

BHUTAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

(DRAFT)



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Contents

Acknowledgement/Copyright

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Foreword

The Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF) is the national document underpinning the national qualifications systems in Bhutan. The BQF forms an integral part of the national regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for education and training and aims to ensure the quality and relevance of education and training across different sectors. The first edition of the BQF was launched in 2012 and given the fast-changing developments across all sectors, there is a need to review the BQF.

The BQF was revised by engaging multi-sector stakeholders, including higher education providers, the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, professional councils, ministries and policy makers, to enhance trust and accountability. In addition, many national and regional qualifications frameworks were referred to in the review process to ensure alignment and comparability.

The revised BQF is more inclusive and incorporates qualifications from varied sectors viz community, school, vocational, higher and monastic education sector into a single framework. The scope of the BQF has been broadened, taking into consideration the diversity across sectors and fast-changing technological advancement/evolution that demand recognition of the contemporary mode of delivery.

Further, the revised BQF serves as the basis to ensure quality at the national level and comparability of the Bhutanese qualifications with other national and regional frameworks and qualifications to support international mobility. The Framework also supports lifelong learning by providing a flexible credit transfer system, multiple pathways to progress through education and training, and recognition for learners' prior learning and experiences.

The Framework has eight levels based on the needs of the country. The qualification levels indicate the levels of learning and complexity using four domains viz *Knowledge*, *Skills*, *Values* and *Application*, the hierarchy of relative learning difficulty, complexity and depth. Each qualification level is defined by an agreed descriptor. The higher the level, the greater the challenge and the demand expected of a learner.

The Bhutan Qualifications and Professional Certification Authority, as the guardian of the framework, shall ensure smooth implementation of the BQF through close collaboration with the key stakeholders. The framework shall be a dynamic document that remains responsive to the changing national needs and the fast-changing developments in the global context.

Thank you!

(Dr Lotay Tshering)
Prime Minister, Royal Government of Bhutan

ACRONYMS

| | |
|------------------|---|
| ALC | Advanced Learning Course |
| APL | Accreditation of Prior Learning |
| BQF | Bhutan Qualifications Framework |
| BQR | Bhutan Qualifications Register |
| BHSEC | Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate |
| BCSEA | Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment |
| BCSE | Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education |
| BQPCA | Bhutan Qualifications and Professionals Certification Authority |
| BVQF | Bhutan Vocational Qualifications Framework |
| CLC | Community Learning Centre |
| EQA | External Quality Assurance |
| EMD | Education Monitoring Division |
| HEIs | Higher Education Institutions |
| HEQC | Higher Education Quality Council |
| IQA&E | Internal Quality Assurance and Enhancement |
| MHPC | Medical and Health Professional Council |
| MoESD | Ministry of Education and Skills Development |
| NCE | National Commission for Education |
| NFE | Non-Formal Education |
| NPASP | National Programme Accreditation Standards and Processes |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| NC1 | National Certificate 1 |
| NC2 | National Certificate 2 |
| NC3 | National Certificate 3 |
| ND1 | National Diploma 1 |
| ND2 | National Diploma 2 |
| PLC | Post Literacy Course |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| QA&E | Quality Assurance and Enhancement |
| RPL | Recognition of Prior Learning |
| TAC | Technical Advisory Committee |
| TVET QC | Technical and Vocational Education and Training Quality Council |

1. SECTION I: Introduction

1.1. Definition

The Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF) is an integrated national framework that outlines all qualifications levels according to the various education sectors in Bhutan. The BQF, which is an established and nationally accepted instrument has been benchmarked against international practices in terms of the criteria, standards and learning outcomes.

The Framework aims to recognize all forms of learning achievements – be it formal, non-formal and informal learning that contribute to Bhutan's economic, social and cultural success. It also incorporates technological advancement/evolution in the contemporary mode of delivering education in Bhutan.

The Framework intends to clarify the various Bhutanese qualifications so that learners, education providers, employing agencies and the general public may understand the interrelatedness of the qualifications levels across various education sectors in Bhutan.

1.2. Purpose

The Framework's specific objectives are:

- i. Convey knowledge, skills and values a graduate acquires at different qualification levels.
- ii. Enable and support lifelong learning through:
 - a. The provision of flexible education pathways and recognition of formal learning across education pathways.
 - b. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
- iii. Recognise qualifications offered by different institutions both within and outside the country at different levels.
- iv. Enhance equity in education, training and employment opportunities.
- v. Enhance confidence in the quality and international comparability of qualifications.
- vi. Provide broad guidelines for programme development.

1.3. Scope

The BQF encompasses qualifications from Bhutan's higher education sector, the technical and vocational training and education sectors, the monastic education sector and the community education sector. Qualifications awarded by these sectors must meet the respective learning domains and its descriptors as outlined by the framework according to their levels.

The framework clearly sets out what qualification types are at the same level of complexity and indicates how one qualification may lead to another at the same or different level. It supports individuals' lifelong learning goals by providing the basis for individuals to progress through pathways within different types of education systems including non-formal and informal learning, acquired within and outside the country.

It also recognises quality-assured qualifications gained through different modes of delivery to leverage on fast-changing technological advancement. However, the BQF does not encompass the following:

- (i) honorary symbolic awards such as honorary doctorates and degrees;
- (ii) certificate of attendance or completion; and
- (iii) professional licensing, individual registration, fellowships or similar certifications.

Accredited institutions in the respective education sectors are responsible to convey the information relating the qualifications awarded to its recipients.

1.4. Principles

The Bhutan Qualifications Framework is based on the following principles:

1.4.1. Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes outline what a learner is expected to know, understand and demonstrate the skills required at each level of qualifications. Qualifications based on learning outcomes will support and facilitate a wider variety of learning pathways and enhance the transferability of formal learning (for example, credits) and provide recognition for non-formal and informal learning.

1.4.2. Quality Assurance

The Framework aims to support and link to quality assurance arrangements and forms the basis for a systemic and sustained development of the quality of education. Quality assurance arrangements, which include the process of development of qualifications and programmes that lead to the award of qualifications by involving external stakeholder engagement on an ongoing basis, are seen as a critical component of quality assurance of all aspects of the qualifications system.

1.4.3. Need-Based

The Framework ensures that qualifications are based on the needs of the country and global demands. It also acknowledges the spiritual and rich cultural heritage of Bhutan as well as its national policy on Gross National Happiness.

1.4.4. Flexibility

The Framework acknowledges all forms of quality-assured learning gained through different modes of delivery to leverage on fast-changing technological advancement/evolution to promote lifelong learning. In addition to formal learning, non-formal and informal learning is recognised to allow learners to learn in ways most suited to their needs.

1.4.5. Trust and Accountability

The Framework is developed collaboratively through comprehensive stakeholders consultations based on good communication, collaboration, mutual trust and accountability.

1.5. Benefits

The Bhutan Qualifications Framework benefits the following stakeholders:

1.5.1. Learners

Learners can clearly identify the level of their qualification within the BQF. Moreover, they can evaluate their prior learning and identify potential pathways for lifelong learning.

1.5.2. Employing Agencies

Employers can identify the level of complexity of qualification holders through the level descriptors and match the knowledge, skills and competencies based on their employment needs.

1.5.3. Institutions

Accredited Institutions can design programmes as per the requirements of each individual qualification level as outlined in the Framework and National Programme Accreditation Standards and Processes (NPASP) to ensure quality of programmes.

1.5.4. Qualification Agencies

Qualification agencies within and outside Bhutan will develop confidence in the award of qualifications and support the mapping of qualifications whilst providing qualification recognition services.

1.5.5. General Public

The general public can access information on the full range of qualifications offered in Bhutan, equivalency amongst different education systems and educational pathways to provide lifelong learning opportunities.

1.5.6. International Community

The international community can access information on the qualifications offered in Bhutan and facilitate transnational mobility of learners and workers.

2. SECTION II: Features

2.1. Definition of Qualifications

Qualification is defined as the formal outcome of an assessment and validation process obtained when an awarding body determines that an individual has achieved the desired learning outcomes. It indicates successful achievement of learning outcomes at a specific level through formal certification. It usually takes the form of certificates, diplomas or degrees that are awarded by any competent authority, having affirmed that one has been successful in completing the study at the determined standard, has satisfied the determined level of achievement and is able to take on a role, duty or work.

2.2. Qualification Levels and Types

The BQF has eight levels of qualifications awarded through different types of education sectors, namely, school education, vocational education, higher education, monastic education, and community education. The qualification levels indicate the levels of learning and the complexity of knowledge, skills, values and their applications required at each specific level.

Each qualification level is defined by a descriptor. Each level represents a hierarchy of relative learning difficulty, complexity and depth. The higher the level, the greater the challenge and the demand expected of a learner in order to be awarded the relevant qualification.

Table 1 outlines the eight levels of qualifications in the BQF according to their titling conventions.

Table 1

Types of Qualification and Levels

| Level | Qualifications Types |
|-------|--|
| 8 | Doctoral Degree/ <i>Khewang</i> (མཁའ་དབང་།) |
| 7 | Masters Degree/ <i>Tsugla-Gongma</i> (གཞུག་ལག་གོང་མ།) Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate |
| 6 | Bachelors Degree (Honours) Bachelors Degree/ <i>Tsugla-Wogma</i> (གཞུག་ལག་འོག་མ།) Applied Degree Graduate Diploma Graduate Certificate |
| 5 | Advanced Diploma |
| 4 | Diploma |
| 3 | Certificate 3 Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate/ <i>Dingrim-Gongma</i> (འབྲིང་ ཅིན་གོང་མ།) |
| 2 | Certificate 2 Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education/ <i>Dingrim-Wogma</i> (འབྲིང་ཅིན་འོག་མ།) |
| 1 | Certificate 1 PLC and ALC |

Table 2 provides the types of qualification and levels according to the different education sectors in Bhutan.

