NQF state of play

Germany 2024

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Overview

Stage of development: Operational stage

NQF linked to EQF: ✓

Scope of the framework:
The NQF includes qualifications awarded within (general education, initial VET, regulated further training and higher education) and outside formal education and training.

Number of levels:

Eight

Legal basis/stage of development:

Joint resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Economic Affairs and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Technology (2013)
(in German)

NQF/EQF website:
⧉ Website

Qualifications register/database:
⧉ DQR qualifications database

Introduction and context

1.1. Policy context

Participation in early childhood education (93.1%) has decreased by 2.7 percentage points over the past decade, reaching the EU average (93.1%) in 2022. The rate of early leaving from education and training (12.8% in 2023) is increasing and higher than the EU average of 9.5%. In 2021, tertiary educational attainment (ages 25–34) was 38.4%, below the EU-27 average of 41.2% (European Commission, DG Education, Youth, Sport & Culture, 2024). In 2022, participation in upper secondary vocational education and training (VET) was below the EU average (46.6% versus 49.0%), and participation in post-secondary VET was 94.9%. In short-cycle tertiary education, vocational pathways are the only option ([1]).

Some of the underpinning concepts of the DQR, such as the learning outcomes approach or the notion of parity of esteem, are widely accepted among policymakers and feature prominently in political discourse (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022). References to the DQR and its categories have already been made in instruments regulating formal education and training, such as the framework curricula for part-time vocational schools (*Berufsschule*) of the *Länder*. The DQR has also been a driving force in strengthening regulated further vocational training (at DQR/EQF levels 5 to 7) and improving its quality. For example, a three-level structure was developed and included in the Vocational Training Act, which has been in force since January 2020. New titles for regulated further vocational training programmes and related qualifications ([2]) at levels 5 to 7 underline their equivalence to academic education.

1.2. NQF legal basis

Reflecting the federal structure of Germany, the formal basis of the DQR is the joint resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs (Kultusministerkonferenz – KMK), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF), the Conference of Ministers of Economics of the *Länder* and the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, which entered into force on 1 May 2013. It paved the way for the DQR's full implementation, defined the responsibilities of different stakeholders and set up supporting tools and methodologies, including the DQR database and handbook. This resolution was the basis for administrative regulations, such as indicating DQR/EQF levels on certificates and diplomas and their supplements. Although the DQR is a

functioning system with clearly defined responsibilities, a theoretical discussion has begun on whether a binding legal framework should be created. However, there is still no consensus on whether and how this framework should be developed ([3]).

Policy objectives

The DQR aims to increase the transparency and comparability of German qualifications, and overall coherence and permeability in the education, training, and qualification system.

According to the German EQF referencing report, the DQR aims to (BMBF & KMK, 2013):

a. increase transparency of German qualifications and aid their recognition elsewhere in Europe;
b. support learner and employee mobility between Germany and other European countries and within Germany;
c. improve the visibility of equivalence and differences between qualifications and promote permeability;
d. promote reliability, transfer opportunities, and quality assurance;
e. increase the skills orientation of qualifications;
f. reinforce the learning outcomes orientation of qualification processes;
g. improve opportunities for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning;
h. encourage and improve access to, and participation in, lifelong learning.

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

3.1. NQF structure and level descriptors

The DQR has an eight-level structure. Level descriptors describe the competences required to obtain a qualification; they are guided by the established German terminological and conceptual approach, referring to the ability to act (*Handlungskompetenz*) (BMBF & KMK, 2013). The DQR differentiates between two categories of competence: professional and personal. The term 'competence' lies at the heart of the DQR and signals readiness to use knowledge, skills, and personal, social, and methodological competences in work or study situations and for professional and personal development. Competence is understood in this sense as comprehensive action competence (Table 1). Methodological competence is understood as a transversal competence and is not separately stated in the DQR matrix. The DQR expresses only selected characteristics; the comprehensive and integrated notion of competence, underlying the DQR, has a strong humanistic and educational dimension ([4]).

