

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – KYRGYZSTAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

Kyrgyzstan's national qualifications framework (NQF) was adopted in law in 2020.

The NQF includes qualifications from general education, vocational education and training (VET), higher education (HE), and adult education/learning (AE/AL).

The National Qualifications Council (NQC) coordinates the NQF.

The implementation of the Kyrgyz National Qualifications Framework requires further efforts to refine the main functions of the qualifications system, including the introduction of a quality assurance system, the application of learning outcomes within the qualifications themselves, as well as informing the key stakeholders of the goals and uses of the NQF.

Kyrgyzstan's framework is currently at the activation stage.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 Policy context

Kyrgyzstan has a young and growing population. According to the latest data of the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the population in 2024 totalled circa 7.3 million confirming stable [demographic growth](#). This creates significant opportunities for economic growth but also requires special attention to socio-economic development issues.

The Kyrgyz economy is demonstrating steady growth: the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) forecasts that the country's GDP will grow by 8.7% in 2025 thanks to high investment activities. In the [medium term](#), growth rate is expected to reach 6.0%. The main sectors of the economy remain agriculture, construction, and the services sector.

Remittances from migrant workers continue to play an important role in sustaining Kyrgyzstan's economy. More than one million Kyrgyz citizens work abroad, mainly in the Russian Federation, and their remittances make up a significant share of the national income.

Despite positive macroeconomic trends, the country continues to face poverty and unemployment. According to the National Statistical Committee, the [poverty rate](#) in 2023 was 29.8%, while the unemployment rate was 4.1%, 0.8% lower than in 2022. However, it remains higher among young people and rural residents.

Gender inequality in employment also persists in the country: in 2022, the employment rate for men was 71.8%, while for women it was significantly lower, at around 43.1%.

[The national development strategy for 2018-2040](#) and [the National Development Program of the Kyrgyz Republic until 2030](#) serve as key benchmarks for ensuring sustainable economic growth, creating a favourable climate for foreign investment, and developing export-oriented industries. Special attention is given to creating an education and training system that will provide the population with the skills needed for the labour market and promote lifelong learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for urgent changes in the education system, including the introduction and development of digital learning tools.

The educational component of the development Strategy provides for the creation of an education and training system that equips people with skills that meet the needs of the labour market, promotes lifelong learning, and offers universal access to education. The new "[Law on Education](#)" of the Kyrgyz Republic, adopted in 2023, plays an important role in achieving the Strategy's goals.

Education and training reform

Approximately 33% of post-secondary students are enrolled in Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes. In the education system of the Kyrgyz Republic, after completing basic secondary education (9 grades) or full secondary education (11 grades), students can enter institutions of

Primary Vocational Education (PVE) or Secondary Vocational Education (SVE). In exceptional cases, opportunities are created for individuals without basic general education to obtain a profession.

Primary Vocational Education (PVE) can be obtained at vocational lyceums and vocational schools (including those under correctional institutions of the penitentiary system of the Kyrgyz Republic), which offer the following programmes:

- an integrated programme of general secondary and primary vocational education based on basic general education, with a duration of at least 2–3 years.
- a primary vocational education programme based on basic general education without obtaining general secondary education, with a duration of 1–2 years, including a pre-prescription training programme.
- a primary vocational education programme based on general secondary education, with a duration of at least 1 year.
- vocational training, retraining, and advanced training programmes with a duration of up to 1 year.

Secondary Vocational Education (SVE) programmes are offered by colleges and technical schools, some of which are integrated into the structure of higher education institutions (HEIs). SVE provides training and retraining for mid-level specialists after they have completed basic secondary, general secondary, or primary vocational education, corresponding to Level 5 qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of Kyrgyzstan.

The standard periods of full-time study in SVE institutions are as follows:

- 1 year and 10 months after completing general secondary education.
- 2 years and 6 months after completing basic secondary education.
- 2 years and 10 months after completing basic secondary education.
- between 3 years and 6 months, and 3 years and 10 months, after completing basic secondary education.

In the general education system, the Ministry of Education and Science is currently developing a concept for transitioning school education to a 12-year model.

Within the framework of the Education Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2021–2040, a programme for reforming the education and training system is being implemented, including the further development of the National Qualifications System (NQS). This reform includes:

- methodological development and updating of VET content based on professional standards.
- improvement and modification of competency-based VET content.
- independent assessment and certification in accordance with the NQF.

The NQF concept was approved by the Government on September 30, 2019, which enabled the development and approval of the corresponding [Action plan](#), ratified on March 16, 2020.

These documents aim to create a system ensuring the comparability of qualifications at both national and international levels, as well as their recognition within the country and abroad. The Plan served as a roadmap with clearly defined stages, responsible bodies, and implementation timelines. However, it covered only the short-term period of 2020–2021. Currently, there are no agreed and approved strategic or operational plans. However, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security, and Migration of the Kyrgyz Republic (MLSSM) has initiated a renewed approval process with government bodies for the Action Plan on the Implementation of the National Qualifications System Concept in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2025–2027.

2.2 NQF legal basis

On September 18, 2020, the [Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic](#) (KR) No. 491 “On the Approval of the National Qualifications Framework” (NQF) formally adopted the country’s NQF.

To establish the legal and methodological framework, amendments were made to the Law, "On Education", on 2 May 2019, which introduced new definitions such as "national qualifications system," "national qualifications framework," "professional standard," and "sectoral qualifications frameworks." These changes established the legal basis for the further development and application of the NQF in various sectors of education and the labour market.

Another important regulatory act is the regulation on the establishment of the National Qualifications Council, the frameworks' coordinating body, from 2022.

In addition, in recognition of foreign qualifications, a legal act was adopted establishing the Centre for Independent Certification and Validation under MES, as well as setting out the methodologies for procedures of independent certification and validation of competencies/qualifications for the awarding of the corresponding qualification, which must be applied by the Centre.

3. NQF objectives and functions

The NQF of the Kyrgyz Republic is a systemic tool that establishes a unified scale of qualification levels for the development of sectoral qualifications frameworks and professional standards. It ensures cross-sectoral comparability of qualifications and serves as the basis for a system of conformity assessment and the awarding of qualifications to specialists.

The NQF is based on the following principles:

1. lifelong learning for citizens.
2. openness and flexibility of the qualifications system.
3. individualization of educational pathways.

The NQF is intended for various groups of users such as government bodies, employers, enterprises, educational organizations, and citizens, and makes it possible to:

1. develop professional standards, educational standards, and educational programmes on a unified methodological basis.
2. describe, from a common perspective, the requirements for learning outcomes, qualifications, and competencies of specialists and graduates of educational institutions when developing professional and educational standards.
3. develop assessment materials and procedures for determining the qualifications of graduates at all levels of vocational education.
4. form a general strategy for the development of the labour market and the education system, including planning various educational pathways leading to the acquisition of a specific qualification, advancement in qualification levels, and career growth.

4. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

4.1 NQF structure and level descriptors

The main elements of the NQF are:

- qualification levels.
- descriptors of qualification levels.
- variable pathways for achieving qualification levels.
- workload required to attain a qualification level within formal education.

The NQF of the Kyrgyz Republic comprises nine levels, covering the full range of educational qualifications: from primary to higher professional and postgraduate education, vocational education and training (VET) and adult education (AE/AL).

Each NQF qualification level consists of descriptors in terms of the knowledge, skills, and personal competencies required to achieve it.

The descriptors establish a common formulation of expectations regarding educational achievements and abilities typical for a qualification, indicating the completion of a course of study or its individual stage.

The NQF descriptors of the Kyrgyz Republic are developed based on the following principles:

1. comprehensiveness – descriptors should be sufficiently general to cover all types of education, including non-formal and informal, and reflect modern types of qualifications.
2. transparency and comparability – descriptors should serve as a reference for international comparison.
3. from simple to complex – descriptors should reflect the increasing complexity of learning outcomes as one moves from lower to higher levels.
4. flexibility – descriptors should allow for the development and smooth integration of new types of qualifications emerging in the labour market into the qualifications framework.

The level descriptors are elaborated in detail and can be used to define specific educational and professional standards.

The legal acts regulating the NQF provide for the possibility of including sub-levels to take account of specific labour market needs or changes in the education system. This allows the system to be adapted to changing conditions and keeps it relevant. The NQF also supports the recognition of qualifications acquired through formal, non-formal, and spontaneous learning, which contributes to the flexibility and accessibility of education for different categories of citizens.

Description of levels:

1. Levels 1–2 – Primary Education:

These levels cover basic general education, which lays the foundations for the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities necessary for further learning and social adaptation. The focus is on developing basic learning abilities and socialization of students.

2. Levels 3–5 – Initial and Secondary Vocational Education:

These levels include qualifications related to obtaining secondary general and vocational education. They prepare individuals for the labour market by offering both general education and vocational training, enabling graduates to be competitive in the labour market.

3. Levels 6–9 – Higher Vocational and Postgraduate Education:

These levels cover higher education, including bachelor's and master's programs, basic doctoral programmes (PhD), postgraduate, and doctoral studies. At these levels, students engage in in-depth study of specialized disciplines, develop research skills, and prepare for or engage in scientific activities. Graduates of these levels acquire the competencies necessary to perform complex professional tasks and participate in academic research.

4.2 NQF scope and coverage

The NQF covers a wide range of qualifications from various fields of education and training.

Table 4.1 Types of qualifications

Level of EQF ¹	Level of NQF of the KR	Type of qualification	Example
-	9	Doctor of Science (postgraduate degree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctor of economics • Doctor of philology • Doctor of technical sciences
8	8	Candidate of Science (postgraduate degree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate of economic sciences • Candidate of philological sciences • Candidate of technical sciences
8	8	Doctor of Philosophy PhD (postgraduate degree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PhD in economics • PhD in management • PhD in biology • PhD in computer engineering
7	7	Master's degree (higher education degree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree in cultural studies • Master's degree in economics (specialization in accounting and auditing) • University lecturer
7	7	Specialist (higher education degree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family doctor/general practitioner • water supply and sewerage sector engineer
6	6	Bachelor's degree (higher education diploma)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree in cultural studies • Bachelor's degree in economics (specialization in accounting) • Secondary vocational education teacher
5	5	Specialist of SVE (SVE diploma)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse • VET (Vocational Education and Training) Instructor • Social worker social services without providing housing • Accountant in water supply and sewerage sector • Veterinary paramedic • Electrical technician for repair, operation, reconstruction, and maintenance of electrical networks
4	4	Technician, PVE diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plumber-pipefitter for sanitary systems • Sous chef (4th grade cook) • Painter
3	3	Short-term course certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turner-miller • 3rd grade cook
2	2		
1	1		

Source of the table: <https://www.gov.kg/ru/npa/s/2709>, <https://mlsp.gov.kg/ru/reestr-professionalnyh-standartov-2/>

¹ The comparison with the EQF levels is unofficial.

Non-formal and informal education are still poorly integrated into the NQF due to insufficiently developed professional standards and sectoral qualification frameworks.

4.3 Use and renewal of learning outcomes and standards

According to the regulatory framework of the Kyrgyz Republic, learning outcomes play a key role in professional standards and educational programmes.

The approved sequencing for using learning outcomes at various stages of the qualification cycle is as follows:

- learning outcomes are used to describe the requirements for the competencies, knowledge, and skills necessary to perform specific professional activities, reflecting the needs of the labour market and employers, and are reflected in professional standards.
- State Educational Standards are developed based on professional standards and include the learning outcomes that must be achieved during training. Currently, these procedures are outlined in the [Model of the State Educational Standard](#) for Primary, Secondary, and Higher Vocational Education of the Kyrgyz Republic, approved on 8 July 2024, No. 371.
- the curricula of educational institutions are developed taking these learning outcomes into account, ensuring alignment between educational and professional requirements.
- assessment procedures and materials are developed in such a way as to measure the extent to which students achieve the learning outcomes.
- certification/qualification is awarded after successful verification of learning outcomes.

However, the insufficient development of professional standards currently prevents full implementation of this sequencing.

4.4 Quality assurance arrangements

State Educational Standards (SESs) for all levels include requirements for quality, structure, implementation conditions, general and professional competencies, and learning outcomes according to the curriculum.

On 8 July, 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic approved the [Model of the State Educational Standard](#) (SES) for Primary Vocational Education, Secondary Vocational Education, and Higher Vocational Education of the Kyrgyz Republic by Resolution No. 371. Currently, all SESs for PVE, SVE and HVE are under development.

Educational standards are used to develop curricula, mechanisms and criteria for quality control of education and for the accreditation of education providers and curricula.

The SES model states that: “Educational institutions independently develop curricula for the corresponding level of professional education, considering labour market needs. The curriculum is developed based on the corresponding SES for the profession/specialty/field, the National Qualifications Framework, sectoral/industry-specific qualifications frameworks, and professional standards (if available).”

Kyrgyzstan also approved [the methodology and procedure for developing professional standards](#) (15 July 2021). The development of professional standards is coordinated by the MLSSM, which also registers professional standards and maintains their register.

The standards can be developed by sectoral authorized state bodies, sectoral councils, trade unions, and employers’ associations. Standards are approved by the relevant sectoral authorized state bodies. The validity period of a professional standard is determined by its developers depending on the specifics of the sector, usually ranging from 3 to 5 years. Priority sectors for the development and implementation of professional standards are determined in accordance with approved national strategic documents and sectoral development programmes of the Kyrgyz Republic.

The external quality assurance of qualifications developed by VET providers is implemented through independent accreditation agencies. In 2014, to provide oversight of these agencies' activities, the government established the National Accreditation Council (NAC). The NAC evaluates and authorises the agencies, which can then accredit educational institutions and other providers. Currently, eight such independent accreditation agencies are operational.

In 2015, a KR Government Resolution was issued specifying the criteria for accreditation of institutions of primary, secondary, and higher vocational education. The criteria related to curricula require that they be formulated in terms of learning outcomes in collaboration with stakeholders from professional associations and industry organizations.

By 2018, most educational institutions had undergone accreditation procedures applied by the Ministry of Education and Science or one of the independent accreditation bodies.

Currently, the regulatory framework for the accreditation of VET organizations is being revised in connection with the adoption of the new Law of the Kyrgyz Republic, "On Education."

Since 2023, the Centre for Independent Certification and Validation under the Ministry of Education and Science has been operational for the independent recognition (validation) of qualifications.

VET organizations independently develop and implement internal quality assurance systems, including the assessment of learning outcomes.

VET providers apply the following assessment methods: testing knowledge and skills; practical assignments and projects; demonstration of professional competencies in real or simulated conditions.

Compliance control: pedagogical councils and internal committees monitor the compliance of assessments with established standards.

The traditional system for assessing the quality of education of students and graduates of VET institutions includes evaluation of their current academic performance, midterm assessments, and final state attestation.

The final state attestation committee includes external experts or employers, although their level of participation in the final decision-making process varies. For several years, a pilot model of independent attestation of VET graduates, as well as the validation of non-formal learning, supported by the GIZ programme, "Promotion of Employment and Vocational Education in Kyrgyzstan", was being implemented.

5. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

In 2022, by the [Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic](#), the National Qualifications Council (NQC) was established to coordinate the activities of government bodies, employers, public and private educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local communities in planning, implementing, and monitoring the development of the national qualifications system.

The Council is tasked with performing several functions:

1. coordinating – to ensure interaction among all stakeholders for the comprehensive development of the elements of the national qualifications system, ensure consistency and transparency of procedures, their comparability with international methodologies, and recognize qualifications in regional and transnational labour markets.
2. methodological – to develop elements of the national qualifications system (sectoral frameworks, professional standards, assessment tools, etc.) for ensuring comparability of outcomes.
3. training – to coordinate the training of entities involved in the development and implementation of elements of the national qualifications system.

4. informational – to organize the dissemination of information to the public and ensuring access to methodological and regulatory documents on the development of the national qualifications system.

The key actors in the processes of developing the NQF are the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), the Ministry of Labour, Social Security, and Migration (MLSSL), and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI).

MES is responsible for linking qualifications with learning processes and the assessment of skills and competencies, as well as quality assurance processes. It develops the regulatory framework for recognizing outcomes not only of formal but also of non-formal and informal learning. Since 2023, MES has also been developing the regulatory framework for piloting skills validation and certification through the Centre for Independent Certification and Validation.

MLSPM conducts labour market needs analyses and coordinates the development of professional standards and sectoral frameworks jointly with sectoral ministries and working groups.

Sectoral ministries are responsible for developing the respective sectoral frameworks and professional standards through working groups or sectoral councils, which include representatives of employers, industry associations, experts, educational institutions, and professional communities.

5.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

One of the main stakeholders of the NQF is the national Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI). Representing the business community, the CCI ensures the involvement of employers from key sectors in the NQF development processes.

Stakeholder participation in the governance and daily operations of the NQF in the Kyrgyz Republic is a key factor for the successful functioning of the qualifications system. However, in practice, aside from certain government institutions, the level of stakeholder involvement in NQF development remains limited.

In an economy where small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are prevalent, there are few large employers. Consequently, there are few employers who have the resources and expertise to contribute to education and training strategies. Moreover, stakeholder input is usually advisory in nature rather than co-decisional.

However, some employers are aware of and understand the NQF concepts due to their participation in various international and donor-funded projects related to the qualifications system. For example, the ADB launched a project for the development and updating of professional standards and modular curricula, in which employers and other stakeholders provided consultation on the content of curricula.

Industry sectors also participate in the validation of non-formal learning.

Employer involvement is also specified as one of the requirements for the independent accreditation of educational institutions.

6. RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

6.1 Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

The Education Development Strategy for 2021–2040 envisages the expansion of the system for validating non-formal and informal learning, recognizing its importance for human capital development and ensuring access to lifelong learning.

The new Law, “On Education”, establishes the legal basis for the confirmation and recognition of competencies in a profession in general or in certain types of activities, obtained through formal, non-

formal, and informal learning, with the issuance of a document certifying the corresponding qualification.

Since 2017, with support from the GIZ project, “Promotion of Employment and Vocational Education in Kyrgyzstan”, a pilot model of validation and independent certification has been implemented with active participation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and representatives of sectoral organizations and enterprises.

On 28 August 2023, the Centre for Independent Certification and Validation under the Ministry of Education and Science was established by the [Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers](#).

The main tasks of the Centre are to:

- define the framework conditions for establishing a system of independent certification and validation.
- organise work processes for conducting independent certification and validation of professional qualifications.
- coordinate the activities of expert groups in developing forms, procedures, and materials for independent certification and validation.
- prepare the material, technical, and methodological base for achieving the set objectives and establishing timelines for conducting independent certification and validation.
- organise independent professional performance assessment with the awarding of qualification/skill levels and issuance of certificates.

The Centre and the validation procedures operate according to the Guidelines (Procedure) for the Assessment and Recognition of Professional Competencies, approved by a joint order of MES and MLSPM. To conduct independent certification and validation, the Centre forms Certification Committees. Assessors are required to have the relevant professional qualifications and at least five years’ work experience. In addition, both assessors and employers must undergo appropriate training. Such training was first conducted in 2024 within the GIZ project.

6.2 Credit systems

In 2011, KR Government Resolution No. 496 adopted a two-level higher education structure with bachelor’s and master’s degrees, expressed in academic credits (credit units), to strengthen integration into the international educational community. In 2018, KR Government Resolution No. 160 adopted a model of the State Educational Standard for secondary VET, introducing a credit unit system for secondary VET programmes.

In 2020, the NQF established that the workload required to achieve a qualification level within formal education is determined within sectoral qualifications frameworks and professional standards. In this context:

- for qualification levels 1–4, workload is measured in hours.
- for qualification levels 5–8, workload is measured in credits; 1 credit equals 30 academic hours.
- workload for qualification level 9 is not formally established.

Credits can be transferred between institutions at the same level. Credits cannot be transferred between vocational education institutions and higher education institutions.

6.3 Promoting lifelong learning

The NQF promotes the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, which is important for the social integration and employment of various population groups.

7. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

7.1. Stage of implementation

Currently, Kyrgyzstan is at the activation stage according to the guidelines defined by ETF and Cedefop.

The country has established a legal and regulatory framework and allocated institutional roles for the implementation of the NQF. The NQF is used in the development of professional standards, independent assessment, and validation. However, at present, it is necessary to refine the key functions of the qualifications system, including the implementation of a quality assurance system, the application of learning outcomes within the qualifications themselves, and informing the main NQF stakeholders about its objectives and usage.

7.2 Indicating RQF/NQF levels

Currently, NQF levels are not indicated on diplomas and certificates. However, some universities issuing the European Diploma Supplement do indicate the corresponding NQF level in this document.

7.3 NQF dissemination

A unified communication strategy for the NQF in the Kyrgyz Republic has not been developed. However, the following information and communication activities are carried out as part of NQF implementation:

- seminars and training sessions for representatives of educational institutions, employers, and other stakeholders.
- publications of informational materials, methodological guidelines, and manuals on the development and implementation of professional standards and qualifications.
- information campaigns in mass media and social networks to raise public awareness of the objectives and benefits of the NQF.
- collaboration with international organizations e.g., Asian Development Bank, GIZ, ETF, that support informational projects promoting the NQF.

7.4 Qualifications Databases and Registers

Currently, [a register of professional standards](#) has been established and is maintained by MLSSM.

As of June 2025, the register includes 78 professional standards. However, additional databases related to services or sources of information, such as training opportunities, validation options, job vacancies, professional classifications, career information, and counselling, are not available at this stage.

The standards cover sectors such as healthcare, water supply and sanitation, education, social services, food service, construction, and others. However, these standards do not encompass all existing qualifications within each sector.

7.5 Use of NQF in recognition of foreign qualifications

In 2004, Kyrgyzstan ratified and implemented the [Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#).

The State Supreme Qualifying Committee of Kyrgyzstan coordinates the recognition and nostrification² of academic degrees such as Candidate of Sciences and Doctor of Sciences. MES handles the legalization of secondary education documents. For the recognition of higher education documents in the context of continuing education, decisions are made by the respective higher education institutions.

7.6 Career guidance and counselling

Government authorities and educational institutions are working to better integrate the various available careers guidance services. Information is provided through several national platforms and sources, including audio and video materials about different sectors, specialized television and radio programmes, and regular coverage of career guidance activities on the recently launched website <https://bilim.akipress.org/>.

MES, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and GIZ, has implemented several career guidance projects, resulting in the development of manuals and other tools. There is currently no publicly available government resource that provides information on forecast of skills demand.

7.7 Awareness and use of the NQF

At the national level, professional standards are developed with the participation of employer representatives. Additionally, some employers have become familiar with the NQF and its functions through their involvement in various international and donor-funded projects related to the qualifications framework.

7.8 Monitoring and evaluating the NQF

So far, the use of the NQF has not been evaluated.

7.9 Impact of the NQF

Educational standards must now be developed considering the levels of the NQF, which should ensure the continuity and comparability of qualifications.

8. Referencing to Regional/ Other Frameworks

8.1 Referencing to Regional Frameworks

The Kyrgyz Republic is actively working to integrate into the international educational space and to enhance the comparability of its qualifications with international standards. Although Kyrgyzstan is not a member of the [European Higher Education Area \(EHEA\)](#), the country actively applies the principles of the Bologna Process to reform its higher education system.

The National Qualifications Framework of the Kyrgyz Republic has been developed considering the structure and descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which promotes comparability of qualifications and facilitates academic mobility. Additionally, in developing the NQF, the structure and [descriptors of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(ASEAN\)](#) were taken into account.

² The formal recognition and validation of a foreign educational qualification (like a university degree or high school diploma) within a specific country, affording it equivalence with a domestic qualification.

Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and within the framework of this association, agreements on mutual recognition of educational documents and academic degrees are in force. This facilitates the recognition of qualifications among CIS countries.

Kyrgyzstan has also concluded several bilateral agreements on educational cooperation with countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and others, which may include provisions for the recognition of qualifications. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), where the issues of cooperation in the field of education, including the recognition of qualifications, are discussed. The Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Educational Documents of 1997 and its subsequent updates govern these processes.

8.2 International cooperation

Kyrgyzstan participates in the European Education Initiative in Central Asia (EEI), which promotes cooperation between Central Asia and the EU, as well as among the Central Asian countries themselves, to strengthen educational reforms in the region.

A notable activity under this initiative was the ETF initiative, the Central Asian Education Platform (CAEP, 2012–2019), which included extensive dialogue on developing measures and technical components for education development, including the NQF.

Kyrgyzstan is a partner country of the Erasmus+ programme.

Kyrgyzstan is also a member of the [Eurasian Economic Union](#) (EAEU). In the decision "[On Strategic Priorities for Eurasian Economic Integration until 2025](#)", the five EAEU countries agreed on measures to support integration in the field of labour migration, including ensuring the comparability of education systems, skills, and qualifications.

