National Qualifications Framework in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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CONTENTS

- National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment (NCAAAA)
- Qualifications Frameworks
- Saudi Arabia Qualifications Framework
NCAAA Overview

- Independent body responsible to the Higher Education Council

- Accreditation of all postsecondary education except military (public and private, higher and vocational education)

- Board of Directors drawn from government, institutions, and industry
VISION
“...recognized within Saudi Arabia and internationally for the quality and effectiveness of its contributions to continuing improvement in the quality of postsecondary education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.”

MISSION
“...encourage, support and evaluate the quality of postsecondary institutions and the programs they offer to ensure that

- the quality of student learning outcomes
- the management and support services provided within institutions
- the contributions to research and the communities served by postsecondary institutions,

are equivalent to high international standards.
Values
The Commission is committed to the following values which will be reflected in all of its activities.

1. Excellence
2. Independence
3. Transparency
4. Impartiality
5. Integrity
OBJECTIVES

To ensure that educational standards are:

- Equivalent to high international standards
- Consistent throughout the country
- Appropriate for academic, professional and vocational skill requirements including particular requirements of Saudi Arabian culture and economic development.
NCAAA MAIN FUNCTIONS

• Establish standards and processes for QA and Accreditation
• Plan, train and support Quality Improvement
• Accredit Institutions
• Accredit Programs
• Provide Provisional Accreditation of new institutions and programs
• Link and coordinate with international agencies (e.g., INQAAHE, ANQAHE, AQAAAIW)
Quality Context in Saudi Arabia

“Quality” involves three important elements:

1. Consistency with generally accepted standards of good practice

2. Fitness for Purpose—the extent to which mission, goals and objectives are achieved.

3. Fitness of Purpose—the appropriateness of the mission, goals and objectives for the communities it is established to serve.
GENERAL STRATEGIES

- Phased development over a five year period.
- Approach to QA drawn from international experience, but system designed specifically for the KSA.
- Greater detail in documents setting out procedures and requirements because of inexperience and involvement of people from many systems.
- Common requirements but diversity in detailed procedures.
- Emphasis on self evaluation verified by independent review.
No compromise in demands for quality, but:

- Training is provided.
- Time is allowed for development.
- Standards relate to all activities, but special emphasis given to learning and teaching, and
- Standards of learning outcomes must be verified.
NCAAA Key documents

1. Handbook
2. Quality Standards for HE Institutions
3. National Qualifications Frameworks
Handbook
HANDBOOK

Part 1. The System for Quality Assurance and Accreditation

- Describes Principles underlying the approach taken by the Commission
- Summarizes The Standards that will be applied in QA and Accreditation Judgments
- Outlines the Stages involved in the Approval of Institutions and Accreditation of Programs
- Explains a number of terms used in the process
Part 2. Internal Quality Assurance Arrangements

Focuses on internal QA processes & provides guidance on:

- Establishing of Quality Centers
- Processes of planning, evaluation and internal reporting on educational programs
- Self-Study and improvement of institutional activities

Includes templates for use in preparing reports
HANDBOOK (Cont.)

Part 3. External Reviews for Accreditation and Quality Assurance

Provides details of preparation for and conduct of external reviews.

These may relate to

- applications for approval and accreditation of a new institution
- accreditation and re-accreditation of programs
- re-accreditation on a five year cycle
Quality Standards for HE Institutions
Quality Standards for HE Institutions:
Standards have been identified, relating to broad areas of activity in HE institutions.

- Institutional Standards (11 areas)
  Companion document provides Self Evaluation Scales

- Program Standards (11 Areas)
  Companion document provides Self Evaluation Scales
## Quality Standards for HE Institutions

### Institutions
- Mission and Objectives
- Governance and Administration
- Management of QA and Improvement
- Learning and Teaching
- Student Administration and Support Services
- Learning Resources
- Facilities and Equipment
- Financial Planning and Management
- Employment Processes
- Research
- Relationships With the Community

### Programs
- Mission and Objectives
- Program Administration
- Management of Program QA
- Learning and Teaching
- Student Administration and Support Services
- Learning Resources
- Facilities and Equipment
- Financial Planning and Management
- Employment Processes
- Research
- Relationships With the Community
Qualifications Frameworks
QFWs describe the structure of qualifications in postsecondary education systems. Their main elements are:

- Levels of qualifications corresponding to qualification titles. The levels relate to the academic rigor and complexity of learning involved.