Descriptors are partly expressed as alternatives, such as 'field of study or work' and 'specialised field of study or field of occupational activity'. The broad and inclusive nature of level descriptors, using parallel formulations, if necessary, makes it possible to open up all levels to different kinds of qualifications; higher levels are not restricted to qualifications awarded within the Bologna process.

Table 1. **Level descriptors in the German qualifications framework for lifelong learning**

Level indicator			
Structure of requirements			
Professional competence		**Personal competence**	
Knowledge	**Skills**	**Social competence**	**Autonomy**

| Depth and breadth | Instrumental and systemic skills, judgement | Team/leadership skills, involvement and communication | Autonomous responsibility/responsibility, reflectiveness and learning competence |

Source: BMBF & KMK (2013).

Each reference level maps comparable/equivalent, rather than homogeneous, qualifications. A key principle of the DQR is that 'each qualification level should always be accessible via various educational pathways' (BMBF & KMK, 2013).

3.2. NQF scope and coverage

The DQR includes qualifications awarded both within and outside formal education and training. Qualifications from initial VET, higher education, general education and regulated further training ([5]) have been levelled to the DQR and linked to the EQF. In 2024, following a pilot phase, a qualification awarded outside formal education and training was included in the DQR for the first time ([6]). It was placed under the qualification type 'Non-formal qualifications (level 6)' (*Nicht-formale Qualifikationen (Niveau 6)*) (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

Higher DQR levels are open to qualifications from various education and training subsystems. Qualifications at the same level are considered comparable; for example, the master craftsperson qualification (level 6) is regarded as equivalent to a higher education bachelor degree. VET qualifications are allocated across levels 1 to 7.

The number of qualifications included in the DQR continues to grow. From September 2024, a total of 1 346 individual qualifications had been included, with the largest numbers at levels 4 and 6. Since 2022, the total number of qualifications included in the DQR has increased by 106, largely due to the 41 qualifications added under the category 'advanced vocational training' pursuant to § 54 of the Vocational Training Act or § 42f Crafts and Trades Regulation at DQR levels 5 and 6. Additionally, nine qualifications were added under the category 'retraining qualifications' pursuant to the Vocational Training Act at level 4. Two new qualification types were created: 'other advanced vocational training' at level 7 and 'other training and further education' in accordance with EU/international law at level 6. The latter has opened up the DQR to international qualifications. The first such qualification to be included was the Transport airline pilot (*Verkehrspilot/Verkehrspilotin*) (European Commission &

Cedefop, 2024).

3.3. Use of learning outcomes

The DQR level descriptors support the restructuring of initial and continuing VET training plans (curricula) and are increasingly being used for designing qualifications in the non-formal sector (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

In school education, the country aims to develop quality assurance measures further and improve the comparability of qualifications and learner mobility. The introduction of educational standards that are binding across all *Länder* and the establishment of the Institute for Educational Quality Improvement (*Institut zur Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen* (IQB)) to review and develop them marked the beginning of a paradigm shift towards output-oriented control of education. Educational standards are in place for key subjects such as German, foreign languages (English and French), mathematics, and the natural sciences at different educational levels, and are updated as necessary. For example, the standards for biology, chemistry, and physics in lower secondary education were last updated in 2024 (KMK, 2024a; 2024b; 2024c). The IQB Educational Trends studies (*IQB-Bildungstrends*) review the implementation of educational standards in primary (grade four) and lower secondary (grade nine) education. The latest edition of these studies, which take place every two years, was published in 2023 (IQB, 2023).

Since 2016/2017, the resolution of educational standards for the *Allgemeine Hochschulreife* (general higher education entrance qualification) and the establishment of a pool of *Abitur* (school-leaving examination) tasks in German, mathematics, and advanced foreign languages (English and French) have guaranteed the comparability and high quality of *Abitur* tasks ([7]) ([8]).

