

# NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – LEBANON

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

## 1.1 NQF snapshot

Lebanon plans a comprehensive 8-level national qualifications framework (NQF), covering all types of education and training.

So far, however, there is legislation only on the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) component of a future Lebanese NQF (LNQF). A ministerial decision in 2019 approved 6 levels and descriptors applicable to technical and vocational qualifications. However, this legislation does not apply to the general qualifications framework.

Since piloting in 2012, no significant technical work on the general level descriptors has been undertaken, only those applying to VET qualifications. No working group is currently sitting, and the stakeholders required to cooperate in the framework's development have not been identified or convened.

Lebanon is therefore between the explorative and design stages.

## 1.2 Policy context

The EU is a long-term strategic partner to Lebanon and has committed substantial funds to foster economic recovery. It has intensified its aid to the country since the war in neighbouring Syria started in 2011, to support Lebanon in coping with the impacts in its territory of the conflict. Assistance has included measures targeted at promoting growth, job creation, social cohesion and education for all people living in the country.

Mobility Partnership negotiations with the EU have halted but will resume pending political stabilisation.

Lebanon is currently dealing with one of the world's worst humanitarian crises in decades. The Syrian War has brought 1.5 million refugees into the country, adding to the existing 450,000 Palestinian refugees. Combined with the repeat political upheavals, COVID 19 fallout for the economy, and the 2020 explosions in Beirut's port, and the result is a country in turmoil.

Lebanon's GDP growth fell from an average of 9% during 2007–2010 to an average of 0.5% during 2011–2019<sup>1</sup>. In 2019, the economy contracted by 5.6%. Given 2020's events - COVID and the port explosion - the outlook for the near future is bleak.

Unemployment was 6.6% in 2020<sup>2</sup>, but can be expected to rise once the full effects of COVID are felt. Employment rates are low, at 43% of the 15 plus group in 2018<sup>3</sup>. While per capita incomes are higher than most in the region, the society is marked by inequalities, one third of its people living in poverty.

Lebanon's population increased by 38% in nine years – from 4.95 million in 2010 to around 6.9 million in 2019. It is estimated that about 65% of the Syrian arrivals are under 25. Unsurprisingly, the

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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank, World Development Indicators database – <https://databank.worldbank.org/home.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=LB>

<sup>3</sup> ETF calculations.

resulting strains caused by the influx of refugees on the labour market and education and training provision are everywhere visible.

Lebanon is also a country of emigration, and successive generations have seen significant numbers of people, especially the young and better-educated, leave the country, notably to the Gulf, Australia, Canada and the USA.

COVID and the port explosions struck two severe blows to the country's education and training system. Authorities count 163 schools which suffered damage from the port blast and now require repair, reconstruction and replacement of equipment. Up to 85,000 young people are affected. Because of the Covid-19 emergency in 2020, more than 1.2 million school-aged children and young people have been affected by school closures or other disruption. For many, there is a risk they will be out of school or college for prolonged periods.

### 1.3 NQF legal basis

No legal act has been adopted which establishes the full NQF or general framework. However, in 2019 the Minister of Education and Higher Education adopted Decision 374/M/2019, on the VET component of the framework, applying to levels 1-6 of the planned full LNQF. This decree approved descriptors for the 6 levels under the headings knowledge, skills, competencies, life skills, digital skills and languages. Decision 374 also specifies the types of vocational qualification available.

Decision 374, it should be noted, does refer to a "...general framework of qualifications consisting of 8 levels," thus signalling the state's intention to eventually establish a comprehensive NQF.

## 2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

### 2.1 Education and training reforms

The Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE) in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) has overall responsibility for VET, overseeing the vocational schools and institutes, and monitoring private providers. It develops curricula and designs exams.

Agricultural programmes provided by public schools come under the mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA).

Specific short vocational training courses, lasting 3 to 9 months, are offered by private and public providers and NGOs.

One characteristic of the education and training system in Lebanon is the high proportion of private providers: 60% of vocational schools are private<sup>4</sup>. There are two types of private providers: non-profit and for-profit schools.

