



BHUTAN VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

**Department of Occupational Standards
Ministry of Labour and Human Resources
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Foreword

The Ministry of Labour and Human Resources has developed Bhutan Vocational Qualifications Framework (BVQF) as a part of major TVET Reform to streamline and unify the TVET System in the country by developing National Competency Standards and National Assessment System. The past practice of issuing various vocational qualifications by various institutions or agencies will be replaced with single National Vocational Qualification System through the BVQF.

The BVQF is developed in line with the Bhutan Qualifications Framework developed by Bhutan Accreditation Council. Provision has been made to link vocational qualifications with university qualifications to facilitate lifelong learning. Provision has also been made for Recognition of Prior Learning to assess and certify skilled workers who have acquired competencies through informal means. Thus the BVQF grants recognition to competencies of skilled workers whether they have acquired competencies through formal or informal means.

The BVQF will improve the quality of TVET in the country as it will ensure active participation of industries in the TVET System. The TVET system will focus on the skills need of the

industries. The competencies of TVET graduates will be enhanced through the implementation of Competency Based Training which in turn will enhance the productivity of skilled workers thus contributing to the economic development of the country.

Secretary
Ministry of Labour and Human Resources

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Rationale

The Department of Occupational Standards, as mandated to regulate and improve the quality of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the country, has developed the Bhutan Vocational Qualifications Framework (BVQF) to streamline and unify TVET system in the country. This framework is a system of qualifications and aims to facilitate coherent integration of national vocational qualifications within the TVET sector. The main purpose of the framework is to enhance the quality of TVET and provide national recognition to TVET outcomes. The BVQF is intended to enhance the relevance and quality of TVET through:

- a. Unified national vocational qualifications which is recognized nationally;*
- b. TVET system responsive to industry needs;*
- c. flexible learning and career mobility;*
- d. the recognition of prior learning (RPL);*
- e. facilitate linkage between TVET and Tertiary Education;*
- f. the provision of credit for part of a qualification;*

Bhutan Vocational Qualifications Framework

A BVQF qualification is an award which recognises that learning has taken place and that learning outcomes have been achieved. These learning outcomes are expressed as achievements in meeting competencies that are listed in the National Competency Standards. Award of qualifications will be based on competency based assessment for each occupation. A national assessment and certification system is developed to plan and coordinate systematic competency-based assessments for the award of National Certificates.

Vocational Qualifications Levels

The BVQF has five qualifications: National Certificate 1 (NC1), National Certificate 2 (NC2), National Certificate 3 (NC3), National Diploma 1 (ND1), and National Diploma 2 (ND2). NC 1 is the lowest and NC 3 is the highest in terms of skill competency requirements or complexity at the vocational level. However, applicability of all levels differs from occupation to occupation.

BVQ Levels 1 to 3

BVQ levels 1 to 3 allow trainees to upgrade competencies from semi skilled to master craftsmen stage through the acquisition of competencies specified at each level. These competencies are incorporated into the units of competencies which are packaged to form the National Competency Standards of a particular occupation. NC1, NC2 and NC3 shall be mainly skills or practical based with only about twenty per cent of trade related theory.

BVQ Levels 4 to 5(ND1 & ND2)

BVQF levels 4 to 5 leads to supervisor or manager level qualifications. The ND1 and ND2 shall focus on mastery of more knowledge component with decreased proportion of skills competency as compared to competencies at lower levels. Therefore, there will be an increasing knowledge component as individual progresses up the level hierarchy. Potential individuals transiting to ND1 from NC3 shall pursue courses/programmes in line with their trade of competency or related courses offerings only as decided during the selection process.

BVQ levels 4 and 5 competency standards comprise of units of competency and each unit of competency is assigned a credit value. A trainee will be eligible to receive the BVQ level 4 qualification once the required credit specified in the relevant competency standards is earned.

Figure 1. Bhutan Vocational Qualification Framework (BVQF) levels and corresponding qualifications.

