

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – RUSSIA

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 NQF snapshot

Russia has not adopted a law or decree principally addressing a national qualifications framework (NQF). Instead its qualifications framework has a legal status by virtue of a definition of qualification levels contained in a ministerial order adopted in 2013 on occupational standards.

The framework comprises nine levels but includes only qualifications which are based on occupational standards (occupational or professional qualifications). The qualification framework's (QF) lead institution is the National Council for Occupational Qualifications, which coordinates the development of qualifications and the independent assessment system based on occupational standards.

Russia's system of occupational qualifications is advanced in implementation and has reached an operational stage. Institutional, methodological and quality assurance mechanisms are in place; significant progress has been made in establishing an independent assessment system. The work on linking occupational standards, qualification standards, and education and training standards and programmes is in progress.

Russia joined the Bologna Process in higher education in 2003 and so is obliged to implement the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA). It has not self-certified yet.

1.2 Policy context

In 2014, the EU suspended the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which had been in force since 1997, in response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and other illegal actions in other regions of Ukraine. However, bilateral cooperation at a technical level has continued, including in education.

Russian GDP fell by 3% in 2020, which represents a less severe drop compared to world and advanced economy averages. In 2020, its unemployment level was estimated at 5.9%¹. Population ageing and skills mismatches are major challenges.

The 2030 National Development Plan² outlines five goals: sustaining people's health and wellbeing; creating opportunities for self-fulfilment; creating a comfortable and safe living environment; creating an effective labour force and encouraging successful entrepreneurship; and digital transformation of the economy and society.

During the 2020 COVID pandemic, the state suspended practical lessons in VET schools. Distance and online learning were provided where possible. The demonstration exams at the end of school year for students took place remotely. The Ministry of Education approved distance exams based on the WorldSkills Russia standards.

¹ <https://eng.rosstat.gov.ru/>

² The Presidential Decree of 21.07.2020 N 474 "On the national development goals of the Russian Federation in the period until 2030" <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202007210012>

1.3 NQF legal basis

There is no law or decree which specifically establishes a framework of qualifications. Instead, the QF has a legal status via a definition of qualification levels included within a Ministry of Labour order adopted in 2013 for the development of occupational standards³.

Other relevant key legislation includes:

- the 2012 amendment to the Labour code⁴;
- the Federal Law on Education in the Russian Federation, from 2012⁵;
- the Governmental Decree on the Rules for development and adoption of occupational standards, adopted in 2013⁶;
- the 2019 Governmental Decree on the Rules for development and approval of federal state educational standards⁷;
- the Presidential Decree on establishing the National Council for Occupational Qualifications, 2014⁸;
- the Federal Law on Independent Qualification Assessment, passed in 2016⁹.

In October 2018, the National Presidential Council approved the Action Plan for the development of the national qualifications system in the Russian Federation by 2024.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

2.1 Education and training reforms

In May 2018, the new government reorganised public institutions and the Ministry of Education and Science was divided into the Ministry of Education, for general and vocational education, and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

Education policy is guided by the State Education Development Programme 2018-2025¹⁰ which aims to ensure the competitiveness of Russia's education system and achieve a position among the world's ten best education systems. The Programme is being implemented through ten federal projects, which include creating a digital learning environment, continuous professional development of teachers and enhanced competitiveness of vocational education.

Figures for participation in VET can be found in in ETF's Torino Process Report¹¹.

³ Order of the Ministry of Labour of Russia No. 148n of 12.04.2013 "On approval of qualification levels for the development of draft occupational standards" <https://mintrud.gov.ru/docs/mintrud/orders/48>

⁴ <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901807664>

⁵ <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/902389617/>

⁶ <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/902393797>

⁷ <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/554229840>

⁸ <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/499089517>

⁹ <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/420363375>

¹⁰ Governmental decree of 25.12.2017 N 1642 <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/556183093>

¹¹ ETF, 2019, Torino Process 2018-2020 Russia – national report https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-06/trpreport_2019_russia_en.pdf

VET is largely implemented through the regions. In addition, some 20 federal executive authorities manage their own affiliated colleges and institutions of higher education, which offer VET programmes in fields such as healthcare and transport.

Russia's Initial VET programmes (secondary VET) include (i) skilled worker and employee training programmes (ISCED level 4) and (ii) middle-level specialist training programmes (ISCED level 5).