The non-profit private vocational schools are mainly run by charitable foundations and NGOs. These NGOs are mostly community-based, with strong religious ties. Some private schools date back to the early twentieth century, while NGOs have been active in VET since the early 1950s, even before the creation of the DGVTE. The larger, for-profit, private vocational schools are concentrated in the major

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<sup>4</sup> ETF (2020), Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training in Lebanon.

cities. Some belong to European or North American networks and provide internationally-recognised degrees and other qualifications.

The National Strategic Framework for VET 2018-2022 (NSF) drives VET reform in the country. It sets three main outcomes to achieve: (i) expanded access and service delivery; (ii) enhanced quality and relevance of TVET provision; and (iii) improved TVET governance and systems. There are 8 components within these 3 broad outcomes, of which the planned LNQF is one. However, implementation of the NSF is hindered by shortage of funds.

Data to support education and training policy, and labour market analysis, is scarce, so making difficult evidence-based policy-making.

## 2.2 Aims of NQF

The LNQF should be able to classify all qualifications issued by the different sectors of the education and training system. In particular, the LNQF should ensure or contribute to:

- (a) the transparency and readability of qualifications and their relevance to the labour market;
- (b) the recognition of qualifications based on defined competences, whether acquired in formal, non-formal or informal contexts;
- (c) the establishment of pathways and mobility between different sectors of the education system;
- (d) links to qualifications frameworks of other countries;
- (e) development of a comprehensive system of accreditation and quality assurance;
- (f) the broader quality of education and training, through identifying the knowledge, skills and competences required of learners.

In 2012, the NQF was piloted in selected sectors, including education, agro-food, health, electrical works, and hospitality.

# 3. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

## 3.1 NQF scope and structure

An eight-level structure is planned. The NQF is intended to be lifelong learning in scope, covering general, VET and higher education qualifications.

For the NQF as a whole, the *draft* descriptors are knowledge, skills and competencies. For VET qualifications to be placed at levels 1-6 of the NQF, the *approved* descriptors are: knowledge, skills, competencies, life skills, digital skills and languages.

## 3.2 Types of qualifications

After lower secondary education, there is a distinction between *technical* education and *vocational* education. Curricula and qualifications diverge in two streams.

Technical education prepares students for science-based careers with an applied or practical orientation. Entrants to such programmes must have studied for not less than nine years in basic general education or have seven years' basic general education in addition to holding the *vocational brevet (BP)* mentioned below.

Vocational education prepares students mainly for manual occupations or careers and/or those requiring narrower knowledge or a more limited range of skills than that needed by technical education graduates. Vocational education students pursue apprenticeships and school-based learning simultaneously, hence it is also known as the Dual System.

## Technical education qualifications

Qualifications awarded through the technical stream are:

- the Technical Baccalaureate (*baccalauréat technique, BT*): taken by students after the *BP*; it lasts 3 years; awarded to students on successful completion of the technical stream of upper secondary school or technical school; Level 4 of the planned LNQF;

Graduates awarded the *baccalauréat technique* diploma can directly enter the labour market or access further education, either university or higher technical education. If they opt for the latter course, they can pursue:

- the Higher Technician Diploma (*technicien supérieur, TS*): pursued by people who have already obtained the *BT*, or the Lebanese *Baccalaureate* in general secondary education; programmes last two years; it is positioned at Level 5 of the LNQF;
- the Technical Licence (*licence technique, LT*): available to people who hold the *TS* diploma; one year of study; it is placed at Level 6 in the LNQF;
- the Teaching Technical Licence (*licence d'enseignement technique, or LET*): taken by: (i) holders of the *BT* or the general education *Baccalaureate* – these two groups study for 4 years to obtain the *LET*; or (ii) by people who have already obtained the *TS*, who then study 2 years; Level 6 in the LNQF.

## Vocational qualifications

Vocational qualifications are:

- the Vocational Brevet, (*brevet professionnel, BP*); it is awarded to students who have successfully completed the vocational stream in lower secondary/intermediate school; it is placed at Level 3 of the LNQF.
- the Secondary Vocational Diploma; entry to programmes is available to holders of the *BP* or after the general intermediate diploma (*brevet*). It is awarded to candidates on successful completion of a programme of three years of study; it places at Level 4 of the LNQF;
- the Vocational Supervisor's Diploma (*Maister*); pursued by people who: (i) have two years' work experience; they study for two years; or (ii) holders of the *baccalauréat technique (BT)* who have a minimum of three years' work experience; or (iii) holders of the general secondary education *Baccalaureate*, who also have five years' work experience. Level 5 of the LNQF.

