Bachelor Honours Degree	Occupational Certificate (Level 8)	
		Postgraduate Diploma		
7		Bachelor's Degree	Occupational Certificate (Level 7)	
		Advanced Diploma		
6		Diploma	Occupational Certificate (Level 6)	
		Advanced Certificate		
5	Higher Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 5)		
4	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework	National Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 4)	
3		Intermediate Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 3)	
2		Elementary Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 2)	
1		General Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 1)	

*Qualification types beyond level 8 on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) have not been determined.

Figure 1: Bellview Institute of Distance Learning (bellview.edu.za)



Undergraduate Qualifications at Exit levels 5 & 6

HEQSF qualification types	Higher Certificate	Advanced Certificate	Diploma (240 credit) & (360 credit)
HEQSF Exit Level	Level 5	Level 6	Level 6
Minimum total credits	120 credits at Level 5	120 credits at Level 6	240-credits or 360 credits Minimum of 120 credits at NQF level 6
Nomenclature rules	Designators: Not applicable Qualifiers: Maximum of two	Designators: Not applicable Qualifiers: Maximum of two	Designators: Not applicable Qualifiers: Maximum of two
Abbreviations	HCert followed by the qualifier in brackets i.e. HCert (Audio Technology)	AdvCert followed by the qualifier in brackets i.e. AdvCert (Business Management and Administration)	Dip followed by the qualifier in brackets i.e. Dip (Sustainable Development)
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocational qualification with a strong industry-oriented focus. Provides basic introductory knowledge, cognitive and conceptual tools & practical techniques for further higher education studies. Students should attain a basic level of HE knowledge and competence in a particular field/occupation Typically includes a simulated work experience/ work integrated learning (WIL) component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocational or industry-orientated qualifications – strong career focus Mainly emphasises general principles, with some more specific procedures and their application Provides students with sound knowledge in a particular field that they can apply in a specific career/professional context Students are prepared to enter a specific niche in the labour market Typically includes WIL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily vocational orientation. Includes professional, vocational or industry-specific knowledge Provides a sound understanding of general theoretical principles and a combination of general and specific procedure and their application Aimed at developing graduates who can demonstrate focussed knowledge and skills in a specific field. Typically gain experience in applying knowledge and skills in workplace context <p>Distinction between 240 and 360 versions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 240 credit version can only be offered when it leads to a professional designation as determined by a professional body 360 credit must include 120 credits (1 year) of workplace-based learning



HEQSF qualification types	Higher Certificate	Advanced Certificate	Diploma (240 credit) & (360 credit)
HEQSF Exit Level	Level 5	Level 6	Level 6
Minimum admission requirements	National Senior Certificate; or National Certificate Vocational	Higher Certificate	National Senior Certificate; or Higher/Advanced Certificate in cognate field
Progression	Appropriate Advanced Certificate Credits can be used for admission into a cognate Diploma or appropriate Bachelor's degree	Cognate diploma or Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree Advanced Diploma
Minimum duration ¹	Usually 1 year (full time)	Usually 1 year (full time) or 2 years (part time)	Usually 3 years (full time)

¹ Take note: a programme must be registered with the DHET to allow for a part-time registration. Otherwise it is expected that the programme is only available for a full time registration, and students who do not complete in the minimum required time will have an impact on the throughput rate of the programme.



Undergraduate Qualifications at Exit levels 7 & 8

HEQSF qualification types	Advanced Diploma	Bachelor's Degree (360-credit)	(Professional) Bachelor's Degree (480-credit)
HEQSF Exit Level	Level 7	Level 7	Level 8
Minimum total credits	120 credits at Level 7	Minimum 360 credits (120 credits per academic year) At least 120 credits on NQF level 7	Minimum 480 credits (120 credits per academic year) At least 120 credits on NQF level 8
Nomenclature rules	Designators: Not applicable Qualifiers: Maximum of two	Designators: specific and indicate a broad and generic area of study/discipline/profession i.e. Bachelor of <u>Arts</u> , Bachelor of <u>Science</u> Qualifiers: Maximum of 2	Designators: specific and indicate a broad and generic area of study/discipline/profession i.e. Bachelor of <u>Arts</u> , Bachelor of <u>Science</u> Qualifiers: Maximum of 2
Abbreviations	AdvDip followed by the qualifier in brackets i.e. AdvDip (Midwifery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B followed by the abbreviation of the designator, followed by the qualifier in brackets i.e. BA (Language and Culture), BSc (Computer Science) • Where no qualifier is used, only the B followed by an approved abbreviation for the Designator i.e. BCom • Where a unique designator is used, an abbreviation of the designator can be used i.e. BDatSci 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B followed by the abbreviation of the designator, followed by the qualifier in brackets i.e. BA (Visual Arts), BEng (Civil Engineering) • Where no qualifier is used, only the B followed by an approved abbreviation for the Designator or an approved prescribed abbreviation i.e. BSocWork, BDiv, LLB, MBChB • Where a unique designator is used, an abbreviation of the designator can be used i.e. BDatSci



