

NQF levels of a qualification

Higher Education Sub-Framework (HEQSF)

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 minimum requirements, nomenclature regulations and a shared terminology that aims to ensure quality assurance in the entire academic offering in HE. Should we consider curriculaing 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.

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).

This framework focusses on qualifications on NQF levels 5 – 10.

The NQF levels for the different qualification types and the minimum number of credits for each qualification type as follows:

Qualification Type	Exit level of qualification type (NQF level)	Minimum total number of credits
Higher Certificate	5	120 credits at NQF level 5
Advanced Certificate	6	120 credits at NQF level 6
Diploma (240 credit)	6	240 credits at NQF level 6
Diploma (360 credit)	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 360 credits at NQF level 6 • <i>Must include 120 credits of workplace-based learning</i>
Advanced Diploma	7	120 credits at NQF level 7
Bachelor's Degree (360-credit)	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 360 credits • <i>At least 120 credits per academic year</i> • <i>Year 1 modules can be on NQF levels 5 or 6</i> • <i>Year 2 modules on NQF level 6</i> • <i>At least 120 credits (year 3) on NQF level 7</i>
(Professional) Bachelor's Degree (480-credit)	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 480 credits • <i>At least 120 credits per academic year</i> • <i>Year 1 modules can be on NQF levels 5 or 6</i> • <i>Year 2 modules on NQF level 6</i> • <i>Year 3 modules on NQF level 7</i> • <i>At least 120 credits (year 4) on NQF level 8</i>



Postgraduate Diploma	8	120 credits on NQF level 8
Honours Degree	8	120 credits on NQF level 8 <i>30 credits must be allocated to research</i>
Master's Degree	9	180 credits <i>At least 60 credits allocated to research</i>
Professional Master's Degree	9	180 credits <i>At least 45 credits allocated to research</i> <i>Supported by professional body</i>
Doctoral	10	360 credits



Hyperlinks to other sources

Other documents that should be consulted:

[Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework](#)