- Credits, which may relate to the volume of learning or the amount of instruction and study time involved.
Domains of Learning Outcome: Types of learning often referred to as domains. Domains usually involve:

- knowledge,
- capacity for thinking and problem solving,
- personal characteristics such as:
  - capacity for leadership,
  - group cooperation,
  - personal responsibility, and
  - capacity for independent learning.
Domains of Learning Outcome (Cont.)

• Basic communication and computational skills expected of all students regardless of their field of study. In recent frameworks basic IT skills have been included in this group of outcomes.
QFWs have been used on some countries for many years, but their use is now increasing rapidly.

- They have been developed in the UK and Ireland, in most European countries in the European area as a whole under the Bologna agreement and,

- Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Canada, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand and many other Asian countries, and in many Pacific nations.

- In the Arab region QF have been or are being developed in a number of countries and there are proposals to develop a standardized framework for use within the region.
Major reasons for the introduction of Qualifications Frameworks

- Ensuring Common Standards for Qualifications as HE systems expand and become more diverse.
- Achieving International Recognition for Qualifications
- Establishing Equivalence of Qualifications in Different Countries within a Region and Internationally
- Supporting Curriculum Objectives to Broaden the Range of Learning Outcomes
- Supporting Learning Outcomes as Quality Indicators rather than Input Measures
- Clarifying the Differing Nature of Programs in HE and Technical Training and the Comparability of Qualifications in each
National Qualifications Frameworks
Characteristics of the QFW for HE in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

• The framework is a document that focuses on Generic “standards” of learning outcomes for academic awards or qualifications.

• The framework uses the credit hours system currently in widespread use within the Kingdom

• The framework for HE uses existing qualification titles with one suggested variation to avoid the use of one term “diploma” for two different levels (both one year and two year programs).
• The framework describes expected characteristics of graduates at each level, and learning outcomes in broad areas at each level.

• The framework proposes four broad categories (or domains) of learning outcomes
• The framework is built on in program and course specifications that include:
  o teaching strategies,
  o program evaluation mechanisms and
  o student assessment procedures for all of the domains of learning.

• The framework is being broadened to show the relationships between technical training and HE and clarify the special requirements of each of those sectors of the system.
The principal elements in the NQFW are:

1. Levels of Qualifications
2. Credit Hour Requirements
3. Domains of Learning Outcome
1. **Levels:**

Levels numbered and linked to qualification titles used to describe the increasing intellectual demand and complexity of learning expected as students progress to higher academic awards.
Levels in the Qualifications Framework (HE)

• Entry. Completion of secondary education.
• Level 1. Associate Diploma
• Level 2. Diploma
• Level 3. Bachelor
• Level 4. Higher Diploma
• Level 5. Master
• Level 6. Doctor

The QF includes credit hour requirements and learning outcome expectations for each of the domains for each qualification level.
Levels (Cont.)

• The framework for HE assumes that
  – students entering post secondary education will have completed secondary education, with any necessary pre-requisites for study in particular fields.
  – If additional preparatory work is required it is not part of HE and credits that might be granted for such studies does not count towards HE award requirements.
Credits:

• Points allocated to describe the amount of work or volume of learning expected for an academic award or units or other components of a program.

• The number of credit hours assigned to a course or a program are an indication of the amount of learning expected.
Credits (Cont.)

• Practice in defining credit requirements for academic study varies in different countries.

• Common practice in the KSA is to relate this expectation to the number of contact hours in different types of learning activity (e.g. lectures, tutorials, laboratories).
Credits (Cont.)