It is possible to transfer from one track to another. Holders of the Secondary Vocational Diploma can access programmes leading to the technical baccalaureate after following one year of studies of the required general subjects e.g. maths, sciences, languages.

There are also short training certificates, placed at levels 1 to 3 of the framework.

### 3.3 Quality assurance of qualifications

Currently, quality assurance in VET is primarily oriented to conducting accreditation of providers against criteria largely about school infrastructure and the like, rather than aimed at improving provision and qualifications. The NSF does, though, call for a more far-reaching QA system.

DGTVE develops VET curricula and qualifications and accredits VET providers, public and private. Private providers apply to DGTVE to be licensed - only those assessed by DGTVE as approved against its criteria (mainly for equipment, infrastructure and facilities) can offer formal programmes. Private TVET schools must, however, apply the national curricula set by DGTVE for their students to be eligible to sit for national exams and receive the official diplomas.

Competency-based approaches to assessment are not systemically used and final assessments are mainly theoretical in content.

The short VET courses mentioned earlier are not systematically regulated. DGTVE gathers only quite basic information to license providers.

As indicated earlier, Lebanon does not command a comprehensive data-gathering system for labour market analysis, one consequence of which is that there is not accurate or up to date information to support decisions on programmes and qualifications that would meet labour market and individuals' needs. A further limitation is the absence of employers and trades unions from consultative or decision-making roles in education and training. This extends also to assessment and certification, where, a recent ILO survey suggested, employers feel they lack the training to fulfil this role, as the state does not offer such support.

### 3.4 Use of learning outcomes and standards

There is no definition in law of "qualification". Qualifications based on learning outcomes have been piloted in construction but otherwise remain, for the most part, inputs-based.

UNICEF, working with DGTVE, is currently piloting new competency-based curricula. It is planned for implementation in 2022-2023, after training teachers in the new approach.

Qualifications are not usually unit-based. Only some courses are modular.

The Arab Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) is used on an ad hoc basis to design qualifications, but it dates from 2006. UNICEF and the DGTVE currently deliver workshops using the Developing a Curricula (DACUM) method. These workshops bring together experienced workers, trainers, and employers to analyse a given occupation, breaking down the tasks performed and identifying the needed skills, knowledge and behaviours; plus, the requisite tools, equipment, and other resources.

However, overall, few qualifications are developed based on occupational standards.

### 3.5 Credit systems

There is no country-wide VET credit system. However, the Minister of Education issued a decree in 2019 which provides for the adoption of a credit system limited to a few technical institutes in one occupational field, car maintenance and repair.

## 4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

### 4.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education coordinated the 2012 NQF project and hosted the NQF working group. However, the institutional arrangements proposed by the NQF working group were never officially approved.

### 4.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The suspension of work of the NQF has meant that no progress has been made in recent years in identifying or coordinating the stakeholders required to cooperate in its development and implementation. During the earlier NQF project, the NQF working group brought together representatives from the different sectors of the education sector but no other stakeholders such as employers, although invited, participated.

A Higher VET Council, composed of representatives from different ministries and local and economic organisations, was established to provide advice to the MEHE on policies, plans, regulations and budgets. However, the Council met only once before its mandate expired.

Lebanon's VET strategy, the NSF, plans establishment of sector skills councils, which would foster engagement of employers in qualification development and other process.

## 5. RECOGNISING AND VALIDATING NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING AND LEARNING PATHWAYS

### 5.1 VNFIL arrangements

It is not currently possible to be awarded a formal qualification via validation of nonformal and informal learning.

However, VNFIL/RPL would be of great benefit to both citizens and refugees - those with work experience and skills could apply for assessment and certification, while those with limited experience or relevant skills could, following assessment, be directed to undertake identified complementary or full training.

## 6. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

### 6.1 Key achievements and main findings

The full NQF is not functional yet. However, its VET element at levels 1-6 is formally approved.

## 6.2 Qualifications registers and databases

No register exists yet.

## 6.3 Qualification documents

Broadly, formal qualifications, those issued by Ministries, are termed diplomas, while the term certificates applies to qualifications issued by the non-formal sector e.g. private schools or non-formal qualifications issued by the public TVET schools.

Formal TVET diplomas, obtained via study at the TVET schools, are issued by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, with the exception of diplomas in agricultural fields, which are issued by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Certificates obtained through study at accredited private TVET schools or NGOs are issued by the school or the training centre and stamped by the DGTVE to indicate that the institution is recognized. The non-formal certificates issued by public TVET schools or training centres are issued by the institution that provides the training.

NGOs or training centres which are not formally accredited issue their own qualifications, but these are not formally recognised.

## 6.4 Recognition of foreign qualifications

As at 5.1, there is unexploited scope to tap human capital, as systematic processes for recognition of refugees' formal qualifications and application of equivalence procedures would support their integration into the labour market. Likewise, the country could recognise the foreign qualifications obtained abroad by returning Lebanese citizens.

A specialized committee in the DGTVE determines equivalence of diplomas and certificates obtained abroad with Lebanese qualifications.

# 7. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

## 7.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

The Arab Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) has been an external reference tool influencing development of the NQF, as in other countries in the region. However, as indicated above it dates from 2006.

## 7.2 International cooperation

Lebanon participates in ETF's Forum for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training.

## 7.3 International donor support

The country's VET strategy, the NSF, was launched in 2018 with support from the International Labour Organization, UNICEF, plus ETF and other EU offices.

ETF steered the 2012 NQF piloting, supported and part-funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

ILO has a regional office in Beirut and is active in skills development via many projects and initiatives.

*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ, a German development agency) has implemented numerous VET projects in Lebanon.

UNICEF has been active in VET cooperation since 2016, running many programmes, notably the TVET Modernisation Project. In the NQF, UNICEF has worked with national authorities to develop the VET component of the LNQF, including the descriptors.

Due to the Syrian conflict, other donors such as USAID, the Netherlands, *Agence Française de Développement*, are active in the country in the field of education to support refugees and vulnerable local communities and enhance employability. The Netherlands is leading the extensive ILO programme Prospects, the Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities.

## 8. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

Conditions currently inhibit serious progress in developing the full NQF. Updating existing, or developing new, qualifications, is hindered by limited labour market data and the low level of engagement of stakeholders in the education and training system. A VNFIL system would especially benefit refugees.

## 9. MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Ministry of Education and Higher Education <https://www.facebook.com/MEHELLebanon/>

Ministry of Labour <https://www.labor.gov.lb/Default.aspx> and <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ministry%20of%20Labor/472099526616736/>

Ministry of Industry <http://www.industry.gov.lb/>

## 10. VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK AND ITS DESCRIPTORS

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competencies	Life skills	Digital skills	Languages
1	Basic knowledge.	Basic skills required for simple practical tasks.	The ability to carry out work in a professional way and under direct supervision. based on safety conditions and respecting the environmental conservation.	Problem solving, cooperation, negotiation, restraint, communication, respect for diversity, empathy and participation.	Using basic mobile applications.	Familiarity with the vocabulary used in the profession to which he/she is prepared for.
2	Basic knowledge of the profession.	Knowledge and practical skills that are necessary to carry out the basic tasks of the profession professionally and according to the safety rules and solving the daily routine by using simple rules and tools.	The ability to carry out professional work according to professional and safety standards and environmental conservation in a structured context and under the supervision of a supervisor but with a certain degree of independence.	Problem solving, cooperation, negotiation, restraint, communication, respect for diversity, empathy and participation.	Using basic mobile applications.	Familiarity with the vocabulary used in the profession to which he/she is prepared for.
3	Realistic knowledge within broad contexts in the field of work and knowledge of the facts, principles, processes and general concepts in the field of the profession practiced.	Cognitive and practical skills required to carry out coordinated tasks according to the correct rules and standards, safety rules and environmental conservation, problem solving based on correct information, selection and application of appropriate methods,	The ability to carry out the tasks entrusted to the worker that are required by the occupation and that are related to the standards of occupational safety, environmental conservation and independency in the performance.	Problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, negotiation, restraint, communication, respect for diversity, empathy and participation.	Using of mobile phones and basic uses of computers, including using properly the information search engines.	Familiarity with a foreign language, especially French or English to acquire technical vocabulary and to ensure communication. In many cases, the English is a must.

