

NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK – KAZAKHSTAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

Kazakhstan first adopted a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in 2012, which was revised in 2016. Following the adoption of the [Law on Professional Qualifications](#) in 2023, a more fundamental restructuring of the NQF was initiated.

Kazakhstan's Qualifications Framework comprises eight levels covering general education, vocational education and training (VET), adult education (AE), and higher education (HE).

Established in 2023 under the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the interdepartmental National Council for Professional Qualifications (NCPQ) coordinates the development of the National Qualifications System (NQS) and approves the NQS.

Kazakhstan is a member of the Bologna Process and has already self-certified the relevant levels of its NQF to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

The country has a well-established NQF with level descriptors. Government agencies and other actors are assigned key functions. The NQF guides stakeholders on using learning outcomes approaches, as well as on updating qualifications. Kazakhstan is in the operational stage.

2. NATIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 Policy context

Over the past 10 years, Kazakhstan's economy has grown significantly due to the development of its oil and gas industry. In 2024, the country's GDP grew by [4.8%](#). Kazakhstan is trying to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on raw materials and natural resources, and significant growth was achieved in several sectors: agriculture, construction, trade, and transportation, manufacturing. The agricultural sector and processing industries have recorded the most dynamic growth over the past 10 years.

In 2024, the labour force was approximately 9.7 million people, while its share of the working-age population was between 68-70%. Of those employed, 7 million (76.6%) were self-employed and 2.2 million (23.4%) were employees. The total number of employed increased by 132,000 in 2024. This increase was driven by employees, whose number increased by 122,000, as well as the self-employed, who increased by 11,000¹.

TVET is an integral part of secondary education. Depending on the training and academic qualifications of students, it produces "qualified workers" and "middle-level specialists".

In Kazakhstan, 772 colleges educate 565,000 students. Of those, 91,000 are enrolled in dual education programmes. More than 4,000 enterprises collaborate with 613 colleges to provide practical training and employment for graduates through various forms, such as dual training. There are 119 universities in Kazakhstan where more than 600,000 students' study.

[Through a presidential decree](#), 2025 was declared the Year of Working Professions, with the goal of increasing their prestige in the country. The government's [action plan](#) for the Year of Working Professions focuses on career guidance, increasing employer participation in employee training and support, improving employee training systems, and making technical and vocational education more attractive.

¹ National Statistics Bureau.

Education and training reform

The country's socio-economic development strategy, "Kazakhstan 2050," aims to attract foreign investment and increase Kazakhstan's competitiveness in new markets. The National Development Plans of the Republic of Kazakhstan [until 2025 and 2029](#) set out strategic goals and principles aimed at improving the quality of education, establishing fair social policies, developing productive employment, and unlocking Kazakhstan's potential, with a focus on providing quality education.

Since 2022, technical and vocational education (TVET) organizations have enjoyed academic independence, enabling them to develop educational programmes with employer participation based on state mandatory education standards, professional standards, and regional specifics.

VET organizations are moving to a credit-based, modular learning system that allows students to design their own learning path by earning the necessary credits for various levels of proficiency.

Work continues on developing industry-specific competence centres in college. These centres increase citizens' access to various qualifications, retraining, non-formal education, and soft skills development.

Development of the National Qualification System (NQS)

The National Development Plan mentioned above provided the prerequisites for developing legislation to assess qualifications and certify specialists, define a national qualifications authority, and develop models of professional competencies and mechanisms to assess them.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MLSP) has developed [a roadmap for the NQS's development from 2019 to 2025](#).

Road map tasks are: 1) bring existing professions, specialties, and qualifications into a unified system in accordance with modern requirements for labour functions; 2) strengthen links between the labour market and training; 3) create a transparent and sustainable system of certification and recognition of qualifications; 4) create conditions for the transition to a results-based education system; 5) ensure international recognition of qualifications and labour mobility.

Work is ongoing to transition from the previously adopted tariff and qualification categories, which are still used in certain industries, to the use of NQF qualification levels.

In 2023, Kazakhstan approved two concepts for the period of 2023-2029: the [Concept of Development of Preschool, Secondary, Technical, and Vocational Education \(TVET\)](#) and the [Concept of Development of Higher Education and Science](#). Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is considered the primary means of training workers within the framework of lifelong learning. The concept aims to improve access to TVET by increasing per capita funding and providing career guidance. Both concepts emphasize improving quality by strengthening the link with the economy, businesses, and services.