Table 2

Qualification Types and Levels Based on Education Sector

| BQF Level | Community Education | School Education | Vocational Education | Higher Education | Monastic Education |
|-----------|---------------------|---|----------------------|--|---|
| 8 | | | | Doctoral Degree | <i>Khewang</i> (མཁས་དབང་།) |
| 7 | | | | Masters Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate | <i>Tsugla- Gongma</i> (གཙུག་ལག་གོང་མ།) |
| 6 | | | Applied Degree | Bachelors Degree Bachelors Degree (Honours) Graduate Diploma Graduate Certificate | <i>Tsugla-Wongma</i> (གཙུག་ལག་འོག་མ།) |
| 5 | | | Advanced Diploma | Advanced Diploma | |
| 4 | | | Diploma | Diploma | |
| 3 | | Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate | Certificate 3 | | <i>Dingrim-Gongma</i> (འབྲིང་རིམ་གོང་མ།) |
| 2 | | Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education | Certificate 2 | | <i>Dingrim-Wogma</i> (འབྲིང་རིམ་འོག་མ།) |
| 1 | Certificate 1 | | Certificate 1 | | |

2.3. Domain Description

2.3.1. Knowledge

The *Knowledge* domain in this framework describes what a graduate is expected to know and understand at each BQF level. The domain is described in terms of depth, breadth, kinds of knowledge and complexity a graduate should demonstrate, as follows:

- Depth of knowledge refers to the extent to which specific topics are focused upon, amplified and explored. It can be general or specialised. It refers to the level of understanding required to answer a question or perform an activity.
- Breadth of knowledge refers to the full span of knowledge of a subject and can range from a single topic to a multi-disciplinary area of knowledge.
- Kinds of knowledge range from concrete to abstract, from segmented to cumulative. There are three core types of knowledge; explicit

(documented information), implicit (applied information) and tacit (understood information).

- d. Complexity of knowledge refers to the combination of depth, breadth and kinds of knowledge.

2.3.2. Skills

The *Skills* domain in this framework describes what a graduate is expected to do/perform/demonstrate at each BQF level. The domain is described in terms of kinds and complexity and includes cognitive skills a graduate should demonstrate, as follows:

- a. Literacy, numeracy, digital, entrepreneurial, and communication skills and be able to present knowledge and ideas to others.
- b. Cognitive skills to access, record and act on information from varied sources appropriate to subject disciplines and to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise.
- c. Cognitive, technical, communication and creative skills for particular disciplines and to integrate disciplines to solve problems, to underpin flexible and analytical thinking and to work with others.

The skills are described in terms of the type, range and complexity of processes and the types, problems and solutions.

2.3.3. Values

The *Values* domain in this framework describes what a graduate is expected to portray at each BQF level. The domain is described in terms of civic sense, sense of community, human dignity and self-efficacy a graduate should demonstrate, as follows:

- a. Shows interest in learning about people's beliefs, values, traditions and worldviews.
- b. Expresses an interest in public affairs and issues and is actively involved in community issues.
- c. Expresses respect for other people and gives space for others to express themselves.
- d. Expresses a belief in their own ability to undertake actions to achieve their goals.
- e. Expresses an awareness and ability to designate ethical and moral situations and dilemmas.

2.3.4. Application

The *Application* domain in this framework describes how a graduate is expected to combine the knowledge, skills and value domains and apply them at each BQF level.

The domain is described in terms of the application of knowledge, skills and value a graduate should demonstrate, as follows:

- a. Expressed in terms of self-management and leadership in a profession or work, and assumes responsibility for the performance of others.
- b. In particular contexts within the civic life, work life and lifelong learning, be confident and successful individuals; playing the roles as active and informed citizens.
- c. In contexts that include taking individual responsibility with some direction and some accountability for the quality of outcomes.

2.4. Level Descriptors

Table 3: *Level Descriptors*

| L e v e l | Knowledge | Skills | Values | Application |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | Knowledge that is: | Demonstrate skills that involve: | Demonstrate values that involve: | Applied in contexts that involve: |
| 8 | Substantial in broad areas and in-depth in specialised subject areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertise in applying advanced processes to highly complex, diverse and emergent tasks Formulating and testing of theories and processes to resolve significant, highly complex, abstract and emerging issues for the creation of new knowledge Communicating of research findings in the field of expertise and conveying ideas effectively and coherently to peers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained awareness of self, others, and global character; respect for divergent views of norms and values; respect for diversity and interdependence with profound belief system; and be exemplary service to humanity and well-being Appreciation of complex and potentially divergent ethical standards and works to resolve these and tackle emerging ethical issues Sustained commitment to professional integrity, knowledge creation, resilience, and demonstrate high entrepreneurial and intellectual flexibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly complex tasks, specialised with new and emerging aspects High level of autonomy and self-direction with authoritative and expert judgment Significant responsibility for self, others and outcomes, and for challenging new knowledge and ideas |
| 7 | Highly advanced or specialized | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying and evaluating various approaches/processes to highly complex tasks Developing and formulating processes and approaches to resolve highly complex and emergent issues and problems Communicating and critiquing using the language of instruction and demonstrating advanced English and Dzongkha skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance level of awareness of self and others; role model accepted norms and values; respect for diversity and interdependence with sound belief system; and be of service to the community and its well-being Role modelling of ethical norms Demonstration of resilience and entrepreneurial skills, and a high level of commitment to profession or discipline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex tasks with some specialisation and emerging new aspects Significant autonomy and self-direction for expert judgment Responsibility to self and others to achieve sound outcomes and to seek new practice or knowledge |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| 6 | Advanced theoretical and technical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting and adapting processes to complex and unpredictable tasks • Analysing and generating solutions to complex and unpredictable problems • Conveying ideas (in written and oral formats using appropriate and different forms of presentation) confidently, accurately and coherently in a well-structured manner to varied audiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of awareness of self and others; promote social norms and values; respect for diversity and interdependence with some belief system; and contribute to nation building and its well-being • Strong commitment to ethical norms • Strong commitment to professionalism, continuous learning, and resilience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex tasks that are subjected to change • Acting autonomously with self-direction for significant judgment • Responsibility for self, collective work and achievement of goals |
| 5 | Specialised theoretical, technical and operational | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting and applying standard and non-standard processes to complex tasks • Analysing and generating solutions to complex and sometimes unpredictable problems • Communicating in a comprehensive and well-structured manner, for social, academic and professional purposes, with a high level of oral and written Dzongkha and English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep level of awareness of self and others; exhibit and represent accepted social norms and values; respect for diversity and interdependence; and contribute to nation building and its well-being • Acceptance for and commitment to ethical norms • Commitment to high quality professional work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable tasks with some unpredictable changes • Minimal guidance with self-direction or autonomy for sound and valid judgment • Responsibility for self and collective work |
| 4 | Broad theoretical, technical and operational | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting and applying a range of standard processes relevant to varied and sometimes unpredictable tasks • Selecting and applying a range of solutions involving formulation of solutions to resolve complex issues • Demonstrating a high level of proficiency in English and Dzongkha | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong level of awareness of self and others; and an appreciation of belief system, role of social norms, and the importance of relationship building • Application of ethical norms and legal rules in decision-making; and comprehending the correlation between values and behaviour • Commitment to own profession and quality of work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable tasks with predictable changes • Broad guidance with some self-direction that require sound judgment • Taking some responsibility for planning and coordination with others |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| 3 | Theoretical with some technical and operational processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying a range of standard processes to known but varied tasks • Selecting and applying a range of solutions to familiar and unfamiliar problems • Communicating effectively and clearly, both oral and written, in both English and Dzongkha | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound level of self-awareness and beliefs; and ability to apply social norms and build relationships • Application of a set of ethical norms • Commitment to own field of interest and apply self-management of learning and performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable tasks with some aspects of change • General guidance and supervision that require discretion and judgment • Adapting to own behaviours to work with others |
| 2 | Basic, factual and conceptual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying standard processes relevant to carry out known tasks • Applying a set of known solutions to solve simple and straightforward issues • Using simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters developing basic proficiency in Dzongkha and English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some level of self-awareness and beliefs, and appreciation of social norms; and significance of relationships • Awareness of ethical norms, and openness to different activities • Developing own knowledge and skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly structured and stable tasks • General support and supervision that require some discretion and judgment • Collaboration with others to achieve goals |
| 1 | Foundational, everyday and general | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying operational literacy, numeracy skills required to carry out simple tasks • Applying simple solutions to solve simple and straightforward everyday issues • Communicating using everyday expressions and simple phrases in Dzongkha and English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic awareness of self, beliefs, and social norms; and understand the significance of relationships • Basic awareness of fundamental ethical norms, basic civil rights, and responsibilities • Willingness to understand tasks and motivated to implement them successfully | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly structured tasks with close support and supervision • Minimal discretion and judgment • Readiness to work together and share knowledge with others |

3. SECTION III: Qualification Type Definitions

The qualification type definition includes the following:

3.1 Purpose

The purpose statement identifies why the qualification type is a feature of the BQF. It clearly states the qualification type used and its relevance to the Bhutanese learners, employing agencies and communities.

