



PROPOSED NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR BARBADOS

Extracted from the Consultancy Report on the Design, Develop and Implement a
National Qualifications Framework for Barbados
(**Full Report**)



Realising Our Human Potential

SECTION I: DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESCRIPTION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE FRAMEWORK

1. REFERENCING THE FRAMEWORK

In developing the Barbados National Qualifications Framework, reference was made to a number of other frameworks. These included the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) from the Commonwealth of Learning and the CARICOM Qualifications Framework (CQF) each of which is described briefly below.

2. THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (EQF)

The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) is a Meta framework in that it takes into account the diversity of national systems and facilitates the translation and comparison of qualifications between countries an overarching framework set up in Europe to facilitate comparison of qualifications and qualifications levels in order to promote geographical and labour market mobility as well as lifelong learning.

The core of the framework consists of 8 qualification levels described through learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence) and thus provides a common reference framework which assists in comparing national qualifications systems, frameworks and their levels across Europe. It serves as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe, and thus promote lifelong and life-wide learning, and the mobility of European citizens whether for studying or working abroad.

3. THE TRANSNATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK (TQF)

The Transnational Qualification Framework (TQF) consists of 10 qualification levels and was developed for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. It is defined as a translation instrument for the classification of qualifications of the Virtual University of Small States (VUSSC) according to set criteria for specified levels of learning achieved to improve credit transfer and promotion, common accreditation mechanisms between participating VUSS countries.

The TQF was conceptualised as a reference system linking together national qualification systems and frameworks of small states facing common challenges of globalisation and the migration of highly skilled labour. It promotes lifelong learning and encompasses basic adult education and training, technical and vocational education and training as well as higher education. The 10 levels spans qualifications attained at the end of compulsory education, to those awarded at the highest level of the academic, professional, technical and vocational education and training fields. The learning outcomes are developed using knowledge, skills competencies and attributes and these describe the qualifications in the framework which accommodates certificates, diplomas and degrees.

4. CARICOM QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The CARICOM Qualifications Framework (CQF) serves as a common framework for Member States within the Caribbean and acts as a translation device facilitating educational and labour market mobility and supports career progression and lifelong learning. It was developed in recognition that internationalisation of higher education has expanded opportunities for the movement of students across national boundaries and increased opportunities for further study and career advancement have resulted in greater mobility of skilled persons seeking employment regionally and internationally.

The CQF is expected to act as a mechanism at both the regional and national levels to increase transparency and reliability of information about qualifications across the region; improve access of individuals to higher levels of education and training and a wider range of employment opportunities; and secure appropriate regional and international recognition for skills acquired at different achievement levels. The CQF has 10 qualification levels accommodating basic adult education to the highest levels in academic, professional, technical and vocational education and training, The CQF comprises ten reference levels which describe learning outcomes of what learners are expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of learning. They are expressed in terms of knowledge and understanding; application and practice; communication, numeracy and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills; life skills; and autonomy, accountability and working with others.

5. OTHER FACTORS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN ESTABLISHING THE BARBADOS NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

A number of other factors were taken into account in developing the BNQF. These were:

- Access; and
- Benchmarking.

5.1 Access

A core dimension of any Qualification Framework is access. The objective is that the learner should be able to enter and successfully participate in a programme, or a series of programmes leading to an award, or series of awards, in pursuit of their career or educational objectives. The Barbados National Qualifications Framework is structured to facilitate learner entry, recognise learner achievement (PLAR), encourage lifelong learning and promote transfer and progression and articulation at all levels within the Framework.

5.2 Benchmarking

In its development, the Barbados National Qualifications Framework has been aligned and referenced against international, (TNQF, EQF); Regional (CARICOM), and Vocational (CANTA) frameworks of qualifications to ensure comparability and recognition of the awards. The awards that those frameworks contain will be able to be linked and compared with those included in the BNQF. This alignment will, it is expected, offer a degree of comparability and recognition to awards made by international bodies. These frameworks have been included to be used as a reference against the BNQF for comparability.

6. DEVELOPING THE LEARNING OUTCOMES

The first area of importance is the development of Learning Outcomes. Within the framework learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. This is usually defined in terms of terms of Knowledge (factual and/or theoretical), Skills (practical or cognitive), Autonomy and Responsibility (competence).

The development of learning outcomes is guided by a number of factors:

- The complexity of knowledge and understanding;
- The standard of cognitive skills;
- Key or transferable skills achieved;
- The expected responsibility of the learner;

- The autonomy or independence of the learner;
- The amount of guidance required by the learner.

The learning outcomes are used in describing level descriptors and are intended to integrate all sectors of the education and training system; academic, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and the professional aspects of learning, applicable to all learning contexts, (e.g. classroom, on-the-job, practical, blended etc.). The following are current examples of learning outcomes used in qualifications frameworks:

a. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

- Knowledge;
- Skills;
- Competence;
- Learning Outcomes.

b. CARICOM

- Knowledge and Understanding;
- Application and Practice;
- Communication, Numeracy and ICT;
- Life Skills;
- Autonomy and Working with others.

c. CANTA/TVET

- Range and performance of skills;
- Knowledge and Understanding of skills - Breadth, depth and complexity;
- Application of Skills – attitudinal competences, responsibility and autonomy.

d. The TRANS-NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK (TQF) (Commonwealth of Learning)

- Application of knowledge;
- Skills;
- Attitudes.

