



European Training Foundation

# NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – ARMENIA



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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

## 1.2 NQF snapshot

The Armenian national qualifications framework (NQF) was first adopted by Government Decree (No 332-N) in March 2011; an updated decree was adopted in July 2016 (No 714-N).

The Armenian NQF has eight levels, covering general education, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education; currently, levels 6 to 8 are reserved for higher education. The NQF is oriented towards the formal education system and there is no mechanism to include qualifications awarded from outside the formal education sector.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport is the lead organisation for the national qualifications framework (NQF). The ministry has developed tools and approaches, but the framework has not yet had an impact on end-users. Governments have usually prioritised higher education over VET.

Armenia participates in the Bologna process in higher education having joined in 2005, but has not yet presented a self-certification report. Armenia's NQF is formally adopted and contributes to wider VET reform; implementing bodies are operating; learning outcomes are used in standards and qualifications; and quality assurance arrangements are in place. It is therefore at the activation stage of NQF development.

## 1.2 Policy context

The country's principal policy framework is the Armenia Development Strategy (ADS) 2014-2025. It identifies four priorities: growth of employment, development of human capital, improvement of the social protection system, and institutional modernisation of the public administration and governance systems. Its main objective is to increase employment through the creation of quality and high productivity jobs. The education sector is considered fundamental to the country's sustainable development.

The government programme for the period 2019–2023<sup>1</sup> aims at building a high-tech, industrial, competitive, export-oriented, inclusive economy. It recognises the development of human capital, including through the modernisation of education and an improvement in its quality, as one of the key factors to achieving this goal.

The "Work, Armenia" strategy<sup>2</sup> sets out the priorities for employment reform for 2020-2023. The strategy is aimed at developing human capital, promoting employment, and institutional reforms of employment policy development.

Armenia's relations with the EU are based on the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed in November 2017. The cooperation in the field of education and training aims to promote lifelong learning and encourage cooperation and transparency at all levels of education and training, with a special focus on vocational and higher education. This cooperation focuses, inter alia, on modernising education and training systems, enhancing quality,

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<sup>1</sup> Government Decision No. 65-A, 08.02.2019. <https://www.gov.am/files/docs/3562.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Government Decision No. 1753-L, 5.12.2019 <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=152312>  
<https://www.e-gov.am/gov-decrees/item/33051/>

relevance and access at all levels of education, developing the national qualifications framework to improve the transparency and recognition of qualifications and competences aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

In 2018 and 2019, the economy expanded impressively, at 5.2% and 7.6% respectively. Before Covid, the trend for 2020 had been positive. Since then, the pandemic has disrupted Armenia's growth trend - GDP is expected to contract in 2020 by about 3 or 4%.

Due to the pandemic, schools were closed in March 2020, moving to online learning. This shift was difficult as many teachers lack familiarity with using digital tools, while up to a quarter of teachers and a similar proportion of learners lack computers at home. Public TV aired training courses. Schools and colleges developed and implemented online training programmes via Zoom, YouTube etc. End of year exams were replaced by coursework-based assessment.

In 2018, students in upper secondary VET (ISCED 3) accounted for 28% of the cohort. VET enrolment has been growing steadily in recent years, in an education system traditionally dominated by general and higher education.

### 1.3 NQF legal basis

The education system in Armenia is regulated by three main laws: the Law on Education (1999), the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education (2004), and the Law on Primary Vocational (Handicraft) and Secondary Vocational Education (2005).

The Armenian national qualifications framework (NQF) was first adopted by the Government Decree (No 332-N) in March 2011, and revised in 2016 (No 714-N) with new definitions for each level.

Other important relevant legislation includes regulations on quality assurance, the development of state educational standards, lists (classifiers) of VET and higher education specialities and qualifications.

## 2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

### 2.1 Education and training reforms

The Armenia Development Strategy identifies increasing the education sector's quality, effectiveness, relevance and access at all levels as a major priority. Within the ADS, the government programme for 2019-2023 specifies that VET sector reforms will be targeted at enhancing education programmes to enable them to better respond to the changing needs of the economy and labour market, and expanding the dual education system through the active involvement of employers. In higher education, the reforms will aim, inter alia, at reviewing the content and structure of curricula with a focus on learning outcomes and in line with the NQF.