HEQSF qualification types	Advanced Diploma	Bachelor's Degree (360-credit)	(Professional) Bachelor's Degree (480-credit)
HEQSF Exit Level	Level 7	Level 7	Level 8
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides entry-level vocational or professional preparation or <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides specialisation for Bachelor's Degree graduates or graduates from Diploma programmes Offering an intensive focused and applied specialisation that meets the requirements of a specific niche in the labour market Suitable for continuing professional development Inculcation of a deep and systematic understanding of current thinking, practice, theory and methodology in an area of specialisation Can be designed to prepare students for postgraduate study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a well-rounded, broad education that equips graduates with the knowledge base, theory and methodology of disciplines and field of study to demonstrate initiative and responsibility in an academic or professional context. Could require students to undertake research appropriate to the discipline/field of study to prepare them for postgraduate study. Emphasises general principles & theory as preparation for general employment or postgraduate programme. Can include a component of workplace based learning or WIL. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a well-rounded, broad education that equips graduates with the knowledge base, theory and methodology of disciplines and field of study to demonstrate initiative and responsibility in an academic or professional context. Higher level of learning and greater cognitive demand than 360-credit degree Should prepare students to undertake Master's level study, by providing them with research capacity in the methodology and research techniques of the discipline. Prepares students for professional training, postgraduate studies or professional practice. Emphasises general principles & theory in conjunction with procedural knowledge to provide students with thorough grounding in knowledge, theory, principles & skills of the profession/career Ability to apply professional/career contexts. Some programmes are designed in consultation with/according to guidelines provided by professional body. Can be recognised by professional body as requirement to practice that profession. Can include a component of workplace based learning or WIL.
Minimum admission requirements	Appropriate Diploma or Bachelor's Degree	National Senior Certificate National Certificate (Vocational)	National Senior Certificate National Certificate (Vocational)



HEQSF qualification types	Advanced Diploma	Bachelor's Degree (360-credit)	(Professional) Bachelor's Degree (480-credit)
HEQSF Exit Level	Level 7	Level 7	Level 8
Progression	Bachelor's Degree Postgraduate Diploma Bachelor of Honours Degree	Postgraduate Diploma Bachelor of Honours	Postgraduate Diploma Bachelor of Honours Master's Degree
Minimum duration ²	Usually 1 year (full time) or 2 years (part time)	Usually 3 years (full time)	Usually 4 years (full time)

² Take note: a programme must be registered with the DHET to allow for a part-time registration. Otherwise it is expected that the programme is only available for a full time registration, and students who do not complete in the minimum required time will have an impact on the throughput rate of the programme.



Postgraduate Qualifications at Exit levels 8

HEQSF qualification types	Postgraduate Diploma	Honours Degree
HEQSF Exit Level	Level 8	Level 8
Minimum total credits	120 credits at Level 8	120 credits at Level 8
Nomenclature rules	Designators: Not applicable Qualifiers: Maximum of 2	Designators: specific and indicate a broad and generic area of study/discipline/profession i.e. Bachelor of <u>Arts</u> , Bachelor of <u>Science</u> Qualifiers: Maximum of 2
Abbreviations	PGDip followed by qualifier in brackets i.e. PGDip (Primary Care Nursing), PGDip (Intellectual Property Law), PGDip (Infectious Diseases)	B followed by Designator abbreviation followed by Hons Followed by qualifier in brackets (if applicable) i.e. BAccHons, BAgricHons BEdHons (Curriculum Inquiry), BMilHons (Technology)
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sere to strengthen and deepen student's knowledge in particular discipline/profession • Can be multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary in nature • Aims to enable working professionals to undertake advanced reflection and development by means of a systematic survey of current thinking, practice and research methods in an area of specialisation, • Demands high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence • Demands ability to relate knowledge to a range of context to undertake professional or highly skilled work. • Sustained research project not required. • Can include research under supervision (with a more practical/professional focus) • Can carry recognition by appropriate professional/statutory body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate specialisation qualification following a bachelor's degree • Aims to consolidate and deepen student's expertise in particular discipline • Develop research capacity in methodology and techniques of the discipline • Demands a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence. • Can carry recognition by appropriate professional/statutory body • Must include conducting and reporting research under supervision of at least 30 credits in the form of a discrete research component appropriate to the discipline or field.