After consultations with key stakeholders, the following four (4) strands were recommended as learning outcomes for the BNQF:

- Knowledge and Understanding;
- Skills;
- Responsibility and Autonomy or Competence (Including Life Skills);
- Life Skills.

The Learning Outcomes are further addressed under Section IV which describes the characteristics of the levels in the BNQF.

SECTION II: LEVELS IN THE BARBADOS QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Following on from stakeholder meetings and consultations, the proposed Barbados Qualifications Framework has evolved into a framework with 8 qualification levels and 2 access levels, reflecting the current system of education and training in Barbados. The levels of the Framework are described by a set of BNQF Level descriptors designed to provide a general understanding of each BNQF level (Table 1). Other frameworks and their alignment with the BNQF are shown in subsequent pages Tables 2 - 5.

Levels	SECTORS			Lifelong Learning
	General Education	Technical & Vocational	Tertiary Education	
8		C/NVQ 5	Doctoral Degree	PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR)
7			Masters Degree	
6			Post Graduate Certificate & Diploma	
5		C/NVQ 4	Bachelors Degree	
4		C/NVQ 3	Associate Degree	
3	Certificate III		Diploma	
2	Certificate II	C/NVQ 2	Certificate	
1	Certificate I	C/NVQ 1	Certificate	
Access 2				
Access 1				

Table 1: The Barbados National Qualification Framework

Level	European Qualification Framework	Level	Barbados Qualifications Framework	Level	Trans National Qualifications Framework	Level	CARICOM Qualifications Framework
8	Doctoral Degree City & Guilds Senior Award Fellowship	8	Doctoral Degree	10	Doctoral Degree	10	Doctoral Degree
7	Masters Degree	7	Masters Degree	9	Masters Degree	9	Masters Degree
6	Bachelor Degree with Honours Professional	6	Post Graduate Diploma Post Graduate Certificate	8	Post Graduate Diploma Post Graduate Certificate Bachelor Degree With Honours	8	Post Graduate Diploma
5	Bachelor Degree	5	Bachelor Degree	7	Bachelor Degree Graduate Diploma Graduate Certificate	7	Bachelor Degree
4	Higher Diploma	4	Associate Degree	6	Advanced/Higher Diploma Associate Degree Foundation Degree	6	Associate Degree
		3	Diploma Advanced Certificate	5	Diploma	5	Diploma
3	Advanced Certificate	2	Certificate II	4	Advanced Certificate	4	Advanced Certificate
2	Junior Certificate	1	Certificate I	3	Certificate III	3	Certificate III
1	Lower Secondary		Access II	2	Certificate II	2	Certificate II
			Access I	1	Certificate I	1	Certificate I

Table 2: Comparison of levels in frameworks: EQF, BQF, TQF and CQF

CARICOM QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK		BARBADOS NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK		REGIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK	
10	Doctoral Degree	8	Doctoral Degree	5	Post Graduate Degrees & Professional Qualifications
9	Masters Degree	7	Masters Degree		
8	Post Graduate Diploma	6	Post Graduate Diploma Post Graduate Certificate		
7	Bachelor Degree	5	Bachelor Degree	4	Bachelor Degree CVQ Level 4
6	Associate Degree	4	Associate Degree	3	Associate Degree Diploma CVQ Level 3
5	Diploma	3	Diploma Advanced Certificate		
4	Advanced Certificate	2	Certificate 2	2	CVQ Level 2
3	Certificate 3	1	Certificate 1	1	CVQ Level 1
2	Certificate 2	Access 1			
1	Certificate 1	Access 2			

Table 3: Referencing the BQF against the CQF and the RVQF

LEVEL	BARBADOS QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK	LEVEL	REGIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
8	Doctoral Degree	5	Post Grad and Professional Certification C/NVQ Level 5
7	Masters Degree		
6	Post Graduate Diploma Post Graduate Certificate		
5	Bachelor Degree	4	Bachelor Degree CVQ Level 4
4	Associate Degree	3	CVQ Level 3
3	Diploma Advanced Certificate		
2	Certificate II	2	C/NVQ Level 2
1	Certificate I	1	C/NVQ Level 1
	Access II		
	Access I		

Table 4: Barbados Qualifications Framework and the Current Regional Vocational Qualification Framework

BNQF LEVEL	Main Stages of Education/Employment	GENERAL EDUCATION	TVET SECTOR	PROFESSIONAL & TERTIARY SECTORS
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional or post graduate education or employment; ▪ Higher Education; ▪ Advanced Skills Training; ▪ Entry to Professional graduate employment; ▪ Skilled worker; ▪ Entry to Higher Education; ▪ Completion of Secondary Education; ▪ Secondary Education; ▪ Initial entry into employment; ▪ Entry Level Skills; ▪ Lower Secondary. 		CVQ Level 5	Doctoral
7				Masters
6				Bachelor - Honours Degree Graduate Diploma
5			Bachelor Degree	
4			Associate Degree	
3		CAPE A' Levels	CVQ Level 3	
2		CSEC	CVQ Level 2	
1		CSEC	CVQ Level 1	
Access 2				
Access 1			CCSLC	

Table 5: Main stages of education / employment in relation to BNQF levels

N.B. Qualifications can be taken at any age in order to continue or return to education or training

SECTION III: DESCRIPTION OF QUALIFICATIONS IN THE BARBADOS QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Qualification descriptors are usually designed to be read as general statements of the typical achievement of learners who have been awarded a qualification on successful completion of a programme of learning. They are examples to encourage flexibility and the accurate assignment to a level.