In VET, continuous development of the concept of *Handlungskompetenz* has gradually assumed a key role in defining qualifications. These competence-based qualifications are structured in 'learning fields', allowing general subjects and occupational skills to be acquired in authentic labour market settings. Having been applied for more than two decades, this competence-based approach also facilitates a stronger emphasis on transversal skills and competences that are seen as highly relevant in a context of rapid technological and occupational change (Kittel et al., 2021).

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

Owing to the distribution of responsibilities between the *Länder* and the federal government in matters of qualifications, there is no single body responsible for the overall coordination and oversight of the DQR. The main institutions at the national level are the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Standing Conference of Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

The body in charge of DQR implementation (NQF secretariat) is the coordination point for the German qualifications framework (*Bund-Länder Koordinierungsstelle* - B-L-KS), established through a joint initiative by the federal government and the *Länder*. The B-L-KS also assumes the function of the EQF national coordination point (NCP). It has six members, including representatives from the BMBF, the Federal Ministry of Economics and Energy, the KMK, and the Conference of Ministers for Economics of the *Länder*. Its main role is to monitor the allocation of qualifications, ensuring consistency in the overall DQR structure. The work of the B-L-KS as the EQF NCP is supported by the appropriate units of the BMBF and the KMK secretariat, which provide the necessary administrative staff. The units collaborate in carrying out their tasks.

Stakeholders such as ministries, public education institutions, VET, higher and general education providers, social partners, labour market representatives ([9]), researchers, and practitioners participate in the DQR working group (*Arbeitskreis DQR*), which serves as an advisory body for the B-L-KS. Decisions are reached by consensus, and members work closely with their respective institutions and organisations. The DQR working group has played a major role in strengthening the communication and cooperation among this wide range of stakeholders.

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

5.1. Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

Implementation of the DQR, with its focus on learning outcomes, has also strengthened work to make non-formal and informal learning more visible and comparable. A 2024 amendment to the Vocational Training Act introduced the validation of occupational skills. Learners can obtain qualifications at DQR levels 3 and 4 ([10]) through validation; they can also access programmes through validation that lead to CVET qualifications at levels 5 and 6. However, the DQR is not directly used in any existing validation procedure (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022; Unterweger, 2024).

Validation exists with different arrangements in all education and training subsystems, partially enabling transitions between them – for example from VET to higher education. In VET, individuals with substantial vocational experience can sit the external students' examination (*Externenprüfung*) and obtain a full qualification, equivalent to those acquired through a formal apprenticeship programme. General education school leaving certificates can be also acquired through external examinations (*Schulfremdenprüfung*, *Externenprüfung*, *Nichtschülerprüfung*) in all *Länder*. Admission to examinations in the context of regulated further vocational training qualifications, such as *Handwerksmeister* (master craftsperson), is also possible through validation: access is granted based solely on work experience, while preparatory training is not compulsory. Two KMK decisions, in place since March 2009, provide the basis for validation in higher education. The first offers qualified workers who hold certain vocational qualifications – but lack an upper secondary qualification – the option to be admitted to higher education. The second concerns the recognition of competences acquired at work for credit. According to these decisions, knowledge and skills acquired outside higher education can be recognised for up to 50% of a formal qualification (Unterweger, 2024).

5.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications

The 2012 Professional Qualifications Assessment Act/Recognition Act gives individuals the right to have their foreign-acquired qualifications matched to a German qualification by a competent authority. Equivalence can be

granted even when no proof of prior learning is available, opening up opportunities for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The DQR serves as a complementary source of information about qualifications, but in principle, the recognition procedure operates independently of the DQR (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022; 2024).

NQF implementation and impact

6.1. Stage of implementation

The DQR has reached operational status. For example, the framework, along with the DQR database provides broad information on qualifications, improving the transparency within the qualifications system (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

6.2. Procedures for including qualifications in the NQF

There are two distinct procedures for introducing qualifications awarded both within and outside formal education and training into the DQR. The B-L-KS has the overall responsibility for managing these procedures.