3.2 BQF Level

The BQF level specifies the complexity of learning outcomes at each level.

3.3 Credit Requirements (Volume of Learning)

The BQF includes a credit system whereby all qualification types have a credit value. Credit is the quantitative measure that represents the volume of learning based on the estimated learning hours to attain the intended/specified learning outcomes. One credit is equivalent to ten notional learning hours. The minimum credit required to earn the lowest level of qualification in BQF shall be forty (40) credits.

Table 3 specifies the minimum graduating credits required for each specific qualification level. In other words, apart from meeting the intended learning outcomes, institutions must ensure that learners fulfil the minimum credits prior to the award of a qualification. Accredited institutions may also offer qualifications that exceed the minimum credits requirements based on the specific disciplines of study or requirements from the professional bodies.

Table 3

Minimum Grading Credits Required for specific qualification types

| BQF Level s | Qualifications types | Minimum Credit |
|------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 8 | Doctoral Degree/ <i>Khewang</i> | 360 |
| 7 | Masters Degree/ <i>Tsugla- Gongma</i> | 180 |
| | Postgraduate Diploma | 120 |
| | Postgraduate Certificate | 60 |
| 6 | Bachelors Degree (Honours) | 480/120 |
| | Bachelors Degree/ <i>Tsugla-Wongma</i> | 360 |
| | Applied Degree | 360 |
| | Graduate Diploma | 120 |
| | Graduate Certificate | 60 |
| 5 | Advanced Diploma | 240 |
| 4 | Diploma | 120 |
| 3 | Certificate 3 | 40 |
| | Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate/ <i>Dingrim-Gongma</i> | - |
| 2 | Certificate 2 | 40 |
| | Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education/ <i>Dingrim-Wogma</i> | - |
| 1 | Certificate 1 | 40 |

Note: In the case of BHSEC and BCSE, the volume of learning is in terms of instructional hours.

3.4 Entry Requirements

The entry requirements into programmes are explained according to the respective BQF levels.

3.5 Relationship to Other Qualifications

Relationship to other qualifications indicates the link among the BQF qualifications.

3.6 Variations (if any)

Some qualification types are provided across different education sectors. Where there are differences in context requirements these are explained as well.

3.7 Certification of the Qualification

The qualification shall be awarded by accredited institutions or competent authorities. Assessment leading to the award of the qualification lies with the accredited institutions or competent authorities. They are responsible for ensuring the quality of the learning outcomes and that the graduate has satisfactorily completed any requirements for the qualification. All qualification awards that meet the BQF must use the titling convention as included in Appendix 1.

3.8 Qualification Type Descriptors

There are 16 different qualifications types in the BQF which are briefly described in the following sections.

3.8.1 Doctoral Degree/*Khewang*

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to apply a substantial body of knowledge to undertake original, in-depth research in one of the fields of specialisation and contribute new knowledge.

A Doctoral Degree is a research degree whereby the individual becomes an increasingly independent scholar who makes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge.

It is normally the culmination of study, which begins at the Bachelors level and reaches a stage beyond the Masters. For the PhD/DPhil and the named doctorate (e.g. EdD), the development takes place under the guidance of recognised experts in the field of study and under circumstances that allow the individual access to appropriate research resources.

The contribution to knowledge is judged by independent experts applying contemporary international standards of the discipline. The hallmark will be the individual's capacity for substantial independent research or scholarly creative activity as attested by his/her educational institution and/or as demonstrated by submitted work.

The major component of all doctorates is original research. The body of work that leads to the award of a doctorate will be one or more of the following:

- i. a thesis (the PhD/DPhil);
- ii. creative work in the visual or performing arts (the PhD/DPhil);
- iii. a thesis or equivalent creative work in combination with coursework (the named doctorate);
- iv. a creative work in the visual or performing arts (the named doctorate) with a thesis (the named doctorate); and/or
- v. published work.

The following types of Doctoral Degree are recognised:

1) Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD/DPhil)

A thesis constitutes the entire body of work on which the award of the qualification will be judged. Coursework may also be prescribed for the individual, but this will only contribute to the preparation for research and acceptance into the doctoral programme. Where appropriate, individuals may present a creative work as part of the thesis requirement.

2) Doctorate in a specified field or discipline – the named doctorate (e.g. EdD or the DMus)

For a doctorate in a specified field, coursework may contribute to the assessed programme of study, but research or the scholarly creative activity and the associated thesis must occupy at least two full-time academic years and contribute not less than two-thirds of the overall credit for the degree.

The coursework, which is to be at a standard in advance of that expected for a Masters, must be part of a coherent programme with the research work and should normally cover no more than one full-time academic year.

An individual for a named doctorate must gain a passing grade in both the coursework and the thesis or its creative work equivalent.

3) Higher Doctorate (e.g. the DSc or the DLitt)

Higher Doctorates are awarded for independent work of special excellence, as judged by leading international experts, which is completed before a person makes an application to enrol for the degree. Individuals will normally be expected to have completed at least ten years of independent work and to have published extensively.

Publication will normally be in scholarly books and/or in reputable international journals. Individuals in the visual or performing arts will have made equally outstanding contributions in their creative work.

b. BQF level

The Doctoral Degree is at Level 8 on the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

The Doctoral Degree requires at least 360 credits.

d. Entry requirements

Accredited institutions providing programmes leading to Doctoral Degree are responsible for establishing entry requirements. The minimum entry requirement for the Doctoral Degree is Bachelors Degree (Honours) or Masters Degree or its equivalent.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

This degree is the highest qualification on the BQF.

f. Variations

The Doctoral Degree is offered in the higher education sector (Doctoral Degree) and the monastic education sector (*Khewang*).

3.8.2 Masters Degree/*Tsugla Gongma*

a. Purpose

A Masters Degree qualifies the qualification holders to apply for an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research, a pathway for further learning, professional practice and/or further studies.

The Masters Degree usually builds on a Bachelors Degree (Honours), Bachelors Degree, Applied Degree or a Postgraduate Diploma or its equivalent. They may also build on extensive professional experience from a relevant field.

Their outcomes are demonstrably in advance of undergraduate study and require individuals to engage in research and/or advanced studies.

Masters Degrees are constituted in one discipline or coherent programme of study. They may be undertaken by taught courses or research, or by a combination of both. If a Masters Degree includes a component of supervised research of not fewer than 90 credits at level 6, the graduate is also able to:

- i. demonstrate a high order of skills in the planning, execution and completion of a piece of original research or creative scholarly work
- ii. apply such skills learned during the study programme to new situations.

The research is to be completed to internationally recognised standards and demonstrate that the graduate has a capacity for independent thinking.

b. BQF level

The Masters Degree is at level 7 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

The Masters Degree requires at least 180 credits except where:

- i. it builds on a Bachelors Degree (Honours) or an equivalent qualifications or significant relevant professional experience, in which cases it can be fewer than 180 but no fewer than 90 credits.
- ii. it builds on a three-year Bachelor Degree or an equivalent qualification, in which cases it can be fewer than 180 but no fewer than 140 credits.

d. Entry requirements

The entry qualification for a Masters Degree is a minimum Bachelors Degree or equivalent at level 6 or above on the BQF.

Accredited institutions providing programmes leading to Masters Degree are responsible for establishing entry requirements. Admission to a Masters Degree is based on the evaluation of documentary evidence of the individual applicant's ability to undertake a Masters Degree in a specific field.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

An individual with a Masters Degree that includes a research component shall be considered for admission to a programme leading to advanced study and/or original research leading to a Doctoral Degree.

f. Variations (if any)

The Masters Degree programme may be a research-based, coursework, or the combination of both. The Masters Degree is offered in the higher education sector (Masters Degree) and the monastic education sector (*Tsugla-Gongma*).

3.8.3 Postgraduate Diploma

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to extend and deepen an individual's theoretical knowledge, skills and other abilities relevant to the discipline to bridge the requirement gap demanded by employers. This qualification prepares an individual

for independent research and further studies in the subject of the Postgraduate Diploma.

b. BQF level

The Postgraduate Diploma is at level 7 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

The Postgraduate Diploma requires a minimum of 120 credits.

d. Entry requirements

Entry to Postgraduate Diploma is open to those who have achieved a Bachelors Degree or Bachelors Degree (Honours). Graduates of a Postgraduate Certificate may continue into a Postgraduate Diploma with an additional 60 credits.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

A graduate who holds a Postgraduate Diploma may be eligible to enrol in a Masters Degree.

f. Variations (if any)

There is no variation for Postgraduate Diploma.

3.8.4 Postgraduate Certificate

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to extend and deepen knowledge and skills to bridge the requirement gap demanded by employers. It recognises continuing professional development or academic achievement in advance of a Bachelors Degree in the same area as the individual's original degree.

b. BQF level

The Postgraduate Certificate is at level 7 of the BQF, and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

The Postgraduate Certificate requires at least 60 credits.

d. Entry requirements

Entry to the Postgraduate Certificates is open to those who have achieved either a Bachelors Degree/Bachelors Degree (Honours)/ Diploma in a cognate subject, or relevant skills and knowledge acquired through appropriate work or professional experience.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

A Postgraduate Certificate provides the basis for postgraduate study and may lead to a Postgraduate Diploma or Masters Degree.

f. Variations (if any)

There is no variation for Postgraduate Certificate.

