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**Joint project “Strengthening Higher Education in BiH III”**

**Guidance on the use and acquisition of academic and scientific titles in  
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)**

**December 2009**

**by Stephen Adam**

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# **Guidance on the use and acquisition of academic and scientific titles in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)**

**December 2009**

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## 1. Introduction – context and purpose of the guidance document

The main purpose of this guide is to establish and help clarify the position of current and past academic and scientific qualifications and their titles in the context of existing anomalies and difficulties. The *'Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina (FQ-BiH)'*<sup>1</sup> is incomplete<sup>2</sup> and the *'2007 Framework Law on Higher Education (FLHE)'* is only partially implemented and contains inconsistencies. Furthermore both have inconsistencies with some aspects of the Bologna reforms, which would hamper any future self-certification of the FQ-BiH with the overarching *'Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA)'* reproduced in Annex B. It is essential that clear and consistent guidance exists, while past and current holders of BiH qualifications are not disadvantaged and gain appropriate national and international recognition.

This guide is designed to provide assistance to higher education academic institutions (HEI), employers and citizens on the classification and understanding of academic and scientific titles in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It suggests how the relationship between the current range of qualifications and previous qualifications should be established and expressed against accepted national and international frameworks which act as external reference points. This guide is drafted to provide a good practice basis for the development of any future *'Rules on the use of academic titles, and the acquisition of scientific and professional titles in Bosnia and Herzegovina'* to be followed by all higher education institutions.<sup>3</sup> It is hoped that the 'rule-book' and this guidance document should be used in conjunction with, and are complementary to, the FQ-BiH. The guide is also consistent with the successive Bologna agreements (Bologna communiqués) signed by ministers as part of the Bologna process 1999-2009. It anticipates that future amendments to the *'2007 Framework Law on Higher Education'* are necessary.

The FQ-BiH was previously developed as part of the joint project of the European Commission and the Council of Europe *'Strengthening Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina'* and adopted by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2007.<sup>4</sup> The primary function of the framework is to act as a guide and reference point for those creating new qualifications and updating existing ones within the context of the European Bologna process. This guide, together with the future rulebook, would complete the FQ-BiH and, combined with it, establish the approved rules for styling and nomenclature for all higher education qualifications. It

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2007 (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 13/08). The FQ-BiH is reproduced in annex A

<sup>2</sup> Incomplete, since it is generic and not (yet) subject related.

<sup>3</sup> As referenced in Article 6 of the BiH Framework Law on Higher Education in BiH.

<sup>4</sup> The 2006-2008 European Commission-Council of Europe joint project *'Strengthening Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina'* produced the *'Key Strategies and Guidelines to implement the Bologna Process'*. This publication includes seven documents that constitute agreed standards, strategies and guidelines for the implementation of Bologna reforms in BiH. It can be accessed at: [http://www.coe.ba/pdf/7\\_key\\_strategies\\_and\\_guidelines\\_eng.pdf](http://www.coe.ba/pdf/7_key_strategies_and_guidelines_eng.pdf).

also assists higher education providers in establishing and maintaining academic standards.<sup>5</sup>

Higher education qualifications are awarded on the basis of the achievement of learning outcomes, and the FQ-BiH qualifications descriptors establish the generic outcomes and attributes associated with each broad category of qualification - first cycle, second cycle and third cycle.<sup>6</sup>

The guidance in this booklet and the FQ-BiH are designed to act as reference points to facilitate internal and external quality assurance within accredited BiH higher education institutions (HEI). All higher education providers are expected to be able to demonstrate that their successful students gain qualifications at the appropriate standard in accordance with the FQ-BiH. This guidance document cross-references the FQ- BiH and its qualifications with two international qualifications frameworks - the Bologna overarching '*Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*' (FQ-EHEA) and the '*European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*' (EQF).<sup>7</sup> The EQF has eight levels; levels 5-8 cover higher education. The descriptors for the EQF are reproduced in Annex C.

This guide contains four sections: Section 1 - Introduction, content and purpose of the guidance document; Section 2- Table providing examples of typical past and present qualifications at each level of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in BiH; Section 3 - Positioning qualifications within the BiH Higher Education Framework; Section 4 - qualification titles and nomenclature – implementation guidance; Section 5 - Good practice in establishing the equivalence of pre-Bologna (old) and post-Bologna BiH qualifications; and Section 6 - Implementation issues. The annexes complement this guidance and should be used to provide further information to those responsible for establishing and maintaining academic standards.

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<sup>5</sup> The rulebook guidance, the FQ-BiH, the '*Standards for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in BiH*', together with other international reference points, collectively facilitate the maintenance and international recognition of higher education academic standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>6</sup> Currently the FQ-BiH cycle descriptors do not include any level descriptors (cycle sub-divisions) that provide further details on progression within each broad qualifications descriptor. The overarching Bologna '*Framework of Qualifications for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA)*' does contain a generic Dublin 'short cycle descriptor' for qualifications within the first cycle (120 ECTS credits). This short cycle descriptor is used to describe appropriate qualifications in BiH and is reproduced in Annex B.

