

RWANDA

Rwanda currently has two qualifications sub-frameworks: the Rwandan Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (RQFHE, also called the Rwandan National Qualifications Framework) and the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Qualifications Framework (NTQF).

1. CHALLENGES THE NQF WOULD NEED TO ADDRESS

Historically, higher education in Rwanda was provided for only a few students at undergraduate level. There was little investment in quality, research, innovation and knowledge transfer. The present government acknowledges the importance of investing in teaching, learning and research so as to improve the quality and relevance of undergraduate and continuing education (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Rwanda's TVET sector is struggling with the interrelated issues of skills mismatch and limited job growth. Over 42 per cent of young people are unemployed, underemployed or engaging in subsistence agriculture. Several programmes have been developed to address youth unemployment, but since they are not systematically interlinked, these initiatives are failing to reach as many young people as they might (OECD, 2012). At present, policy frameworks for skills development, job creation and gender equality rarely translate into tangible impacts.

2. MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The RQFHE aims to:

- enable international benchmarking of standards;
- ensure that educational programmes are developed and delivered in conformity with the framework and its quality assurance system (Rwandan National Qualifications Framework, 2007, p.3);
- make the Rwandan higher education sector more internationally credible and competitive;
- widen participation in and access to education in Rwanda;
- align Rwandan qualifications more closely with the world of work; and
- support research, innovation and knowledge transfer.

In alignment with the policy of the TVET sub-sector as a whole, the NTQF aims to:

- promote the establishment of a knowledge-based economy for the purposes of sustainable development in Rwanda;
- establish mechanisms for the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning;
- widen access to TVET; and
- enhance the professional development of Rwandan workers by furnishing them with skills and knowledge which are relevant to the labour market.

3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

The RQFHE is the responsibility of the Higher Education Council (HEC). The function of the HEC is to carry out institutional quality audits and subject reviews, and to monitor and report on the performance of the higher education sector against national targets.

The NTQF is governed by the TVET Authority, which was established by law to promote skills development in the national workforce in order to enhance Rwandan workers' competitiveness and employability (Ministry of Education, 2008). The TVET Authority is governed by a Council whose membership reflects the Authority's wide range of stakeholders and beneficiaries in both the public and private sectors. The Council's chairs include representatives from relevant Ministries, the private sector federation and its chambers, employers and employees, NGOs, TVET providers, farmers, professional associations, faith-based organizations and all public institutions which deal with human resource development. The weight of employers in the Council will be critical for its success (Ministry of Education, 2008, pp. 16-17).

The TVET Authority defines levels and standards for the NTQF and indicates learning outcomes at each level which specify what a learner is able to do as a result of the learning process. It also defines the level descriptors which detail the competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) a person has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning programme and in order to be considered qualified at a given level in a given field. 'Competence' refers to the ability to apply the complete set of skills, knowledge and attitudes (learning outcomes) in a defined context, for example in the performance of a specific occupation.

The National Examination and Certification Framework, a legal authority, will offer examinations and certification for all qualification levels. A Labour Market Information System (LMIS) will provide information on the needs of employers which will shape curriculum development. A Business Incubation (Entrepreneurship Development) facility will provide support services to up-and-coming entrepreneurs with lower vocational skills.

4. LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS AND THE USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The RQFHE has seven levels. Learning outcomes at each level are described in terms of five dimensions. These are: knowledge and understanding; applied knowledge and understanding; cognitive skills; communication, ICT and numeracy skills; and autonomy, responsibility and working with others. The level descriptors provide a clear understanding of the learning outcomes expected at each level. All subject groups are required to produce benchmark statements to define their learning outcomes. Programme teams are expected to specify learning outcomes across all five dimensions for each given programme. These are subject to approval by the Higher Education Council before the programme is delivered.

Two factors determine the level of a qualification within the RQFHE: the difficulty of the learning outcomes and the volume of credit that can be achieved (see Table 1).