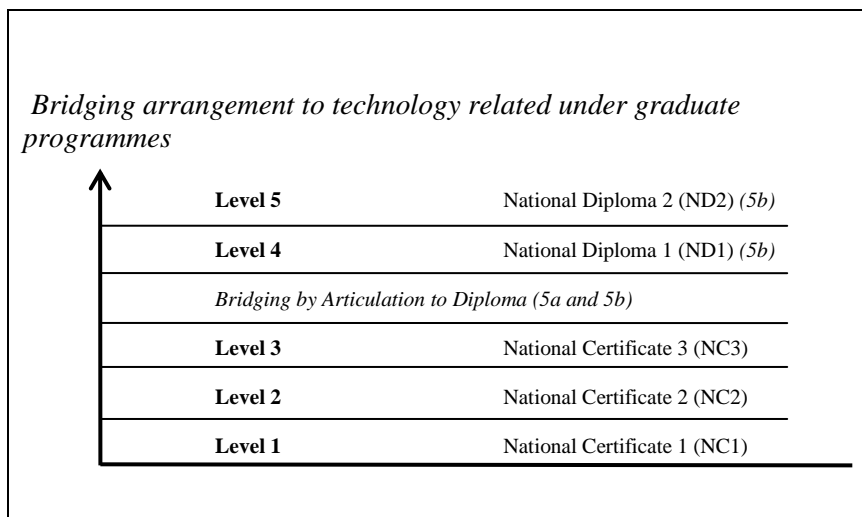
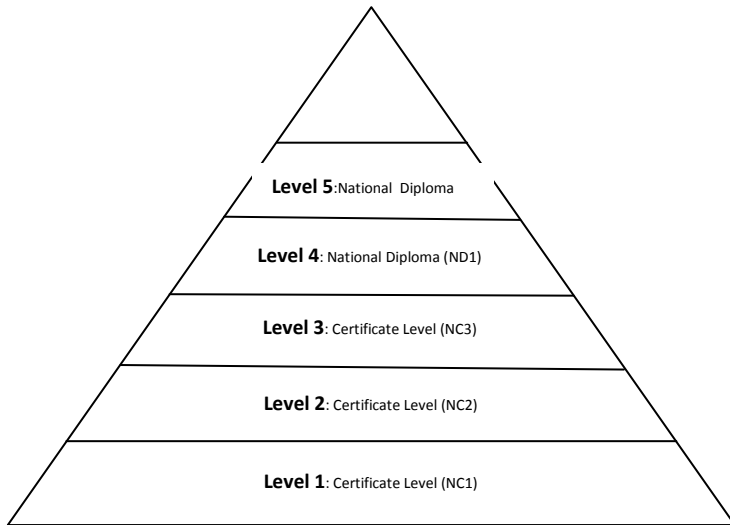


Figure 2. BVQ Levels and their corresponding workplace.



In the workplace, NC1 co-relates to semi-skilled; NC2 to craftsperson; NC3 to master craftsperson in the work place and ND1 and ND2 to supervisory or managerial personnel. Level descriptors¹ have been developed and placed at *annexure 2*.

National Certificates

National Certificates or qualifications shall be awarded to individuals only upon assessment of competencies against assessment criteria defined for each level in the respective National Competency Standards (NCS). The individuals

assessed and found competent at level 1 shall be awarded National Certificate 1 or NC1 and NC2 for level 2 and, so forth. These National qualifications for all in-country TVET programmes shall be defined using the BVQF level descriptors. The National Certificates and diplomas (NC/ND) shall be recognised by the royal government as national qualifications awarded to individuals completing the post secondary level (viz., post basic education) TVET programmes offered by training providers in the kingdom. Training and assessment of competence can continue to be provided by various TVET institutions or providers but the awards shall be centralised and coordinated by the department, in order to ensure consistency of quality outcomes. Only those courses which comply with or fulfils the requirements of the quality assurance system shall to lead to award of a National Certificates.

Equivalency of Vocational Qualifications

As regards equivalency, National Certificate 1 (NC1) is comparable to class X, National Certificate 2 (NC2) to class XI and, NC3 to class XII. However, the NC1 is not exactly the same as class X, NC2 to class XI and NC3 to class XII, it only means that the qualifications are equivalent and make comparable demands in terms of learning outcomes. This

equivalence of qualifications is also stated in Bhutan Qualifications Framework developed by Bhutan Accreditation Council and Tertiary Education Policy of Kingdom of Bhutan 2010.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Any skilled workers in the country shall also be eligible for award of National Certificates, based on the demonstration of competencies as per the National Competency Standards. This helps recognise technical and vocational skill competency that skilled workers achieve through work experience or other modes. The Department of Occupational Standards shall develop and administer Recognition of Prior Learning to award National Certificates to such skilled workers.