<sup>7</sup> The EQF has eight reference levels describing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do - 'learning outcomes'. Levels of national qualifications are placed at one of the central reference levels, ranging from basic (Level 1) to advanced (Level 8). It is designed to enable easier comparison between national qualifications and should also mean that people do not have to repeat learning if they move to another country. Further information on the EQF can be accessed at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm).

## 2. Table providing examples of typical current and past qualifications at each level of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in BiH and other external reference points

1	2	3	4	5
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina Higher Education Qualifications and Titles</b>	<b>Previous Qualifications</b>	<b>The Framework for Qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina (FQ-BiH)</b>	<b>Bologna Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA)</b>	<b>European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)</b>
<b>DOCTORAL DEGREES</b> Currently all new doctoral degrees are styled as PhD. It is anticipated that distinctions between different types of PhD will be introduced in the future, e.g. by pure research, part taught, professional doctorates, etc.	<i>After a rationale for equivalences has been agreed, all previous qualifications must be inserted in the appropriate place.</i>	Third cycle (No credit range specified in the FQ-BiH)	Third cycle (not credit rated) The FQ-EHEA does not specify the number of ECTS credits but ministers encourage the development of a range of doctoral programmes (London Communiqué)	EQF level 8 Currently, a BiH national qualifications framework for lifelong learning is under development which integrates the FQ-BiH (column 3)
<b>MASTER DEGREES</b> • 2 year (120 ECTS credits) • 1 year (60-90 ECTS credits; see NB. in column 3) One and two year Master degrees are styled MA or MSc according to discipline and subject field. Currently integrated Masters do not exist but it is suggested that they could be introduced and awarded at the end of four years of study that integrates first and second cycle studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 year doctor nauka degree (awarded after a minimum of 3 years independent research)</li> <li>• 2 year magistar nauka degree</li> <li>• 4-5 year full time diplomiran/a degrees</li> <li>• 2-3 years post-secondary, non-university degrees (awarded at schools of higher learning).</li> <li>• Others?</li> </ul>	Second cycle (60-120 ECTS credits) NB. The Bologna second cycle credit range specifies 'normally' 90-120 with a minimum of 60 at second cycle level. The current BiH law specifies a range of 60-120 ECTS credits. Master degrees of just 60 ECTS credits are low and an exception by international standards and should be avoided.	Second cycle (normally 90-120 ECTS credits with a minimum of 60 at 2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle level)	EQF level 7
<b>BACHELOR DEGREES</b> • 4 year (240 ECTS) • 3 year (180 ECTS) Three and four year Bachelor degrees are styled BA or BSc according to discipline and subject field.		First cycle (180-240 ECTS credits, except for medical degrees which are 360 credits)	First cycle (180-240 ECTS credits)	EQF Level 6
			Short cycle (120 ECTS credits) The 'Dublin' short cycle descriptor can be found in annex B	EQF level 5 NB. EQF levels 1-4 cover education that precedes higher education.
Admissions ↑		Admissions ↑		Admissions ↑

## Explanatory notes for the summary table:

The table outlines the relationships between different BiH qualifications and various national and internationally accepted reference points. These reference points are based on generic (non subject-specific) cycle and level descriptors that establish internationally accepted standards expressed in terms of learning outcomes. The level descriptors describe the knowledge, skills and abilities associated with typical end cycle qualifications, e.g. Bachelor, Master and Doctorate degrees.

The successful completion of each cycle gives access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention<sup>8</sup>, to the next cycle, as established by the Bologna Ministers in the Berlin Communiqué, 2003<sup>9</sup>. The term 'access' implies the fair assessment of an applicant's qualification, with a view to determining whether they meet the minimum requirements for pursuing the next cycle of studies whilst 'admission' concerns the actual offer and acceptance of a place on a study programme. A major feature of the Bologna process is to introduce more flexibility into higher education systems and encourage a variety of access and progression routes.

The Bologna Ministerial meeting in Bergen 2005<sup>10</sup> adopted the FQ-EHEA and ECTS credit ranges for the first two cycles (180-240 for first cycle and normally 90-120 for the second cycle). It did not prescribe the number of ECTS credits necessary for access to study in subsequent cycles and does not ascribe ECTS credits to the third cycle – doctoral studies.

The five columns are designed to show the relationships, equivalence and standards of past and present qualifications. For this purpose, the table requires completion in column 2, once the relevant stakeholders in BiH have established an equivalence between old and new style degrees that follows the suggested good practice guidance outlined in section 5 of this publication.

### Column 1

This lists the main current higher education (post Bologna) academic and professional qualifications and their respective titles in the FQ-BiH. Within each cycle there is a range of permitted qualifications with different characteristics and titles:

- Currently all successful Doctoral candidates are awarded a PhD. There is no distinction in titles to reflect types of PhD. It is anticipated that distinctions between different types of PhD will be introduced in the future, e.g. Doctorates by pure research, part taught, professional doctorates.<sup>11</sup> Doctoral studies normally have a

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<sup>8</sup> The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the Europe Region, 1997, can be accessed at: [www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/LRC\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/LRC_en.asp).