Regarding formal qualifications, the first step was to include and level qualifications from all education subsystems to the DQR in 2012. They have served as anchor or reference qualifications for the further levelling of additional qualifications. Institutions responsible for the legal regulation of formal qualifications (i.e. qualifications regulated by the government at federal or State level) should submit a proposal to the B-L-KS for inclusion in the DQR. The proposal includes a template providing detailed information (legal basis, curriculum, examination regulations, and other relevant documents, e.g. standards) on the individual qualification or qualification type (in the case of a qualification type, the template should include a detailed description of an anchor qualification) and a justification for the suggested DQR level for the qualification (type). The applying institution is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of and validating the suggested DQR level. The B-L-KS reviews the proposal in cooperation with the DQR working group to ensure coherence with the DQR. Consensus is required to reach a decision ([11]). New or updated formal qualifications that fall under a qualification type already included in the DQR are automatically added to the framework after the official directory of recognised training occupations is updated (this occurs once per year). This en bloc inclusion is used for IVET and several CVET qualifications (B-L-KS, 2013; European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

The B-L-KS and DQR working group have agreed on a procedure for the inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. The procedure is currently in its initial phase. Qualification providers (typically private or public organisations and civil society actors) are responsible for submitting a proposal, accompanied by a dossier containing curriculum documents and other supporting material. The

dossier is reviewed by three independent experts, commissioned for this task by the B-L-KS, against the descriptors of the targeted DQR level. On-site visits by the reviewers can be arranged if needed. The reviewers' evaluation report and joint recommendation are forwarded to the B-L-KS and DQR working group. The final decision is taken by consensus between the two bodies. The procedure involves a fee (currently EUR 4 500), paid by providers, to cover the cost of the external reviewers. Qualification providers may request detailed information directly from the B-L-KS (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

6.3. Indicating EQF/NQF levels

DQR/EQF levels are indicated on VET certificates from level 3 and above, as well as the relevant Europass certificate supplements. It is planned that DQR/EQF levels also be indicated on the certificates for qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. The DQR qualifications database indicates the DQR/EQF levels of all qualifications (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024). It is intended for DQR/EQF levels to be automatically included on VET certificates; several responsible bodies, such as chambers, have already begun implement this ([12]).

6.4. NQF dissemination

The DQR website is the main communication tool, targeting the broader public (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).The DQR handbook outlines the criteria and procedures for including qualifications in the framework. It targets three main groups: competent institutions in the different education sectors, the professional community, and citizens (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

Implementation of the DQR is a joint process involving a broad range of stakeholders across various parts of education and training and the labour market; all stakeholders use their own channels to communicate the DQR to their respective target audiences.

6.5. Qualifications databases and registers

All DQR qualifications are included in the DQR qualifications database (1 346 as of September 2024). The function 'Qualification search' (*Qualifikationssuche*) informs users about the DQR level of a specific qualification, or about which qualifications are allocated to a given level. The database provides, for each qualification, information in German and English about the qualification title, DQR/EQF level, education field, description (as an open text) of what the learner is expected to know, understand and able to do, as well as the awarding body or competent

authority, entry requirements, and pathways to acquire the qualification (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

There is variation in the learning outcomes descriptions. They can be presented either as running text or as bullet points, while their length varies accordingly. Shortened or summary versions of these descriptions are used in Europass certificate supplements and Europass diploma supplements. The database and the corresponding list of qualifications are updated annually to reflect newly assigned qualifications and/or changes in the scope of already levelled qualification types. The database is connected to the Europass platform (via the Qualifications Dataset Register), and the DQR website includes links to the Europass portal and the Federal Employment Agency's portal ([13]) (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

6.6. Awareness and use of the NQF

The DQR enjoys a high level of awareness and usage among the organisations responsible for awarding DQR qualifications. For example, the DQR level descriptors are used to restructure initial and continuing VET training regulations and plans. There is also ongoing interest among providers of non-formal and private qualifications, who use the DQR descriptors as a competence model when designing qualifications.