HEQSF qualification types	Postgraduate Diploma	Honours Degree
HEQSF Exit Level	Level 8	Level 8
Minimum admission requirements	Bachelor's degree Advanced Diploma	Bachelor's degree Advanced Diploma
Progression	Master's Degree	Master's Degree
Minimum duration³	Usually 1 year (full time) or 2 years (part time)	Usually 1 year (full time) or 2 years (part time)

³ Take note: a programme must be registered with the DHET to allow for a part-time registration. Otherwise it is expected that the programme is only available for a full time registration, and students who do not complete in the minimum required time will have an impact on the throughput rate of the programme.



Postgraduate Qualifications at Exit levels 9 & 10

HEQSF qualification types	Master's Degree	Professional Master's Degree	Doctorate
HEQSF Exit Level	HEQSF level 9	HEQSF level 9	HEQSF level 10
Minimum total credits	Minimum 180 credits At least 120 credits at Level 9	Minimum 180 credits At least 120 credits at Level 9	Minimum 360 credits at NQF level 10
Nomenclature rules	Designators: specific and indicate a broad and generic area of study/discipline/profession i.e. Bachelor of <u>Arts</u> , Bachelor of <u>Science</u> Qualifiers: Maximum of 1	Designators: specific and indicate a broad and generic area of study/discipline/profession i.e. Bachelor of <u>Arts</u> , Bachelor of <u>Science</u> Qualifiers: Maximum of 1	Designator <u>Philosophy</u> usually used for doctoral degrees by thesis, however other Designators may be used to denote the area of study. Qualifiers: Maximum of 1
Abbreviations	M followed by abbreviation of designator i.e. MAud, MEng, MAgric prescribed abbreviation including the letter M, i.e. LLM M followed by abbreviation of designator followed by qualifier in brackets i.e. MA (Visual Arts), MPhil (Futures Studies)	M followed by abbreviation of designator i.e. MAud, MEng, MAgric prescribed abbreviation including the letter M, i.e. LLM M followed by abbreviation of designator followed by qualifier in brackets i.e. MA (Visual Arts), MPhil (Futures Studies)	Depending on the use of the Designator i.e. PhD, LLD At SU usually PhD with the qualifier in brackets i.e. PhD (Sustainable Agriculture), PhD (Health Professions Education)



HEQSF qualification types	Master's Degree	Professional Master's Degree	Doctorate
HEQSF Exit Level	HEQSF level 9	HEQSF level 9	HEQSF level 10
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main purpose: to educate and train researchers who can contribute to the development of knowledge at advanced level. • Research component should commensurate with characteristics of the discipline, filed and purpose of the programme. • Research component can be submitted in various forms, i.e. written dissertation, technical report, creative performances/works, and series of interrelated, publishable/published articles. • Deal with complex issues, plan and implement tasks with theoretical underpinning. • By <u>dissertation</u>: single research project culminating in production and acceptance of dissertation/other form of research (research component 180 credits) • By <u>coursework and mini-dissertation</u>: coursework requiring high levels of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence (research component minimum 60 credits followed by increments of 30 credits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main purpose: to educate and train researchers who can contribute to the development of knowledge at advanced level. • Should enable them to be prepared for advanced and specialised professional employment. • Can be designed in consultation with or according to guidelines by a professional body • May require the fulfilment of all/part of the requirements for professional registration/recognition • May include appropriate forms of work-integrated learning. • Advancing knowledge, understanding and skills relevant to a particular profession. • Successful completion of coursework programme requiring high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence. • Demonstration of ability to relate knowledge to resolution of complex problems in professional practice. • Research component: independent research demonstrating innovation or professional expertise consisting of single research/technical project or smaller projects (minimum 45 credits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate high level research capability & making significant and original contribution in the discipline or field. • Requires candidate to undertake research at most advanced academic levels, i.e. often preparing for academic career. • Mostly submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis/dissertation. • Partial fulfilment of research requirements can include different forms of research, i.e. peer-reviewed articles/papers or creative works (artefacts, compositions, performances, manuscripts) • Coursework can be required as preparation for research – not required and does not contribute to credit value • Graduate should be able to supervise and evaluate research of others in the area of specialisation.



HEQSF qualification types	Master's Degree	Professional Master's Degree	Doctorate
HEQSF Exit Level	HEQSF level 9	HEQSF level 9	HEQSF level 10
Minimum admission requirements	Professional (480-credit) Bachelor's Degree Bachelor Honours Degree Postgraduate Diploma	Professional (480-credit) Bachelor's Degree Bachelor Honours Degree Postgraduate Diploma	Master's Degree
Progression	Doctoral Degree	Doctoral Degree	None – Doctoral degree is the highest qualification offered in the HEQSF
Minimum duration ⁴	Usually 1 year (full time) or 2 years (part time) Depending on the discipline and research requirements. Should complete within 3 years (full time) and 4 years (part time)	Usually 1 - 2 years (full time) or more (depending on the discipline) Should complete within 3 years (full time) and 4 years (part time)	Usually 2 years (full time) or 4 years (part time) Depending on the discipline and research requirements. Should complete within 4 years (full time) and 6 years (part time)



Sources of information

Bellview Institute of Distance Learning. *What are the Sub-Frameworks in the NQF?* Available from <https://bellview.edu.za/what-are-the-sub-frameworks-in-the-nqf/> [Accessed 23 July 2022]

Council on Higher Education. 2013. National Qualifications Act (66/2008): Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework. (Government Gazette 36721 Notice 549, 2 August 2013). Pretoria: Government Printer.