<sup>9</sup> The Berlin Communiqué 'Realising the European Higher Education Area' can be accessed at: <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Communique1.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> The Bergen Communiqué 'The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals' can be accessed at: [http://www.ns.ac.yu/sr/novosti\\_dogadjaji/bergen/050520\\_Bergen\\_Communique.pdf](http://www.ns.ac.yu/sr/novosti_dogadjaji/bergen/050520_Bergen_Communique.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> The 2005 Bologna seminar on Doctoral studies established a consensus on 10 principles. Further information can be accessed at: [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salzburg\\_Conclusions.1108990538850.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Salzburg_Conclusions.1108990538850.pdf). In addition, the 2007

minimum duration of three years. Currently, the 2007 Framework law (Article 5) designates 180 ECTS credits for Doctoral studies. It is anticipated that this would be reviewed in future legislation as there are logical difficulties in allocating credits based on learning outcomes to pure research where the outcomes are unknown at the start of the research.

- Candidates who successfully complete Master degrees are awarded an MA or MSc according to discipline and subject field. The rules for representing discipline and subject field are explored in section 4 of this guide. There is no distinction made in title whether the Master is of one or two year full-time duration. Higher education institutions must clearly indicate the exact length of their programmes and whether they relate to academic years or a full calendar year. Both types of Master must achieve the standard represented by the second cycle level descriptor and the difference between them is only in the number of learning outcomes achieved. It is anticipated that variations in titles to show different types of Master study programmes will be introduced in the future, e.g. taught Master, Master by research, integrated Masters. All Master degrees are designed to give access to third cycle studies. The 2007 Framework law, Article 5, currently prevents admission to third cycle degrees if a total of less than 300 first and second cycle appropriate credits has been acquired (a 3+1 combination). It also prevents the award of a one year Master qualification if it follows a three yr Bachelor – even if the course is passed!) It is expected this rule will be reviewed in future legislation. Furthermore, the ECTS credit range for Master studies in the FQ-BiH is under the 2007 Framework law designated as 60-120 credits. The European accepted range is ‘normally’ 90-120.
- Bachelor degrees are divided into three and four academic year programmes. Successful candidates are awarded a BA or BSc according to discipline and subject field. Three year Bachelor degrees are awarded 180 ECTS credits and four year Bachelor, 240 ECTS credits. Both types of Bachelor degree must achieve the standard represented by the BiH first cycle level descriptor. The difference between them is only in the number of learning outcomes achieved. All BiH first cycle degrees are designed to give access to second cycle studies and the labour market - employment.

## Column 2:

This lists the main (pre-Bologna) BiH qualifications and their respective titles. Once the relevant stakeholders in BiH have established a formal equivalence between old and new style degrees, this column should be completed. By reading across the completed table the appropriate levels and relationship to new qualifications should be understood. Section 5 of this document includes good practice advice on how any equivalence could be established in a fair and transparent way.

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London communiqué indicated: *‘We recognise the value of developing and maintaining a wide variety of doctoral programmes linked to the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA.’*

**Column 3:**

This indicates the three cycles of the Framework for Qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina (FQ-BiH). The full cycle descriptors are reproduced in Annex A. The BiH framework details the qualification descriptors that describe the knowledge, skills and abilities associated with typical end cycle qualifications - Bachelor degree, Master degree and Doctorate. These descriptors are not meant to be prescriptive or exhaustive and need to be cross-referenced with other external reference points. The guidance in this document is that no ECTS credits are attached to third cycle (doctoral studies) and that second cycle degrees should conform to Bologna norms that indicate a 90-120 ECTS credit range for one and two year Master studies. Master degrees of 60 ECTS credit duration face problems with their international recognition.

**Column 4:**

Indicates the three cycles and the short cycle descriptor (linked, or within the first cycle) of the Bologna Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA). The full set of cycle descriptors is reproduced in Annex B. These were used as a basis for developing the FQ-BiH descriptors. Currently, the FQ-BiH designates no short cycle qualifications. The development of a range of academic, scientific and professional intermediate qualifications throughout each cycle is encouraged by the Bologna process to reflect the needs of business, industry and society. It is anticipated that in future appropriate qualifications and titles will be developed to accommodate this need.

**Column 5:**

Indicates the higher education component (levels 5-8) of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). These descriptors are reproduced in Annex C. Currently, a draft BiH national qualifications framework for lifelong learning is under development that will directly relate to the European Commission EQFLLL.

**Access to higher education:**

Applicants for higher education are required to have successfully accomplished secondary education comprising four years full time schooling. The credential that entitles access is the *'svjedodžba o završenoj srednjoj školi'* (certificate on completion of secondary education). It is anticipated that detailed information on the individual autonomous higher education institution's admission criteria can be found at the BiH ENIC-NARIC website<sup>12</sup> or the appropriate institutional website and that future practice should introduce more varied admission to higher education routes, consistent with the requirements of lifelong learning and the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

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<sup>12</sup> The Bosnia-Herzegovina ENIC-NARIC website can be accessed at: <http://www.cip.ba/>.