Table 1. Higher Education Level 1 (Certificate of Higher Education) as an example

Knowledge and understanding	Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Cognitive skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, responsibility and working with others
<p>Demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * a broad knowledge of the main principles of the subject * an awareness that knowledge is constantly evolving * an understanding of the difference between knowledge supported by data and proof and knowledge that is discursive and conceptual without the support of evidence 	<p>Use some of the basic and routine techniques and/or materials associated with the subject. Practice these techniques in routine and non-routine situations.</p>	<p>Present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas which are routine to the subject. Use a range of approaches to address pre-defined and/or routine problems in familiar contexts.</p>	<p>Use a range of routine skills associated with the discipline, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent form * use a range of forms of communication effectively in both familiar and new contexts * use standard ICT applications to obtain and process a variety of information and data * use a range of numerical and graphical skills. 	<p>Be able to work with little or no supervision. Be able to work with others to achieve defined objectives. Take responsibility for own work. Be able to take a leadership role in group work.</p>

Source: Rwandan National Qualifications Framework, 2007.

The requirements for the award of qualifications from higher education institutions are in line with the draft *Rwandan National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education* produced by the National Council for Higher Education.

At the core of the RQFHE is a Credit Accumulation and Modular Scheme (CAMS), which is benchmarked to internationally recognized standards. This is illustrated by Table 2 below.

Table 2. The RQFHE Credit Accumulation and Modular Scheme

Award	Level	Credit	Year (undergraduate full time)
Certificate of HE	1	120 Level 1	1
Diploma in HE	2	240: 120 Level 1 + 120 Level 2	2
Advanced Diploma in HE	3	300: 120 Level 1 + 120 Level 2 + 60 Level 3	3 Semester 1
Bachelor's Degree	4	360: 120 Level 1 + 120 Level 2 + 60 Level 3 + 60 Level 4	3 Semester 2
Bachelor's Degree with Honours	5	480: 120 Level 1 + 120 Level 2 + 60 Level 3 + 60 Level 4 + 120 Level 5	4
Postgraduate Certificate	6	Minimum 60 at Level 6	
Postgraduate Diploma	6	Minimum 120 at Level 6	
Masters (following an integrated programme from undergraduate to Masters level study)	6	Minimum 600, with a minimum of 120 at Level 6	
MA/MSs (name of programme)	6	180 with a minimum of 140 at Level 6	
MA/MSc by Learning Contract	6	180 with a minimum of 140 at Level 6	
Masters by Research	6	Not credit rated (research degree)	
MPhil /MLitt (named subject)	6	240 credits with a minimum of 200 at Level 6	
Prof M	6	360 at Level 6	
MPhil (subject not named)	6	Not credit rated (research degree)	
PhD	7	Not credit rated (research degree)	
Prof D	7	Minimum 540 with a minimum of 420 at Level 7	

Source: Rwandan National Qualifications Framework, 2007.

5. PROGRESSION PATHWAYS AND RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

The NTQF aims as far as possible to incorporate already existing TVET activities into its qualification programmes. Enrolment in TVET courses is expected to be fairly evenly balanced between commerce and science subjects due to the large number of female students opting for accountancy and secretarial/administrative courses (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Horizontal and vertical mobility both within the TVET sector and between TVET and general education is considered essential for responding to technological progress and professionalizing the workforce. Mobility is made possible by the creation of equivalencies between different streams. The rules regarding equivalencies are set by the TVET Authority on behalf of the NTQF. Entry and exit pathways at all levels and programmes give TVET graduates the option of progressing to higher education commensurate with their abilities and the opportunities present in the labour market (Ministry of Education, 2008, p.14). Bridging courses are envisaged to smooth the progress of

students moving from one stream to another and ensure that they are not at a disadvantage as they enter the new stream.

6. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The leaders and citizens of East African countries are committed to constructing a powerful and sustainable East African economic and political bloc (EAC, 2011). This commitment is reflected in Rwanda's membership of regional organizations such as the East African Community (EAC), a regional intergovernmental organization which also includes the Republics of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi. Negotiations are also underway to create an East African Monetary Union and an East African Federation.

The Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) in close collaboration with EAC and the East African Business Council has developed the EAC Regional Higher Education Qualifications Framework (RHEQF) (IUCEA, 2014). It will act as a translation device to make NQFs more readable across the region and international frontiers, as well as promoting worker and learner mobility between countries.

7. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

Significant progress has been made since 1994 in establishing a sound base for higher education in Rwanda. The government remains focused on maintaining high standards and continuing to develop collaborative working relationships between public higher education institutions and the private sector (Ministry of Education, 2008). TVET has been recognized as a national priority and the quality and accessibility of TVET programmes have been improved accordingly (Ministry of Education, 2008, p.11).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

East African Community (EAC). 2011. *East African Community. East African Community Portal* <http://www.eac.int/about-eac.html> (Accessed 27 July 2011.)

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