

NQF referencing to EQF

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 MALTA

Timeline



ID number 28667

Background

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) (the name changes in January 2021 to Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)) is the competent authority for recognising qualifications and accrediting courses against the Malta qualifications framework (MQF). It is also responsible for ensuring proper development, implementation and promotion of the MQF.

Objectives

The objective of establishing the Malta qualifications framework (MQF) and its referencing to the EQF is to make the Maltese qualifications system framework easier to understand and review, and more transparent at national and international levels. The MQF is also a referencing tool that helps to describe and compare both national and foreign qualifications to promote their quality, transparency and mobility. The reference levels make it easier to understand what a learner with a qualification related to the MQF knows, understands and is able to do. These levels are neutral reference points to be used for all qualifications irrespective of whether they arise from academic or vocational education; formal, informal and non-formal learning. These are useful for education and training providers as they describe the knowledge, skills and competences and a set of learning outcomes that indicate to the learner the end of a learning process.

Description

In 2016, the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) published the fourth revised edition of the referencing report that sets the parameters for all qualifications and awards that can be conferred in Malta. It reflects on the range of current reforms representing a move towards a more modular based concept as building blocks for qualifications. Such an approach is intended to allow for and promote lifelong learning for non-traditional learners. It calls for better integration of non-formal learning within mainstream education routes. The 2016 referencing report has updated the MQF by

introducing two additional levels covering learning below level 1: introductory level A and introductory level B.

These two new levels have no equivalence on the EQF.

2016 Implementation

2017 Implementation

In 2017, the NCFHE developed 13 national occupational standards attached to the MQF to increase uniformity and support the standardisation of training provision and assessment.

2018 Implementation

Implementation continued.

2019 Implementation

During 2019, one of the NCFHE objectives related to the MQF is to further disseminate it among users and promote its use among stakeholders. The NCFHE took part in a series of dissemination activities on the MQF at the University of Malta, MCAST and during the 'I choose' fairs in Malta and in Gozo. It also participated in the Europe day in Valletta, informing the general public about the Malta qualifications framework. These dissemination activities were conducted in collaboration with the National Europass Centre and the EUROGUIDANCE centre in Malta. The EQF national coordination point (NCP) took part in the dissemination events of the National Europass Centre and the EUROGUIDANCE centre aiming at strengthening the cooperation between the networks.

In September 2019, the NCFHE set up the consultative working group on the MQF that has been meeting monthly. The working group uses its technical expertise to support the MQF coordinator by highlighting improvements required in the referencing process and in the MQF impact assessment.

2020 Implementation

In 2019/20, the NCFHE completed three main initiatives related to the MQF, its promotion and its further development in Malta.

The NCFHE launched the MQF impact assessment study project in collaboration with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP).

The data collection for the impact assessment study was held in three phases: an online survey, focus groups, and one-to-one interviews.

The final report, with the assessment and analysis, was finalised in December 2020.

In November 2020, the NCFHE brought to conclusion the Malta qualifications database (MQD) linked to the qualifications database register (QDR), which has been developed through a project jointly financed by the European Union, in accordance with the rules of Erasmus+ programme, Grant agreement for an action with one beneficiary.

In line with the 2017 Council recommendation on the EQF, the database features detailed information on qualifications and awards in Malta and is a reliable source for answers to important questions to be asked when looking into various study programmes including VET programmes and national occupational standards (NOS) for informal and non-formal learning.

The information provided on accredited programmes is comparable and compatible with that provided by other countries to help ensure the transparency of the system of accreditation carried out in Malta and to increase trust. It also facilitates the recognition of Maltese qualifications abroad through the transparent provision of

information on programmes that are level-rated and linked to the EQF. This is further supported by the link of the MQD to the QDR and the EUROPASS portal, ensuring a more comprehensive database of qualifications in Europe.

The MQD is a publicly accessible information system, which provides detailed information about all further and higher education qualifications and awards that are accredited and can be obtained in Malta. The MQD also includes the NOS, which are pegged to the Malta qualifications framework. The NOS are a set of job-related standards that highlight the performance expected when carrying out a specific occupation at a specific level. These standards define the main jobs that people carry out and link qualifications to the requirements of the labour market

All accredited study programmes from MQF level 1 up to MQF level 8 can be found in this database. These include awards and qualifications by licensed providers and the three self-accredited institutions: MCAST, ITS and University of Malta.

2021 Implementation

The MQF was operational and run as regular practice.

2022 Implementation

The MQF was operational and run as regular practice.

2023 Implementation

The MQF was operational and run as regular practice.

2024 Implementation

The MFHEA released the fifth edition of the Referencing report in 2024, succeeding the 2016 edition published by its predecessor, the NCFHE. This latest edition reflects significant developments in Malta's education sector over the intervening years.

One of the primary updates in the 2024 referencing report is the comprehensive description of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and its alignment with other meta-frameworks, including the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA). This alignment aims to enhance the clarity and comparability of Maltese qualifications on an international scale.

Additionally, the 2024 edition provides detailed information on the parameters required for any national programme conferred in Malta, specifying the level of learning outcomes and the number of credits associated with each MQF level. This serves to guide education and training providers in developing programmes that adhere to the stipulated level descriptors.

The report also outlines the main pathways across compulsory, further, and higher education in Malta, encompassing both academic and vocational education. This offers a clearer understanding of the relationships between different qualification levels and the associated credit requirements.

2025 Implementation

In 2025, the referencing report continued being updated.

Bodies responsible

- Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)
- National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) (until 2021)

Target group

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)
National, regional and local authorities

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Optimising VET funding

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses
Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Referencing report 2016](#)

[Malta qualifications framework \(MQF\)](#)

[The Malta qualifications database \(MQD\)](#)

[The MQF impact assessment study](#)

[Referencing report 2024](#)

Related policy developments

2021 Completed

Establishing the learning outcomes approach in curricula

The compulsory education system has reviewed all its curricula in terms of learning outcomes and will be introducing them as from the academic year 2019-20.

 MALTA

Type of development

Practical

measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

“ … ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). NQF referencing to EQF: Malta. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28667>