### 3. Positioning qualifications within the BiH Qualifications Framework

When positioning new higher education qualifications within the FQ-BiH, higher education institutions must ensure that:

- The achievements represented by each qualification are expressed in terms of appropriate learning outcomes (including those related to employability) and are consistent with the relevant BiH cycle and level descriptors. It is also good practice to use other national and international subject benchmarks statements for guidance in establishing appropriate standards for qualifications<sup>13</sup>;
- Curriculum development teams ensure that the volume of learning expressed in terms of ECTS credits (based on learning outcomes and workload) for each component/module of the qualifications is evenly distributed and that the assessment is appropriate for the learning outcomes;
- Their qualifications are consistent with the good practice presented in the revised 2009 ECTS Users' Guide<sup>14</sup> particularly: Section 3 on learner-centred credit systems, learning outcomes, level descriptors and workload; Section 4 Implementing ECTS in Higher Education Institutions; and Section 5 Quality Assurance and ECTS;
- The process of internal approval of new qualifications and periodic review of existing qualifications must be consistent with: the Bologna '*Standards for Quality Assurance in Higher Education*'; the BiH '*Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance*' (Framework Law, Articles 47-49 and the '*Recommendations for the Implementation of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in BiH*'.<sup>15</sup>

Some BiH staff have undergone training in the Council of Europe - European Commission joint project 'Strengthening Higher Education in BiH' - some as general Bologna experts 2006-2008 and some in the detailed process of curriculum development 2009-2011. This institutionally based expertise should be fully utilised in the training of BiH staff and implementation of the guidance and rulebook.

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<sup>13</sup> Several countries have developed useful subject benchmarks statements including the Netherlands, Germany, UK and Hungary. In addition, the European community '*Tuning educational structures in Europe project*' explores sectoral statements.

<sup>14</sup> Article 53 of the 2007 Framework Law indicates that '*In formulating its rules a public higher education institution shall ensure compliance with the current European Credit Transfer System*'.

<sup>15</sup> Produced as part of the European Commission-Council of Europe joint project 2006-2008 '*Strengthening Higher Education in Higher Education in BiH*'.

#### 4. Qualification titles and nomenclature - implementation guidance

The title of any qualification must accurately reflect the level of achievement and provide consistent and clear information. It is important that the use of titles is transparent. The following rules are designed to create clarity and consistency so that the names of qualification titles convey to the public accurate information about the qualification.

There are a number of problems with the existing situation where there is confusion between the equivalence of old qualifications and new “post-Bologna” degrees. This guidance booklet provides definitive rules on the relationship between all national qualifications and their place in terms of international reference points.

The three cycles contain the following qualifications titles: Bachelor (BA and BSc) Master (MA and MSc) and Doctorate (PhD). It should be defined which authority sets the rules for the actual wording and the approval of the wording. Such as: *The subject basis of the qualification and its specific designation is governed by [insert] and has been approved by [insert].*

Currently, there are no agreed conventions for the exact styling of qualification titles apart from the broad categories above. A clear title is necessary to ensure the name given to any BiH higher education qualification represents the appropriate level. The following guidance is designed to clarify and provide consistency on the use of titles:

- There should be coherence in the use of titles, possibly by establishing a ‘BiH convention of titles’.
- The titles: BA, BSc, MA, MSc and PhD can only be used when a qualification meets in full the expectations of the appropriate qualifications descriptor in the FQ-BiH;
- The title should clearly reflect the subject(s) basis and nature of the degree/the qualification in question.
- Insert rules for distinguishing academic and scientific titles in BiH. Such as: The basis for distinguishing between a Bachelor of ‘Arts’ (artium baccalaureus, BA) and ‘Science’ (scientiæ baccalaureus, BSc) is the discipline of studies undertaken. The basis for distinguishing between a MA and MSc is the discipline of studies undertaken.
- First cycle level joint degrees are described as a Bachelor of [subject A] *with* [subject B] if subject A and subject B are a major-minor combination. A first cycle level joint degree is described as a Bachelor of [subject A] *and* [subject B] if the two subjects are equal. (The same for 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle degrees).
- Intermediate qualifications (such as certificate, short courses, etc.) should be described and rules inserted in the rulebook.

- Each university in BiH should maintain an approved list of qualifications/titles titles in BiH. All corresponding ministries, the HEA and CIP should have access. A consolidated list of approved BiH qualifications and their titles should be held by the national body in charge (yet to be determined).

## **5. Good practice in establishing the equivalence of pre-Bologna (old) and post-Bologna BiH qualifications**

The relationships between pre- and post-Bologna qualifications are to be indicated in the table presented in Section 2, page 5 column 2, of this document.