Citizens, overall, have moderate awareness of the DQR. They regularly contact the B-L-KS seeking information about the positioning of a specific qualification within the DQR, or about the requirements for achieving a qualification at a particular DQR level. Such enquiries suggest that learners are, to some extent, aware of the DQR and consider it when deciding which learning opportunity to pursue. Workers and jobseekers, seeking employment or further learning, often request information on whether a qualification is recognised by the labour market, or whether qualifications assigned to the same DQR level are equivalent. The volume of such enquiries has remained stable since 2020 (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022; 2024).

There are no explicit data referring to the use of the DQR by labour market stakeholders. However, as representatives of labour market actors are members of the DQR working group and involved in the design and renewal of qualifications, for example in VET, they are aware of the framework and use the DQR and its level descriptors. Experience also indicates that vacancy notices sometimes specify the DQR level of the required qualification. Occasionally, the B-L-KS receives questions from employers (particularly from the public sector) about the implications of

DQR levels for job openings and recruitment procedures. Trade unions use the DQR in campaigns to promote parity of esteem between vocational and general education. In general, labour market representatives have a high level of awareness, but make moderate use of the DQR (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022; 2024).

6.7. Impact of the NQF

The DQR has enhanced the transparency and comparability of qualifications across different subsystems of the formal education system. This function of the framework has been supported by the DQR database and the use of learning outcomes as a common language that bridges different education subsystems. The opening-up of the DQR to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training is expected to improve transparency and comparability of qualifications further (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022; 2024). The DQR has facilitated transparency between VET and higher education, thereby impacting accreditation practices. For example, universities and universities of applied sciences increasingly use the DQR in procedures for accrediting competences acquired in other education subsystems. The DQR has contributed to promoting permeability in education and training, helping reduce barriers between sectors and institutions. It is also reported that the DQR has significantly strengthened parity of esteem, especially between VET and higher education. With the allocation, introduction, and development of VET qualifications at DQR levels 6 and 7, this parity became more visible. This is also reflected in the increasing willingness of universities to recognise competences acquired outside higher education. However, this has also led to some confusion, as some learners or jobseekers have mistakenly assumed that parity of esteem implies equivalence and interchangeability between different education and training subsystems (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022; 2024).

The DQR has influenced the design of qualifications standards. For example, the level descriptors are increasingly used in the non-formal sector when designing qualifications. Although quality assurance bodies do not directly use the DQR, it does influence the quality assurance of regulated continuing VET qualifications; its competence model and level descriptors serve as one source of information among others when formulating quality criteria. Further, the DQR can be viewed as offering an additional mark of quality, since the inclusion of a qualification in the framework requires evidence that it is supported by adequate quality assurance measures (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024). The institutional framework of the DQR promotes dialogue and cooperation among education and training subsystems. The B-L-KS is composed of

representatives from ministries responsible for general, vocational, and higher education, while the German Rectors' Conference is a member of the DQR working group. In parallel, the working group provides a platform for cooperation between education and the labour market (see Chapter 5) (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

Referencing to the EQF

The DQR was referenced to the EQF in 2012 (BMBF & KMK, 2013). The qualifications framework for higher education, now an integral part of the DQR, was self-certified against the QF-EHEA in 2008. Although an updated referencing report is expected by stakeholders, there is currently no confirmed decision on this matter (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

Important lessons and future plans

A major element of the DQR's development and implementation is the committed involvement of stakeholders from education and training, the labour market, ministries, and *Länder.* The DQR working group provides a forum for reaching consensus, ensuring full support from stakeholders. Creating and sustaining mutual understanding and trust between stakeholders from different education sectors is seen as a key success factor – and a challenge – as reaching decisions on the further implementation of the DQR can be time-consuming (European Commission & Cedefop, 2022).