3.8.5 Bachelors Degree (Honours)

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to produce a graduate who can apply a broad knowledge in a specific context to undertake professional work or who can be involved in conducting research projects or independent study and to qualify for further learning.

b. BQF level

The Bachelors Degree (Honours) is at level 6 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

A Bachelors Degree (Honours) requires at least 480 credits, or maybe a discrete 120-credit degree following a Bachelors Degree.

d. Entry requirements

Entry to the Bachelors Degree (Honours) requires a minimum of a Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate and its equivalent.

For a discrete 120-credit degree, the entry is usually open to those who have excelled in Bachelors Degree.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

A Bachelors Degree (Honours) provides the basis for postgraduate study.

f. Variations (if any)

For 480 credits Bachelors Degree (Honours), an exit point option can be offered after meeting the requirements for a Bachelors Degree.

3.8.6 Bachelors Degree/Tsugla Wogma

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to prepare a graduate with a broad and coherent body of knowledge in a range of disciplines. The content is progressively developed to form a basis for postgraduate study and/or professional practice.

b. BQF level

The Bachelors Degree is at level 6 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

A Bachelors Degree requires at least 360 credits.

d. Entry requirements

Entry to Bachelor Degree is open to those who have successfully completed the Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate or its equivalent or a qualification at level 5.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

A Bachelors Degree may lead to Bachelors Degree (Honours), Applied Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate or any qualification at level 7.

f. Variations (if any)

The Bachelors Degree is offered in the higher education sector (Bachelors Degree) and the monastic education sector (*Tsugla Wogma*).

3.8.7 Applied Degree

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to produce a graduate with focused knowledge and skills within a particular field to meet the requirement of the labour market or to qualify for further learning.

b. BQF level

An Applied Degree is at level 6 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

An Applied Degree requires at least 360 credits.

d. Entry requirements

Entry to Applied Degree is open to those who have completed the Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (or its equivalent), Advanced Diploma or Diploma.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

Graduates are eligible to enrol in Bachelors Degree for further learning.

f. Variations (if any)

The Applied Degree is based on competency standards developed by the competent authority.

3.8.8 Graduate Diploma

a. Purpose

A Graduate Diploma allows degree graduates to pursue a significant body of study at an advanced undergraduate level. The Graduate Diploma is typically designed as a bridging qualification to postgraduate study, as well as broadening knowledge and skills in a familiar subject or discipline or developing knowledge in a new area.

b. BQF level

A Graduate Diploma is at level 6 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

The Graduate Diploma requires at least 120 credits.

d. Entry requirements

Entry is open to degree graduates. However, subject to the regulations of the award, those who have been able to demonstrate equivalent practical, professional or educational experience of an appropriate kind may be granted admission.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

A Graduate Diploma may provide the basis for postgraduate study.

f. Variations (if any)

There is no variation for Graduate Diploma.

3.8.9 Graduate Certificate

a. Purpose

A Graduate Certificate is designed mainly for degree graduates to pursue further study at an advanced undergraduate level. It is designed as a bridging qualification to postgraduate study for individuals developing educational, professional or vocational knowledge in a new discipline, profession or subject area.

b. BQF level

A Graduate Certificate is at level 6 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

The Graduate Certificate requires at least 60 credits.

d. Entry requirements

Entry is open to degree graduates. However, subject to the regulations of the award, those who have been able to demonstrate equivalent practical, professional or educational experience of an appropriate kind may be granted admission.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

A Graduate Certificate may provide the basis for postgraduate study.

f. Variations (if any)

There is no variation for Graduate Certificate.

3.8.10 Advanced Diploma

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to qualify individuals with theoretical and/or technical knowledge and skills in specialised/strategic contexts.

b. BQF level

The Advanced Diploma is at level 5 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

An Advanced Diploma requires a minimum of 240 credits.

d. Entry requirements

There is no specific entry requirement.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

The Advanced Diploma may be a standalone qualification or may build on Diploma. It may also lead to a Bachelors Degree.

f. Variations (if any)

There is no variation for Advanced Diploma.

3.8.11 Diploma

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to qualify individuals with relevant theoretical and/or technical specialised knowledge through interpretation of information and informed judgement and skills within an aspect(s) of a specific field.

b. BQF level

The Diploma is at level 4 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

A Diploma requires a minimum of 120 credits.

d. Entry requirements

There is no specific entry requirement.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

The Diploma may be a standalone qualification or may build on Certificate 3. It may also lead to an Advanced Diploma.

f. Variations (if any)

The Diploma is offered by both accredited institutions and training providers.

3.8.12 Certificate 3

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to qualify individuals with an introductory and narrow range of knowledge and skills for a field(s)/areas of work or study.

b. BQF level

Certificate 3 is at level 3 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

Certificate 3 requires a minimum of 40 credits but may range up to 120 credits.

d. Entry requirements

There is no specific entry requirement. However, RPL can be used to assess the required competency for Certificate 3.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

Certificate 3 may be a standalone qualification or may build on Certificate 2. It may also lead to Diploma.

f. Variations (if any)

There is no variation for Certificate 3.

3.8.13 Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (BHSEC) */Dingrim Gongma*

a. Purpose

The purpose of the Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate is to qualify individuals with knowledge, skills, and values for diverse pathways to further education, training, work and effective participation in civic life.

b. BQF level

The Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate/*Dingrim Gongma* is at level 3 and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit Value (Volume of Learning)

A graduate of Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate/*Dingrim Gongma* should have approximately 1600 instructional hours or typically 2 school years.

d. Entry requirements

Entry to BHSEC/*Dingrim Gongma* is open to those who have completed the Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education or *Dingrim Wogma* or equivalent.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

BHSEC or *Dingrim Gongma* builds on BCSE (or its equivalent). It may also provide the basis to enrol for higher education or training.

f. Variations (if any)

The BHSEC is offered in the school education sector and the *Dingrim Gongma* is offered in the monastic education sector.

3.8.14 Certificate 2

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to qualify individuals with introductory knowledge and skills for a field(s)/areas of work or study.

b. BQF level

Certificate 2 is at level 2 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

The Certificate 2 requires a minimum of 40 credits but may range up to 80 credits.

d. Entry requirements

There is no specific entry requirement. However, RPL can be used to assess the required competency for Certificate 2.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

Certificate 2 may be a standalone qualification or may build on Certificate 1. It may also lead to Certificate 3.

f. Variations (if any)

There is no variation for Certificate 2.

3.8.15 Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education (BCSE)/Dingrim-Wogma

a. Purpose

The purpose of the Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education (BCSE) is to qualify individuals with basic knowledge, skills, and values to make an informed decision about the choice of stream and career alignment.

b. BQF level

The Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education/*Dingrim Wogma* is at level 2 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

A graduate of Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education/ *Dingrim Wogma* should have approximately 1600 instructional hours or typically 2 school years.

d. Entry requirements

Entry to BCSE/ *Dingrim Wogma* is open to those who have achieved foundational education.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

BCSE or *Dingrim Wogma* may provide a basis to enrol for BHSEC/*Dingrim Gongma* and training.

f. Variations (if any)

The BCSE is offered in the school education sector and the *Dingrim Wogma* is offered in the monastic education sector. There is no variation for this qualification type.

3.8.16 Certificate 1

a. Purpose

The purpose of this qualification is to qualify individuals with an introductory/functional and narrow range of knowledge and skills for a field(s)/areas of work or study.

b. BQF level

Certificate 1 is at level 1 of the BQF and demonstrates the learning outcomes at that level.

c. Credit requirements (Volume of learning)

Certificate 1 requires a minimum of 40 credits.

d. Entry requirements

There is no specific entry requirement. However, RPL can be used to assess the required competency for Certificate 1.

e. Relationship to other qualifications

Certificate 1 is an entry qualification into the qualification framework. Certificate 1 may lead to Certificate 2.

f. Variations (if any)

The vocational sector offers Certificate 1 as does the community education sector.

The community education sector offers Post Literacy Course (PLC) and Advanced Learning Course (ALC) at BQF level 1. A PLC graduate should have approximately 600 instructional hours or typically 1 year in duration. An ALC graduate should have approximately 900 instructional hours or typically 1.5 years in duration.

The PLC and ALC may be stand-alone qualifications. The ALC may be build on PLC and may also lead to qualifications in BQF level 2.

4. SECTION IV: Governance

4.1 Governing Body

The Bhutan Qualifications and Professional Council (BQPCA) was established on 9th January 2023. It is the competent authority for quality assurance, qualifications recognition, professionals certification and the guardian of the Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF). The BQPCA currently has four Councils namely Higher Education Quality Council, TVET Quality Council, Medical and Health Professionals Council and Engineering Professionals Council. It functions as an authority and reports to the MoESD. Currently, BQPCA is currently drafting the Bill.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is composed of members with expertise and experience in respective sectors to provide technical advice to the Governing Board for BQPCA.

4.2 Bhutan Qualifications Register

All accredited BQF qualifications are registered on the Bhutan Qualifications Register (BQR). Basic information on the qualifications, programmes, awarding institutions and accreditation duration are stated in the BQR to assist students and other global stakeholders to obtain the key information of a programme.

Only programmes that are accredited and meet the requirements of the BQF are listed on the BQR. The register would also contain the term/period of accreditation including those of the professional bodies.

5. SECTION V: Quality Assurance Mechanisms/National Quality Assurance System

5.1 Quality Assurance Mechanisms

A comprehensive framework for Quality Assurance or Enhancement of education at the system level typically comprises the Internal Quality Assurance and Enhancement (IQA&E), mechanisms and processes based, and managed by the accredited institutions themselves. The External Quality Assurance (EQA) mechanisms and procedures are carried out by the Bhutan Qualifications and Professional Certification Authority (BQPCA) outside the university.