Under the Bologna process the fair recognition of qualifications is based on the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention and the use of learning outcomes as the key basis of recognition decisions. In BiH under Articles 45 of the 2007 Framework Law the '*Centre for Information and Recognition of Documents (CIP)*' provides information and advice on BiH and international recognition matters.

The process whereby the correct relationship between old and new qualifications should be established should be transparent (published) and reflect the agreement of all stakeholders. It is essential to avoid over-reliance on crude input-based time measures that focus on years of study. A detailed comparison exercise should take place to establish overall judgements about broad types of qualifications. Any comparison exercise should:

- Focus on what the successful holder of old qualifications can actually know and do – learning outcomes.
- Examine old qualifications against new Bologna external reference points, in particular the BiH cycle descriptors (including the short-cycle intermediate qualifications descriptor) and other appropriate subject-based statements (benchmarks and sectoral statements).
- Explore the old qualifications in terms of their admission criteria, employment obtained, subject content, level of texts used, type of assessment, examples of work produced, etc.
- Express the value of old qualifications in terms of ECTS credits as this facilitates precise judgements, which can avoid generalisations that encourage qualification inflation. Judgements can then be made that indicate so many ECTS credits for a qualification in terms of more than one cycle/level.
- Include guidance on the implications of the age of the qualification. Qualifications can become outdated.

Following the process by which decisions are agreed it is important that HEI are encouraged to introduce rigorous mechanisms to facilitate the recognition of prior learning (formal, informal and non formal) and the possibility, where appropriate, of top-up qualifications that allow holders of old qualifications to complete the full requirements of new qualifications where there is any shortfall.

## 6. Implementation issues

Higher education in BiH is undergoing a process of transformation aided by a number of projects including the 2006-2008 and 2009-2011 joint European Commission- Council of Europe project '*Strengthening Higher Education in BiH*'. Successful reform requires the implementation of the '*7 Key Strategies and Guidelines to implement the Bologna Process*' produced by the first phase of the project. In particular, the consistent and proper use of the '*Guidance on the use of academic titles, and the acquisition of scientific and professional titles in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)*' and its associated rules – requires the operation of robust internal and external quality assurance procedures.

Further elaboration is required of the relationship and progression route between academic and professional education, especially the horizontal and vertical mobility routes within and between the two areas. The current 2007 Framework law, Article 53, indicates that '*First cycle degree and diploma courses offered by public higher education institutions<sup>16</sup> shall be flexibly constructed so as to allow entry and exit at appropriate points with the award of credits and/or qualifications depending on the progress made by an individual student.*' This is not reflected in current practice.

Higher education institutions need to become more autonomous and capable of taking strategic decisions, using the new qualifications framework and formulating new curricula that reflect the realities of the changing face of global and European higher education.

The ongoing successful reform of BiH higher education requires amendments to the current 2007 Framework Law to make it consistent with Bologna reforms and the 2009 ECTS Users' Guide and facilitate the successful self-certification of the FQ-BiH and the emerging national framework for lifelong learning.

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## 7. Annexes

- A The Framework for Higher Educations Qualifications in BiH
- B Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area
- C Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework
- D Glossary

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<sup>16</sup> Article 53 should apply to all higher education institutions, private and public.

## **Annex A**

### **The Framework for Higher Educations Qualifications in BiH<sup>17</sup>**

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<sup>17</sup> This document was developed within the joint EC/CoE project "Strengthening Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina" and approved by the project's Steering Board on 5 June 2007. The Framework for Qualifications in Higher Education in BiH was adopted by the Council of Ministers of BiH on 27th December 2007 (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 13/08).

# HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK<sup>18</sup> IN BIH

## Introduction

The Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) higher education system is fragmented and in need of reform. The BiH educational area requires a higher education framework that is consistent with the principles and values of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as developed by the Bologna process,<sup>19</sup> including ENQA standards and guidelines for quality assurance in EHEA. The new BiH qualifications framework is designed to strengthen higher education and act as a lever in assisting the higher education authorities and decision makers in their reform efforts aimed at reshaping the academic community, its institutions and processes. The primary function of the framework is to act as a guide and reference point for those creating new qualifications and updating existing ones within the new quality assurance system for higher education.

The new framework has been produced in the frame of a joint project of the European Commission and the Council of Europe "Strengthening Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina", following widespread consultation and agreement with appropriate stakeholders including academics, students, public authorities and social partners.<sup>20</sup> Its successful implementation will improve public confidence in higher education. The framework is intended to help to improve the quality and recognition of qualifications and promote the reform of higher education for the benefit of all citizens.

## Structure of the framework

The BiH framework for higher education qualifications consists of three cycles that reflect and expand upon the 'Dublin Descriptors'<sup>21</sup> adopted by Ministers of Education under the Bologna Process,<sup>22</sup> following a decision of ministers to adopt a higher education system that is essentially based on three cycles. The Dublin Descriptors are generic (non-subject specific) statements of

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<sup>18</sup> A National Framework for Higher Education Qualifications: The single description, at national level or level of an education system, which is internationally understood and through which all qualifications and other learning achievements in higher education may be described and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between higher education qualifications. A qualifications framework is designed to ensure a consistent use of qualification titles.