The action plan for the VET sector for the period 2017–2023 approved by the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport sets nine priorities: transformation of the VET institutions network, strengthening social partnership, modernisation of the content of educational programmes, new models for the organisation of educational process and improvement of assessment of students, implementation of internet-based educational technologies, internationalisation of the VET system, promotion of youth employability and entrepreneurship; and human resource development in the VET system.

## 2.2 Aims of NQF

The Armenian NQF, in addition to supporting overall improvement of quality, aims at providing more transparency to education and training qualifications, assisting employers in assessing the workforce skill level, and informing government decisions on skills matching adjustments. The objectives of the Armenian framework are similar to the frameworks of other countries:

- a. to link different levels of qualifications in a hierarchy from the lowest to the highest;
- b. to link Armenian qualifications to those of other countries, promoting international mobility;
- c. to enable learners to attain qualifications, transfer between different pathways and progress from one level to the next.

## 3. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

### 3.1 NQF scope and structure

The Armenian NQF has eight levels and follows the EQF level descriptors categories: knowledge, skills and competences- Level descriptors for NQF levels 6-8 are based on the Dublin Descriptors in line with the QF-EHEA.

### 3.2 Types of qualifications

The NQF defines the types of qualifications allocated by levels. General education qualifications correspond to NQF levels 1, 2 and 4. VET qualifications correspond to NQF levels 3 and 4, “Primary VET” in Armenia (initial VET), and NQF level 5, “Secondary VET” in Armenia (higher VET). Higher education qualifications are allocated to NQF levels 6-8.

### 3.3 Quality assurance of qualifications

VET qualifications are defined in the state VET standards which are approved by the MoES. VET standards are developed (revised) and approved according to the procedure adopted by the Government<sup>3</sup>. They must meet the requirements of the relevant NQF level descriptors and be validated by the corresponding Sectoral Committee. VET standards are developed by the MoES working groups with the involvement of representatives of interested public bodies, organisations, educational institutions and social partners. There are no occupational or professional standards to inform qualifications development.

VET qualifications are included in the lists (classifiers) of primary and secondary VET professions (specialities)<sup>4</sup>. For a new VET qualification (profession) to be introduced into the classifier, the relevant VET standard shall be developed and approved. VET qualifications are delivered and awarded by VET institutions or other training providers licensed and accredited by the MoEs.

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<sup>3</sup> Government Decision № 333, 22.03.2012 <http://www.mkuzak.am/wp-content/uploads/1-2.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Government Decision No. 1254, 30.10.2008 <http://mkuzak.am/wp-content/uploads/woroshum-1.pdf>

Government Decision No. 73, 12.01.2006 <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=22489>

Secondary VET qualifications can be acquired at secondary vocational educational institutions (colleges) and higher education institutions.

Higher education qualifications are awarded by the higher education institutions accredited by the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA). Programme accreditation is not obligatory except for the medical education programmes. It also can be done by foreign organisations listed in the EQAR register or which are full ENQA members. Programme accreditation requires that the education programme be in line with the relevant NQF level descriptors and state educational standards.

### 3.4 Use of learning outcomes and standards

The state VET standard defines general characteristics of the qualification (NQF level, modes and terms of training, minimum and maximum student workloads), occupational characteristics (related occupational titles and main tasks and duties), minimum content of the educational programme (competence profile of the graduate, including general/key competences, modules of learning outcomes and performance criteria), requirements for the organisation of training, and exemplary curriculum.

General/key skills (communication, entrepreneurship, professional soft skills, digital competencies) are defined in modules common for all VET standards. Along with the vocational qualification, VET curricula for persons with basic general education ensure the acquisition of general secondary education.

### 3.5 Credit systems

The current legislation allows for the use of a credit system for VET to ensure progression or transfer between VET and higher education systems<sup>5</sup>.

In higher education, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) has been used since 2008. Most first cycle (NQF level 6) programmes have 240 ECTS credits, second cycle (NQF 7 level) programmes have 60-120 ECTS.

## 4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

### 4.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

The Ministry of Education has the overall lead in the NQF. It is responsible, in particular, for the approval of state educational standards and descriptions of VET qualifications, licensing of educational institutions and VET programmes, and development of the lists of VET and higher education specialities and qualifications.