5.2 Internal Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Each and every accredited institution have comprehensive IQA&E mechanisms put in place that focuses on:

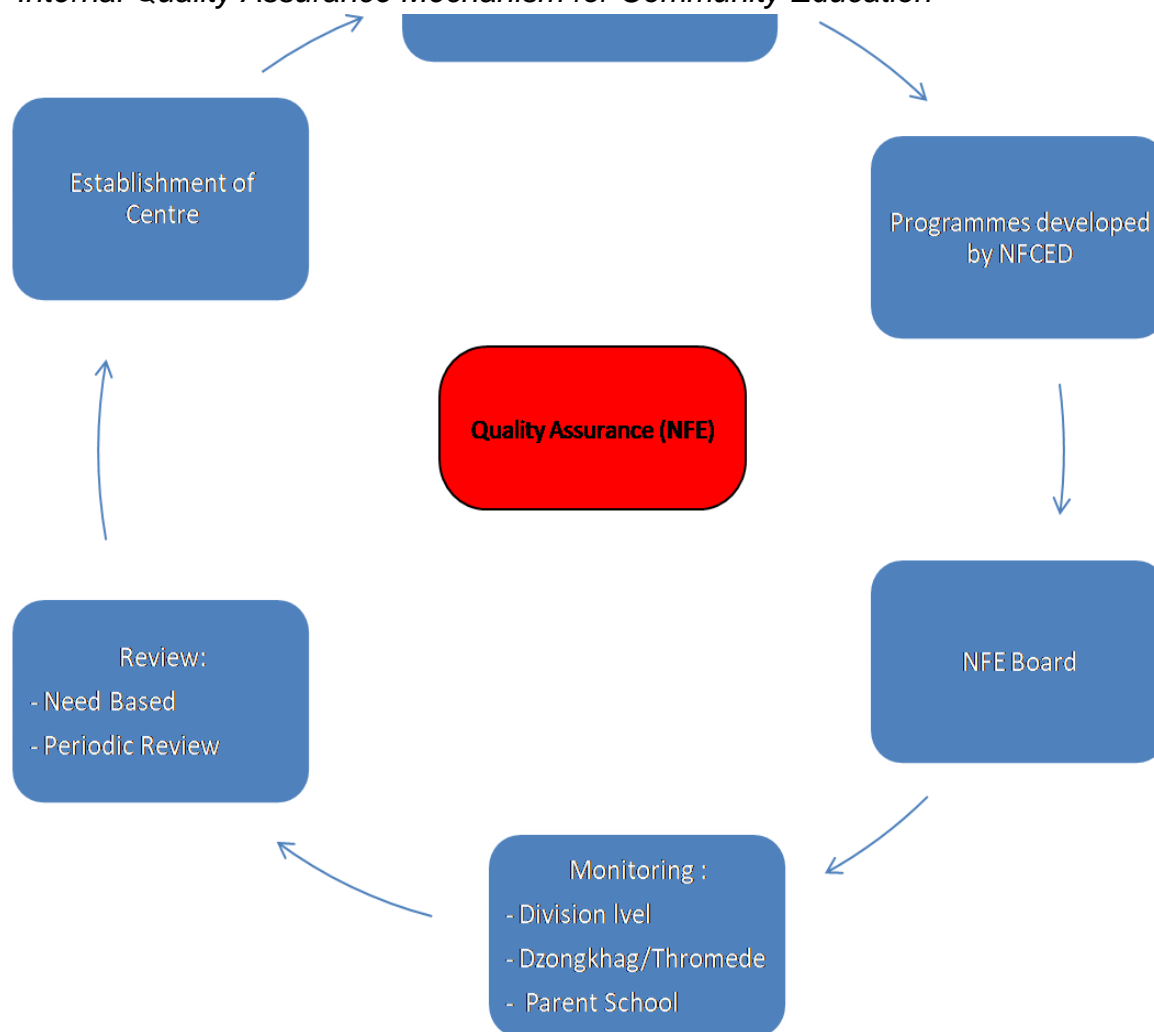
- development of quality programmes based on the currency and the needs of the nation.
- using appropriate teaching, learning and assessment approaches.
- achievement of learning outcomes as desired by each programme.
- enhancement of quality culture and values of the graduates
- creating an environment where accountability can be valued and autonomy is earned.

5.2.1 Internal Quality Assurance Mechanism

5.2.1.1 Community Education Sector

Figure 1

Internal Quality Assurance Mechanism for Community Education



5.2.1.2 School Education Sector

Figure 2

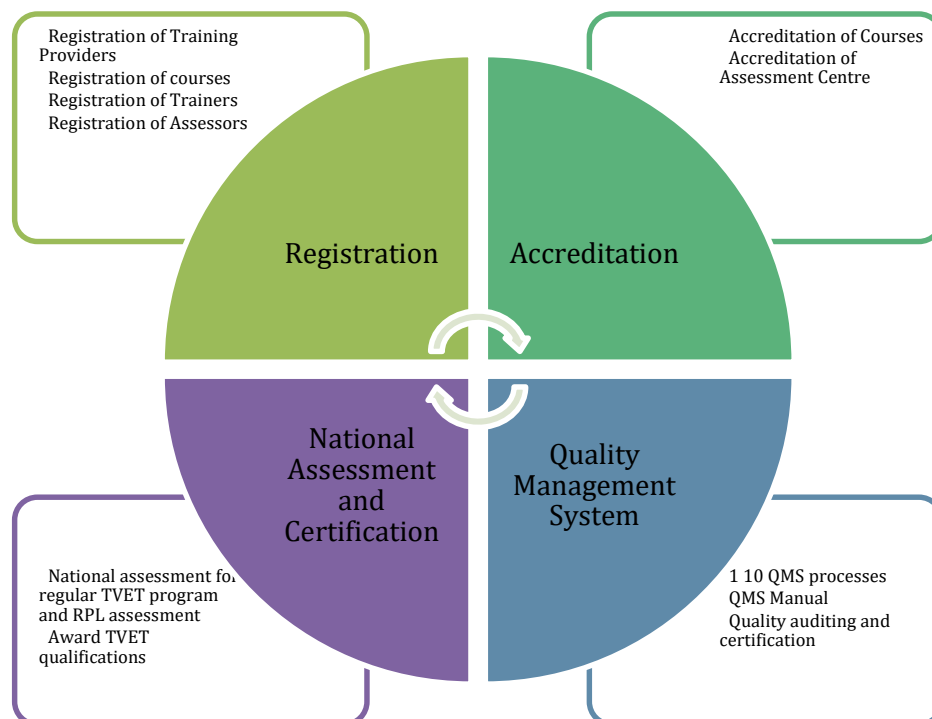
Internal Quality Assurance Mechanism in School Education



5.2.1.3 Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Sector

Figure 3

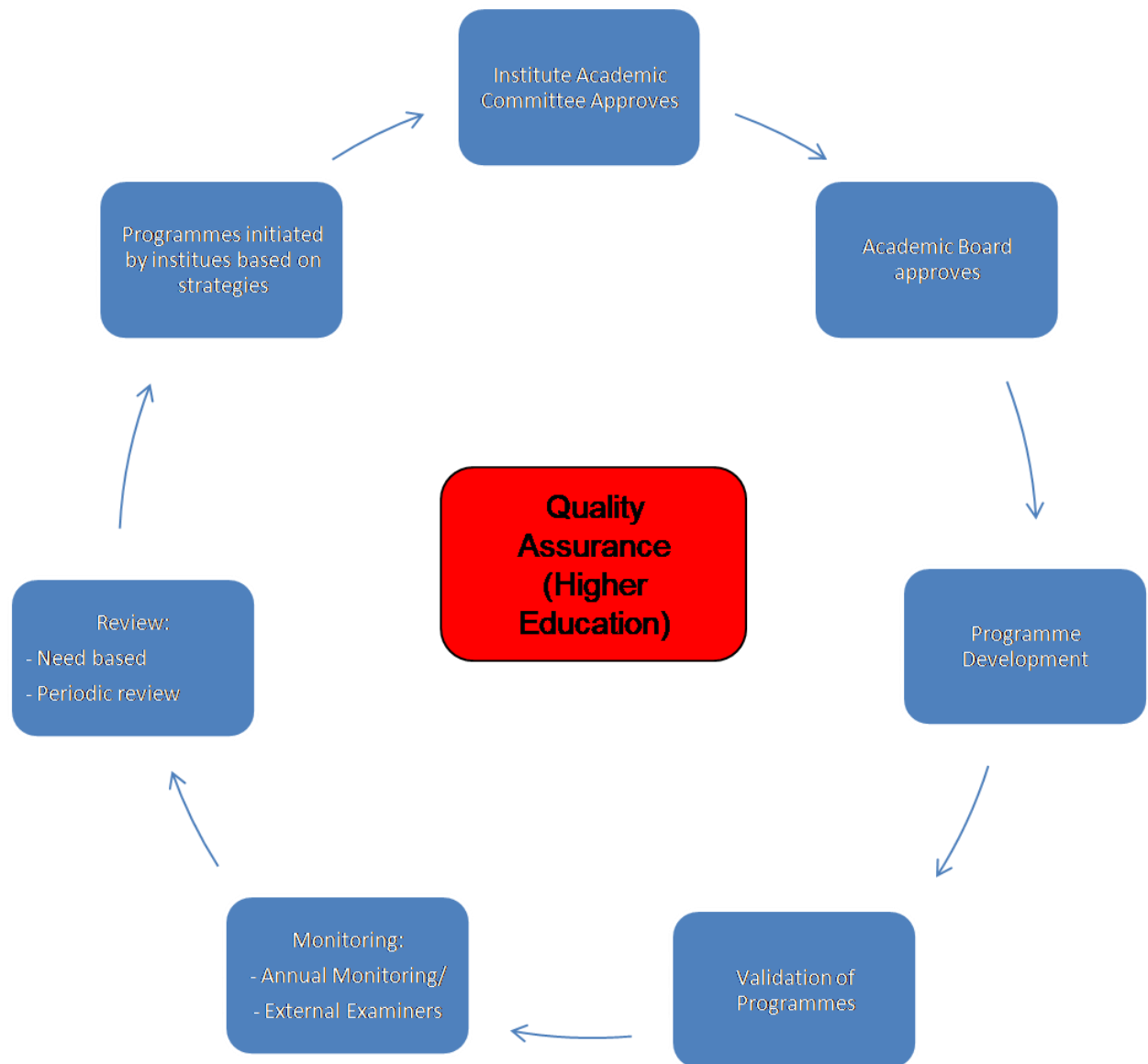
Internal Quality Assurance Mechanism for TVET sector