Admission is based on either basic or secondary general school. Secondary VET (SVET) programmes are provided in VET schools, technical schools and colleges, as well as higher education institutions.

The draft 2030 VET Development Strategy sets five priority areas: modernization of content; optimization of the network of VET institutes; enhancement of financial sustainability of VET institutes; upskilling VET teachers, offering opportunities for fostering new sets of competences; and promotion of the professional competition movement¹².

The government recognizes the development of the national qualifications system as one of its employment policy priorities, including by increasing the involvement of employers in the improvement, implementation and use of the qualifications system¹³.

2.2 Aims of NQF

The 2030 National Qualifications System development strategy¹⁴ identifies the following priorities:

- (a) providing citizens and employers with reliable and up-to-date information, plus available services for obtaining modern qualifications based on greater application of digital technologies;
- (b) integration of institutions for assessment and recognition of qualifications into a nationwide qualifications system, ensuring pathways between different qualifications;
- (c) updating professional access requirements based on occupational standards;
- (d) strengthening the relationship between the worlds of work and education and training, ensuring that the education and training system is more responsive to labour market needs;
- (e) international comparability of qualifications, and improving the recognition of Russian qualifications abroad and foreign qualifications in the Russian Federation, including to attract foreign skilled workers;
- (f) ensuring access to qualifications, and the introduction of mechanisms stimulating citizens and employers to use modern qualifications.

Qualification levels adopted by the Ministry of Labour in 2013 establish standards requirements for the qualification of employees. They are used for the development of occupational standards to describe job functions, and education and training requirements for workers¹⁵.

¹² Collegium meeting of the Ministry of Education, 23.10.2020
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_95sxlP9gN4&feature=youtu.be

¹³ Main directions of activity of the Government of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024
<http://docs.cntd.ru/document/554168464>

¹⁴ approved 12.03.2021 by the National Council for occupational qualifications <https://nspkrf.ru/documents/>

¹⁵ Order of the Ministry of Labour of Russia No. 148n of 12.04.2013 "On approval of qualification levels for the development of draft occupational standards" <https://mintrud.gov.ru/docs/mintrud/orders/48>

3. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

3.1 NQF scope and structure

Russia has adopted a QF of nine qualification levels¹⁶, but the framework includes only occupational qualifications.

The framework includes the descriptors competence and responsibility (which correlates with the responsibility and autonomy descriptor of the EQF), skills, and knowledge; and the main pathways of attaining the qualification level (taking into account types of education and training programmes and practical/work experience).

3.2 Types of qualifications

Qualification levels are used for the development of occupational standards and are not supported by a typology of qualifications.

“Qualification” is defined in relation to job readiness as ‘the level of knowledge, skills and work experience of a worker’¹⁷ or ‘the level of knowledge, skills and competency, characterising readiness to perform a certain type of occupational activity’¹⁸.

The roadmap for the development of the national qualifications system¹⁹ foresees the development of sectoral qualifications frameworks and a national catalogue of qualification types.

The Russian Federation uses the term “qualification” narrowly, only in relation to occupational qualifications or occupations.

3.3 Quality assurance of qualifications

Qualifications are developed by Councils for occupational qualifications (sectoral qualifications councils) according to the methodology and procedure adopted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP)²⁰. They are developed based on occupational standards and/or qualification requirements established by legislation, then validated by the National Council for Occupational Qualifications and approved by the National Agency for Qualifications Development (NARK).

In VET and higher education, providers develop their educational programmes based on federal state educational standards²¹ which must comply with the requirements of the relevant occupational

¹⁶ Order of the Ministry of Labour of Russia No. 148n of 12.04.2013 "On approval of qualification levels for the development of draft occupational standards" <https://mintrud.gov.ru/docs/mintrud/orders/48>

¹⁷ Art. 195-1 of the Labour code (2012)

¹⁸ Art. 2 of the Federal Law on Education in the Russian Federation (2012)

¹⁹ The Action Plan (Roadmap) for the development of the national qualifications system in the Russian Federation until 2024 adopted by the National Council for occupational qualifications (2018) http://nspkrf.ru/documents/materialy-natsionalnogo-soveta/2018-1/19-10-2018_30/1477-dor_karta/file.html

²⁰ Regulation on the development of qualifications titles and requirements for the independent assessment of qualifications. Order of the Ministry of labour and social protection No. 726H of 12.12.2016 <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/420387416>

²¹ Except some higher education institutions defined by legislation (art. 11 of the Federal law on Education)

standards²². Qualifications awarded by VET institutions are included in the lists of occupations and specialties of secondary vocational education²³. For a new VET qualification (occupation) to be introduced into the list, the relevant federal state educational standard shall be developed and approved²⁴.