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competencies	Life skills	Digital skills	Languages
		tools, information and materials.	Taking responsibility for the results of the work entrusted to the worker and adapt his/her own behavior with the conditions when solving problems with other employees.			
4	Realistic knowledge within a wide range of the field of work and knowledge of facts, principles, procedures and general concepts that are related to the profession, which also allows the worker to pursue his studies at the fifth level of learning.	Cognitive and practical skills required to organize and implement activities that apply methods, procedures and instructions for each activity according to the correct rules and standards, safety rules and environmental conservation, and to find solutions to the problems through information, selection and application of appropriate methods, tools, materials and human resources.	The ability to perform tasks independently within the limits of specific instructions or requirements of professional and associated standards, safety standards and environmental conservation within predictable contexts, adapting self-behavior with situations for solving problems with other workers, supervising the work of others and organizing materials and human resources that are necessary to accomplish the required tasks.	Problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, negotiation, restraint, communication, respect for diversity, empathy, participation and self-employment.	Using mobile applications and basic computer applications including information search engines, Microsoft Office especially Word and Excel.	Recognize French and English languages to acquire technical vocabulary, communicate and write a simple message or work report. In many cases, the English is a must.
5	Comprehensive and realistic knowledge related to a specific field of work and the comprehension of the limits of these knowledges.	Skills' knowledge and a comprehensive set of practical skills that are required to organize and implement the work, supervise the workers and the distribution of tasks on them, evaluate the results through tools	The ability to exercise management and control in different work situations and tasks assigned to him/her, to face possible alternative changes, to review and develop self-performance, to	Problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, negotiation, decision making, self-control, communication, respect for diversity, empathy, participation and self-employment	Using mobile applications and basic computer applications, including information search engines, Microsoft Office especially Word, Excel and Power Point.	Advanced knowledge of foreign languages, especially French and English, and the ability to communicate in English and to formulate correspondences and work reports without major language errors.

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competencies	Life skills	Digital skills	Languages
		and objective indicators in accordance with the rules and the professional standards, the safety rules and the conservation of the environment, and to develop solutions and innovative performances to solve the problems.	supervise the accurate application of public and professional safety standards and environmental conservation.			
6	Advanced knowledge in the field of work that is based on critical understanding of scientific theories and principles.	Advanced knowledge and practical procedure that indicate the distinction and the innovation required to organize and manage the work, evaluate and solve complex and unexpected problems in a specialized range of work.	The ability to manage complex technical or professional activities, to take responsibility, to take decisions in the context of work to solve problems and to adapt the changes based on the application of modern methods, to address situations that cannot be foreseen in advance, to supervise the workers, to assess their performance, to ensure the proper application of public and professional safety standards and environmental protection, to have responsibility and to develop the human resources.	Problem solving, critical thinking, cooperation, negotiation, decision making, self-control, communication, respect for diversity, empathy, participation and self-employment	Using mobile applications and basic computer applications, including information search engines, Microsoft Office, Word-Excel and Power point.	Advanced knowledge of foreign languages, especially French and English, and the ability to communicate in English and to formulate correspondences and work reports without language errors.



## ABBREVIATIONS

ASCO	Arab Standard Classification of Occupations
BP	Brevet Professionnel (Vocational Brevet)
BT	Baccalauréat technique (Technical Baccalaureate)
DGVTE/DGTVET	Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education
DACUM	Developing a Curriculum
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LET	Licence d'enseignement technique, (Teaching Technical Licence)
LNQF	Lebanese National Qualifications Framework
LT	Licence technique (Technical Licence)
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE)
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NCVT	National Centre for Vocational Training
NEO	National Employment Office
NTITE	National Training Institution for Technical Education
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NSF	National Strategic Framework for action, TVET 2018-2022
TS	Technicien supérieur (Higher Technician Diploma)
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)
TVET QF	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Framework.
UNICEF	United Nations Children's' Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## REFERENCES

ETF (2021), Education, Training and Employment Developments 2020.

<https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-01/lebanon.pdf>

ETF (2020), Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training in Lebanon.

[https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-10/quality\\_assurance\\_in\\_vet\\_lebanon.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-10/quality_assurance_in_vet_lebanon.pdf)

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