Progression and linkage of TVET to Tertiary Education

Individuals shall have the option to enter the labour market upon certification at particular level certification or qualification level. Although individuals will be encouraged to spend reasonable time in employment upon completion of each level, no restrictions shall be placed on individuals who wish to progress up from NC1 to NC2 levels. However, minimum of six months

field experience in relevant is required to progress from NC2 to NC3.

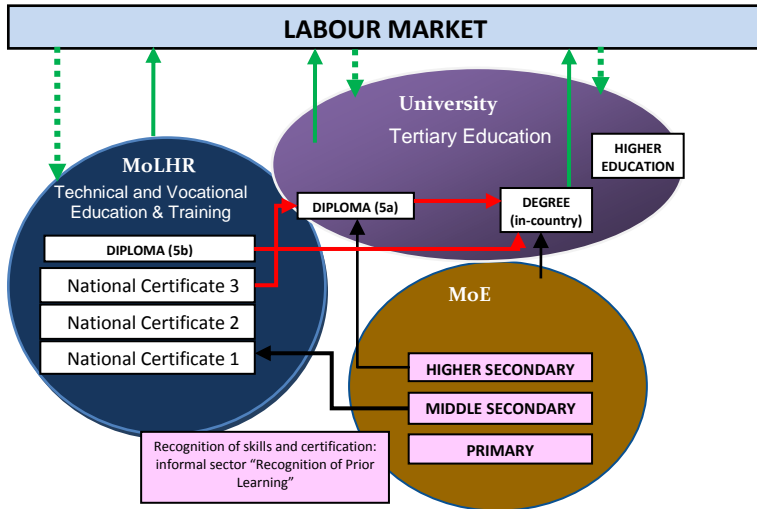
Entry of National Certificate 3 holders to Diploma programmes offered by institutions within the country shall be based on fulfilment of selection criteria and bridging arrangements. While diploma programmes categorised as 5a² is offered by the institutions accredited to the Royal University of Bhutan, programmes categorised as 5b shall be offered by the providers registered with the Department of Occupational Standards. Similar linkage and bridging arrangements shall also be established for entry of ND2 to first degree qualification. This provision to link TVET to Tertiary Education is proposed in Bhutan Qualifications Framework to promote life-long learning and career development opportunities. The “Bhutan Qualifications Framework” as proposed in the Tertiary Education Policy ensures the linkage between school education, TVET and, tertiary education in the country.

The following illustration also focuses on the concept of life-long learning shown by dotted arrows from the labour market to TVET. This is further complimented by the Bhutan Qualifications Framework at *annexure 1* which proposes 8

² UNESCO International Standard of Classification of Education

levels across School education, Vocational education, University education and Monastic education.

Figure 3: Schematic illustration of the three major stakeholders and the linkages between each as well as labour market



Annexure 1

The Bhutan Qualifications Framework developed by Bhutan Accreditation Council

Level	School Education	Vocational Education	University Education	Monastic Education
8			Doctoral	Khenpo
7			Masters	Geshey
6			Bachelor	Tencho
5		ND1 & ND2	Diploma	Madhamik
4	BHSEC	NC2 & NC3		
3	BCSE	NC1		Sheyrim
2	LSE			
1	PE			

BVQF Level Descriptors

National Certificate 1 (NC 1)

Carry out processes that are:	Learning demand:	Accountability:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited in range - Routine responses, repetitive and familiar - Single processes - Employed within closely defined contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recall - Narrow range of knowledge and cognitive skills - No generation of new ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In directed activity - Under close supervision and quality control - With no responsibility for work or learning of others

National Certificate 2 (NC 2)

Carry out processes that:	Learning demand:	Accountability:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are moderate in range. - Are established and familiar - Offer a clear choice of routine responses. - Involve some prioritisation of tasks from known solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some relevant theoretical knowledge. - Interpretation of available information. - Known solutions to familiar problems - Little generation of new ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In directed activity. - Under general supervision and quality control. - With some responsibility for the quantity and quality of output. - With possible responsibility for guiding others.

National Certificate 3 (NC 3)

Carry out processes that:	Learning demand:	Accountability:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Require a range of well developed skills - Offer a significant choice of procedures requiring prioritization - Are employed within a range of familiar contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some relevant theoretical knowledge - Interpretation of available information - Informed judgement - A range of known responses to familiar problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In directed activity with some autonomy - Under general supervision and quality checking - With significant responsibility for the quantity and quality of output - With possible responsibility for the output of others

National Diploma (ND1)

Carry out processes that:	Learning demand:	Accountability:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Require a wide range of technical or scholastic skills - Offer a wide choice of standard and non-standard procedures - Are employed in a variety of routine and on routine contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialised knowledge with depth in more than one area - Analysis, reformatting and evaluation of a wide range of information - Formulation of appropriate responses to resolve both concrete and abstract problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In self directed activity - Under broad guidance and evaluation - With complete accountability for quantity of quality of output - With possible responsibility for the quality and quantity of output of others

National Diploma (ND2)

Carry out processes that:	Learning demand:	Accountability:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Require a wide range of specialised technical or scholastic skills - Involve a wide choice of standards and non standard procedures - Are employed in a variety of routine and non routine contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A broad knowledge base with substantial depth in some areas - Analytical interpretation of a wide range of data - Determination of appropriate methods and procedures in response to a range of concrete problems with some theoretical elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In self directed and sometimes directed activity - Under broad general guidelines or functions - With full responsibility for the nature, quantity and quality of outcomes - With possible responsibility for the achievement of team output

NOTE: Unlike the competency-based system at the certificate levels, credit system may be followed at the diploma levels to facilitate credit transfers to technical and technological degree programmes.

Operationalising BVQF

The department of Occupational Standards is responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring the BVQF and Quality Assurance System in the country. The following elements shall be developed and implemented to operationalise the BVQF and QAS:

National Competency Standards

National Competency Standards is a written specification of Knowledge, Skills and Attitude and application of Knowledge Skills and Attitude to perform a particular occupation to industry specific standards. National Competency Standards are a unifying feature of a competency based TVET system. It provides the benchmarks for other features of a unified system such as:

- Training Provider Registration
- Setting nationally recognised vocational qualifications
- Curriculum development
- Program Accreditation
- National Assessment (Competency based assessment)
- Awarding National Certificates
- Recognition of prior learning

National Competency Standards will form the core of a unified national system since it:

- Identifies the level of competencies exhibited by workers
- Identifies the level of competencies to be transferred through curriculum
- Identifies competencies to be assessed
- Identifies competencies that training providers must be capable of delivering
- Identifies competencies that form the basis for awarding Bhutan Vocational Qualifications

National Competency Standards shall be developed for every occupation. The National Competency Standards shall be developed following the process and format prescribed in the “National Competency Standards Operational Manual”.

Institutional Registration

All the training providers in the country should be registered with the Department of Occupational Standards. This is to ensure that the training providers have necessary minimum requirements in place to deliver quality training. Registration of

Training Providers will be implemented to ensure that Training Providers meet the following criteria or standards:

1. Location and Establishment
2. Physical Resources
3. Human Resources
4. Teaching, Learning and Assessment system
5. Student Welfare and Support services
6. Quality Management and Record Maintenance System

Registration of Training Providers shall be implemented in accordance with the “Regulation for Registration of Training Providers”.

Course Accreditation

The accredited courses ensure high quality training. For the courses to be accredited, it should be developed in line with the BVQF. The curriculum should be developed based on National Competency Standards for that occupation. For accreditation of courses the training providers will be evaluated against the following nine criteria:

1. Course curriculum (based on NCS)
2. Training delivery documents

3. Instructional resources
4. Physical Resources
5. Human Resources (Trainers)
6. Student Record keeping system
7. On-the-job training/in-plant training
8. Training assessment and certification system
9. Quality Management System

The course accreditation shall be implemented following the “Guidelines for Accreditation of Courses”.

