Towards Establishing an Integrated Qualifications System in the United Arab Emirates
PURPOSE OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

- Purpose at a strategic level is to provide practical solutions to real political, economic and educational concerns such as:
  - changing economic goals and the need for labour market reform;
  - changing social needs within a global economic, knowledge-based environment;
  - expansion or diversification of post-compulsory education;
  - improvements in the quality of education or training.

- At the learner level, purpose includes:
  - within- and cross-nation learner mobility;
  - homogenisation of international standards for recognition and equivalency, supported by robust quality assurance.
WHY THE UAE NEEDS A NQF: THE CHALLENGES

The UAE has identified that it faces significant challenges to remain competitive in an increasingly globally competitive and changing environment, which includes:

- the need for a flexible world-class workforce;
- recognition of increasing global economic integration, technological innovation and advance to ensure continuing productivity growth;
- access to a pool of highly skilled, educated and qualified workers through development of the nation’s citizens (Emiratisation);
- perception of VET as a second class learning pathway – compared to the general education system.
To meet its future development and prosperity ambitions, the UAE needs:

- a central education and training coordination authority to oversee the development of national strategic policy on skills and quality assurance of education and training outcomes;
- a singular, coherent and integrated framework of qualifications bringing together general education, higher education and VET to allow comparisons with and alignment to existing UAE and international qualifications, facilitating learner progression;
- an enabling mechanism for all national qualifications that can be used by the nation’s decision makers to coordinate, monitor and quality assure providers, especially in VET and, in particular, to avoid the perception that VET is a second class learning pathway.
In late 2010, President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Sayed Al Nahyan issued a Federal Degree to establish the UAE National Qualifications Authority (NQA).

Its vision is to:
‘develop and maintain a qualifications system that values every individual’s learning and optimises access, transfer, progression and recognition of qualifications, leading to a skilled and knowledgeable workforce for a globally competitive environment.’
The National Qualifications Authority (NQA) was established by issuance of a Decree:

Date of decree: 23 August 2010
Management: Board of Trustees
Reports to: Council of Ministers (Cabinet)
Chairman: Appointed 27 February 2011 (Minister of Labour)
WORK IN COORDINATION WITH RELEVANT BODIES, SUCH AS:

- Ministry of Higher Education Science and Research (MOHESR), and its Commission of Academic Accreditation (CAA)
- Ministry of Education (MoE), and its General Education Commission (GEC)
- Other relevant entities
DECREES: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE UAE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (NQA)

1. Comprehensive and unified national strategy for qualifications.
2. Standards and regulations for qualifications of HE, GE, VET: to keep pace with:
   - scientific and technological progress, and to meet the requirements of economic and social development.
3. Policies and procedures to obtain national and international accreditation (recognition).
4. Systems, processes and procedures to assess learning outcomes that serve as the basis for awarding qualifications.
5. Issue equivalencies for HE, GE and VET qualifications.
6. Assess and accredit HE, GE and VET education & training providers.
7. Policies and procedures for access, transfer and progression of individuals within HE, GE and VET streams inside and outside the country.
8. Advise individuals and entities to promote the concept of life-long learning.
9. Ensure the National Qualifications Framework is the national frame of reference for qualifications in the country.
10. Qualifications-relevant data, and submit proposals to relevant entities, to improve the quality of HE, GE and VET systems.
11. Specialised committees to develop national occupational (skills) standards for all jobs in compliance with QF levels.
12. An integrated system to license assessors of VET qualifications.
13. Support the efforts of all entities responsible for assessing and regulating workforce quality.
14. A national database for all:
   - education and training providers in the country;
   - learners;
   - accredited (recognised) national qualifications, and
   - national occupational (skills) standards.
15. Studies and periodic evaluations - to improve the overall performance of the national qualifications system.
16. Implement any other tasks or responsibilities assigned by the Council of Ministers.

Note - Reporting requirements:
Submit periodic (including annual) reports to the Council of Ministers about:
- the quality of outcomes of education, training and assessment; and
- their alignment and integration with the labour market and economic developments across the UAE.
Why is change necessary?

The key drivers

- Increasing globalization of economies
- Rapid technological advances
- Changing population demographic profile
- Increased mobility of labour
- UAE strategic industrial development agenda
- UAE Emiratization plans
- National skills shortages

The challenge - Human development ...