Each qualification on the BNQF describes what a learner needs to know, or what they must be able to do. It is generally agreed that the achievement of learners can be recognised in a number of context and their knowledge and skills will be transferable between qualifications and education and training providers. The qualification titles will allow for comparability and easy understanding of qualifications as well as improved regional and international recognition of qualifications.

The qualifications in the BNQF consist of certificates, diplomas and degrees. These are further elaborated below:

1. THE CERTIFICATE

Certificates may be used in a wide range of contexts across all levels up to and including Level 3, and are often used to prepare candidates for both employment and further education and training. Certificates I and II have a range of between 1 – 29 credits. The Advanced Certificate has a range between 30-60 credits. Entry to Certificates 1 – II is open. Entry to the Advanced Certificate is normally from a Secondary Certificate or of a relevant qualification from at least Level 2. Advanced Certificates may be used in a wide range of context and are often used to prepare candidates for both employment and further education and training. Certificates awarded beyond Level 6 may be termed graduate or post graduate.

2. THE DIPLOMA

The Diploma is a qualification that commonly has a wider theoretical base than a certificate and more specialised, technical, professional or managerial competencies. Diplomas often prepare learners for self- directed application of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. These qualifications often build on prior qualifications or experience and recognise capacity for initiative and judgment across a broad range of educational and vocational areas, and in technical, professional and or managerial roles. Diplomas awarded at Level 3 may be termed “Advanced” and must have at least 30-60 credits contributing to the qualification at Level 3. Diplomas awarded beyond Level 5 may be termed “Graduate” or “Post Graduate”.

Two types of diplomas are recognised, namely:

- The Undergraduate Diploma (*Level 3 on the BNQF*);
- The Postgraduate Diploma (*Level 6 on the BNQF*).

a) The Undergraduate Diploma (Level 3 on the BNQF):

The Undergraduate Diploma is a post-secondary qualification, combining the academic with the vocational. It denotes the successful acquisition of knowledge and understandings and skills that are relevant within a specialised field of study

b) The Postgraduate Diploma (Level 6 on the BNQF)

This Diploma is a postgraduate qualification, denoting competence in a specialised field. The entry requirement to a post-graduate diploma is a relevant Bachelors degree or the equivalent.

3. THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE (LEVEL 4 ON THE BNQF)

An Associate Degree is a programme designed to recognise and facilitate student's successful progression to a Bachelor's degree or directly to employment. These degrees focus on learning within a work context, underpinned by both vocational and academic understanding, and enable learners to demonstrate learning outcomes that are explicitly relevant to employment and professional requirements. The Associate Degree is a post-secondary qualification awarded to learners who successfully complete a prescribed programme of study of at least two years duration (or the part time equivalent). The programme of study is similar to those offered in the first two years of a four-year Bachelors degree programme. The curriculum normally combines the academic and the vocational and the Associate Degree may normally be regarded as years 1 and 2 of a four-year Bachelors programme. The Associate Degree will have a minimum of 60 credits.

4. THE BACHELORS DEGREE (LEVEL 5 ON THE BNQF)

A Bachelors Degree is a systematic, research-based coherent introduction to the knowledge, ideas, principles, concepts, research methods and to the analytical and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject or subjects. A programme leading to this qualification usually involves major studies in which significant knowledge is available. Programme content is taken to significant depth and progressively developed to a high level, which can provide a basis for post-graduate study and professional careers. A Bachelors or first degree denotes completion of a University level programme of four years duration, beyond the CSEC, or 3 years beyond CAPE. Graduates of an Associate Degree may be admitted into year 3 of a Bachelors degree programme. A Bachelors Degree requires a minimum of 120 credits for the four-year programme, or 90 credits for the 3 year programme. A programme of study leading to a Bachelors Degree builds upon prior study, work or experience and is open to those who have met the specified entrance requirement.

5. THE MASTERS DEGREE (LEVEL 7 ON THE BNQF)

A Masters Degree is a post graduate qualification. It is normally designed to extend the principal subject or subjects of the qualifying degree or may build on relevant knowledge and skills derived from advanced occupational experience. A Masters Degree contains a significant element of supervised research, normally embodied in a (thesis??), dissertation or a substantial research paper. Learning outcomes at this level include specific professional or vocational skills undertaken by directed coursework and/or research. The Masters Degree has a range of between 35 – 45 credits and builds upon the undergraduate degree. The duration of the Masters Degree is normally a minimum of twelve (12) months, full time.

Training Providers of courses leading to Masters Degrees are responsible for establishing their own entry requirements, and admission as a candidate, is based on the evaluation of documentary evidence and the academic record of the applicant's ability to undertake post graduate study in a specialised field of enquiry or professional practice. The candidate must have attained through formal study, professional or other experience, a high order of knowledge about the principal subject (s) and have demonstrated interest or aptitude for scholarship.