Federal state educational standards must be developed with the involvement of representatives of education institutions, employers, interested public bodies and other organisations, and validated by the relevant council for occupational qualifications and the National Council for Occupational Qualifications to ensure their compliance with the relevant occupational standards²⁵.

3.4 Use of learning outcomes and standards

Federal state educational standards (FSES) define the requirements of basic educational programmes: their structure and volume, and conditions for the implementation and content - graduate competence profile²⁶. Learning outcomes of VET programmes should relate to general and professional competences. The list of general competences is the same for all FSES of secondary vocational education, while professional competences are derived from occupational standards and structured by types of occupational activity (work functions) in relation to qualifications awarded.

Occupational standards are also used as a basis for the independent assessment of workers' levels of knowledge, skills, and competency ("assessment of qualification")²⁷.

3.5 Credit systems

Progression up the framework levels is traditionally restricted to a stage by stage linear path i.e. a person can only progress to a higher level if s/he has obtained the preceding lower level qualification, and where confirmed by the relevant certificate or diploma.

In higher education, a credit system aligned to the European credit transfer system (ECTS) is used.

4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

4.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

Overall responsibility for coordinating the development of the national qualification system lies with the National Council for Occupational Qualifications²⁸, a consultative and coordinating body established in 2014 to support the development of a system of occupational qualifications and the development of occupational standards.

²² Art. 11 of the Federal law on Education

²³ Order of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 1199 of 29.10.2013
<http://docs.cntd.ru/document/499056441>

²⁴ Regulation on formation of the lists of occupations, specialties and fields of training. Order of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 1059 of 12.09.2013 <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/499045863/>

²⁵ Rules for development, approval of federal state educational standards and making amendments to them, adopted by Governmental decree No. 434 of 12.04.2019 <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/554229840>

²⁶ Art. 11 of the Federal law on Education

²⁷ Law on independent qualification assessment (2016) <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/420363375>

²⁸ <https://nspkrf.ru/>

Its main tasks include bringing federal VET standards into line with relevant occupational standards and supporting the development of a system for independent assessment of qualifications. Further, it recognises by decision sectoral qualifications councils i.e. councils for occupational qualifications.

The National Council includes representatives from relevant ministries, employer associations, trade unions, professional associations, education, research and other interested organisations.

Other key actors are the National Agency for Qualifications Development (NARK), the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, councils for occupational qualifications, sectoral qualifications councils, assessment centres, the two ministries responsible for education, namely the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and employer associations and professional bodies.

4.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The National Agency for Qualifications Development (NARK) supports the activities of the National Council for Occupational Qualifications, councils for occupational qualifications, and assessment centres. It monitors and approves occupational qualifications and maintains the register of independent qualification assessments.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection oversees the development and approval of occupational standards, and maintains the standards register.

The Ministry of Education oversees the development of federal state educational standards (FSES) for secondary and vocational education, while the Ministry of Science and Higher Education develops standards in higher education.

Sectoral qualifications councils (councils for occupational qualifications) are created by employer or professional associations and recognized by decision of the National Council for Occupational Qualifications. They monitor labour market needs in skills; develop occupational standards, qualifications, and sectoral qualifications frameworks; approve assessment centres and monitor their activities; and develop and approve assessment tools and validate the results of assessment.

Assessment centres conduct independent assessment for award of qualifications.

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

5.1 VNFIL arrangements

There is no legislative framework in Russia which allows for recognition and validation of skills acquired outside formal education and training.

Since 2016, under the Law on Independent Qualification Assessment, validation has been available for candidates seeking certification for occupational qualifications. This independent assessment system is evolving rapidly, and there are now over 500 assessment centres established across Russia.

However, applicants must already hold formal education documents to access the certification process.

6. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

6.1 Key achievements and main findings

The development of a fully-fledged national qualifications system is evolving.

Institutions including the national qualifications council, sectoral qualifications councils, sector bodies and assessment centres have been established and are functioning. Forty sectoral qualifications councils have been established so far.

Methodological advances are notable in the development of occupational standards, and in quality assurance mechanisms in assessment, validation and recognition of occupational qualifications. The National Council for Occupational Qualifications has coordinated the development of over 1,300 occupational standards so far – these provide the basis for occupational qualifications.