Department of Basic Education. 2018. Policy for the quality assurance of private [Adult Learning Centres, Further Education and Training Colleges] Colleges for Continuing Education and Training, offering qualifications registered in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework, and the

⁴ Take note: a programme must be registered with the DHET to allow for a part-time registration. Otherwise it is expected that the programme is only available for a full time registration, and students who do not complete in the minimum required time will have an impact on the throughput rate of the programme.



Accreditation of Private Assessment Bodies. (Government Gazette 41887 Notice 926, 7 September 2018). Pretoria: Government Printer. Available from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201809/41887gon926.pdf [Accessed 23 July 2022]

Department of Education. 2007. The Higher Education Qualifications Framework. (Government Gazette No 30353, Notice 928, 5 October 2007). Pretoria: Government Printer.

Quality Council for Trades and Occupation. 2013. Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework [OQSF] Policy. (Government Gazette 36803 Notice 1040. 30 August 2012). Pretoria: Government Printer. Available from https://www.fpmseta.org.za/downloads/QCTO_OQSF_Policy_Version_25_02_2013.pdf [Accessed 23 July 2022]

Using this information in the programme specification document (Form A)

Information related to the qualification type will be applicable throughout the programme specification document, but specifically to the *General Information* and *Criterion 1 (Programme Design)*.

<p>Full qualification title</p>	<p>This is the full name of the programme that would indicate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The qualification type 2. The applicable designator 3. The applicable qualifier(s) <p>The title is written out in full with the <i>Designator</i> following the word of and the <i>qualifier(s)</i> following the word in. i.e. Bachelor of Science in Computer Science Masters of Philosophy in Breast Surgery</p> <p>A qualifier is not required for a Bachelor's, Honours, Masters or Doctoral degree if the programme aims to focus on a broad field of study or where the programme differentiates itself with a unique qualifier (i.e. not Science, Commerce, Arts, etc.) i.e. Bachelor of Science Bachelor of Social Work</p>
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	Master of Global Surgery
Abbreviated title	See guidelines on the appropriate abbreviation regulations in the tables above.
Programme Type	<p>Apart from the different qualification types listed in the HEQFS, the DHET and CHE distinguishes between three different <i>types</i> of programmes, largely aimed at providing them with an indication whether special approval for the programme must be taken into account:</p> <p>Non-professional: the majority of programmes offered at SU</p> <p>Professional: the programme is associated with a statutory professional body in SA (i.e. HPCSA, SANC, ECSA, SAICA). This body could either support the curriculum design or can provide regulations for which these programmes must adhere to. A professional programme must, upon submission to the CHE, also submit an approval letter from the professional body stating that (1) this programme has been evaluated for professional accreditation or (2) the programme submitted has the approval of the professional body and full accreditation will be granted at a later stage (i.e. a site-visit or submission of documentation). A professional programme will not be accredited by the CHE without the proof of accreditation/registration by the professional body.</p> <p>Teacher education: all programmes focussing on teacher education (BEd, BEdHons, etc.) must adhere to the <i>Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications</i> (MRTEQ). Before a programme is submitted to the DHET, it must be evaluated by the Teacher Education Programmes' Evaluation Committee (TEPEC). This requires the completion of additional templates.</p>
Qualification Type	This question relates to the different qualification types listed by the HEQSF as per the tables provided above.
Qualification designation	Refers to a broad field of study (i.e. Commerce, Engineering, Science, Theology). A Designator always follows the word of , i.e. Bachelor of <u>Commerce</u> , Bachelor of <u>Theology</u>
First qualifier	A qualifier indicates a specialisation within the broad field of study. Qualifiers can be used in all qualification types. The linking word is in , i.e. Bachelor of Engineering in <u>Civil Engineering</u> , Postgraduate Diploma in <u>Futures Studies</u> .



Second qualifier

Although we do not have many examples of the use of second qualifiers, second qualifiers can be used to identify the programmes that requires a specialisation of the first qualifier, i.e. Postgraduate Diploma **in** Higher Education **in** Teaching and Learning, Bachelor of Arts **in** Opera Music **in** Composition



Hyperlinks to other sources

Other documents that should be consulted:

[Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework \(HEQSF\) \(2014\)](#)

[Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications \(2015\)](#)