5.2.1.4 Higher Education Sector

Figure 4

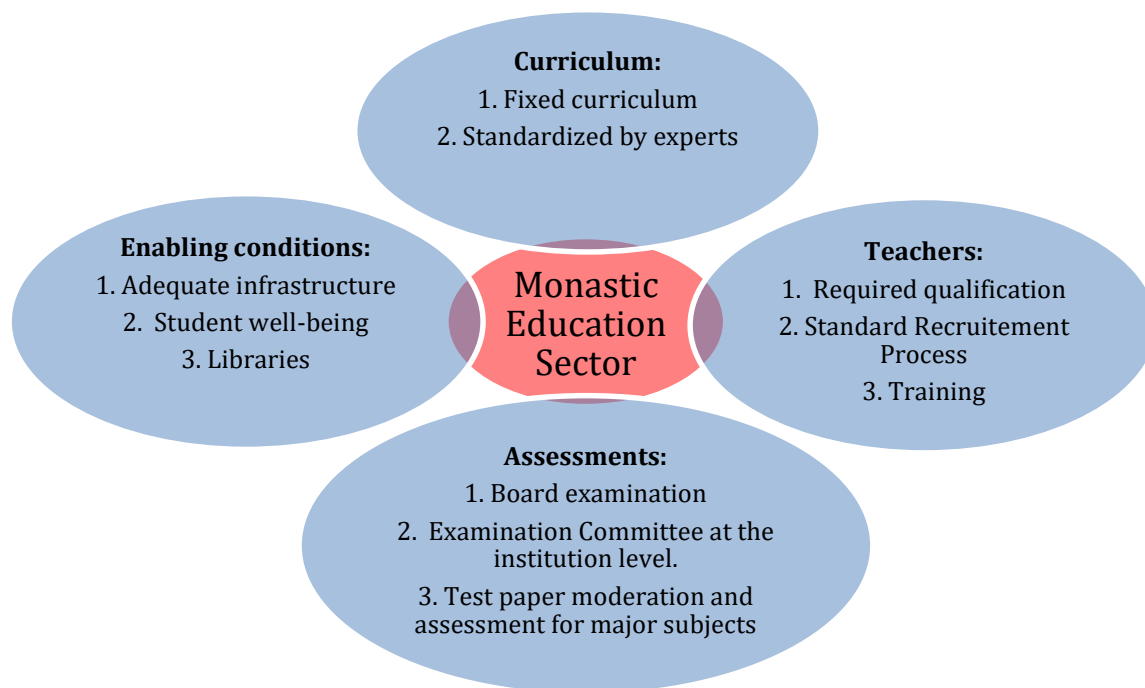
Internal Quality Assurance Mechanism in Higher Education



5.2.1.5 Monastic Education Sector

Figure 5

Internal Quality Assurance Mechanism in Monastic Education



5.3 External Quality Assurance Mechanisms of Qualifications

The QA agencies shall ensure the quality of qualifications through quality mechanisms that ensure: there is a need for the qualification, the design of qualifications meets the requirements of the BQF; and the promotion of pathways, credit transfer, and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

For the higher education institutions (HEIs), the Bhutan Qualifications and Professionals Certification Authority (BQPCA) is the apex body responsible for QA and accreditation. Further, the National Commission for Education (NCE) is responsible for approving the establishment and based on the rules and regulation for establishment of colleges. In the case of the community education sector, the Non-Formal and Continuing Education Unit under the Department of Education Programmes is responsible for ensuring the design of community-centered qualifications across Bhutan.

5.4 External Quality Assurance Mechanism of Qualification Provision

The QA agencies shall ensure the quality of the education and training providers and its programmes depending on the nature of the qualifications for different levels. For HEIs, the Bhutan Qualifications and Professionals Certification Authority is the apex body responsible for QA and accreditation. It is mandatory for all the registered HEIs to undergo accreditation, both at the institutional and programme levels. The HEIs are responsible for self-assessment to maintain and improve the quality of their provision in line with the accreditation standards.

The accreditation exercise is undertaken based on the self-assessment reports submitted by the HEIs. Accreditation is conducted by a team of experts in relevant fields of study. The team submits a report on the findings and recommendations to the TAC for endorsement. The validity of the accreditation status ranges from 3-5 years, depending on the score secured. In order to maintain quality, the Secretariat to the TAC shall monitor the implementation of the recommendations to ensure continuous quality enhancement and provide the necessary support. The HEIs must apply for accreditation six months prior to the expiry of the accreditation status. The Committee reserves the right to withdraw, withhold and suspend the accreditation status in case of serious quality concerns.

Further, in the case of specialised fields of study, e.g. medical education, respective professional councils shall ensure the quality of programmes based on the standards for specific programmes. The Medical and Health Professionals Council ensures the fulfillment of requirements for medical and health education.

For vocational qualifications, it is mandatory for the training providers to be registered with the competent body to deliver the BQF qualifications at that level. Upon registration, the providers must apply for course accreditation based on accreditation standards. The accreditation is conducted by a team of certified accreditors. The team submits a report on the findings and recommendations to the concerned Technical Advisory Committee for endorsement. In order to maintain quality, the competent body conducts monitoring to ensure compliance and identify shortcomings, if any. Based on the findings, it provides professional support to the providers. Further, it certifies the implementation of the Quality Management System of the providers through external audit. The validity of accreditation status ranges from 2-3 years depending on the score secured. The competent body shall conduct national assessment based on assessment guidelines to ensure achievement of the learning outcomes/unit competency based on the National Competency Standards.

For the community education sector, the Non-Formal and Continuing Education Unit is responsible for ensuring the provision of community programmes across Bhutan.

For qualifications (school) at level 2 & 3, the Education Monitoring Division under the Ministry of Education and Skills Development conducts monitoring of schools to assess the performance of schools. The Bhutan Council for School Examination and Assessment conducts national-level assessment to ensure that learners achieve learning outcomes at the specific level. Similarly, for community education qualifications, starting from the establishment of centres until the completion of the course, the Non-Formal and Continuing Education Unit, in collaboration with relevant agencies monitors the performance of the centres based on the NFE operational guidelines.

Figure 5 shows external quality assurance mechanism for institutional accreditation and figure 6 shows external quality assurance mechanism for programme accreditation.