Competency Based Training

Competency based training system ensures that training and assessment are based on National Competency Standards. Competency based training ensures a responsive and high quality TVET system in the country. The Competency based training is based on the principle of :

- National Competency Standards
- Industry involvement in the TVET system
- Learner centered training
- Flexible delivery of training
- Endorsement of curriculum
- Training to meet industry needs
- Linking training to industry needs
- Competency based assessment

Recognition of Prior Learning(RPL)

The skilled workers who have acquired competencies through work experience or other modes shall be assessed and certified through Recognition of Prior Learning. Unlike in the past it is not necessary to undergo formal training to be eligible for assessment and certification. Through RPL the competencies achieved through other informal means can be validated against the national competency standards. The prior learning can be acquired from:

- The Workplace
- Life experience
- Non-certificated training
- In-service training
- Overseas training or experience etc.

Recognition of Prior Learning shall be implemented following the “Guidelines for Recognition of Prior”.

National Assessment and Certification

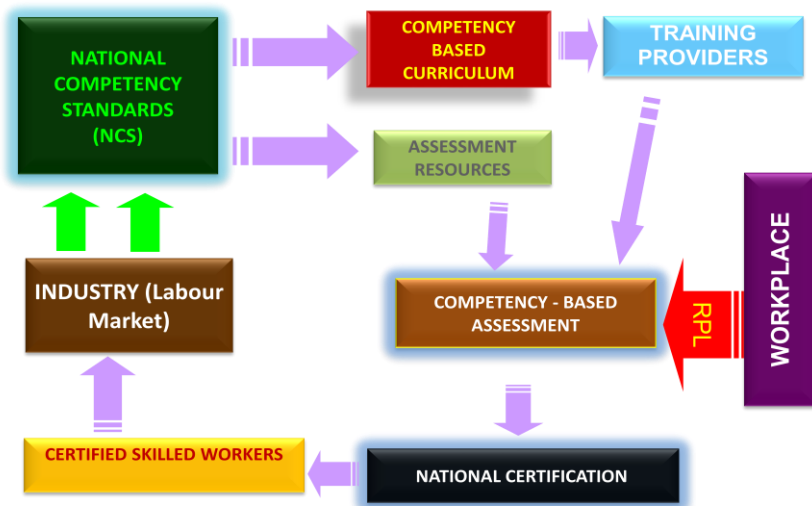
Only the accredited courses are eligible for National Assessment and award of National certificates. The competency based assessment involves collecting evidences in order to prove that a person can perform against the elements of competence and

performance criteria stated in the National Competency Standards. National assessment will be implemented making use of external assessors and assessment resources developed by industry experts. The important principles of Competency Based Assessment are:

- Validity
- Fairness
- Sufficiency
- Authenticity
- Currency
- Cost effectiveness
- Flexibility
- Reliability

The National Assessment and certification shall be implemented following the “Guidelines for Competency based Assessment and Certification”.

The various elements of BVQF are as shown below:



The National Competency Standards, which is developed in consultation with the industry experts, will be the basis for development of curriculum and assessment resources. The trainees from training institutes and skilled workers from the workplace will be assessed and certified through National Assessment. National Certificate shall be issued to the competent trainees or workers if they are declared competent.

Glossary of terms

- Accreditation:** Confirmation that a particular course meets the requirements of the Accreditation Guidelines
- Assessment:** Process of collecting evidence and making judgement as to whether a person can perform according to the competencies specified in the National Competency Standards.
- BVQF:** Bhutan's national system for Technical Vocational Education and Training Qualifications.
- Competence:** The possession by workers of what they are expected to know and be able to do, together with the capacity to apply skill and knowledge in new situations and environment.
- CBT:** A flexible learner centered training approach based on National Competency Standards.
- Courses Accreditation:** Courses that are based on NCS and fulfils the requirements of Accreditation Guidelines leading to National Vocational Qualifications
- National Assessment:** Final assessment with the use of external assessors for assessing the

competencies in order to confirm competence.

National Certificate: Qualifications awarded at level 1-3 (NC1-NC3) of the Bhutan Vocational Qualifications Framework.

National Diploma: Qualifications awarded at level 4-5 (ND1-ND2) of the Bhutan Vocational Qualifications Framework.

Quality Assurance: The processes identified by a regulatory body to ensure that training providers are meeting or exceeding specified quality standards.

Recognition of Prior Learning: The processes awarding credit for competencies achieved outside of formal accredited training.

Registration: Approval for training institution to carry out education and training services.

References

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4. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (2009). **National Vocational Qualifications Framework of Sri Lanka** – Operation Manual, Colombo, Sri Lanka.