### 4.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

Responsibility for the implementation of education policy is distributed among a number of institutions. The National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development (NCVETD)<sup>6</sup> supports the

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<sup>5</sup> the Law on Primary Vocational (Handicraft) and Secondary Vocational Education, art. 3, 7  
<http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=30686&m=%27%27&sc=>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.mkuzak.am/?lang=en>

development and implementation of the NQF, its alignment with the EQF; organises the development and updating of VET standards and curricula; supports the introduction of a credit accumulation and transfer system in VET; ensures communication between the VET system and the labour market.

The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA),<sup>7</sup> was established in 2008 as an independent quality assurance body accountable to the Government. Its main responsibility is external quality assurance of higher education institutions, through institutional and programme accreditation.

There are 14 Sectoral Committees responsible for the provision of expertise and validation of the draft state educational standards. They operate as consultative bodies of the MoES, representing social partners (chambers of commerce, employers organisations, trade unions).

Social partners are also represented in the tripartite National Council for VET Development (NCVD) which is the main structure of social partnership in VET at the national level.

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

### 5.1 VNFIL arrangements

In 2015, the government approved the procedures for continuing vocational training and validation of non-formal and informal learning<sup>8</sup>. The decree defines requirements for the VNFIL process and assessors. The National Training Fund (NTF)<sup>9</sup> was authorised by MoES as the body responsible for the implementation of the VNFIL system. Currently the VNFIL mechanism is not operational.

## 6. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

### 6.1 Key achievements and main findings

Armenia has made important and valuable progress in NQF development in recent years. The country has updated its VET system to include quality assurance measures, competence-based education standards and assessment, modular programmes based on learning outcomes, career guidance, sectoral committees representing social partners.

Quality assurance mechanisms have been aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG). Since 2017, ANQA has been a full member of ENQA and registered in EQAR. ANQA supports the introduction of QA principles in the VET system and has started institutional accreditation of VET institutions.

Although the current framework allows for the use of a credit accumulation and transfer system, it is not used to ensure progression or transfer across education subsectors.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.anqa.am/en/>

<sup>8</sup> Government Decision No. 1062, 10.09.2015 <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=100589>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=72097>

There is no mechanism to include qualifications awarded outside the formal education sector into the NQF. Regulatory documents necessary for the recognition of non-formal learning have been approved, but they do not allow that NQF qualifications be awarded based on the VNFIL process.

## 6.2 Qualifications registers and databases

VET standards and exemplary modular programmes and curricula are published on the website of the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development (NCVETD)<sup>10</sup>. VET qualifications (standards) are structured according to the lists (classifiers) of primary and secondary VET professions (specialities) based on ISCED-F 2013.

The State register of institutional accreditation<sup>11</sup> and the State register of programme accreditation<sup>12</sup> include the lists of higher education institutions which have applied for institutional or programme accreditation, together with the relevant information.

## 6.3 Qualification documents

The titles of higher education qualifications include the name of the higher education level and the name of the field of study according to the list of specialities and qualifications of higher professional education<sup>13</sup>. The supplement to the higher education diploma<sup>14</sup> follows the European Diploma Supplement format.

## 6.4 Recognition of foreign qualifications

Armenia ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 2004. The Armenian National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility (ARMENIC)<sup>15</sup> is a member of the ENIC-NARIC network.

# 7. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORK/ OTHER FRAMEWORKS

## 7.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

Armenia has been a member of the Bologna process since 2005. It has not yet self-certified the NQF against the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF EHEA). The revision of the NQF in 2016 mainly addressed higher education qualifications to ensure that they better comply with the QF EHEA.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.mkuzak.am/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.anqa.am/en/institutional-accreditation-state-register/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.anqa.am/en/programme-accreditation-state-register/>

<sup>13</sup> Government Decision No. 1191, 23.10.2014 <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=93665>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=40823>

<sup>15</sup> <http://armenic.am/?lang=en>



## 7.2 International cooperation

In 2015 Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) (with Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). Relations between the EU and Armenia are based on the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed in 2017.

ANQA is a member the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (CEENQA); it is registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

## 7.3 International donor support

EU is the principal donor supporting VET in the country. The implementation of the NQF higher education component was supported by the Tempus project ARMENQA (2014-2017)<sup>16</sup>. It aimed to make the Armenian NQF operational, including by the development of methodological guidelines, sectoral frameworks for higher education, the draft NQF implementation strategy and self-certification report.

The EU “Better Qualifications for Better Jobs” support programme launched in 2017 seeks to improve the efficiency of Armenia's labour market and the employability of its workforce, with an emphasis on agricultural employment. It also focuses on enhancing the capacity of labour market stakeholders to formulate skills needs and on supporting the operation of Sector Skills Councils.