Both concepts also refer to integrating the mechanisms of the National Qualification System (NQS)² into TVET and higher education, including the use of professional standards, the introduction of micro-qualifications and/or minor programmes, and assessment in qualification recognition centres. They also discuss using foresight studies of the labour market to forecast the need for new professions, offering new qualifications, and developing innovative educational programmes.

The plan is to integrate the portfolio of educational programmes created based on the register of educational programmes, with the digital platform of the National Qualification System.

² A wider concept than an NQF, encompassing everything related to the award of a qualification.

2.2 NQF legal basis

The current [National Qualifications Framework \(NQF\) was approved on March 16, 2016](#), by the Trilateral Commission on Social Partnership and Regulation of Social and Labour Relations. The [Law on Professional Qualification](#), adopted on 4 July 2023, established the necessary legal framework. It states that the NQF is one of the fundamental instruments of the wider national qualification system (NQS).

The NQS is collectively developed and revised by the MLSP, the Ministry of Education, and Science (MES) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE). The National Council for Professional Qualifications (NCPQ), which was established under the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, approves the NQF. The 2023 law:

- regulates the activities and interactions of NQS participants, basic tools, and the NQS digital platform.
- regulates the competence of bodies and the management structure of the field of recognition of professional qualifications.
- describes the procedure and conditions for the recognition of professional qualifications, accreditation of recognition centres and incentive measures for the recognition of professional qualifications.

Implementation of the provisions of the 2023 Law implies changes to older legislation regulating programmes, professional training and qualifications, such as the [Labor Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan](#).

[The country's historical](#) tariff and qualification categories, which are still used in certain industries, are scheduled to be phased out, by 2030, in the transition to defining qualifications and developing standards linked to NQF levels.

3. NQF OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS

Kazakhstan has developed its NQF as a single structure for classifying qualifications.

It is intended for various groups of users, including government agencies, employers, educational organizations, and citizens. It aims to contribute to:

1. developing professional and educational standards and programmes based on a unified methodology.
2. describing requirements for training results, qualifications, and competencies of specialists and graduates of educational institutions from a single point of view.
3. developing assessment materials and procedures for determining the qualifications of graduates at all levels of professional education.
4. providing cross-industry comparability of qualifications and competencies. This is the basis for the system of conformity assessment and awarding of professional qualifications.

4. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

4.1 NQF structure and level descriptors

Currently, the NQF has eight levels and three domains. These domains are: 1) knowledge; 2) skills and abilities; and 3) personal and professional competencies. The general NQF table with level descriptors also shows ways to achieve each level, including stages of formal education and types of non-formal education.

The following major changes or additions are being considered as part of the 2024-launched [NQF revision](#):

1. renaming the three domains, "knowledge," "skills," and "responsibility and autonomy".
2. providing more detail within, and a clearer structure to, the level descriptors.
3. insertion of a table that provides a detailed description of the content of the levels and how to access them and move between them. This table takes into account the type and level of education, as well as the assessment and recognition of qualifications and work experience.
4. A new column, "Documents Confirming the award of Qualification, Education" is being added. It will list documents from formal and non-formal education, and professional qualifications, each allocated to NQF levels.

Related instruments

The [National Classifier of Occupations of Kazakhstan](#) (harmonized with ISCO-08) can be approximated to the NQF like so:

- the 1st to 3rd levels of the NQF correspond to the 1st level of the National Classifier.
- the 4th to 6th levels of the NQF correspond to the 2nd level of the Classifier.
- the 7th and 8th levels of the NQF correspond to the 3rd and 4th levels of the Classifier.

4.2 NQF scope and coverage

The NQF covers qualifications obtained through general secondary, technical, vocational, post-secondary, and higher education programmes. It also recognizes learning outcomes achieved through on-the-job training or other nonformal and informal learning experiences.

Overview of Kazakhstan's National Qualifications Framework



Source: National Professional Qualifications Authority

The revisions to the NQF now underway emphasize and provide details on how to access qualifications through non-formal and informal learning, and the recognition of qualifications and work experience. Additionally, the restructured NQF will correlate NQF levels with the categories of the Unified Tariff and Qualification Directory of Workers' Jobs and Professions. This directory is used in Kazakhstan to assign tariff categories to workers.

The overhauled NQF will encompass:

- Levels 1-4: labour market qualifications include a certificate, diploma, or degree in a TVET field.
- Levels 5 to 8: educational (academic) and scientific (expert) qualifications: TVET diploma, certificate, certificate, bachelor's degree, specialist's degree, master's degree, doctorate, Ph.D., and doctorate.

TVET educational programmes include micro-qualifications that allow students to master the skills necessary to perform certain labour functions in related fields. In higher education, minor programmes and micro-qualification programmes are being implemented and are available. In accordance with professional standards, these programmes provide students with the opportunity to be awarded qualifications at the 4th and 5th levels of the NQF. After two or three years of study, students can work in the field of micro-qualification they have mastered, while continuing their studies.

4.3 Use and renewal of learning outcomes and standards

The [Order of the Minister of Education of August 3, 2022](#), which approves the state standards of technical and vocational education (TVET), stipulates that standards, qualifications and programmes at all levels should derive from learning outcomes.

Professional or occupational standards, based on the descriptors of the NQF and the relevant SQF, determine the level of qualification and programme. HE programmes focus on learning outcomes and compliance with the NQF and SQF and take account of professional standards. Educational programmes and qualifications across all education and training sectors and qualifications indicate the appropriate NQF level.

Outcomes-based occupational standards are also used to assess candidates for award of professional qualifications.

Over 8,500 educational programmes based on professional standards have been updated, and education and labour market classifiers are being integrated into 330 specialties and 771 Technical and TVET qualifications.

In Kazakhstan, the structure of professional standards has been revised. In 2024, [methodological recommendations](#) for developing and updating professional standards were published in accordance with the [Rules](#) for Developing and Updating Professional Standards (hereinafter referred to as the "Rules"), which were approved by Order No. 377 of MLSP on 7 September 2023.

Professional standards are divided into units - labour functions; and components - skills needed to solve professional tasks. Skills are then described by knowledge and abilities. Recognition centres can evaluate and validate an individual's skill set.

Fifty-six sectoral councils for professional qualifications, which are established under line ministries, determine the need to develop or revise professional standards. In 2024, line ministries approved 189 new professional standards for in-demand professions. The total number of professional standards reached 838, including 4,510 professions. Changes were made to 54 sectoral qualifications frameworks.

4.4 Quality assurance arrangements

Standards

Quality assurance of qualifications in TVET begins with occupational standards. The National Professional Qualifications Authority (NPQA) conducts reviews of these documents which list the tasks and performance requirements of an occupation.

Line ministries approve professional standards. Approval and inclusion of a professional standard in the register is necessary to include the professions and qualifications related to the approved standard in the NQF.

Programmes

At the beginning of each academic year, TVET colleges are free to update educational programmes to align with employer demand and professional standards, including WorldSkills standards. All modules within an educational programme are linked to professional standard descriptors.

The Ministry of Education's Talap³ organisation evaluates educational programmes for compliance with professional standards. After verification and approval, educational programmes are included in the register of TVET educational programmes, which currently number over 8,000.

Assessment for award of qualifications

In Kazakhstan, assessment for certifications is called qualification recognition and evaluates whether a candidate meets professional standards⁴.

TVET college exams are practical tests or demonstrations, conducted in workshops, laboratories, and training centres of TVET organizations, on the premises of enterprises, and at the Recognition Centres run by Atameken.

³ [Talap](#) is a national institution that supports the development of technical and vocational education in Kazakhstan. Its key tasks are to provide methodological support to providers in the development of educational programmes, and to support teachers' professional development

⁴ Where such standards are not yet available, the candidate must demonstrate his/her competencies against other criteria defined by the assessors.

Recognition centres develop the assessment arrangements against professional standards, and ensure the compliance of these arrangements with [Order No. 348](#) adopted in 2023, which stipulates the relevant criteria.

TVET college graduates may voluntarily confirm their qualifications at the Atameken recognition centres.

Institutional accreditation

Atkamaken accredits recognition centres in accordance with the [accreditation rules](#) of September 12, 2023. In 2024, [Methodological Guidelines](#) were developed to assist in the development of qualification programmes.

At the TVET level, the external quality assurance system includes self-assessment, state certification of educational organizations every five years, monitoring of student educational achievements, and rating of TVET organizations. Accreditation is also available on a voluntary basis for two or five years from Kazakh institutions and foreign agencies.

Educational organizations conduct an annual self-assessment of their curricula using established criteria and submit the results to the relevant education authority. These [criteria are used](#) in state certification.

The [Guidelines](#) on Quality Assurance by Level of Education direct that external evaluation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) organizations be carried out through institutional or specialized accreditation.

Accreditation is carried out on a voluntary and contractual basis by accreditation bodies included in the register of recognized accreditation bodies. The procedures for institutional and programme accreditation of TVET organizations follow European and international standards and include the following stages: 1) preparing a self-assessment report; 2) conducting an external assessment; 3) analysing the report and making a decision; and 4) post-accreditation monitoring.

The register of recognized accreditation bodies for VET includes six national institutions and six foreign ones.

System monitoring

MES monitors students' educational achievements through selective monitoring of the quality of training.

5. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

The [National Council for Professional Qualifications](#) and the MLSP are responsible for general coordination of the system of professional qualifications. They also coordinate the activities of the NPQA and approve legal acts in recognition of professional qualifications. The Council's members are:

- Ministers and/or deputies, including ministers of Labour and Social Protection of the Population; of Education; of Higher Education; and of other ministries.
- Deputy city and regional akims (heads of local executive authorities).
- Deputy city and regional akims (heads of local executive authorities).

- First Deputy Chairman of the Board of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of the Republic of Kazakhstan i.e., Atameken.
- Deputy Chairman of the Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
- Head of the National Professional Qualifications Authority.
- Chairs of sectoral councils.
- Deputies of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan (as confirmed).
- Deputy Chairmen of the Agencies for Strategic Planning and Reforms, and the Regulation and Development of the Financial Market.

Meetings of the NCPQ discuss and decide on strategic, general, and sectoral issues of the NQS,

Since 2023, the National Professional Qualifications Authority (NPQA) has been the main body ensuring the functioning of the NQS. The NPQA was created on the basis of the Centre for the Development of Labour Resources. It conducts organizational, advisory, and methodological activities related to professional qualifications. The NPQA regularly conducts seminars on NQS issues for all categories of stakeholders.

5.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

There are fifty-six sectoral councils for professional qualifications established under line ministries. These councils comprise over 700 experts from various industries, including employers, trade unions, Atameken, industry associations, TVET organizations, and higher and postgraduate education institutions. These councils play a central role in assessing the need for specialists, developing professional standards, and approving industry frameworks.

The departments of NPQA ensure NQS-related analysis and development, functioning, and methodological support. They also provide information, training, methodological and analytical support for the development of industry-specific qualifications frameworks, professional standards, training, and assessments. The NPQA creates working groups with representatives of industries, the trades unions, and the education and training system, when developing and updating methods for developing professional standards, qualifications, qualifications frameworks, and assessment.

In March 2024, the NPQA established an [Expert Council](#) on NQS Issues to develop recommendations and proposals on NQS development. Its members are representatives of state bodies and educational institutions, as well as employers and independent experts.

Atameken accepts applications through its regional representative offices and as indicated at Section 4.4, accredits qualification recognition centres. Information about this process is posted on the NQS digital platform. Qualification recognition centres develop assessment arrangements and evaluate candidates' compliance with professional or qualification standards. These centres are accredited either by Atameken or the National Accreditation Centre.

Before the Law on Professional Qualifications was adopted in 2023, Atameken approved and maintained a register of professional standards. Currently, line ministries approve professional standards, and the NPQA maintains the register of professional standards.

It has to be said that industry in Kazakhstan is more proactive in supporting or driving change in the qualification system than in many countries. Industry associations and large enterprises establish on their own initiative working groups on qualifications, whose representatives actively participate in industry council meetings.

For instance, with the help of the Project Office for Sustainable Development Goals within the national parliament⁵, the Union of Machine Builders of Kazakhstan signed a roadmap with MES in August 2024, to provide qualified specialists to mechanical engineering enterprises and other industries.

The roadmap includes activities such as updating professional standards and college curricula in mechanical engineering, organizing pilot projects for dual training, promoting the WorldSkills movement in mechanical engineering specialties, and providing vocational guidance to schoolchildren.

6. RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING

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

Kazakhstan's system for validating non-formal learning (recognition of qualifications) is currently divided into two areas:

- voluntary, where it is regulated by the Law on Professional Qualifications (2023).
- mandatory: line ministries determine the regulations for training and recognition of qualifications in regulated professions⁶, but they can use the methods and procedures provided in the Law on Professional Qualifications. For example, medical and pharmaceutical workers, as well as specialists from the sanitary and epidemiological service during a break in their work experience, those who have completed a certification course and those who are applying for an assessment to determine their next level of qualification, as well as foreign specialists, are subject to mandatory qualification recognition.

Recognition of a professional qualification establishes the process for evaluating whether a candidate meets professional standards' requirements.

In Kazakhstan, assessment includes the possibility of evaluating and recognizing a single skill or a group of skills that are part of the labour functions of a profession at a certain level of the NQF or an SQF.

A total of 513 professions from various economic sectors are included in the register of professions for which it will be possible to confirm skills. Of these, assessment to confirm skills is mandatory for 135 of them.

In the voluntary sector, qualification recognition centres are accredited by Atameken through its regional representative offices, and they are entered in the [NPQA register](#). To be accredited, recognition centres must have the necessary equipment and materials to carry out the recognition of professional qualifications, as well as qualified personnel to perform the work. The main personnel requirements are to have at least three years of work experience in the relevant industry within the last five years, as well as having an appropriate level of education according to the sectoral qualifications framework and the requirements for the declared professions.

The centres develop assessment arrangements based on professional standards. Centres adhere to the [rules for recognizing professional qualifications](#). The professional qualification recognition procedure is carried out by an examination board established by the centre. It consists of two stages: 1) a theoretical knowledge exam and 2) a practical skills exam.

⁵ Formally, the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

⁶ Those occupations requiring the practitioner to hold a qualification specified in law are known as regulated professions.

As indicated above, sectoral recognition centres in line ministries conduct assessment for recognition for occupations for which holding a specific qualification is mandatory. They can be accredited by Atameken and included in the NPQA register.

To date, six professional qualification recognition centres have been accredited in Kazakhstan and demand is growing. Professional qualifications are recognized in 45 occupations, including in tourism and hospitality, information technology, and manufacturing.

Prior to the adoption of the Law on Professional Qualifications in 2023, certification centres were regulated through inclusion in the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs' (NCE) register. The NCE's register of specialist certification centres included 28 centres where 33,612 people have been certified in the following areas since 2016: ICT, the beauty industry, the food industry, tourism and hospitality, light industries, construction and housing, printing, transport and logistics, and education. Currently, these centres are accredited by the NCE as centres for the recognition of qualifications.

The possibilities for obtaining and recalculating credits, exemption from individual academic disciplines, and recognition of partial and full qualifications based on the results of validation of a candidate's competencies exist and are provided for in the regulatory documents of educational institutions and recognition centres but have not been widely used yet.

6.2 Credit systems

Since 2022, TVET organizations have been transitioning to [a credit-based, modular learning system](#) to promote continuity between levels of education. This system allows students to design their own learning paths by accumulating the necessary credits according to their level of competence ([one credit equals 24 academic hours](#)). Higher TVET colleges coordinate their applied baccalaureate programs with specialized universities to ensure the transfer of academic credits to higher education institutions (HEIs) and reduce the time it takes to earn a bachelor's degree from HEIs.

Since 2011, separate [rules](#) have regulated the use of credits in higher education. These rules describe the structure of educational programmes and curricula, the order of the educational process, academic mobility (including international credit mobility), and the implementation of two-degree and joint educational programs. The volume of one Kazakhstan academic credit in the higher education sector (30 academic hours) corresponds to one ECTS credit (25–30 academic hours).

6.3 Promoting lifelong learning

The NQF promotes recognition of learning acquired in non-formal and informal settings by recognizing qualifications awarded via assessments by the accredited recognition centres. It is also possible to recognize individual units of learning outcomes.

7. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

7.1. Stage of implementation

Kazakhstan has a well-established NQF structure with level descriptors. Key functions are distributed among actors. Methodological guidelines on NQS procedures and mechanisms have been developed, including the development of professional standards, qualification programmes, and the accreditation of qualification recognition bodies.

According to the [ETF and Cedefop Guidelines](#) for determining the stage of development and implementation of an NQF, Kazakhstan is in the operational stage.

7.2 Indicating RQF/NQF levels

Diplomas and certificates of formal education do not distinctively indicate NQF levels, but the appropriate level can be determined by the first sign in the specialty code given in diplomas, including those from higher education institutions. These codes are defined in [TVET classifiers](#) and [areas of higher education and training](#). The first two characters of the code indicate the level of education according to the NQF. For example, qualified workers are 3W, middle-level specialists are 4S, applied bachelor's degrees are 5AB, bachelor's degrees are 6B, master's degrees are 7M, and doctoral degrees are 8D.

Documents on professional qualifications, which appear in the new column included in the NQF table, will include the serial number assigned by the NQS digital platform to indicate the NQF level at which the qualification is placed.

7.3 NQF dissemination

The [action plan](#) for developing NQS in Kazakhstan from 2019 to 2025 includes several actions under the heading "Information Support and Involvement of Participants in the Qualification System." Currently, in Kazakhstan:

- a unified NQS digital platform has been created and is operating.
- NPQA regularly hosts online events to provide methodological support to key NQS stakeholders.

7.4 Qualifications databases and registers

The [NQS digital platform](#) contains two registers: [one for professions](#) and [one for professional standards](#).

The Register of Professions includes 513 professions that are recognized on a mandatory (141) or voluntary (395) basis. It includes the profession's title and National Classifier of Occupations code, its NQF and SQF levels, the document of recognition indicating its validity period, and the sectoral state body of reference (Sectoral Council).

The Register of Professional Standards includes over 800 professional standards covering more than 4,500 professions. In the Register, people can search by industry, sub-industry, or name of the professional standard. The initial structure of the professional standard is presented in the form of a passport and profession cards. The profession cards describe work functions and requirements for skills, abilities, knowledge, and personal competencies for professions. They also determine the level of the SQF. One professional standard may combine several profession cards that characterize a particular field of activity.

7.5 Use of NQF in recognition of foreign qualifications

Kazakhstan has a system for assessing and recognizing foreign academic qualifications in technical and vocational education and higher education. This system is supported by legislation and the [Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications](#), which Kazakhstan has ratified. The system is regulated by the 2023 [Rules for the Recognition of Documents on Secondary, Technical, and Vocational Education](#), as well as the [Rules for the Recognition of Documents on Higher and Postgraduate Education](#).

MES and MHE, through the Republican State Enterprise "[National Center for Higher Education Development](#)" carry out recognition of educational documents.

7.6 Career guidance and counselling

The Enbek Portal was created in 2018 to simplify access to job openings for potential employees and to CVs for employers. It is [a single ecosystem for the social and labor spheres](#), as well as a fully-fledged operator of employment and social security services, including job openings and opportunities for online training and other forms of state support. The goal is to help every citizen find a fulfilling career.

In 2023, more than 350,000 people in Kazakhstan were covered by employment promotion measures. Citizens who are unemployed, underemployed, or seeking suitable employment can apply for assistance at the careers centre in their area of residence through the "electronic government" web portal or the "electronic labour exchange." The careers centre provides applicants with information about employment promotion measures and the services it provides. They draw up an individual employment card and an individual employment plan, which includes social and professional orientation, active employment promotion measures, social assistance, and a schedule of interaction with the careers centre.

The individual employment card includes a referral for vocational training in the required specialisms and qualifications among its four active employment promotion measures. However, the tools and mechanisms of the NQS, such as professional standards, qualification programmes, and information on recognizing qualifications, are not yet being used.

A digital ecosystem of opportunities called "[Mansap Compasses](#)" has been created and used in Kazakhstan to help choose a career and educational programmes. It provides analytics and trends on the 400 most popular professions in Kazakhstan, as well as a salary calculator and educational programme and university statistics. The platform allows users to analyse their current skills, compare the demand for different professions, and choose the optimal educational trajectory. One of the platform's key features is its analysis of data from the largest job search platforms. This feature helps users navigate popular professions and choose regions with the best working conditions. This feature is especially useful for school leavers and students.

7.7 Awareness and use of the NQF

Those who develop and use professional standards are the most knowledgeable about the NQF. The next group that is aware of the NQF are representatives of educational institutions, since state education standards and the law on education prescribe that they draw up educational programmes based on the professional standards and descriptors of the NQF and SQF.

For the remaining stakeholder groups, the focus of NQF and SQF application remains on the content of labour functions and the knowledge and skill requirements defined in professional standards and assessment and award criteria. One reason for the limited awareness and application of the NQF and SQFs may be the widespread use of educational levels instead of skill-level content descriptors.

The NQF's potential influence on the country's qualification processes has not yet been fully realized. Discussions on qualifications, the organization of an expert group on the use and revision of the NQF, the updating of NQF descriptor content, the institutionalization of NQF status, and the creation of guidelines and explanatory notes on NQF application can strengthen the NQF's position as an applied tool for the qualification system.

7.8 Monitoring and evaluating the NQF

The NQF has not been evaluated yet.

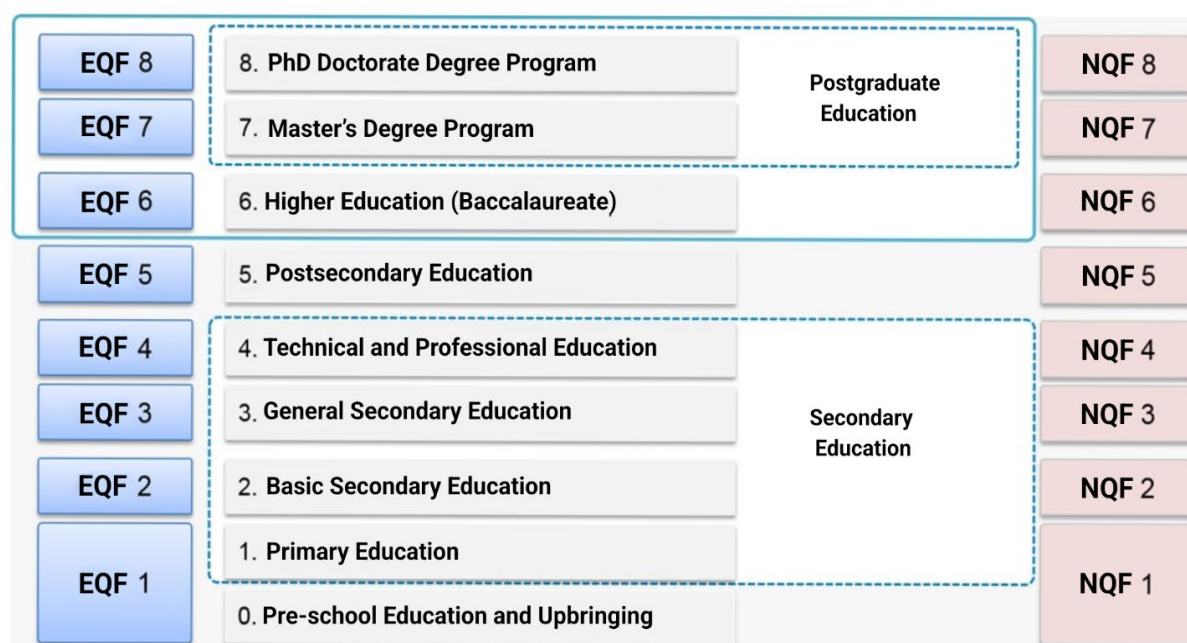
7.9 Impact of the NQF

The levels and descriptors of the NQF are used to develop professional standards and educational programmes for formal TVET. They are also used for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, including to award qualifications. These changes shift education and learning processes towards results-based learning and promote the recognition of learning outside formal education.

8. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL AND OTHER FRAMEWORKS

8.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

Kazakhstan has developed its NQF with an eye to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Like the EQF, it consists of eight levels of qualifications.



Drawing: An informal comparison of the NQF levels of the Republic of Kazakhstan with the EQF levels.

In 2020, the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Kazakhstan was confirmed to be compatible and comparable with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, as a result of the Bologna Process Secretariat's adoption of the [report on self-certification](#) of the framework. Starting in 2021, graduates from Kazakh higher education institutions have been able to receive an updated Diploma Supplement confirming that their qualifications are comparable to European ones.

In 2021, the [Declaration](#) on the Creation of the Central Asian Higher Education Area was signed.

8.2 International cooperation

Since 2010, Kazakhstan has participated in the European Training Foundation's [Torino Process](#), which involves conducting a review of the development and implementation of VET policies.

With the support of EU experts, the [ESCO](#) classifier is being translated into Kazakh for use in the digital skills bank.

Since 2009, Kazakhstan has participated in the international [PISA](#) program, which assesses students' educational achievements. The PISA survey is conducted annually for schools.

Since 2015, Kazakhstan has been a member of the [WorldSkills International Association](#), participating in competitions for skilled trades.

Since 2022, Kazakhstan has participated in the [EU DARYA project](#), [an international initiative](#) involving Central Asian countries that supports young people by promoting inclusion and developing their skills for the labour market.

Kazakhstan began establishing the NQS in 2012 with the support of the World Bank (2012-2015), while subsequent phases of the project focused on [strengthening the established NQS foundations](#). From 2016 to 2021, the MLSPP collaborated with the World Bank, in developing methodologies for professional standards, qualifications frameworks, and educational programmes. It also developed recommendations for updating the NQF and devised a NQS roadmap.

Other key donor-supported projects:

2004-2006	GIZ and MES' "Professional Education" programme.
2006-2010	"Your Business" project, which includes training modules from the ILO, USAID, and MES.
2008-2012	"Development of Social Partnership" project run by the ETF and MES.
2008-2010	GIZ and MES project titled "Development of Professional Education".
2011-2013	GIZ, EU, and MES project, "Support for Vocational Education and Training; Educational Institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan".
2011-2017	"Dual Training" project of the Trier Chamber of Crafts (Germany), in collaboration with the Independent Association of Entrepreneurs until 2013 and the NCE until 2017.
2012 - 2019	2012-2019 project: "Central Asian Education Platform" led by the EU.
2013-2018	A joint initiative by GIZ and MES, which provides expert guidance on education and training to government entities.
2013-2015	EU project with the Republican Scientific and Methodological Center titled "Implementation of the Dual Training System".
2015-2018	GIZ Alliance 1 project focusing on dual training.
2019-2020	GIZ Alliance 2 project focusing on dual training.
2012-2015	"Modernization of Technical and Vocational Education" project, a collaboration between the World Bank and MES.
2016-2021	"Development of Labor Skills and Promotion of Jobs" project , joint initiative of the World Bank and MLSPP.
2019-2020	"Formation of Effective National Strategies on Skills" project , a joint initiative of OECD and MLSPP.

9. REFLECTIONS AND PLANS

Government has given priority to the NQF, and there has been renewed impetus to transform it, in particular since the 2024-initiated restructuring which seeks to make the level descriptors more precise and add useful guiding information on the applicability of the NQF.

Institutional arrangements including establishing the NPQA in 2023, and setting up the NCPQ, have favoured government and industry reform objectives by concentrating expertise in strategic bodies.

The NQF is used for VET, recognition of qualifications, and development of professional standards and sector-specific qualifications frameworks. International cooperation is important and has significantly contributed to progress.

Unlike the position in many countries, there is no lack of employer or industry engagement in the NQF.

All the above said, implementation is complicated by the consequences of 1) the way in which the ongoing co-existence of QFs with other qualification or educational classification systems is sometimes managed; 2) the complexity of standards development processes; and 3) some societal underestimation of the NQF's scope.

On the first, an example is the too-tight binding of the SQFs and professional standards to the National Classifier of Occupations (NCO), which distances frameworks and standards from the requirements of industry.

On standards, they are often developed for bunches of several related occupations while employers say they need instead clear indications in the standards of the performance requirements in single professions or occupations. That includes determining the NQF and SQF qualification level for the tasks and performance requirements specified in the standard.

On the NQF's functions, some stakeholders narrowly view the NQF as a table to compare education system levels rather than as an instrument allowing identification of competency levels. Detailed guidelines with examples and recommendations to various stakeholders on applying the NQF could be a remedy.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ESCO	Multilingual Classification of European Skills, Competencies and Occupations
ERC	European Qualifications Framework
ETCS	Unified Tariff and Qualification Directory
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation and Development)
ILO	International Labor Organization
MES RK	Ministry of Education and Science
MHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population
NOPK	National Professional Qualifications Authority
Atameken NCE	Atameken National Chamber of Entrepreneurs
NCPQ	National Council for Professional Qualifications
NPQA	National Professional Qualifications Association
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NQS	National Qualification System
SQF	Sectoral Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RK	Republic of Kazakhstan
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USAID	US Agency for International Development

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