To create a highly qualified workforce that is suitably educated, skilled, competent, adaptable and valued
Need a world class:

1. Progressive and responsive education and training system

2. Qualifications system to support it, that includes the following infrastructure:
   - a Qualifications Framework,
   - Industry and Education Standards,
   - Quality Assurance (QA) Systems,
   - associated supporting arrangements, such as qualifications register and information system
OBJECTIVES OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM

1. Improve the quality of qualifications awarded in the UAE.

2. Promote lifelong learning by putting in place policies and tools that allow transfer, progression and mobility.

3. Promote access to learning across formal, non-formal and informal settings.
OBJECTIVES OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM

4. Benchmark quality of qualifications in the UAE with those of international and best practice.

5. Assist mobility of workers inside and outside UAE through proper recognition of their qualifications.

6. Ensure similar language and standards for qualifications across all education providers.
THE QF (ITSELF) DOES NOT?

Identify or stipulate the discipline or outcome of the qualification that will be issued:
- e.g. Bachelor of "Mechanical Engineering"

Permit direct assessment (including RPL) against the levels for the issuance of a qualification

Dictate the curriculum for a course or a program

Tell you how to deliver education and training or conduct assessment
KEY DESIGN FEATURES OF THE QFEmirates

- General education, vocation, technical and professional education and training and higher education in a single, integrated system;
- Based on unit standards contextualised to specific sectors and learning requirements;
- Common language for qualifications and learning outcomes;
- Multi-dimensional - relative standards of every qualification determined through level and credit;
- VET qualification design based on occupational skills standards;
- Involves stakeholders at every stage of design and implementation;
- Flexible - to respond to changing national and international needs demands;
- Incorporates recognition of prior learning;
- Phased implementation to reflect and support existing systems.
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Develop Integrated Qualifications Framework</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Define learning outcomes required for each of the Qualifications Framework Levels</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Identify the Industry Sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Coordinate the Sectors to define occupational skills standards and qualifications as they relate to needs of the labor market</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Develop and endorse the national occupational skills standards and qualifications</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Coordinate with relevant bodies to licensing Vocational Education bodies and programs against them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Develop and implement a qualifications Database that is used for public recognition, and can benefit education and industry sectors and the society in general.

Coordinate and develop mutual recognition arrangements between UAE education and training sectors, and with the EQF to ensure international recognition.

Establish, in coordination with relevant authorities, entities and other bodies, career development and guidance information.

Evaluate the quality of outcomes of the education and training outputs to meet the needs of the labor market.
### Pillars of the Proposed UAE Qualifications System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework</th>
<th>a singular, coherent and integrated Qualifications Framework covering HE, VET and GE sectors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
<td>an agreed classification system of new awards with qualifications that are nationally and internationally recognised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>education and training standards (industry driven for vocational standards) as the basis for quality assessments, learning provision and qualification issuance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>a system for recognising relevant existing / new UAE and international qualifications including processes for recognising prior learning from formal, non-formal and informal settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>quality assurance systems underpinning licensure, audit, accreditation, assessment and learning provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Register</td>
<td>a qualifications register and information system for recording recognised education and training authorisations and activities and allowing access to stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>an overarching independent body responsible for policy setting within the system, and for overall coordination of system implementation by the HE, VET and GE sectoral bodies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK: A MORE COHERENT POLICY APPROACH

A SINGLE ORGANISING STRUCTURE FOR ALL QUALIFICATIONS IN UAE

- A frame of reference for existing qualifications
- A basis for the design of new qualifications
- An aid in the recognition of foreign qualifications
A QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK: A MORE COHERENT POLICY APPROACH

An aid in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning

A 10-Level Framework has been developed, based on learning outcomes, for the UAE
1. ten (10) levels
2. learning outcomes expressed in terms of:
   - knowledge
   - skill
   - aspects of competence (comprising three [3] sub-parts)

   That is, **five (5) ‘strands’**, which are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand 1</th>
<th>Strand 2</th>
<th>Strand 3</th>
<th>Strand 4</th>
<th>Strand 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>Autonomy &amp; Responsibility</td>
<td>Self-development</td>
<td>Role in context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aspects of competence
# Proposed System – Grid of Level Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Strand 1</th>
<th>Strand 2</th>
<th>Strand 3</th>
<th>Strand 4</th>
<th>Strand 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Autonomy &amp; Responsibility</td>
<td>Self-development</td>
<td>Role in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50 sets of descriptor statements
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal qualifications</td>
<td>Are the major class of awards associated with each level</td>
<td>Bachelor Degree Higher Diploma Certificate 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite awards</td>
<td>Are for achievement of specified learning outcomes, which may form part of the requirement for a principal award</td>
<td>A principal award in Computer Applications could contain a component award in word processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component awards</td>
<td>Are made for relatively narrow sets of outcomes, generally for a particular purpose</td>
<td>Certification of training in Health and Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Generic Nomenclature</td>
<td>Principal Qualification titles (each with its own Profile) used in the UAE Qualifications Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma</td>
<td>Applied Master, Post Graduate Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>Applied Bachelor, Bachelor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Higher Diploma</td>
<td>Advanced Diploma, Higher Diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Diploma / Associate Degree</td>
<td>Diploma, Associate Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Certificate 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Certificate 3, TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Certificate 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>Certificate 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TYPES OF QUALIFICATIONS (Précis from QFEmirates Handbook)