Figure 5

External Quality Assurance Mechanism for Institutional Accreditation

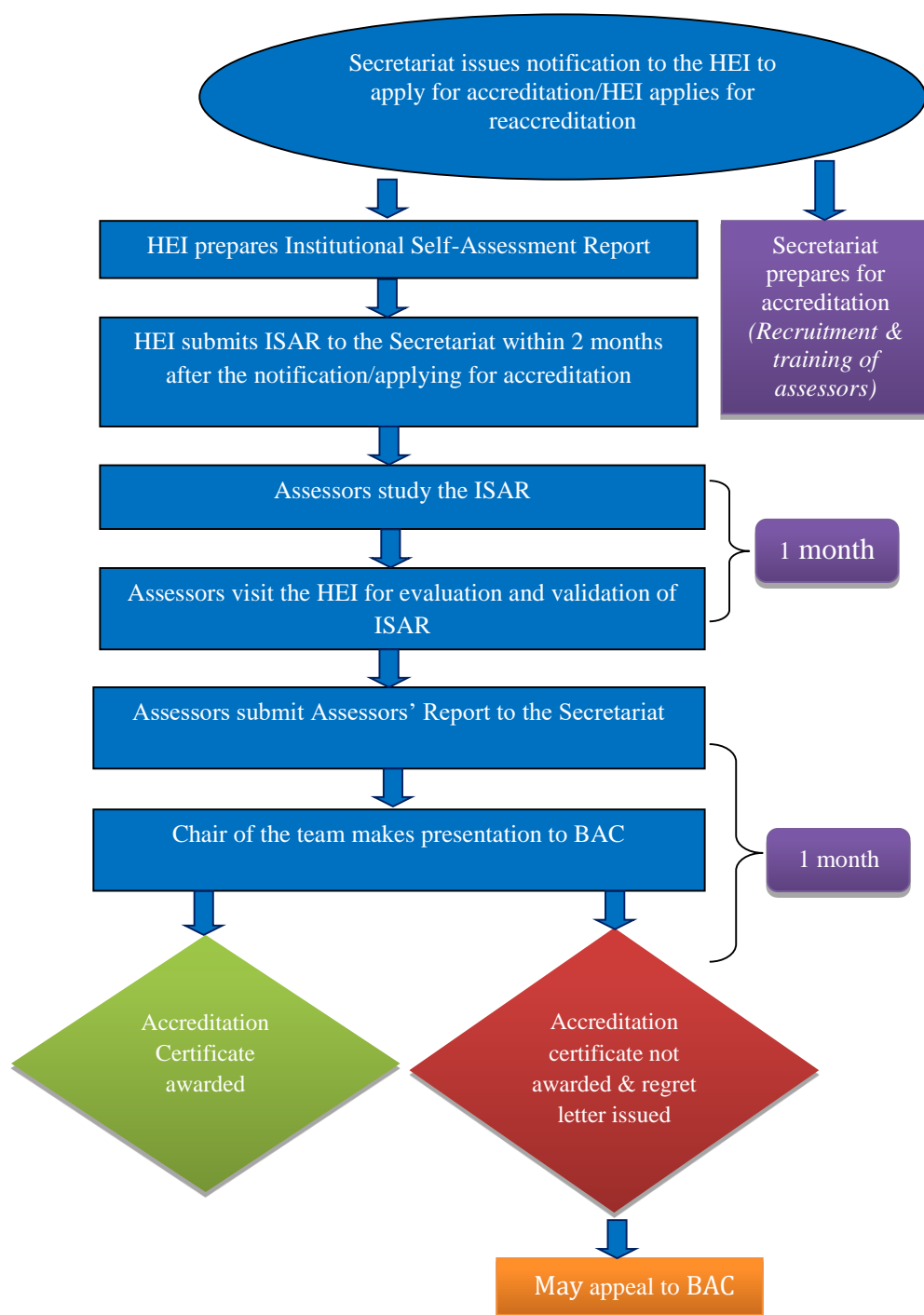
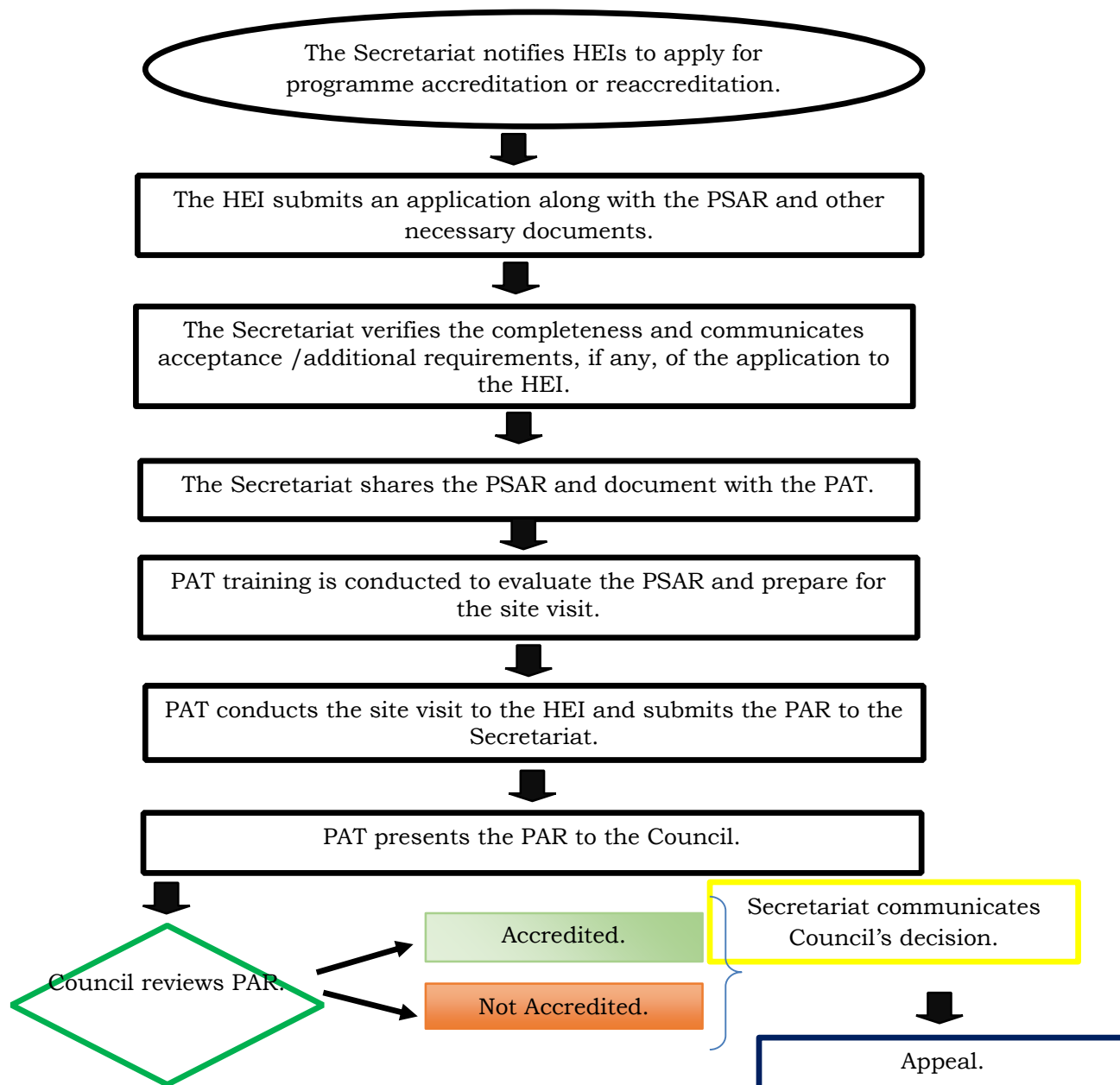


Figure 6

External Quality Assurance Mechanism for Programme Accreditation



5.5 External Linkages

Establishing linkages, or internationalisation, can be a means of improving the quality of education and training to serve larger social goals. Internationalisation initiatives promote mutual understanding and encourage collaboration amongst education and training providers, accelerating the mobility of learners and employees. The trend in internationalizations and quality assurance of education and training shapes the development of education and training all around the world. There is a need to develop and implement different initiatives for assessing and measuring the quality of internationalisation. It includes a systematic, sustained effort aimed at making education and training more responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalisation of societies, economies and labour markets.

Amongst others, internationalisation could improve the quality of education and training in:

- Enhancing international cooperation and capacity building
- Enhancing internationalisation of curriculum offered at home
- Enhancing prestige for education/training providers
- Improving graduate employability
- Improving quality of teaching and learning and strengthening the creation of knowledge
- Increasing international awareness/engagement of students with global students/issues
- Increasing international networking by faculty and researchers
- Benchmarking/comparing institutional performance within the context of international good practices

Therefore, internationalisation of education and training shall be facilitated through international faculty recruitment, student exchange programmes, and bringing reputed international branch campuses/baccalaureate for cross-fertilization of ideas for a positive contribution to society.

6. SECTION VI: Lifelong Learning

6.1 Purpose

The BQF recognises learning gained in many different ways. It promotes the concept of lifelong learning that aims to recognise prior learning and to further enhance progression pathways between higher, vocational, monastic, community and school education sectors. There are three key education pathways - Individual Development (through formal learning across the learning sectors in Bhutan), Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning.

- 6.1.1 The BQF underlines the point of integration and overlaps with different qualifications in terms of levels and types. The awarding body shall establish a flexible system of accumulation and transfer of credits, assessment of recognition of prior learning, and the mechanism and use of lower level qualifications or other qualifications to be used as a pathway to higher qualifications.
- 6.1.2 Learners have the right to apply and be considered for admission to a higher level qualification upon successful completion of a level of study. Their right for such entrance, however, is not automatic as learners may need to fulfil additional entry requirements for the higher qualification.
- 6.1.3 The BQF, by linking qualifications, simplifies the process and supports learners by indicating all possible opportunities and learning pathways for individual progress. The BQF generates various alternative pathways with points of entry and exit that recognise individual achievements, thus intensifying access and social boundaries.
- 6.1.4 The BQF makes lifelong learning a reality as it acknowledges the recognition of prior learning which provides opportunities for individuals with knowledge and skills acquired from work/life experience and self-learning to be assessed and given the opportunity to attain qualifications or to gain access to a qualification.
- 6.1.5 The BQF recognizes credit transfer for the purpose of access, and to attain advanced standing to higher level programmes. It reduces learning duplication and learning time. Thus, it widens access and progression to learners who actively seek to upgrade their qualifications and seek advanced skills and competencies for career development in order to fulfil industry needs and for better life opportunities.

6.1.6 The BQF encourages greater collaboration between public, private and institutions within and among sectors, particularly through articulation arrangements to facilitate advanced placements for their learners. The BQF's level descriptors and credits are key elements in determining comparability of qualifications. It also enables the determination of parity at the same level and of sector-based accredited BQF qualifications, as there may be more than one type of BQF qualification type in the same level awarded by different sectors. As such, it facilitates lifelong learning and stimulates a learning culture.

6.2 Pathways

The BQF links the qualification levels in different education sectors and provides progression and flexible learning pathways to learners with various needs and backgrounds. The Framework also encourages greater collaboration between QA agencies and education and training providers. It aims to facilitate lifelong learning and stimulates a learning culture. Qualifications accredited according to BQF principles, will include information regarding pathways, credit transfer and recognition of prior learning.

6.3 Credit Transfer

Credit transfer means the process of allowing individuals who have accumulated credit in one context to have it valued and recognised in another context. Further, this is a way to accept components of a previous qualification as meeting the learning outcomes (or covering the syllabus) for components in another qualification, so the learner need not take it as part of that qualification. This reduces the number of components (and the length of time) required to complete a qualification.