6. THE DOCTORAL DEGREE (LEVEL 8 ON THE BNQF)

The Doctoral Degree recognises a substantial original contribution to knowledge in the form of new knowledge or significant and original adaptation, application and interpretation of existing knowledge. A Doctoral programme may be defined as a period of in-depth, post-graduate, academic, professional or vocational study and research beyond the Masters level and is at a significantly higher level than the Masters Degree. Candidates for a Doctoral programme are normally required to hold a Masters degree. A typical Doctoral programme would require the equivalent of a minimum of three years of full time work. Doctoral programmes include the Ph.D. (research), and are not usually credit-rated.

Typical Doctoral programmes and entry pathways are:

- The Research Doctorate, which is primarily achieved through supervised research, with entry from a research or part research Masters Degree, an M.Phil, or a Bachelor's with Honours degree (Upper Second or First Class Division);
- The Professional Doctorate which may be undertaken through varying combinations of coursework and research, with entry from a combined research and Masters Degree, a Bachelor with Honours Degree (First or Second Class, upper division) or equivalent, and requires significant professional practice either prior to or as part of the programme.

SECTION IV: DEVELOPING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BNQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS (Learning Outcomes)

1. LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS

The development of a hierarchy of levels that recognises all kinds of learning outcomes demands some theoretical or descriptive basis that is independent of current forms of qualifications and current education and training infrastructure. Most of the existing frameworks today have emerged from a consideration of what exists already in the qualifications systems of each country. In developing the characteristics for the level descriptions of the BNQF, key stakeholders were consulted to map the various qualifications which exist in Barbados.

Generally, two main characteristics of qualifications systems are commonly used to arrive at a series of levels. The first is the *hierarchy of qualifications* and the second is the nature of *infrastructure* in the education and training system. In developing the BNQF, the hierarchy of qualifications was used. In this approach, there is the possibility for diversity in the number of levels across national systems. Globally, the range of six (6) to 12 levels exists among current transnational and overarching NQFs. These NQFs usually accommodate sub systems of qualifications, for example in TVET or tertiary education that will have different numbers of levels.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BNQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Levels are traditionally the key structural elements on which many national qualification frameworks are built. Levels can be understood as representing a series of sequential steps (a developmental continuum), expressed in terms of a *range of generic outcomes*, against which typical qualifications can be positioned. Different approaches are taken by countries in determining the number of levels, the ways in which they are described, the span of their outcomes and the depth of levels.

Level Descriptors are generic statements that describe the characteristics and expected performance at each level of the Framework and are related to learning outcomes. Level Descriptors are useful reference points which:

- Support the design and development of qualifications and learning programmes at an appropriate BNQF Level;
- Allocate a BNQF Level to qualifications and learning programmes;
- Benchmark informal learning and other learning provision that has not been credit-rated;
- Support recruitment and workforce development;
- Benchmark skills and competence of individuals;
- Provide guidance and information on opportunities for learner progression;
- Support the recognition of prior learning.

Level descriptors tend to be comprehensive and attempt to indicate the full range of outcomes associated with a level. The BNQF level descriptors which have been proposed each have 3 characteristics (**Knowledge and Understanding, Skills, Autonomy and Responsibility**) and provide a reference point for determining the level of a qualification, learning programme module or unit of learning or for the recognition of prior learning. **They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements of required learning for individual qualifications.**

The BNQF Level Descriptors allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications and learning programmes achieved in different contexts. They apply to learning based on learning outcomes that is subject to reliable and valid methods of quality-assured assessment. In developing the BNQF, other frameworks were referenced (Table 6). The eight (8) levels of the BNQF will be described through learning outcomes based on the following three (3) characteristics which evolved after stakeholder consultations:

- Knowledge and Understanding;
- Skills;
- Autonomy and Responsibility and Life Skills.

LEARNING OUTCOMES	EUROPEAN QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK	CARICOM QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK	BARBADOS QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK
1	Knowledge	Knowledge and Understanding	Knowledge and Understanding
2	Skills	Application and Practice	Skills
3	Competences (autonomy and Responsibility)	Autonomy, Accountability, Working with others	Autonomy and Responsibility
4	-	Communication, Numeracy and Information Communication Technologies (ICTS)	
5	-	Life Skills	Life Skills

Table 6: Comparison of Learning Outcomes

The three (3) Strands in the Level Descriptors are elaborated in Table 7 on the following page.

Characteristic	Description
Knowledge and Understanding (Mainly subject-based)	<p>The knowledge and understanding which underpins the achievement of skills and competence varies according to the complexity and breadth of learning. BNQF Levels begin with a basic knowledge of facts and progress to a point where learners are required to reflect on that body of knowledge and reason why it is correct or incorrect, and then adapt or develop new knowledge accordingly</p>
Skills (applied use of knowledge and understanding)	<p>Competent practice and the development and use of skills come through the application of knowledge and understanding. This involves being able to contextualise knowledge to apply it in a variety of different situations and practices.</p> <p>BNQF levels progress from relating knowledge of a few simple everyday contexts to using a range of complex skills, techniques and practices. Learners demonstrate originality and creativity in the development and application of new knowledge and understanding.</p>
Autonomy Responsibility and Life Skills	<p>The nature of working relationships, levels of responsibility for self and others and managing change, the ways in which individuals work, and the impact if this on their job role and other individuals. BNQF Levels progress from working alone on simple and routine tasks under direct supervision, to becoming increasingly autonomous and accountable within a work role, becoming either more independent or more focused on management and leadership, becoming more self-critical and being able to reflect on ethical and professional issues.</p> <p>The Life Skills' are defined as psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They are normally loosely grouped into three broad categories: cognitive skills for analysing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and inter-personal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others.</p>

Table 7: Level Characteristics

Key competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context and which every individual needs for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. These key competences, essential for lifelong learning, must be an integral part of the BNQF.