- **Principal Qualifications:** the major type of qualification associated with formal recognition at each level. They include the five strands of learning outcomes and capture a typical range of achievements for that level.
- In addition there are:
  - **Composite Awards:** provide formal recognition for learners who achieve a set of learning outcomes covering all five strands of learning outcomes but not the full combination of learning outcomes required for a Principal Qualification at a given level;
  - **Component Awards:** provide the smallest parcel of formally recognised learning outcomes that can be achieved by learners within the Framework. It may relate to all or only some of the strands of learning outcomes, at a given level.
- When the QFEmirates is fully operational, it is anticipated that each type of qualification will be available at each of the ten levels, based on the demand of users.
- The QFEmirates is dynamic, responding to user needs, so will be under constant review.
Indicative employability range

1. Basic
   Employability in work requiring limited well-defined and procedural skills or programmes to enable occupational entry

2. General
   Entry to many occupational sectors and employment in roles requiring routine general skills

3. Semi-skilled
   Entry to many occupational sectors and employment in semi-skilled vocational occupations

4. Skilled
   Employability as a craft-worker, technician or administrative operative, and/or lead teams
   Entry to many careers with strong general employability

5. Highly Skilled
   Employability as an advanced craft-worker, technician or administrative operative, and/or in limited supervisory roles
   Entry to many paraprofessional careers with strong general employability

6. Supervisory and Technical
   Employability as a highly developed craft-worker, technician or administrative operative and/or supervisor roles

7. Limited Professional and Higher Technical
   Employability at the upper end of many technical occupations, or in limited professional and management roles

8. Professional
   Employability as autonomous professionals and as managers

9. Higher Professional
   Employability as senior professionals or leaders in specialised fields

10. Leading specialist/expert
    Employability in the leadership of research and critical change activity
MUTUAL RECOGNITION OPTIONS - GCC META FRAMEWORK
Regional Frameworks
PROPOSED CLASSIFICATION OF INDUSTRY SECTORS
- for developing Occupational Standards and Qualifications

1. **A** Government services and public administration
2. **B** Community, health and social services
3. **C** Business, administration and financial services
4. **D** Tourism, hospitality, retail and leisure services including personal care services
5. **E** Arts, culture and entertainment
6. **F** Education, learning and social development
7. **G** Building and construction, estates and assets development and management
8. **H** Utilities and infrastructure
9. **I** Energy resources – oil, natural gas, petrochemical, chemical and mining/quarrying
10. **J** Manufacturing
11. **K** Logistics and transport
12. **L** Agriculture, livestock and fishery
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

A process model for RPL/RCC based on four key steps has been proposed for consideration. The model is to be promoted for use in UAE as widely as possible. The process relies on the learner, with the support of a qualified assessor (including RP), confirming, submitting and undertaking activities that lead to a judgement being made, encompassing:

1. **Identification**: learners identify what they know and can do (a qualified assessor would guide this process).

2. **Documentation**: learners gather evidence that demonstrates knowledge, skills and aspects of competences. This evidence is then validated, under the guidance of the assessor, with reference to relevant endorsed standards.

3. **Assessment**: a qualified and experienced assessor will review evidence and determine if it meets the established requirements for recognition.

4. **Recognition**: recognition can take various forms such as the award of a qualification, allocation of credit(s), occupational certification, employment, workplace advancement, or self recognition.

The recognition process for prior learning in the UAE:

- Learners
- Counselling, Guidance and agreed RPL strategy
- Potential sources of Evidence identified and RPL plan developed
- Evidence obtained and validated
- Evidence valid and sufficient?
  - Yes
  - Advice on qualifications or employment options
  - No

[Diagram illustrating the process flow]
Following alignment to the QF level, credits are values allocated to qualifications, courses, modules, and/or units which indicate a learner’s notional effort to complete them.

A notional guideline for the use of a Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) has been included within the UAE Qualifications Framework system.
QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER AND INFORMATION

Data flow to Qualifications Register and Information Database

- Learners enrol for Accredited Courses & Programs on successful completion of the training program are registered on.
- Accredited Courses & Programs offered by Licensced Education & Training Providers that are registered on.
- Licensced Education & Training Providers which lead to Recognised Qualifications that are registered on.
- Recognised Qualifications awarded by Accredited Awarding Bodies that are registered on.

Qualifications Register and Information Database which is accessible to:

- Learners
- Government
- Employers
- Education & Training Providers
- General Public
The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region

Six states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE

All share similar socio-economic challenges and visions

An ideal context for a regional meta-framework of qualifications
International trend towards use of Qualifications Frameworks in many countries with which the UAE has links:

1. EU countries
2. Australia, New Zealand, South Africa
3. many countries in the Middle-East, North Africa and Asia