There shall be a provision for a flexible credit system to facilitate credit accumulation and transfer which is acceptable within and outside Bhutan. The credit transfer system will enable student-learning achievements be quantified and recorded.

A credit system:

6.3.1 helps to measure student learning and programme transparency;

6.3.2 provides flexibility in programme design and delivery to the accredited institutions;

- 6.3.3 helps to achieve common understanding and secure standards of qualifications;
- 6.3.4 facilitates credit transfer and recognition within, and amongst the higher, vocational, community, monastic and school education sectors;
- 6.3.5 facilitates comparability of qualifications locally or internationally by comparing volume of learning;
- 6.3.6 aids access and credit transfers based on determination of prior achievement; and
- 6.3.7 promotes mobility of learners and workers between institutions, regionally and globally.

Credit has both qualitative and quantitative value overall. BQF also provides a point of reference for minimum credit accumulation for each level and transferable credits are prescribed and regulated. At the institutional and programme levels, policies and requirements on credit exemptions and transfers between programmes and between institutions locally and abroad, must be provided.

Key elements to be observed on the credit system:

- a) In this aspect, credit value is a quantitative measure of all that represents the volume of learning based on the estimated learning hours to attain the set learning outcomes.
- b) The credit value is 1 credit equivalent to 10 notional hours of learning. Notional learning hours include: lecture, tutorial, seminar, research, practical, project work, clinical practice, studio work, field work, work-based learning, as well as preparing and undertaking for assessment.
- c) Credit(s) may also be acquired by learners through assessment and validation of prior learning in other settings. Refer to Recognition of Prior Learning.
- d) The minimal credit load for each level is defined in the BQF (and is independent of the mode and context of delivery of learning). However, higher credit requirements for specific qualifications are established, indicated based on fields of study or for professional programmes accordingly.
- e) Credit exemption allows a student to be granted credit on application for exemption for a course(s) based upon learning achieved in another programme. However, this does not preclude institutions from requiring, of those granted credit transfers or exemptions, obligations to meet all graduation requirements including the satisfactory completions of the minimum number of components within a qualification as specified by the institution.

6.4 Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) refers to a systematic process that involves the identification, documentation and assessment of prior experiential learning, i.e., knowledge, skills and attitudes, to determine the extent to which an individual has achieved the desired learning outcomes irrespective of time and place, and certified against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system or workplace.

The RPL process can enable these individuals to acquire a formal qualification that matches their knowledge and skills, and thereby contribute to improving their employability, mobility, lifelong learning, social inclusion and self-esteem.

An academic record of RPL achievement shall be written and communicated in a way that encompasses all relevant information about the outcome. Amongst others, it may contain the following:

- 6.4.1 Title page – including your name and the course your RPL relates to.
- 6.4.2 Table of contents.
- 6.4.3 Personal information – including address, and contact information.
- 6.4.4 Record of achievement against each module achieved and credits attained
- 6.4.5 A summary of each component the RPL applies.

Glossary

Accreditation means a recognition granted by the competent authority after examining and assessing institutions and the programmes leading to BQF qualifications.

Accredited institutions refer to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or training providers that are accredited/registered by competent body based on the respective accreditation standards within each sector.

Awarding body is a body issuing qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles) formally recognising the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, applications and values) of an individual, following an assessment procedure.

Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF) is an integrated national framework that outlines all qualifications levels according to the various education sectors in Bhutan. The BQF, which is an established and nationally accepted instrument has been benchmarked against international practices in terms of the criteria, standards and learning outcomes.

Certified Programme is a programme that measures, evaluates and promotes the learners' knowledge and skills meeting the standards prescribed and leading to higher qualification as a mark of credibility.

Community Education is a philosophy and set of principles that advocate for the creation of life-long learning opportunities for community members to become partners in addressing community needs and improve their quality of life.

Comparability of qualifications is the extent to which it is possible to establish equivalence between the level and content of qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles) at sectoral, regional, national or international levels.

Competence is the ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development).

Competent authority is the competent official or organisation empowered and/or accredited to execute various functions such as award, certification and inspection.

Credit is a quantitative measurement that represents the learning volume of learning based on the estimated learning hours to attain the set learning outcomes.

Discipline, also referred to as Profile, means a specific subject or a field of study for a qualification or features that is different in conglomeration of qualifications of various disciplines, which has a similar emphasis or level.

Domains of Learning refers to the knowledge, skills, values, and their applications that learners are expected to acquire at a specific qualification level resulting in specific learning outcomes.

Employability refers to the combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to progress during their careers.

Exit qualification refers to a qualification which may be awarded on completion of an intermediate point of studies in a longer programme of study (when a student leaves the programme) but for which the student has not registered at the outset.

Formal learning refers to learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (such as in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources) that is intentional and leads to certification.

Foundational Education refers to basic school education below BCSE.

Higher Education refers to all types of study programme at post-secondary education which are recognized by competent authorities and offered by institutions belonging to the higher-education system in the host country.

Informal learning refers to learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective.

Instructional hours are used within the school and community education sectors to describe the timetabled hours required for the programme leading to specific qualifications within these sectors.

Learning Outcomes are statements that explain what students should know, understand and can do upon the completion of a period of study. Learning outcomes are references for standard and quality, as well as for the development and delivery

of curriculum in terms of teaching and learning, the determination of credits and the assessment of students.

Level refers to a measure of intellectual progress as seen in the demands of the programme that follow. The year of study may be used as a proxy for a level though the second year material, for example, may not necessarily provide intellectual progress for the third year study.

Lifelong learning means all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills/competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons.

Monastic education refers to the traditional Buddhist form of education and remains the central form of spiritual learning and development in Bhutan. Monastic education provides a distinct medium of acquiring knowledge, skills and values. There are a number of public and private monastic education systems within Bhutan each with their own established governance arrangements.

Non-formal learning is learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification.

Notional learning hours include all the learning and assessment activities that are required to achieve the learning outcomes such as lecture, tutorial, seminar, research, practical, project work, clinical practice, studio work, fieldwork, work based learning, as well as preparing for and undertaking for assessment.

Programme (of study) is an approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification including research programmes.

Qualification is defined as the formal outcome of an assessment and validation process obtained when an awarding body determines that an individual has achieved the desired learning outcomes. It indicates successful achievement of learning outcomes at specific level through formal certification. It usually takes the form of certificates, diplomas or degrees that are awarded by any competent authority, having affirmed that one has been successful in completing the study at the determined standard, and has satisfied the determined level of achievement and is able to take on a role, duty or work.

Qualification alignment refers to mapping of qualifications issued by educational or training institutions (mostly foreign) that are approved by the competent authority on comparable BQF levels.

Qualification Descriptors refer to generic statements of the outcomes of study associated with a specific qualification which provides clear points of reference that describe the main outcomes of a qualification.

Qualifications Level is an award level described with generic outcomes or a qualification descriptor against which typical qualifications can be positioned.

Recognition of Prior Learning refers to a systematic process that involves the identification, documentation and assessment of prior experiential learning, i.e., knowledge, skills and attitudes, to determine the extent to which an individual has achieved the desired learning outcomes through formal, TVET and community education irrespective of time and place, for access to a programme of study.

Reference points are collectively agreed requirements or points of comparison (at international, national and degree-awarding body level) which are used by degree-awarding bodies to ensure consistency in academic standards.

Skill is the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

Validation of learning outcomes is the process of confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes acquired by an individual, regardless of the context, have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a standard. Validation typically leads to certification.

Vocational education and training (VET) refers to education and training which aims to equip people with the competences (knowledge, know-how, skills and application) required in particular occupation or more broadly on the labour market.

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Appendix 1: BQF Titling Conventions

Qualification titles

All BQF qualifications shall adhere to the following titling conventions.

Qualifications listed on the BQF begin with the generic title of the qualification type and are then completed by a designator, which identifies the main discipline or subject field/area. Qualifiers or sub-fields may be included in square brackets after the qualification field.

The titling conventions for the qualification types identified in the BQF are:

Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of *broadfield of study*

Master of *broadfield of study*

Postgraduate Diploma of *broadfield of study*

Postgraduate Certificate of *broadfield of study*

Bachelor of generic or *broadfield of study* (Honours)

Bachelor of generic or *broadfield of study* [which may be followed by the name of a major]

Graduate Diploma of *broadfield of study*

Graduate Certificate of broad *broadfield of study*

Advanced Diploma of *field of study*

Diploma of *field of study*

Certificate 3 in *field of study* / National Certificate 3 in *field of study*

Certificate 2 in *field of study* / National Certificate 2 in *field of study*

Certificate 1 in *field of study*/ National Certificate 1 in *field of study*

Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate

Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education

Qualifications issued must adhere to these conventions.

Conventions for post nominals

Providers are required to provide details of post nominals.

Abbreviations for qualifications should follow international conventions, noting that there are differences in the titles and descriptions of some qualifications across nations.

Graduates who have obtained a BQF award are entitled to use the approved abbreviation for the qualification as a post nominal (after their name) if this is an accepted convention, as is normal for qualifications.

An example would be '**Jigme Dorji, BA**'. Other examples are:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| BSc (Geology) | Bachelor of Science, majoring in Geology |
| BEng | Bachelor of Engineering |
| MBBS | Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery |
| PGradCertIT | Postgraduate Certificate in Information Technology |
| PGradDipSusDev | Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Development |
| MBA | Master of Business Administration |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |