

GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT, MAINTENANCE AND DISSEMINATION OF OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS

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ACRONYMS

ASK	National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers) Organisations of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan
AzQF	National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning in the Republic of Azerbaijan
MLSPP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan
OS	occupational standard
SCSD	sector committee for skills development
SEQ	sector experts' group
VET	vocational education and training
WG	working group

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Azerbaijan considers human resources development to be one of the main priorities for socio-economic development. For this reason, the Government started development and implementation of occupational standards.

Occupational standards are accepted as a common language between the worlds of work and the world of learning. They are an essential link between workplace requirements and human capital development (i.e. education and training programs) that affect individual citizens throughout their life span. They can make a major contribution to the design of high-quality education and training programs by ensuring they are directly linked to the needs of the workplace and overall economy. Occupational standards together with qualification standards may provide the guarantee for a reliable certification of the labour force and recognising competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. They are important prerequisites for tackling skills mismatch that exists in the labour market – bringing education and training systems closer to demands of employers.

Occupational standards across the world differ in their format and presentation as they are developed in different contexts with different local interests. Despite the various formats of occupational standards, they all contain relevant information about good performance in work situations. With other words occupational standards refer to competences – in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes – that a person should have for performing at expected level of quality in one occupation. And, in general terms, they also refer to the activities that a competent worker should perform in his/her day-to-day work duties.

By acknowledging the role of occupational standards in human resources and labour market development, policy makers have already incorporated them into several policy documents. Their development was first initiated by National Employment Strategy for 2006-2015, State Program for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development and respective Implementation Plans. Occupational standards are also mentioned in national development strategies – strategic roadmaps for priority sectors approved by the President in December 2016 and the Action Plan for implementation of the Order № 2199 dated July 13, 2016 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On additional measures for increasing efficiency of the business climate in the Republic of Azerbaijan and improving the status of the country in international rankings” and the new Employment Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2019-2030 approved by a Presidential Decree on October 30, 2018.

The occupational standards development process started within projects funded by donor organisations and continues under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population. Creating legislative and regulatory framework for occupational standards becomes more and more important with urgent requirements of the labour market in improving the quality of workforce and increasing its competitiveness. This is mainly required for the following reasons:

- Structuring the process of studying employers’ skills needs by occupations;
- Defining roles and functions of stakeholders in the development and use of professional standards;
- Proper organization of staff training according to the requirements of modern labour market (basing training programs and assessment of occupational competences on occupational standards);
- Establishing a base for the recognition system of skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning;
- Raising labour productivity and production of highly competitive products through better match of demand and supply of workforce in the labour market.

Legislative basis for development of occupational standards drafted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population is being discussed at the level of the Cabinet of Ministers. Upon approval, it will regulate development of occupational and qualification standards through social partnership and functioning of Sector Committees for Skills Development.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of these guidelines is to define general principles for the development, maintenance and dissemination of occupational standards. It identifies roles and functions of all the stakeholders and guides them throughout the process.

REGULATING OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS

According to the Law on Employment (No: 1196-VQ) approved by Presidential Decree on 29 July 2018, occupational standard is a set of minimum requirements identified by a respective authority (the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population) for content of job and work conditions to be fulfilled by an employee in a specific occupation.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population coordinates the processes of development, revision, approval, registration and dissemination of occupational standards.

STAKEHOLDERS AND GENERAL FUNCTIONS

Stakeholders closely associated with the activities in the area of development, maintenance and dissemination of occupational standards are the followings:

- State authorities, ministries, their central or regional (local) agencies;
- Education and training providers;
- Employers and their associations;
- Professional associations;
- Employees of enterprises and trade unions;
- Researchers and experts.

The development of occupational standards needs to be carried out through a consultative process among all the stakeholders. Stakeholders collaborate within sector committees for skills development (SCSD) established by types of economic activity. These committees involve the following institutions/organisations:

- One representative from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan (with a right to vote);
- One representative from the State Labour Inspection Service under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- One representative from the State Employment Service under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- One representative from the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (with a right to vote);
- One representative from the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan (with a right to vote);
- One representative from the State Agency for Vocational Education under the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- One representative from each line ministry / state agency in the field (with a right to vote);
- One representative from the State Committee for Statistics of the Republic of Azerbaijan (with a right to vote);
- One representative from a higher education institution in the sector;
- One representative from the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers) Organizations of Azerbaijan Republic (with a right to vote);

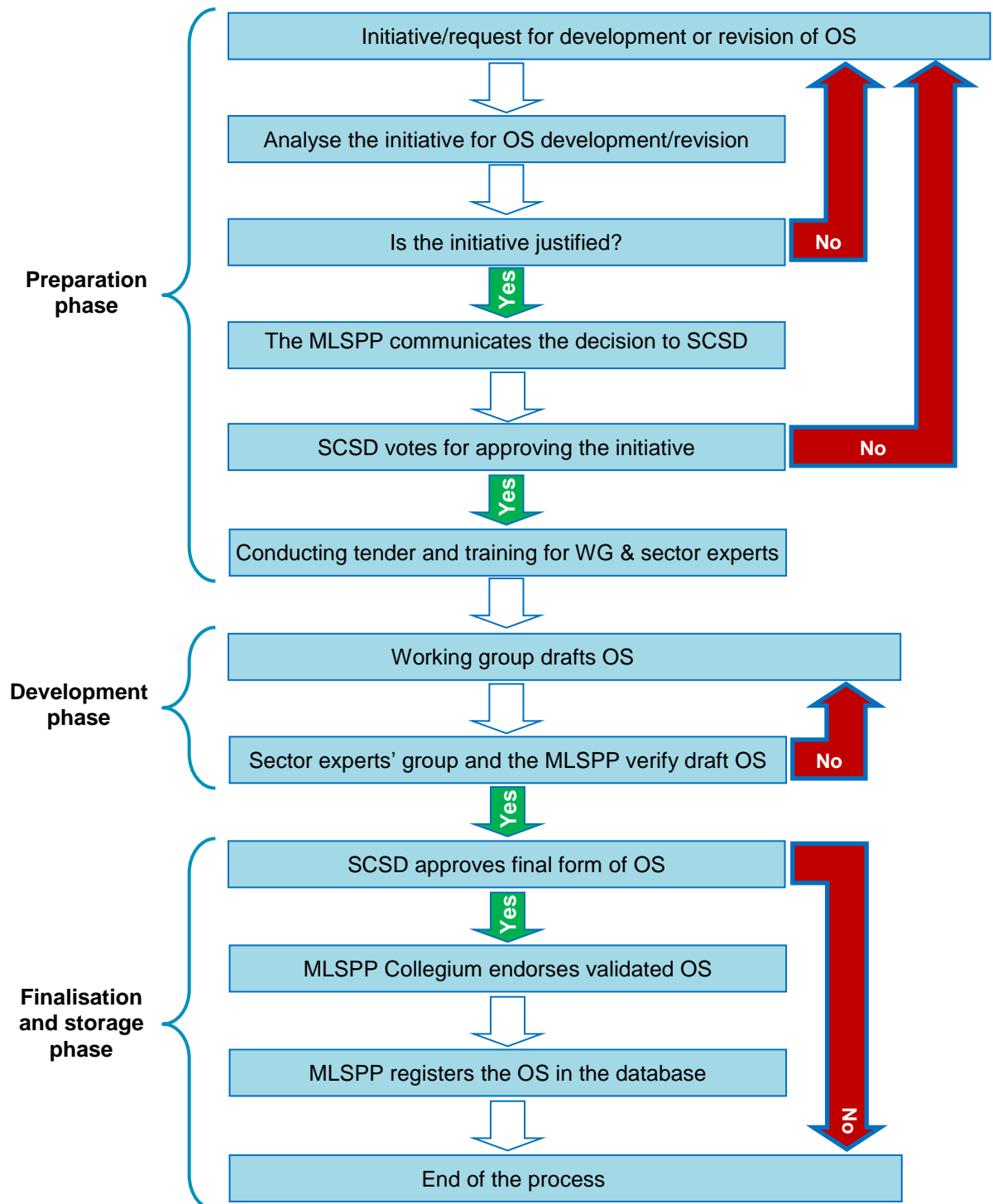
- One representative from Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation (with a right to vote);
- One representative from each professional association in the sector (associations are identified by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population);
- One representative from each of three trend-setting companies in the sector (companies are identified by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population).

Representatives of education and training providers – initial vocational, secondary specialized and higher education institutions – may be invited to meetings of SCSDs as observers.

As the enterprises are the main buyer and user of the workforce at the labour market, they possess thorough understanding about requirements for human resources. The world of work is expected to define the workplace requirements in terms of duties, tasks and competences.

SCHEME OF DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS

Occupational standards are drafted/ revised through the steps reflected in the scheme given below:



STAGES OF PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS

The process of development and revision of occupational standards consists of the following activities:

Steps	Actions	Who does what
1	Initiative for development or revision of an occupational standard	<p>Any legal entity, individual entrepreneur, including government institutions, businesses, education and training providers, associations, civil society organizations may apply to the MLSPP with an initiative for development or revision of occupational standards. Such an application is realised by filling in a respective form on the register of occupational and qualification standards (electronic information system) of the MLSPP. The application is signed electronically with encrypted E-signature or ASAN-signature. Information is placed on the register by a representative of a government institution, general manager, director of an enterprise or organisation, or his/her authorised representative.</p> <p>The initiator shows the suggested occupation(s) for development or revision of standards, respective coding in the National Employment Classification, type(s) of economic activity the occupation(s) belong(s) to and reasons for development (revision) of occupational standard(s). Necessary documentation can be attached to the application form.</p> <p>By submission of a request for development or revision of occupational standards, the initiator agrees to free participation in the development/review process. The initiator may draft an occupational standard(s) in line with the existing legislation and regulations for validation of sector committee(s) and endorsement by the MLSPP.</p>
2	Analyse the initiative for OS development/revision	<p>The MLSPP analyses the initiative/request for development or revision of OS(s) to make a decision on fulfilling or rejecting implementation of such a request. It considers evidences provided by the initiator, labour market needs, government's policies, state strategies, the existing legislation, public demands (investment plans) and other relevant information for making a decision. The initiator is contacted if any clarification and additional information is needed.</p> <p>The MLSPP informs within one month of the receipt of the online request, the initiator about its decision and the next steps.</p> <p>If the request is approved, the MLSPP in consultation with the sector committee(s) for skills development and other relevant stakeholders identifies to which type(s) of economic activity the occupation belongs to and its respective level in the National Qualifications Framework (AzQF) and refers the request to respective committee(s).</p> <p>The MLSPP can also be an initiator of development/revision of occupational standard(s).</p>
3	The MLSPP communicates the decision on	<p>The MLSPP addresses an offer for development or revision of OS(s) to respective SCSD(s). This is done by the MLSPP's</p>

Steps	Actions	Who does what
	development or revision of OS(s) to SCSD(s)	<p>own initiative, or by making a decision of approving a request of any legal entity.</p> <p>The MLSPP sends the list of profiles for development/revision of occupational standards to respective SCSD together with their coding in the National Employment Classification and AzQF level. Any available justification or documentation is attached to the offer.</p> <p>The MLSPP plans quarterly meetings of SCSDs. Irregular meetings can be held by a request of any public authority, the chairman of the SCSD or at least one-third of all members.</p> <p>The Ministry organises information or training sessions whenever required, for SCSD members on topics related to development, status and use of occupational standards and other related issues.</p>
4	SCSD votes for approving the initiative	<p>SCSD reviews the information provided in the light of labour market demands and development priorities in the sector and votes for approving the list of profiles for development/revision of occupational standards.</p> <p>SCSDs involve representatives of public authorities, businesses and their associations, education and training providers, trade unions and professional associations. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Education, line ministries and state agencies (committees), National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers) Organisations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation and the State Statistical Committee – each has a right to vote. The public authorities represent interests of agencies/services under their auspices. The Trade Unions Confederation represents interests of sector trade unions and ASK – interests of employers and their unions.</p> <p>Chairman of SCSD is elected for one year on a rotational basis among members with voting rights by a simple majority of votes.</p> <p>A representative of initiator of OS development/revision is invited to SCSD meetings. Education and training providers – universities, colleges and VET institutions, as well as researchers and experts are also consulted in SCSDs.</p> <p>The MLSPP delivers the agenda of the meeting, the list of issues to be discussed and related documents to the chairman and all members of the SCSD at least fifteen days prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Voting is valid if at least half of members with voting rights are present. In case of equality of votes, the chairman has a casting vote.</p> <p>Results of voting are documented in meeting minutes, which is signed by the chairman and the secretary. The secretary is a representative of the MLSPP.</p> <p>In case a representative of any member organisation / institution of the SCSD does not participate in meetings three</p>