Further, a methodology has been developed to link occupational standards, qualification standards, and education and training standards and programmes.

These developments have supported production of new qualifications, development of sectoral qualifications frameworks and the use of independent assessment.

Guidelines for the development of sectoral qualifications frameworks, occupational standards, qualifications and assessment tools were updated in 2020²⁹.

6.2 Qualifications registers and databases

Qualifications approved by the National Agency for Qualifications Development (NARK) are entered in the Register of independent qualification assessment³⁰. The Register covers occupational qualifications and also includes information on assessment centres and qualification certificates issued, holding over 2,500 occupational qualifications and 84,500 certificates.

Occupational standards are entered in the MLSP register³¹.

6.3 Qualification documents

There are two types of VET documents issued: (i) those that confirm the achievement of both an educational level and a qualification (IVET *diploma*); and (ii) those that confirm the award of a qualification (CVET *certificate*)³².

Occupational qualifications are certified by a qualification certificate.

²⁹ <https://nark.ru/lib/?type=2>

³⁰ <https://nok-nark.ru/>

³¹ <https://profstandart.rosmintrud.ru/>

³² Art. 60 of the Federal law on Education.

6.4 Recognition of foreign qualifications

Russia is a signatory to the Lisbon Convention³³ on higher education qualifications. It signed the Convention in 1999 and ratified it in 2000.

The Main State Centre for Education Evaluation³⁴ and the National Information Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility³⁵ act as Russia's ENIC³⁶ centres.

7. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORK/ OTHER FRAMEWORKS

7.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

The country's NQF is influenced by the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and by the Bologna Process in higher education, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Russia has been a member of the Bologna Process since 2003 but has not yet certified against the QF-EHEA. In the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2020 Russia is indicated as having reached Step 4 i.e. the level structure, level descriptors (learning outcomes), and credit ranges have been agreed.

7.2 International cooperation

Three Russian quality assurance agencies are members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA): the National Accreditation Agency of the Russian Federation, the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Career Development, and the National Centre for Public Accreditation³⁷.

8. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

The development of the national qualifications system has contributed to overcoming the fragmentation of earlier efforts to improve the quality and relevance of vocational education and training. The main challenge nevertheless remains to contribute to making the VET system more responsive to individual and labour market needs.

Given the rapid changes in the labour market, matching graduates' skills to needs will require new approaches to defining qualifications and curricula. The proposed key measures include bringing education and training programmes into line with relevant occupational standards, the introduction of independent assessment procedures for the award of occupational qualifications alongside

³³ Formally, the Convention on Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region.

³⁴ <https://nic.gov.ru/en>

³⁵ <http://www.russianenic.ru/english/index.html>

³⁶ ENIC: European Network of Information Centres in the European Region.

³⁷ <https://www.enqa.eu/membership-database/countries/russian-federation/>

educational qualifications, designing flexible modular programmes and educational standards based on sets of skills from one or several qualifications or occupations³⁸.

Independent qualification assessment is based on occupational standards and reflects current labour market demand. However, there is no legislative framework in Russia which provides for recognition and validation of skills acquired outside formal education and training³⁹.

There is an urgent need to reduce the time by which new skills are identified and formalised in standards and qualifications. Digitalising processes related to qualification development, creation of a unified digital platform of the national qualifications system interoperable with the information systems in the education and training sectors and labour market, are considered as part of the solution⁴⁰.

9. MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- National Council for occupational qualifications: <https://nspkrf.ru/>
- National Agency for Qualifications Development: <https://nark.ru/>
- Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation: <https://edu.gov.ru/>
- Register of independent qualification assessment: <https://nok-nark.ru/>

ABBREVIATIONS

CVET	Continuing VET
ECTS	European credit transfer system
EQF	European qualifications framework
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
FSES	federal state educational standards
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
NARK	National Agency for Qualifications Development
SVET	secondary VET
NQF	national qualifications framework
VET	vocational education and training
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning

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³⁸ NRF (2020). Russia - national Torino Process report 2018-2020.

³⁹ NRF (2020). Russia - national Torino Process report 2018-2020, p. 27

⁴⁰ Leibovich A.N. National agency for qualifications development: yesterday, today, tomorrow. Transport technician: education and practice. 2020; 1(3), p. 177. (in Russian)