The DQR makes it possible to identify and understand better the similarities and differences between qualifications in different areas of education and training. A permeable system, with improved horizontal and vertical progression possibilities, is at the heart of DQR implementation, along with parity of esteem between VET and higher education.

Future plans include the further opening up the DQR to new qualifications. Particular focus will be placed on including qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. In addition, the strictly non-regulatory status of the DQR should be more clearly communicated to avoid unrealistic expectations and frustration among end users (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

Main sources of information

[URLs accessed 8.4.2025]

DQR website

DQR qualifications database

BMBF & KMK. (2013). *German EQF Referencing Report.*

National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	**Doctorate and equivalent arts degrees (Doktorat und äquivalente künstlerische Abschlüsse)**	8
7	**Master degrees and equivalent higher education qualifications (traditional German courses of higher education study such as the first degrees of Diplom or Magister, State examinations) (Master und gleichgestellte Abschlüsse (Diplom, Magister, Staatsexamen))**	7
	Strategic professional (IT) (certified) (Strategische/r IT Professional (Geprüfte/r))	
	Other advanced vocational training on the basis of national advanced training regulations according to the Vocational Training Act or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (level 7) (Sonstige berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen aufgrund bundeseinheitlicher Fortbildungsordnungen nach BBiG/HwO (Niveau 7))	
	Advanced vocational training on the basis of local advanced training examination regulations according to the Vocational Training Act or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (level 7) (Sonstige berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen aufgrund von Fortbildungsprüfungsregelungen der zuständigen Stellen nach BBiG/HwO (Niveau 7))	
	Other advanced vocational training (level 7) (Sonstige berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen (Niveau 7))	

6	Bachelor degrees and equivalent higher education qualifications (Bachelor und gleichgestellte Hochschulabschlüsse)	6
	Specialist commercial clerk (certified) (Fachkaufmann/-frau (Geprüfte/r))	
	Business management specialist (certified) (Fachwirt (Geprüfter))	
	Master craftsman (Meister)	
	Operative professional (IT) (certified) (Operative/r Professional (IT) (Geprüfte/r))	
	Trade and technical school (advanced vocational training governed by federal State law) (Fachschule (Landesrechtlich geregelte berufliche Weiterbildungen))	
	Advanced vocational training on the basis of local advanced training examination regulations according to the Vocational Training Act or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (level 6) (Berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen aufgrund von Fortbildungsprüfungsregelungen der zuständigen Stellen nach BBiG/HwO (Niveau 6))	
	Other advanced vocational training on the basis of national advanced training regulations according to the Vocational Training Act or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (level 6) (Sonstige berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen aufgrund bundeseinheitlicher Fortbildungsordnungen nach BBiG/HwO (Niveau 6))	
	Other training and further education in accordance with EU/international law (level 6) (Sonstige Aus- und Fortbildungen nach EU-Recht/internationalem Recht (Niveau 6))	
	Non-formal qualifications (level 6) (Nicht-formale Qualifikationen (Niveau 6))	

5	**IT specialist (IT-Spezialist/in (Zertifizierte/r))**	5
	Service technician (certified) (Servicetechniker/in (Geprüfte/r))	
	Advanced vocational training on the basis of local advanced training examination regulations according to the Vocational Training Act (or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (Berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen aufgrund von Fortbildungsprüfungsregelungen der zuständigen Stellen nach BBiG/HwO (Niveau 5))	
	Other advanced vocational training on the basis of national advanced training regulations according to the Vocational Training Act or the Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (level 5) (Sonstige berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen aufgrund bundeseinheitlicher Fortbildungsordnungen nach BBiG/HwO (Niveau 5))	