• For the purposes of this Framework 15 credit hours is taken as a measure of the amount of teaching and instruction normally expected for a full time student at undergraduate levels in a semester and 30 credit hours in an academic year.

* Credit hour calculations are based on a formula in which one 50 minute lecture, or two or three 50 minute laboratory or tutorial sessions over a 15 week teaching semester are regarded as one credit hour.
Credits (Cont.)

• The length of programs (and the number of credit hours or credit points given) may differ for programs with the same or similar titles (For example a program leading to a degree of bachelor may be four or five (or even six) years in length depending on the amount of learning expected).

• HE programs in professional fields often include periods of field work or internship. These may be assigned credit hours. However the number of credit hours allocated must be justifiable in relation to the student learning outcomes expected from that experience.
3. Domains of Learning Outcomes

The framework groups the kinds of learning expected of students into four domains and describes learning outcomes at each level in each of these groupings.
Domains of Learning Outcomes (Cont.)

- in each domain there is an increase in the scale or complexity of the learning that is expected at higher levels.

- In each case the knowledge and skills are intended to be cumulative, so that the learning at any level includes that of the same domain at earlier levels even if the particular knowledge or skill is not restated.
Domains of Learning Outcomes (Cont.)

Five broad areas or Domains of Learning have been identified:

I. **Knowledge**

The ability to,

- recall, understand, and present information, including:
  - knowledge of specific facts,
  - knowledge of concepts, principles and theories, and
  - knowledge of procedures.
Domains of Learning Outcomes (Cont.)

II. Cognitive skills

The ability to:

- apply conceptual understanding of concepts, principles, theories and

- apply procedures involved in critical thinking and creative problem solving, both when asked to do so, and when faced with unanticipated new situations.
III. **Interpersonal Skills and Responsibility, including**

The ability to:

- take responsibility for their own learning and continuing professional development,
- work effectively in groups and exercise leadership when appropriate,
- act responsibly in personal and professional relationships,
- act ethically and consistently with high moral standards in personal and public forums
Domains of Learning Outcomes (Cont.)

IV. Communication, Information Technology and Numerical Skills, including,

The ability to:

- communicate effectively in oral and written form,
- use information and communications technology, and
- use basic mathematical and statistical techniques.
V. Psychomotor skills: Is a fifth domain which is included for those fields of study where psychomotor skills are an important outcome (e.g. Dentistry, surgery, performing arts)

Include:

- Manual dexterity
- Capacity to manage physical behavior with precision and skill
Domains of Learning Outcomes (Cont.)

• Learning outcomes included under the headings of knowledge and cognitive skills are associated with the field of study or profession for which students are being prepared.

• Interpersonal skills and responsibility, and communication, information technology and numerical skills, are general capabilities that all students should develop regardless of their field of study. Development of these abilities would normally be integrated into the teaching and learning processes in some appropriate way in all subjects studied.
The relationship between levels, credits and domains of learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Minimum Credit Hours</th>
<th>Domains of Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Associate Diploma</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Specified learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Diploma</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Specified learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bachelor</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Specified learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Higher Diploma</td>
<td>24 beyond Bachelor</td>
<td>Specified learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Master</td>
<td>24 or 39 beyond Master plus thesis or project*</td>
<td>Specified learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Doctor</td>
<td>12 or 30 beyond Master, plus thesis*</td>
<td>Specified learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Different credit hour requirements reflect regulations for types of programs and thesis requirements. The academic awards at each of these levels are regarded as equivalent despite the differences in credit hour requirements.
The principal elements in the NQFW are:
Level 6. Doctor
 Characteristics of Programs

• An award requiring a minimum of 30 credit hours for advanced coursework plus a major thesis normally taken over two full time academic years or equivalent following a Masters degree.

• An alternative program structure with greater concentration on independent research is available in selected fields at some institutions involving a minimum of 12 credit hours and a more extensive thesis.
Thank You!