<sup>19</sup> The Bologna Process is the most important and wide ranging reform of higher education in Europe. The ultimate aim of the Process is to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010 in which staff and students can move with ease and have fair recognition of their qualifications. The Bologna declaration was signed by ministers of education from 29 European countries in 1999. The process was opened up to other countries, and further governmental meetings have been held in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005) and London (2007). BiH joined the process in 2003.

<sup>20</sup> For further information go to [Joint EC/CoE project 2006-2007 "Strengthening Higher Education in BiH"](http://www.coe.ba/highereducation) at <http://www.coe.ba/highereducation>.

<sup>21</sup> Descriptors exemplify the outcomes of the main qualification at each level, and demonstrate the nature of change between levels. They provide clear points of reference at each level, and describe outcomes that cover the great majority of existing qualifications.

<sup>22</sup> The 'Dublin Descriptors' were originally formulated and further developed by the Joint Quality Initiative (an informal group of higher education specialists from a variety of countries, see <http://www.jointquality.org>) and were adapted in Bergen as the cycle descriptors for the framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The full Bologna Working Group discussion text on 'new style' qualifications frameworks can be found at: [http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main\\_doc/050218\\_QF\\_EHEA.pdf](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf).

the typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with qualifications that represent the end of each Bologna cycle. They are built on the following elements: knowledge and understanding, applying knowledge and understanding, generic cognitive skills, making judgements, communication skills and learning skills, learner autonomy accountability and working with others.

The BiH descriptors provide more detail than the Dublin Descriptors and are intended to be read with reference to each other. They describe the knowledge, skills and abilities associated with typical end cycle qualifications e.g. Bachelors Degree, Masters Degree, and Doctorates. These descriptors are not meant to be prescriptive or exhaustive and need to be cross-referenced with other external reference points including national and international academic or professional subject specific guidance materials e.g. Tuning project<sup>23</sup> materials and subject benchmark statements.

Currently, the BiH framework for higher education qualifications does not include any further levels or sub-divisions within the three cycles to illustrate progressions within the structure. However, the structure does reflect the ECTS credit ranges associated with the Bologna framework.

### **Relationship of the framework with the adoption of new approaches towards quality assurance, and recognition**

The new BiH qualifications framework is just one aspect of higher education reform that must be taken in conjunction with other initiatives, which collectively are designed to transform the higher educational system to make it fully consistent with the European Higher Education Area. The Council of Europe and the European Commission Joint Project '*Strengthening Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina*' has three elements – (1) creating a higher education qualifications framework, (2) developing a work plan to introduce modern procedures and structures for the recognition of qualifications and, (3) establishing quality assurance standards and guidelines for higher education. These elements are connected and their simultaneous implementation is essential for any successful outcome.

Furthermore, it is recognised that successful reform will require bottom-up as well as top-down developments.

All three elements are closely linked to previous initiatives for university reform as well as the adoption of a framework law for higher education.

### **The objectives of the qualifications framework of the BiH Area are to:**

- enable employers, schools, parents, prospective students and others to understand the achievements and attributes represented by the main qualification titles, and how qualifications relate to one another;

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<sup>23</sup> "Tuning educational structures in Europe" was a pilot project undertaken by a group of European universities, with support by the European University Association (EUA) and the European Commission from 2000 to 2004 and a growing number of partners. It addresses several of the Bologna action lines, notably the adoption and application of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, based on two cycles and the establishment of a system of credits; by identifying points of reference for 1) generic competences, 2) subject-specific competences, 3) the role of ECTS as an accumulation system and 4) the role of learning, teaching, assessment and performance in relation to quality assurance and evaluation.

For further information go to <http://www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm>,  
<http://www.let.rug.nl/TuningProject/index.htm>.

- assist higher education institutions (HEI), learners and others to clarify potential routes for progression and credit transfer, particularly in the context of wider participation in lifelong learning;
- create and maintain international comparability of standards, especially in intra-institutional, inter-institutional, regional and European contexts; and to facilitate mobility for all (students, academic and non-academic staff, citizens);
- eradicate inconsistency and confusion between higher education qualifications by a clear description of qualifications in terms of cycle/level, learning outcomes and credit;
- help create domestic and international confidence in BiH higher education qualifications and standards by integrating them with the new BiH quality assurance system fully consistent with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) *'standards and guidelines'*;<sup>24</sup>
- improve the recognition of BiH qualifications and the employability of citizens by ensuring their relevance to the needs of the national and international labour market;
- ensure that access to, and the content of, BiH higher education is based upon the principles and values of democratic society.

**Qualifications that signify the successful completion of the first cycle (180-240 ECTS credits) are awarded to students who:**

- have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by appropriate learning resources (texts and information communication technologies), includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;
- can apply the thorough knowledge and critical understanding of principles relating to the field of study/discipline in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;
- have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;
- can apply the main methods for acquiring knowledge and undertaking applicative research in the given discipline, and are able to decide on the approach to be taken for solving a given problem and are aware of the extent to which the selected approach is suitable for solving the problem;
- can communicate using appropriate language (and where appropriate foreign language[s]), communication technologies, information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialised and non- specialised audiences for given area of science;

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<sup>24</sup> The full ENQA *'Standards and Guidelines'* for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area can be found at: <http://www.engq.eu/files/BergenReport210205.pdf>.



- have developed the necessary learning skills to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy and academic skills and attributes necessary to undertake research, comprehend and evaluate new information, concepts and evidence from a range of sources;
- possess a foundation for future self-directed and lifelong learning;
- have acquired interpersonal and teamwork skills appropriate to employment and/or further study.

**Qualifications that signify the successful completion of the second cycle (60-120 ECTS credits) are awarded to students who:**

- have demonstrated a systematic understanding and mastering of knowledge in their field of study/discipline that is founded upon, and extends and/or enhances, that is typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;
- can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;
- apply conceptual thinking and abstraction with a high level of proficiency and creativity, which will enable the:
  - critical evaluation of current research and academic work at the forefront of the discipline
  - evaluation of different methodologies, development of critical opinion and the raising of alternative solutions
- have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;
- can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these using appropriate language(s), to specialised and non-specialised audiences clearly and unambiguously;
- are able to take their own knowledge to a higher level, deepen the understanding of their field of study/discipline and continuously develop their own new skills through individual learning and self-development;
- have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed and autonomous;
- have acquired interpersonal and teamwork skills appropriate to a variety of learning and employment contexts and also demonstrate leadership and/or initiative and make a contribution to change and development.

Qualifications that signify the successful completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:

*(The following are the 'Dublin' third cycle descriptors that need to be discussed and expanded upon. They may well be altered following the current Bologna work in this area.)*

- have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;
- have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;
- have made a scientific contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge;
- are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;
- can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise ;
- shall be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, advancement in a knowledge based society.

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## The BiH Framework of Higher Education Qualifications

### Acknowledgement

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### **Annex B**

## Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Adopted by the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process in Bergen in 2005.

## The framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area

The Bergen Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education 19-20 May 2005 adopted the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. Ministers committed themselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010, and to having started work on this by 2007.

	Outcomes	ECTS Credits
First cycle Qualification	<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;</li> <li>• can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;</li> <li>• have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;</li> <li>• can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;</li> <li>• have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.</li> </ul>	Typically include 180-240 ECTS credits
Second cycle qualification	<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;</li> </ul>	Typically include 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;</li> <li>● have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments;</li> <li>● can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;</li> <li>● have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.</li> </ul>	cycle
Third cycle qualification	<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;</li> <li>● have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;</li> <li>● have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;</li> <li>● are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;</li> <li>● can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;</li> <li>● can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.</li> </ul>	Not specified

**Annex C**  
**Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework<sup>26</sup>**

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<sup>26</sup> Reproduced from Annex II of “The European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning (EQF)”; European Communities, 2008

## Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications.

		<b>Knowledge</b>
		In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.
<b>Level 1</b>	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 1 are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ basic general knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b>	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 2 are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b>	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 3 are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study</li> </ul>
<b>Level 4</b>	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 4 are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study</li> </ul>
<b>Level 5</b>	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 5 are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within</li> <li>▪ a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that</li> <li>▪ knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Level 6</b>	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 6 are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical</li> <li>▪ understanding of theories and principles</li> </ul>
<b>Level 7</b>	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 7 are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of</li> <li>▪ knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking</li> <li>▪ and/or research</li> <li>▪ • critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface</li> <li>▪ between different fields</li> </ul>
<b>Level 8</b>	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 8 are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study</li> <li>▪ and at the interface between fields</li> </ul>



<b>Skills</b>	<b>Competence</b>
In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).	In the context of EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ basic skills required to carry out simple tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ work or study under direct supervision in a structured context</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ work or study under supervision with some autonomy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study</li> <li>▪ adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change</li> <li>▪ supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change</li> <li>▪ review and develop performance of self and others</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts</li> <li>▪ take responsibility for managing professional development of</li> <li>▪ individuals and groups</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches</li> <li>▪ take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research</li> </ul>

## **Compatibility with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area**

The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area provides descriptors for cycles. Each cycle descriptor offers a generic statement of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with qualifications that represent the end of that cycle.

- \* The descriptor for the higher education short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle), developed by the Joint Quality Initiative as part of the Bologna process, corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 5.
- \*\* The descriptor for the first cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 6.
- \*\*\* The descriptor for the second cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 7.
- \*\*\*\* The descriptor for the third cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 8.

## **Annex D**

### **Glossary<sup>27</sup>**

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<sup>27</sup> Reproduced from the ECTS Users' Guide 2009; European Communities, 2009 and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

**Accumulation**

The process of collecting credits awarded for achieving the learning outcomes of educational components or other learning activities.

**Allocation of Credit**

The process of assigning a number of credits to qualifications/ programmes or to other educational components.

**Assessment**

The total range of methods (written, oral and practical tests/examinations, projects and portfolios) used to evaluate learners' achievement of expected learning outcomes.

**Assessment criteria**

Descriptions of what the learner is expected to do, in order to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved.

**Award of Credit**

The act of delivering learners the number of credits that are assigned to the component or a qualification. The award of credit recognises that learners' learning outcomes have been assessed and that the learner satisfies the requirements for the educational component or the qualification.

**Competences**

A dynamic combination of cognitive and metacognitive skills, knowledge and understanding, interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills, ethical values and attitudes. Fostering competences is the object of all educational programmes. Competences are developed in all course units and assessed at different stages of a programme. Some competences are subject-area related (specific to a field of study), others are generic (common to any degree course). It is normally the case that competence development proceeds in an integrated and cyclical manner throughout a programme.

**Condoning**

Condoning is the term used in some national contexts when an examination board exempts a student from reassessment in a failed (or marginally failed) component if other related components are passed with sufficiently high grades.

**Contact Hour**

Hours (typically a period of 45-60 minutes) spent by students on activities guided by teaching staff.

**Credit (ECTS)**

Quantified means of expressing the volume of learning based on the workload students need in order to achieve the expected outcomes of a learning process at a specified level.

**Cycle**

All qualifications in the European Higher Education Area are located within three cycles. One of the objectives indicated in the Bologna Declaration in 1999 was the "adoption of

a system based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate.” In 2003 doctoral studies were also included in the Bologna structure and referred to as the third cycle.

### **Cycle (Level) Descriptors**

Generic statements of the broad expected outcomes of each of the three cycles. A good example of general cycle (level) descriptors are the so-called Dublin Descriptors, which have served as one of the foundations (along with ECTS) for the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

### **Educational Component**

A self-contained and formally structured learning experience (such as: course unit, module, seminar, work placement).

### **Europe/European**

Europe/European refers to those countries that are signatories to the Bologna Declaration, whilst ‘national’ is used to describe the contexts within each of those countries or education systems.

### **Formal learning**

Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.

### **Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area**

An overarching framework that makes transparent the relationship between European national higher education frameworks of qualifications and the qualifications they contain. It is an articulation mechanism between national frameworks.

### **Informal learning**

Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or “incidental”/random).

### **Learner**

An individual engaged in a learning process (formal, non-formal or informal learning).

### **Learner-centred (approach or system)**

An approach or system that supports the design of learning programmes which focus on learners’ achievements, accommodate different learners’ priorities and are consistent with reasonable students’ workload (i.e. workload that is feasible within the duration of the learning programme). It accommodates for learners’ greater involvement in the choice of content, mode, pace and place of learning.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning.

**Level Descriptor**

General statements of the typical achievement of learners who have been awarded a qualification at a certain level in a qualifications framework.

**Levels**

Represent a series of sequential steps (a developmental continuum), expressed in terms of a range of generic outcomes, against which typical qualifications can be positioned.

**Module**

A course unit in a system in which each course unit carries the same number of credits or a multiple thereof.

**Non-formal learning**

Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

**National framework of qualifications (higher education)**

The single description, at national level or level of an education system, which is internationally understood and through which all qualifications and other learning achievements in higher education may be described and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between higher education qualifications.

**Profile**

Either the specific (subject) field(s) of learning of a qualification or the broader aggregation of clusters of qualifications or programmes from different fields that share a common emphasis or purpose (e.g. an applied vocational as opposed to more theoretical academic studies).

**Programme (educational)**

A set of educational components, based on learning outcomes that are recognised for the award of a specific qualification.

**Progression**

The process which enables learners to pass from one stage of a qualification to the next and to access educational programmes that prepare for qualifications at a higher level than those he/she already possesses.

**Progression rules**

Set of rules that define conditions for learners' progression within qualifications and towards other qualifications.

**Qualification**

Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a recognised programme of study.

**Qualifications (higher education)**

Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting that particular learning outcomes have been achieved, normally following the successful completion of a recognised higher education programme of study.

**Qualification descriptors**

are generic statements of the outcomes of study. They provide clear points of reference that describe the main outcomes of a qualification often with reference to national levels.

**Quality Assurance**

The process or set of processes adopted nationally and institutionally to ensure the quality of educational programmes and qualifications awarded.

**Recognition of credit**

The process through which an institution certifies that learning outcomes achieved and assessed in another institution satisfy (some or all) requirements of a particular programme, its component or qualification.

**Recognition of non-formal and informal learning**

The process through which an institution certifies that the learning outcomes achieved and assessed in another context (non-formal or informal learning) satisfy (some or all) requirements of a particular programme, its component or qualification.

**Reference points**

Non-prescriptive indicators that support the articulation of qualifications, learning outcomes and/o other related concepts.

**Student**

Learner enrolled in a formal educational programme.

**Transfer**

The process of having credits awarded in one context recognised in another context for purposes of obtaining a qualification.

**Workload**

Indication of the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations) required to achieve the expected learning outcomes.