The key Life Skills that have been identified and are considered are described as follows:

- **Communication in English:** The ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written format, and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in the full range of societal and cultural contexts – education and training, work, home and leisure;
- **Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology:** Mathematical competence refers to the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking to solve a range of problems in everyday situations and includes mastery of numeracy, as well as a willingness to use mathematical modes of thought and presentation:

- **Scientific competence** refers to the ability to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to explain the natural world in order to identify and question and draw evidence-based conclusions;
- **Competence in technology** involves the application of that knowledge and methodology in response to perceived human needs or wants.
- **Digital competence:** The confident and critical use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) for work, leisure and communication;
- **Learning to learn:** The ability for individuals to organise their own learning through being aware of their own learning processes or needs. It means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance;
- **Social and civic competences:** All forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies to resolve conflict where necessary. It is based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation;
- **Entrepreneurship:** Embodies methods for thinking, acting, identifying opportunities, and approaching problems that enables people to manage change, adjust to new conditions, and to take control of actualising personal goals and aspirations. It is also a mechanism for developing additional skill sets such as creative thinking, leadership, decision-making, social networking, which taken together, enable individuals to distinguish themselves in a variety of traditional and non-traditional work and life paths. An entrepreneur is inspired and capable of creating opportunities for oneself;
- **A Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship:** The ability to turn ideas into actions. It involves creativity, innovation and risk taking as well as planning and management of projects in order to achieve objectives. It is a foundation needed for establishing social and commercial activities;
- **Cultural awareness and expression:** The appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, arts, literature, and the visual arts.

All these competences are considered equally important because they are all essential for achieving a knowledge-based society. There is some amount of overlap between the various competences as more than one is often used concurrently in facing the challenges of everyday life at home, during leisure and at the workplace. It is important for each of these key competences to be incorporated in the different levels of the Barbados National Qualifications Framework. This will ensure a skilled and competent workforce as well as responsible citizens in Barbados.

All characteristics may not be relevant for some qualifications or learning programmes and therefore should not be regarded as a “mandatory”. There is no expectation that learning outcomes in qualifications and learning programmes will cover all of the characteristics of a BNQF Level as described in the Level Descriptors.

3. LEARNING OUTCOMES AND COMPETENCES

Learning outcomes represent one of the essential building blocks for transparency within the education and training system and the qualifications therein. Learning outcomes have been defined as “*statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a period of learning.*” They are important for the understanding of qualifications in society, for example by learners and employers and can be applied in several other contexts:

- In training institutions for course units/modules and programmes of study;
- Nationally for qualifications, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance systems;
- Internationally for purposes of wider recognition and transparency.

The appropriate BNQF Level of a qualification or learning programme is based on the learning outcomes rather than directly related to the size of the qualification or learning programme, or the length of study time.

Each BNQF level described in the Level Descriptors, increases in demand by changes to factors such as complexity, depth of knowledge and the learner's autonomy in demonstrating achievement, with Level 1 being the least demanding and Level 8 the most demanding.

Over a lifetime, Barbadian and other individuals will be able to move between and across BNQF levels as they undertake new learning and acquire new skills for particular contexts and circumstances. This might be from higher to lower BNQF Levels, from lower to higher BNQF Levels or across the same BNQF levels. It should also not be assumed that all learners undertaking new studies would start at Level 1 in the Framework.

CARICOM has recommended an outcomes-based (standards-based) approach to education and training. This has implications for inputs and outcomes of the education and training system in Barbados including qualifications such as the Barbados National Vocational Qualifications (BNVQ), academic qualifications, curriculum design, teaching, learning, assessment and the need to quality assure all components.

Table 8 which follows describes the generic components of each of the characteristics of the BNQF Level Descriptors.

LEVEL	KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING	SKILLS	AUTONOMY, RESPONSIBILITY AND LIFE SKILLS
Access 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elementary numeracy and literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Repetitive and routine skills not geared towards an occupation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Directly supervised, no responsibility for work of others ▪ Is self-aware and recognises non-verbal signals of emotional states
Access 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Functional literacy and numeracy ▪ Ability to learn new skills and knowledge in a supervised environment and to carry out routine work under direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carries out processes that are repetitive and predictable, established and familiar and are routine in nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carries out directed activity under close supervision, with no responsibility for the work of others ▪ Communicates the decision to say no effectively ▪ Makes simple choices with guidance ▪ Displays positive behaviour
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited range of applied knowledge and basic comprehension to roles and tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Performance of relatively simple work ▪ Clear choice of routine and simple tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Works under direct supervision with regular checking ▪ Differentiates between and among options ▪ Uses communication technology in a socially appropriate manner ▪ Cooperates and relates positively with others ▪ Exercises limited degree of discretion and judgment about possible actions ▪ Makes and promotes healthy lifestyle choices
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas ▪ Make comparisons ▪ Interpret available information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Choose from a range of procedures performed in a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine ▪ Moderate use of practical and cognitive skills ▪ Use a range of procedures and apply known solutions to a variety of problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertakes directed activity with a degree of autonomy ▪ Achieves outcomes within time constraints ▪ Coordinates and collaborate positively with others ▪ Some sense of responsibility for shaping one's life ▪ Expresses self effectively, verbally and non-verbally

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrates respect and tolerance when interacting with other ▪ Respect self, persons in authority and the environment
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apply knowledge in a range of complex activities, demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories ▪ Access and evaluate information independently ▪ Analyse information and make reasoned judgments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operate in a variety of familiar and unfamiliar contexts using a range of technical or learning skills ▪ Select from a considerable choice of procedures ▪ Capacity to use a variety of instruments and techniques in various contexts ▪ Employ range of responses to well defined but often unfamiliar or unpredictable problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engages in self-directed activity with guidance, limited evaluation ▪ Responsibility for output ▪ Limited responsibility for quality and quantity of the output of others ▪ Anticipates consequences as related to choices and problems ▪ Makes morally appropriate choices and can justify and defend choices ▪ Can identify emotional states of others
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge and understanding of underlying principles and concepts associated with areas of studies and ability to interpret within their context ▪ Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of knowledge ▪ Generate a range of responses, a limited number of which are innovative, to well defined, but often unfamiliar problems ▪ Evaluate information, using it to plan and develop investigative strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employ a range of specialised skills ▪ Operate in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities ▪ Comprehensive range of skills vocationally specific or generally supervisory in nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primarily autonomous and self-directed work with a limited amount of directive activity ▪ Anticipates problems and initiates preventative action ▪ Operates independently within broad general guidelines or functions ▪ Accountability and responsibility for personal outcomes and for the nature and quantity of outputs ▪ Assumes design, management and administrative responsibilities within a specific discipline or area of expertise
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generate ideas through the analysis of information and concepts at an abstract level ▪ Formulate appropriate responses to resolve well defined and abstract problems ▪ Analyse, reformat and evaluate a wide range of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of technical, professional or management functions ▪ Command wide ranging specialised technical, creative and/or conceptual skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsibility and accountability within broad parameters for determining and achieving personal and or group outcomes ▪ Practices evidence-based decision making ▪ Exercises appropriate judgment in planning, design, technical and or supervisory functions related to products,

			<p>services and operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Makes decisions that reflect sensitivity to issues of diversity ▪ Analyses decisions made to inform future decisions ▪ Creates an environment conducive to free interaction and expression
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critically reviews, consolidates and extends a systematic and coherent body of knowledge ▪ Critical analysis, efficient and effective retrieval and processing of general information ▪ Utilises research skills ▪ Critically evaluates new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilise highly specialised technical or scholastic skills across an area of study ▪ Transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of situations ▪ Exercise appropriate judgment in a number of planning, design technical and or management functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accountable for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes ▪ Begins to lead multiple complex and diverse groups ▪ Adaptability, flexibility and ability to cope with change and ability to exercise initiative and solve problems ▪ Makes decisions using experience and empirical data. ▪ Uses emotional awareness to inform decisions in multicultural situations ▪ Assign responsibilities and tasks based on decisions made ▪ Engages in stress reducing activity
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Displays mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge ▪ Applies knowledge, understanding and problem solving abilities in new and unfamiliar contexts ▪ Ability to retrieve, process, analyse, synthesise and evaluate qualitative and quantitative data ▪ Communicates results of research to peers ▪ Integrate knowledge handle complexity and formulate judgments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate expertise in highly specialised and advanced technical, professional and or research skills ▪ Conduct research or advanced technical or professional activity using and modifying advanced skills and tools ▪ Design and apply appropriate research methodologies ▪ Develop new skills to a high level including new and emerging techniques ▪ Present and communicate academic or professional work effectively to a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capable of self-directed study and ability to work independently ▪ Accountability in related decision making including supervision of teams ▪ Takes significant responsibility for the work of other professional staff, lead and initiate activity ▪ Perform a wide variety of unpredictable and advanced professional contexts ▪ Develops creative solutions and original responses to solve problems and issues ▪ Deals with very complex and or new issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent

		wide range of audiences	data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Makes decisions that will impact organisations and others and uses knowledge of relevant laws and conventions, experience and related empirical data.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discovery and development of new knowledge ▪ Evaluates and responds to abstract problems that expand and redefine existing knowledge ▪ Makes a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of enquiry ▪ Communicate results of research to peers and engage in critical dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrate specialist and transferable skills required for managing ▪ Develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and or materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-directed development and mastery of a range of knowledge, skills and attitude ▪ Initiate monitor and evaluate change management ▪ Develop organisational structures, initiates change ▪ Leads and originates complex social processes ▪ Accountability in related decision-making including and supervision ▪ Responsibility and accountability for all aspects of the work of others ▪ Deals with very complex and or new issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data

Table 8: Characteristics of the Level Descriptors in the BNQF

SECTION V: DETERMINATION OF CREDIT VALUES IN THE FRAMEWORK

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2011 – 2016 Barbados Human Resource Strategy has recommended that the design of the National Framework of Qualifications should facilitate the development of a national approach to credit accumulation and transfer, based on units of learning. This approach will open up the Framework to learners as it will enable them to accumulate credit, including credit for prior and experiential learning, towards the achievement of awards. The general purpose of credit is to recognise learning achievements which have value in themselves and which may be used to gain an award or qualification.