Steps	Actions	Who does what
		times in a row, the MLSPP asks the respective institution / organisation for a replacement.
5	Conducting tender and training for working groups and sector experts	<p>The MLSPP places the list of profiles for development or revision of OSs on the register of occupational and qualification standards within three working days upon receipt of a positive feedback from the SCSD(s). A unique identification number is assigned to an occupational standard; stages of development or revision of the OS can be tracked by this number.</p> <p>The Ministry conducts tender or quotation to contract practitioners and other individual experts or companies in line with state procurement legislation and regulations. The MLSPP prepares service contracts for development, revision and examination of occupational standards to be concluded with specialists and companies/organisations.</p> <p>Two groups of experts (or companies) are contracted – one for drafting and validations occupational standards (working group), the other for reviewing and examination/verification of developed standards (sector experts’ group). Working group (WG) includes up to three highly qualified experts with at least three years of experience in the respective field. Expert group (SEG) consists of two highly qualified experts with at least five years of experience in the field. Both WG and SEG members can be involved by individual contracts, or by contracts to be signed with their companies. Participation of the same people in both WG and SEG formed for development of any OS is not allowed.</p> <p>Occupational standards can be developed or revised on a voluntary basis or through alternative funding by endorsement of the MLSPP.</p> <p>The MLSPP devises the OS development plan (schedule) and instructs the WG on writing OS. It trains and guides the WG and SEG members on regulations, tools and mechanisms for development/revision and validation of occupational standards, including main requirements of the Labour Code and the Employment Law, the “Regulations for development, revision, approval and registration of occupational and qualification standards”, “Regulations on establishment and Approval of the statute for SCSDs” and the approved template of the OS. The Ministry also explains the concepts used in OS, methods of analysing the content of occupation in light of OS content requirements, format and process quality criteria and gives its recommendations on selection of the recognized and most advanced enterprises in the particular field (trend-setting enterprises) for validation of standards.</p>
6	Working group drafts OS	<p>Working group selects relevant sources of information, reviews existing resources and drafts OS in line with the requirements of the existing regulations and the available template, as well as instructions presented by the MLSPP. Criteria listed under the following Step are taken into account in the drafting process. For future orientation of occupational standards, they are taken from or validated by trend-setting enterprises working in the field. The standards drafted and</p>

Steps	Actions	Who does what
		<p>validated by the WG are submitted to the MLSPP for verification.</p> <p>The MLSPP places draft occupational standards into the register for collecting additional views.</p> <p>OSs can be drafted by a company / organisation / institution on a voluntary basis in line with the existing regulations and templates.</p>
7	Sector experts' group and the MLSPP verify draft OS	<p>The MLSPP examines the standards received from developers – the WG or a (volunteer) company / organisation / institution – for format quality and process quality.</p> <p>The following criteria are considered for examination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OS is consistent with the requirements of normative and legal acts, including “Regulations for development, revision, approval and registration of occupational and qualification standards”; • OS is based on job analysis consisting of stages like research on the occupational activities, collection and evaluation of the information. Job analysis serves for identifying duties, tasks and competences for successful functioning in a certain occupation and is conducted in several ways: studying local and international documents, group or individual discussions with specialists working in trend-setting companies, or their managers; • OS is prepared through a participatory approach and opinions and contribution of the relevant parties (master-practitioners, line managers and/or human resource staff) are taken; • All components of the OS are formulated in accordance with their definitions; • OS covers general phases of any job – planning, acting, monitoring and reviewing, reporting; • OS covers and includes competences related to the occupational health and safety, environment and quality regarding the professional field; • OS includes the ability to work and communicate with others; • OS is written as to be understood by the users; • OS does not contain any explicit or secret discrimination factor. <p>The MLSPP may ask the WG for reviewing and modifying the OSs if necessary. If the Ministry considers the OSs suitable, it submits them to the SEG for verification of content and structure.</p> <p>The SEG assigned for verification checks if the draft OS addresses comprehensively the content of the occupation in question and provides feedback in the form of a detailed review report.</p> <p>The following criteria are considered for examination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OS sets minimum tasks and competences required from a person to be able to perform a job professionally;

Steps	Actions	Who does what
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each duty and task in the OS is expressed with an action verb; • OS encourages the individual to improve himself/herself and advance in her/his career within the frame of life-long learning principle. <p>They mention the problems and give recommendations for modifications and improvement (how these problems should be addressed in the draft OS) if necessary. The Ministry addresses those recommendations to the WG or other developers for reviewing and improving the standards and ensures that only agreed modifications are imbedded in the final OS.</p> <p>OSs that are deemed suitable by the SEG are submitted to the Ministry together with an accompanying report. The MLSP submits the verified OSs together with its accompanying review to respective SCSD(s) for approval.</p>
8	SCSD approves final form of OS or declines its approval	<p>SCSD reviews each OS within fifteen working days after receipt and approves through voting. OSs are approved by simple majority of votes of members with voting rights. If an OS is not approved by SCSD, it is either returned to the MLSP for improvement or annulled.</p> <p>Results of voting are documented in meeting minutes. The SCSD submits a report on approval or annulment of OSs to the MLSP within three working days after voting.</p>
9	MLSP Collegium endorses validated OS	<p>The MLSP discusses and endorses the report of the SCSD in its Collegium. After this, OS(s) become valid and open to all users.</p>
10	MLSP places the OS in the register	<p>The MLSP registers the approved OSs in the register of occupational and qualification standards open to all the stakeholders and general public. The Ministry is responsible for regular updating of the register and taking outdated OSs from the there.</p> <p>In addition, the MLSP conducts activities for increasing awareness of stakeholders and general public on OSs through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations, • Media / press briefings, • Press releases, • Interviews, • Individual stories, • Training, • Websites, • Surveys, etc.