

# MALDIVES

The Maldives National Qualifications Framework (MNQF) was established by the Maldives Accreditation Board (MAB) in September 2001. The Maldives Accreditation Board (MAB) was replaced by the Maldives Qualifications Authority (MQA) on 17 May 2010. The revision process of the framework began in 2005 and was completed in February 2009 (MAB, 2009) and implemented on 1 September 2011.

## 1. CHALLENGES THE NQF WOULD NEED TO ADDRESS

Two main challenges are being addressed by the MNQF:

1. The Maldivian post-secondary education sector is growing rapidly, with an increasing number of private providers entering the sector to meet demand. This has resulted in a need to assure the quality of qualifications awarded in relation to educational attainments (MAB, 2009).
2. International recognition of Maldivian qualifications abroad, especially in the Asia Pacific region, is emerging as a major issue as more and more students are pursuing higher education at home and abroad. Information needs to be gathered about overseas qualifications, institutions and academic programmes, and the status of institutions needs to be clarified with respect to the recognition and credibility of qualifications.

## 2. MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The government sees the revised MNQF as a tool to bring all recognised qualifications together under a single unified structure. The main policy objectives of the strengthened MNQF are:

- to establish national competency standards;
- to assure the quality of teaching, assessment and certification;
- to promote student and learner support and reporting;
- to allow for a possible future interface with secondary education;
- to allow technical and vocational education (TVET) graduates to progress seamlessly to advanced technical, professional and post-graduate learning;
- to provide an internationally benchmarked suite of higher education qualifications from Associate and Foundation degrees through Bachelor's and Master's degrees to higher technical and professional diplomas and doctorates;
- to allow valid international higher education qualifications to be recognised in the Maldives;
- to promote mobility and recognition for Maldivian citizens abroad;
- to establish a national technical and vocational qualifications system based on national competency standards, allowing flexibility in worker skills acquisition.

### 3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

The official accrediting agency of the Maldives is the Maldives Accreditation Board (MAB). This board was formed by the president of the Maldives in 2000. Before the formation of the MAB, the accreditation process was carried out by the Department of Public Examinations (DPE).

On 17 May 2010, the functions of the Maldives Accreditation Board (MAB) were changed to the Maldives Qualifications Authority (MQA). The Regulatory Board of the MQA on its first meeting on 30 August 2010 decreed that all rules, regulations and procedures of the former MAB will be adhered to by the MQA until decreed otherwise by the Regulatory Board (MAB, 2009). The MQA's mandate is to assure the quality of post-secondary qualifications awarded in testimony of educational attainments (MQA, 2010). The process of revising the framework began in 2005. After extensive research and discussion with experts and relevant authorities, the revision process was completed in February 2009. The strengthened MNQF came into effect when the MAB formally endorsed it in September 2009. In September 2011, the Maldives Accreditation Board checked whether all qualifications submitted for approval were consistent with the new national system.

Under the new strengthened MNQF, trainers can modularise training in addition to developing full-time training programmes. Modular programmes offer part time courses to suit workers so that a full qualification is achieved over time. The new framework allows for a combination of theoretical instruction and training in the workplace, with assessment results being combined towards a full award.

Where qualifications are delivered through training institutions, the MAB proposes three clusters of activities to support the new national qualifications arrangements:

- establishment of a quality management system at the time of registration;
- programme accreditation;
- ongoing monitoring and institutional quality audit (MQA, 2010).

### 4. LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS AND THE USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Maldives Accreditation Board assigns qualifications to a 10 level framework using the descriptors for levels 3-12 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (MAB, 2009).

**Table 1. The Maldives National Qualifications Framework (MNQF)**

LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TITLE
10	Doctoral Degree/ Higher Professional Certificate/Higher Professional Diploma
9	Master's Degree/ Advanced Professional Certificate/Advanced Professional Diploma
8	Graduate or Postgraduate Certificate/Graduate or Postgraduate Diploma/ Bachelor's Degree with Honours
7	Bachelor's Degree Professional Certificate/ Professional Diploma
6	Professional Certificate/ Advanced Diploma Associate Degree/ Foundation Degree
5	Diploma
4	Certificate IV
3	Certificate III
2	Certificate II
1	Certificate I

Source: Maldives Accreditation Board, 2009

Certificate I recognises the acquisition of a core of entry-level skills for a new worker. Certificates II, III and IV recognise increasing levels of capability and competence through to the fully qualified tradesperson. Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas and Higher Diplomas recognise technical, managerial and professional level knowledge and skills.