4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate - General higher education entrance qualification (Allgemeine Hochschulreife (AHR))	4
	Subject-linked higher education entrance qualification (Fachgebundene Hochschulreife (FgbHR))	
	Higher education entrance qualification for university of applied sciences (Fachhochschulreife (FHR))	
	Dual VET (3-year and 3.5-year training courses) (Duale Berufsausbildung (3- und 3 ½-jährige Ausbildungen))	
	Full-time vocational school (vocational education and training governed by federal State law) (Berufsfachschule (Landesrechtlich geregelte Berufsausbildungen))	
	Full-time vocational school (vocational education and training governed by federal law in healthcare and elderly care) (Berufsfachschule (Bundesrechtliche Ausbildungsregelungen für Berufe im Gesundheitswesen und in der Altenpflege))	
	Full-time vocational school (fully qualifying VET pursuant to the Vocational Training Act or Crafts and Trades Regulation Code) (Berufsfachschule (vollqualifizierende Berufsausbildung nach BBiG/HwO))	
	Retraining qualification pursuant to the Vocational Training Act (level 4) (Berufliche Umschulung nach BBiG (Niveau 4))	
3	Intermediate secondary school leaving certificate - General education, 10 years (Mittlerer Schulabschluss (MSA))	3
	Intermediate secondary school leaving certificate - Full-time vocational school (Berufsfachschule (Mittlerer Schulabschluss))	
	Dual VET (2-year training courses) (Duale Berufsausbildung (2-jährige Ausbildung))	

2	**Lower secondary school leaving certificate - General education, 9 years (Erster Schulabschluss (ESA))** **Vocational training preparation (vocational preparation scheme, prevocational training year, introductory training) (Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung (Niveau 2; BvB, BvB-Reha, BVJ, EQ))** **Basic vocational training - Full-time vocational school (Berufsfachschule (Berufliche Grundbildung))**	2
1	**Vocational training preparation (vocational preparation scheme, prevocational training year) (Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung (Niveau 1; BvB, BvB-Reha, BVJ))**	1

Acronyms

B-L-KS	Bund-Länder Koordinierungsstelle [national coordination point]
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung [Federal Ministry of Education and Research]
DQR	*Deutscher Qualifikationsrahmen für lebenslanges Lernen* [German qualifications framework for lifelong learning]
EQF	European qualifications framework
IQB	Institut zur Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungswesen [Institute for Educational Quality Improvement]
KMK	Kultusministerkonferenz [Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany]
NQF	national qualifications framework
VET	vocational education and training

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Notes

[1]More information at Eurostat [educ_uoe_enra13], accessed 13 February 2025.

[2]Examples include certified professional specialist (EQF level 5), bachelor professional (EQF level 6) and master professional (EQF level 7).

[3]Source: Internal communication with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

[4]The ability to act (Handlungskompetenz) in vocational school curricula is not restricted to the world of work but implies individual ability and readiness to act appropriately in a social context and be individually responsible.

[5]Regulated further training refers to qualifications regulated by the Vocational Training Act or State law, or subject to the framework agreements of the technical colleges by resolutions of the KMK. Some qualifications under the responsibility of chambers or other competent bodies have also been included.

[6]The title of the qualification is VWA Graduate in Business Studies (Betriebswirt (VWA)/Betriebswirtin (VWA)). At national level, such qualifications are referred to as 'non-formal qualifications' (nicht-formale Qualifikationen) or 'qualifications from non-formal education and training' (Qualifikationen der nicht-formalen Bildung).

[7]In June 2020, educational standards for the Allgemeine Hochschulreife in the natural science subjects (biology, chemistry and physics) were adopted and implemented for the first time in the 2022/2023 school year. This version is still in force.

[8]Source: internal communication with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

[9]The group includes the employers' national umbrella organisations such as the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA), the Federation of German Trade Unions (DGB), the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), the Federal Employment Agency (BA) (European Commission & Cedefop, 2024).