The principles and guidelines are intended to guide the BAC in developing its credit system to complement the Barbados National Qualifications Framework. It is recognised that the overall aim is ***to establish a common currency of credit in the education and training system*** so that it can provide a basis for the development of credit in the framework.

The approach is also based on the need to establish zones of mutual trust for credit to operate within and between institutions at all levels. This takes time to establish and the Framework is expected to play a significant role in building this trust.

2. CREDIT POINTS OR VALUES

Credit points or values allocated to qualifications and learning programmes in a framework give learners, employers and training providers/institutions, a means of describing and comparing the amount of learning that has been achieved, or is required to complete a qualification or learning programme at a given level in the Framework. Allocating credits is a way of valuing, measuring, describing and comparing learning within and across the Framework. Credits are used to quantify the volume of learning based on the achievement of learning outcomes and their associated workload.

Credits support flexibility within education systems and if properly used and administered, link diverse forms and types of education. They provide an additional dimension and an added value, to further improve the mobility of learners, candidates and programmes of learning through recognition and transparency of competence.

3. AGREEING ON THE UNIT OF CREDIT

The assignment of credits is intended to give an indication of the volume of learning required by a programme. It is usually expressed as a numerical value linked to notional learning time, although the precise definition of notional learning time varies from country to country and from system to system. Many credit systems work on the basis that one credit point represents the outcomes of learning achieved through a notional 10 hours of learning. Others assign one credit hour representing one hour of contact time each week for one semester (e.g. in the USA). One credit hour, or one credit: being equal to a minimum of 15 hours of teaching or lecture time. **Through consultations and in agreement with stakeholders, the Barbados National Qualification will use a total of 15 hours per credit.**

Notional learning time includes all learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes, including, for example:

- Formal learning (classes, training sessions, structured coaching, seminars and tutorials, etc.);
- Non-formal learning (community groups, community-based workshops, etc.); practical work and practice to gain and refine skills and knowledge (in the workplace, on-the-job, experiential learning, laboratories, workshops, etc.; necessary private study, including information retrieval, preparation, revision, etc.);
- All forms of assessment

It is important to note that none of this relates to the time taken by any individual learner and that the credit value of a programme cannot be increased or decreased if a learner takes more or less time to achieve the outcomes. This is particularly important in the context of work-based learning.

4. A CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The BNQF has been designed as a Credit and Qualifications Framework. As such, it will allow stakeholders to describe and compare the volume of learning undertaken in completing courses and programmes. At present, the credit value applied to awards within the BNQF is not calculated using a standard approach; for example, credits range between 3 and 29 for entry level qualifications (Level 1) on the framework. A credit system allows for the identification of outcomes of a programme of learning (this will be done by the Credit Assessment and Transfer Committee of the Barbados Accreditation Council) and to place these outcomes at a level, giving them a weighting or numerical value which can be applied to another programme.

As the framework should encourage articulation, lifelong learning and facilitate the movement of labour throughout the CARICOM Region, the BNQF has been designed and developed to facilitate the accumulation and transfer of credit.

The number of credit points is worked out on the basis of the number of notional learning hours that an “average” or “typical” learner at a specified BNQF Level might expect to achieve the learning outcomes, inclusive of the assessment. By using credit as a measure, the BNQF is able to recognise any size of qualification or learning programme, provided that it meets the required criteria and that it takes a minimum of a notional 15 hours or more to achieve the learning outcomes.

At the national level, the Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC) will provide the broad underlying principles to be followed by training providers even though individual credit schemes may already exist at older institutions which already have established procedures and rules of progression for awarding credits.

5. CREDIT ACCUMULATION

Credit accumulation usually takes place within an institution or a sub-system (such as the Tertiary Sector). Thus, there may be a system of credit accumulation within an institution or one of its faculties or departments. This means that a credit gained within a particular programme is allowed to count towards a different programme within faculties and departments of that institution. Credit accumulation also occurs where there is a sub-system within the BNQF such as the TVET sub-sector. The TVET Council of Barbados for example, has responsibility for the award of CVQs which will be assigned credits. Credits gained towards a particular CVQ in one training institution can then be used towards the completion of a CVQ in another training institution once a credit scheme is in place for the qualifications.

Credit accumulation is usually automatic, but should be recorded by the training provider/institution. Credit transfer also takes place between institutions and sub-systems, for example from one university/college to another, or between related professional qualifications. The transfer of credit in this instance is determined by negotiation or agreement (e.g. when credits are applied through non-formal or experiential learning (see PLAR) and credit which is accumulated within one sub-system will have to be transferred to the other subsystem.

6. THE CREDIT RATING PROCESS

In establishing the credit rating process, it is necessary to agree on what learning time is required to complete a programme of outcomes. In some cases, where the programme is well established, it will be possible to do this by reference to experience; in others it will be done by making comparisons with well-established and previously credit-rated programmes; but in some cases the assignment of credit has to be done from the beginning.

A Credit Assignment system is generally developed during the design phase of the framework and properly done ensures that the general terms in which the framework is described are understandable to all stakeholders in the framework. The process of frequent consultations ensures that details of the framework are clear to all education and training providers that will seek and give recognition for the outcomes of learning. The BNQF has a common set of levels, with descriptors, so that all outcomes can be allocated to a level and these descriptors will be embedded in outcome terms.

There is an agreed basis for the allocation of credit assigned to the outcomes of learning (1 credit = 15 hours of learning). However, this does not guarantee that all learning will be fully recognised in all circumstances. Guidance will be provided by the BAC, governed by policies and operationised through the **Credit Accumulation and Transfer Committee** (CAT) which will be established. This is critical to the process of credit assignment which should be transparent to stakeholders and understood by all. Communication should be clear, otherwise, learners and the various social partners may misunderstand leading to misconceptions and distrust about the process.

Qualification descriptors (previously discussed) summarise the general expectations of outcomes of learning associated with each of the main educational qualifications. Thus, there is a close link between credit and credit level descriptors and qualifications and their descriptors.

Guideline Details	
1	BNQF Credit points are a measure of appropriate and defined learning outcomes at a specified BNQF Level.
2	One BNQF Credit point equates to the learning outcomes achieved through a notional 15 hours of learning
3	Notional learning hours refers to the time judged to be required by the average/typical learner at a particular BNQF Level to achieve defined learning outcomes. It includes all learning activities relevant to the achievement of the outcomes, including undertaking and completion of assessment tasks.
4	The minimum number of BNQF Credit Points is one (1). Only full BNQF Credit points can be awarded. Fractions are not permissible.
5	BNQF Credit Points are always allocated to a specified BNQF Level normally determined by the original design content of a unit of learning.
6	The number of BNQF Credit Points allocated to a unit of learning or module, is independent of the level of importance that might be placed on the unit in a wider programme.
7	The number of BNQF Credit Points awarded is independent of the standard at which the outcomes are achieved.
8	BNQF Credit Points are general in that they define a volume at a level of outcome within the BNQF. They become specific when related to transfer to a particular programme or to an individual's claim for credit towards a particular programme.
9	BNQF Credit points are transferrable.

Table 9: BNQF Guidelines for Credit Rating

7. CREDITS IN THE BNQF

7.1 The Certificate

Certificates can be awarded at all levels within the Framework and range from 1-30 credits. The Certificate may be assessed by institutions for acceptance to another level, or by the BAC for the determination of equivalencies.

7.2 The Diploma (Levels 3 and 6 on the BNQF)

Diploma courses/programmes tend to be professional or vocational in nature, offering training in very specialised fields of study. Diplomas are normally terminal qualifications. However, they may be assessed by institutions for acceptance to another level, or by the BAC for the determination of equivalencies. Two types of diplomas are recognised, namely:

- The Undergraduate Diploma (*Level 3 on the BNQF*);
- The Postgraduate Diploma (*Level 6 on the BNQF*).

b) The Undergraduate Diploma (Level 3 on the BNQF)

The Undergraduate Diploma is a post-secondary qualification, combining the academic with the vocational. It denotes the successful acquisition of knowledge and understandings and skills that are relevant within a specialised field of study and has a minimum of 30 credits.

c) The Postgraduate Diploma (Level 6 on the BNQF)

The Postgraduate Diploma is normally one (1) year in duration with a minimum of thirty (30) credits.

7.3 The Associate Degree (Level 4 on the BNQF)

The programme of study for the Associate Degree usually consists of a minimum of sixty (60) credits, and the program of study is similar to those offered in the first two years of a four-year Bachelors degree programme.

7.4 The Bachelors' Degree (Level 5 on the BNQF)

The Bachelors Degree is ascribed a credit range of between 90 – 120 Credits.

7.5 The Masters Degree (Level 7 on the BNQF)

The Masters Degree is a post graduate qualification. The duration of the Masters Degree is normally a minimum of twelve (12) months, full time, and the qualification is ascribed a range of between 35 – 45 credits.

7.6 The Doctoral Degree (Level 8 on the BNQF)

A Doctoral programme may be defined as a period of in-depth, post-graduate, academic, professional or vocational study and research beyond the Masters level. Candidates for a Doctoral programme are normally required to hold a Masters degree. A typical Doctoral programme would be expected to require the equivalent of a minimum of three years of full time work. Doctoral programmes are not usually credit rated.

LEVEL	TITLE	CREDIT RANGE
8	Doctoral	Not Credit Rated
7	Masters	35 – 45
6	Post Graduate Diploma Post Graduate Certificate	Minimum 30 16 - 29
5	Bachelors	90 - 120
4	Associate Degree	Minimum 60
3	Diploma Advanced Certificate	Minimum 30 16 -30
2	Certificate Level II	16 – 30
1	Certificate Level 1	1 – 15

Table 10: Credit Scheme per Qualification Level
Barbados National Qualification Framework

Notes:

1 credit = 15 Hours

Certificates can be issued at any level in the Framework. The number of credits will depend on the level of complexity of the learning outcomes.

Awards can be issued at any level in the Framework. This is the smallest unit of achievement with a credit range of 1 – 10.

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