The MNQF descriptors set out the learning outcomes at each level. They provide a general understanding of each level and allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications and learning at different levels. The learning outcomes include five categories:

- knowledge and understanding;
- practice: applied knowledge and understanding;
- cognitive skills;
- communication, ICT, and numeracy skills;
- autonomy, accountability and working with others.

Through the benchmarking already undertaken by Edexcel, it is possible to assign GCSE grades D-G to level 2, GCSE grades A-C to level 3 and A Levels to level 4 of the MNQF (MAB, 2009).

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

The assigning of levels to all MAB accredited courses and the inclusion of all post-secondary qualifications under one banner, from initial certificates to advanced academic, technical and professional qualifications, facilitates students' progression pathways and encourages lifelong learning. All qualifications, no matter which subject area, can be recognised under the new competency-based framework. The MAB will include a full listing of all approved programmes on its website, along with the associated levels and objectives of the programmes purposes, for the information of learners and employers.

Some students or workers may achieve only some of the competences required for a full technical and vocational qualification. Nevertheless, they are still able to receive an official record of that partial qualification (Certificate of Achievement). The credit system therefore allows students to receive credit for all achievement, no matter how modest. Credits are assigned on the basis of one credit for the achievement of the specified learning outcomes of 10 learning hours. In higher education this translates into 120 credits in an academic year. The assessment system makes provision for credit accumulation and transfer, and allows for the recognition of prior learning and of competences towards qualifications even without course attendance (MQA, 2010), since assessment can also be conducted in the workplace.

## **6. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS**

MQA's recognition of overseas institutions/colleges/universities is based on the following criterion:

- Recognition of the institution/college/university in that particular country.
- MQA's recognition of an institution/college/university does not mean that all its qualifications are recognized. Qualifications are recognized and accepted in the Maldives:
- If they are issued by a Government recognized institution in the country of origin.
- If they meet standards and criteria set by the Maldives National Qualifications Framework (MNQF)

MQA also provides the service of checking recognition status of academic programmes and institution for individuals planning to join a programme of study overseas.

## 7. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

With the strengthened MNQF, the Government of the Maldives hopes to have put in place a sustainable and strategic solution for national and human resource development. It is hoped that the incorporation of national competency standards and of a broader and more coherent technical and vocational qualifications system will allow for considerable flexibility in worker skills acquisition.

One of lessons to learn from the MNQF is the shift to a unified qualifications system which guarantees more international recognition of the qualifications and the skills and knowledge of Maldivian citizens. Maldives has been successful in making all qualifications consistent with the new national system. It has achieved this by requiring all existing qualifications to be submitted for approval by the Maldives Accreditation Board.

Another important learning is the role played by the MQA in ensuring that students, employers, education providers and the community at large easily understand the learning outcomes involved in various qualifications. Furthermore, the MQA has encouraged employers, parents and students to seek out only accredited programmes, alongside promoting quality assurance of teaching, assessment and certification.

### MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Asia and Pacific Accreditation and Certification Council. 2004. *International Accreditation and Certification for TVET Institutions to Face the Challenges of Globalization. Country report of Maldives* [http://apacc1.cpsctech.org/newsevents/?b\\_id=Apacc\\_news&b\\_num=46](http://apacc1.cpsctech.org/newsevents/?b_id=Apacc_news&b_num=46) (Accessed 23 January 2014.)
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- Maldives Accreditation Board (MAB). 2009. *The Maldives National Qualifications Framework 2009*. <http://www.mqa.gov.mv/downloads/MNQF2009withAmmendment1.pdf>. (Accessed 27 July 2011.)
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