# 8. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

Steps have been taken to establish a national qualification framework: legislation has been adopted, the NQF and level descriptors have been developed. The priority is to operationalise the NQF, so that there is increased allocation of qualifications to the framework, and that it directly supports end-users such as providers, employers and learners.

NQF governance is centralised under MoES. The NQF's development and implementation will require effective coordination and a stronger involvement of other stakeholders, especially the private sector. Strengthening social partnership, in particular at sectoral level, is one of the main targets of the revised Concept on Social Partnership in VET (2018). It will focus on increasing the role of the Sectoral Committees and expanding the scope of their responsibilities. At present Sectoral Committees have a limited role in qualifications development and identifying and anticipating skills needs.

A broader perspective on skills formation is needed, one that is not limited only to formal education and training. It is important that the VNFIL system be part of the NQF arrangements and lead to the award of qualifications. The use of modular approaches and introduction of partial qualifications can contribute to the flexibility of initial VET and recognition of continuous education and training. The quality assurance framework should address not only education and training programmes, but also the assessment and validation of learning outcomes.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://armenqa.am/>

It is important to implement effective communication mechanisms and tools, including on available career and learning paths. The development of a qualifications register can make the NQF more visible and support career guidance services and recognition practices.

Other initiatives could include the development of methodologies for allocating qualifications to NQF levels, credit transfer and recognition arrangements to promote pathways across education subsectors and progression, improvement of a quality assurance system for VET and building stakeholders capacity.

## 9. MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport: [www.escs.am](http://www.escs.am)

National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance: [www.anqa.am](http://www.anqa.am)

National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development: [www.mkuzak.am](http://www.mkuzak.am)

## 10. INFOGRAPHIC OF THE NQF/NQF OVERVIEW TABLE

Qualifications according to levels

Level	Qualification	Education degree (level), the programme	Duration
1 <sup>st</sup>	CERTIFICATE OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION	1 <sup>st</sup> level of Secondary Education	4 years
2 <sup>nd</sup>	CERTIFICATE OF BASIC EDUCATION	2 <sup>nd</sup> level of Secondary Education	5 years
3 <sup>rd</sup>	CRAFTSMAN (with basic education) (Certificate of Master training qualification) <sup>15</sup>	Preliminary Vocational (Craftsmanship) Educational Programme	6 months to 1 year
4 <sup>th</sup>	1. CERTIFICATE ("Attestat") OF SECONDARY EDUCATION	3 <sup>rd</sup> level of Secondary Education – senior school	3 years
	2. CRAFTSMAN (with secondary education) (Diploma of Craftsmanship Education)	Preliminary Vocational (Craftsmanship) Educational Programme	1-3 years
5 <sup>th</sup>	SPECIALIST (Diploma of Middle Vocational Education)	Middle Vocational Educational Programme	2-5 years
6 <sup>th</sup>	BACHELOR (Diploma of Bachelor)	Bachelor's Educational Programme	Minimum 3 years
7 <sup>th</sup>	MASTER (Diploma of Master)	Master's Educational Programme	Minimum 1 year
	SPECIALIST WITH DIPLOMA (Diploma of Specialist with Diploma)	Bachelor's Educational Programme of Specialist with Diploma	Minimum 5 years
8 <sup>th</sup>	PhD (Certificate of PhD)	Post-graduate Professional Educational Programme	Minimum 3 years

General Education
  Vocational Education
  Higher Education

Source: Armenia - national Torino Process report 2018-2020

## ABBREVIATIONS

ANQA	National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European qualifications framework
ISCED	International standard classification of education
MoES	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
NCVD	National Council for VET Development
NCVETD	National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development
NTF	National Training Fund
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QF-EHEA	Qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area
VET	Vocational education and training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning

## REFERENCES

Armenia - national Torino Process report 2018-2020 <https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/trp/torino-process-2018-2020-armenia-national-report>

ETF (2019). Armenia: Education, Training and Employment Developments 2019. [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Armenia%202018\\_0.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Armenia%202018_0.pdf)

ETF (2020). Policies for human capital development: Armenia - An ETF Torino Process Assessment. <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/policies-human-capital-development-armenia-etf-torino>

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[info@etf.europa.eu](mailto:info@etf.europa.eu)



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