As a member of the SCO, Kyrgyzstan participates in the "[SCO University](#)" programme, which promotes cooperation and exchange for university students between the SCO countries.

International donors, especially the EU, ADB, ILO, and GIZ, play a significant role in developing the country's qualifications system, including the development of standards and curricula, as well as the professional development of teaching staff.

The EU provides support in education and training through budgetary funding for the education sector, as well as through programmes such as Erasmus+ (formerly Tempus) for higher education. Initiatives such as the NQF-Quadriga project under the Tempus programme proposed methodologies for the development of the NQF. These projects facilitated experience exchange with European countries and the introduction of best practices into Kyrgyzstan's education system.

From 2022 to 2027, [ETF's DARYA project](#) is being implemented in Central Asian countries to support young people through inclusion and the development of labour market skills.

Within the framework of the project "Promotion of Employment and Vocational Education" (2021–2023), GIZ provided support for the development of the vocational education and training system, including the implementation of a validation system for non-formal and informal learning, the development of professional standards, and the modernization of curricula.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), through the Second Vocational Education and Skills Development Project (2012–2019) and the Skills for Inclusive Growth Sector Development Programme (2017–2025), supported the improvement of the quality and relevance of vocational education to labour market needs. ADB finances the modernization of educational institutions' infrastructure, equipping them with modern facilities, and the professional development of teaching staff.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) supports the implementation of vocational training strategies, contributes to the development of the qualifications system, and provides technical assistance in employment and social protection. This includes projects such as supporting a "Just Transition to an Environmentally Sustainable Economy in Kyrgyzstan" (2023–2024) and "Strengthening the Social and Solidarity Economy in Asia" (2021–2024). The ILO also implements the ILO-G20 Skills Strategy (2016–2021).

These donor organizations have a significant impact on the development of the qualifications system in Kyrgyzstan, promoting the integration of international standards, improving the quality of education, and enhancing the competitiveness of graduates in the labour market.

9. REFLECTIONS AND PLANS

The influence of the old Soviet tariff and qualification system, which regulated the labour market and education systems through occupational classifiers and state educational standards, still makes its influence felt. There is a tendency to view qualifications as a license to practice a profession rather than as a passport to engage in various activities or pursue different occupations and continue learning throughout life.

That said, the NQF is genuinely aimed at improving the quality of education and vocational training, as well as creating conditions for the recognition of qualifications obtained not only through formal education but also through non-formal and informal learning. Progress is visible, but the system is still at an early stage of implementation. Currently, the main challenges remain the development of institutional mechanisms for the effective management of the NQF, the introduction of a quality assurance system, and the integration of learning outcomes across all levels of the qualifications system. Further efforts are needed to strengthen collaboration between educational institutions, employers, and government bodies to fully implement the NQF and ensure its sustainability.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Banks
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CA	Central Asia
CAEP	Central Asian Education Platform
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EEI	European Education Initiative
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ILO	International Labor Organization
KR	Kyrgyz Republic
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MLSSM	Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Migration
NAC	National Accreditation Council
NQC	National Qualifications Council
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NQS	National Qualifications System
PVE	Primary Vocational Education
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SES	State Educational Standard
SVE	Secondary Vocational Education

Further Information

ETF country page, Kyrgyzstan [Kyrgyzstan | ETF](#)

DARYA – Dialogue and action for resourceful youth in Central Asia [DARYA – Dialogue and action for resourceful youth in Central Asia | ETF](#)

The Kyrgyz Republic Government Resolution No. 505, 30.09.2016 – Concept of the National Qualifications System <https://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/157131/edition/974613/ru>

The Kyrgyz Republic Government Resolution No. 491 – “On the Approval of the National Qualifications Framework” <https://www.gov.kg/ru/npa/s/2709>

The Kyrgyz Republic Government Resolution No. 78, 15.07.2021 – “On the National Qualifications Council” <https://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/158362/edition/1117265/ru>

The Kyrgyz Republic Government Resolution No. 431, 28.08.2023 – “On the Centre for Independent Certification and Validation under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic” <https://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/160403/edition/1276116/ru>

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