[10]These qualifications are regulated by the Vocational Training Act and are related to recognised training occupations.
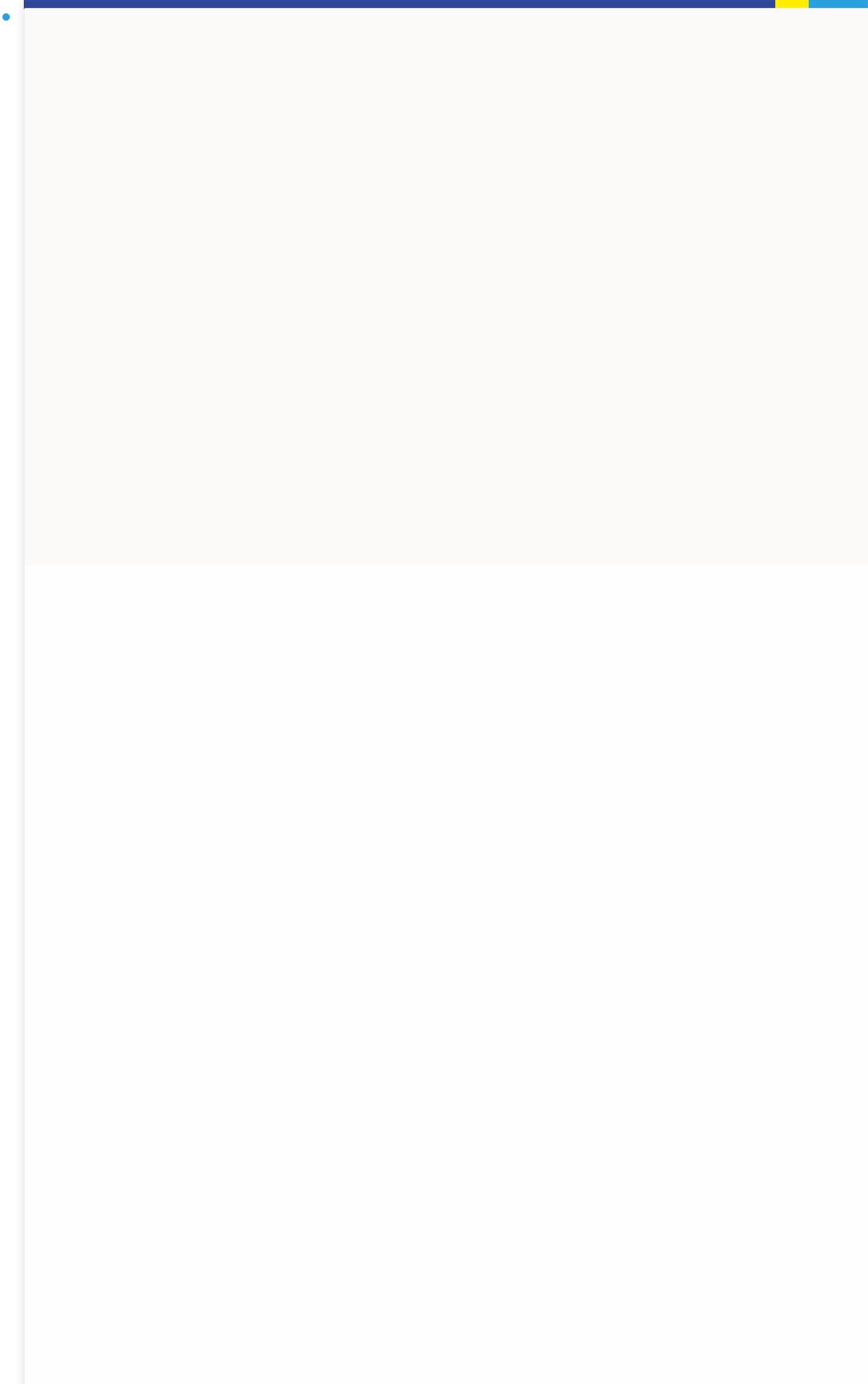
[11]More information (in German) can be found in the DQR handbook.

[12]Source: internal communication with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

[13]Database for profession and training opportunities available in German: Berufenet.

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