



ASEAN QUALIFICATIONS REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

Briefing Paper No. 1- Qualifications Frameworks and Quality Assurance Systems

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Acronyms

AQRF	ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QAF	Quality assurance framework
RQF	Regional Qualifications Frameworks
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide background information for representatives of the ASEAN member states to assist the discussions of the proposed quality assurance in relation to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF).

2. Key terms and definitions

2.1. Qualifications system

National qualifications systems can be defined as including all the structures and activities that lead to the award of a qualification (Coles and Bjørnåvold, 2010). Coles and Werquin (2006: 38) note that a 'national qualifications system is a broad concept that includes all aspects of a country's activity resulting in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and implementing policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, skills identification arrangements and processes for assessment, awarding and quality assurance'.

Key components of a qualification system could include:

- An institutional infrastructure for governance, financing, operations and quality assurance;
- A basis in standards for the development of curricula;
- Providers of learning provision (including organisations providing work-based learning);
- Procedures for assessment of learning outcomes;
- Moderation procedures for assessed outcomes;
- An awarding process that links qualification with assessed learning outcomes;
- A certification process;
- An accreditation processes for qualifications;
- A hierarchy of qualifications that define vertical progression within the qualifications system;
- A credit system that enables learning to be transferred from one setting to another;
- A means of validating learning that is achieved outside formal instruction; and
- A quality assurance system that includes reference to international benchmarks.¹

Within a national qualifications system we examine two key structures:

- A hierarchy of qualifications (often expressed as a National Qualifications Framework [NQF]); and
- National quality assurance arrangements.

¹ As cited in Bateman and Coles (2013)

2.2. National qualifications framework

CEDEFOP (2011) defines a qualifications framework as:

An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications (e.g. at national or sectoral level) according to a set of criteria (e.g. using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes.

Tuck (2007) described a qualifications framework as ‘an instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies along a continuum of agreed levels. It is a way of structuring existing and new qualifications, which are defined by learning outcomes’ (2007: v).

Keevy et. al. (2008) suggest that a framework that includes the key sectors of senior schooling, technical and vocational education training (TVET) and higher education is more likely to enhance mobility and lifelong learning than a less comprehensive framework. Such a framework will provide pathways between the education sectors and facilitate rather than isolate any one sector².

The common ground between qualifications frameworks and quality assurance processes is more contested these days (Coles 2016: 24).

Evidence from the oldest frameworks suggest that it is the link with quality assurance processes (regulatory arrangements) that make NQFs effective in driving towards transparency of the qualification systems.³ It is the admission of a qualification to the framework that is seen as the highest benchmark of quality: awarding organisations that seek this position aim to meet the criteria laid down for admission to the framework (Coles 2016: 24).

However, it is possible to see these quality assurance processes and their governance as separate or independent of an NQF. The NQF can be seen simply as establishing the levels and level descriptors against which qualifications must meet to be included within the framework. The ways in which these qualifications are designed, assessed and certified can be independent of the NQF and can be quality assured independently of an NQF (Coles 2016).

2.3. National quality assurance arrangements

Quality assurance is a component of quality management and is ‘focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled’⁴. In relation to training and educational services, ‘quality assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in educational services provided by training providers under the remit of relevant authorities or bodies. It is a set of activities established by these relevant authorities or bodies to ensure that educational services satisfy customer requirements in a systematic, reliable

² Bateman and Coles (2013)

³ Coles, Keevy, Bateman and Keating 2015.

⁴ AS/NZS (2006)

fashion. However, quality assurance does not guarantee the quality of educational services it can only make them more likely' (Bateman et. al., 2009: 8).

2.3.1. Elements of a quality assurance system

NQFs provide the initial basis for quality assuring qualifications through:

- Describing levels of qualifications and of learning inputs or outcomes across these levels or qualification types, or both;
- Criteria that define the quality of qualifications included in the NQF (accreditation)
- Criteria that define the minimum standards of quality assurance operated by bodies issuing qualifications in the NQF;
- Regulations or guidelines for linking qualifications, either at the same level or between different levels;
- Regulations or guidelines for accepting validated non formal and informal learning for part or full qualification;
- Rules or guidelines for the volume of learning that contribute towards a qualification.

Within these broad parameters there is considerable variation in the ways NQFs are used as quality assurance tools and consequently the degree of regulation that is embedded in frameworks.

Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012: 9-10) note that quality assurance of qualifications includes:

- the accreditation of the product; such as achievement standards (this could include educational and/or competency standards as well as completion rules of a qualification);
- the registration⁵ of education and training providers through evaluation of their infrastructure, financial probity and health, staff qualifications and experience, management systems, delivery systems, and student support systems;
- the monitoring and auditing of provider processes and outcomes, including student learning and employment outcomes, and student and employer satisfaction levels;
- the control, supervision or monitoring of assessment, certification and graduation processes and outcomes;
- provider or system wide evaluations, including evaluations by external agencies; and
- the provision of public information on the performance of providers such as program completions, employment outcomes, and student and employer satisfaction.

⁵ Across countries the processes of endorsement of the probity, capacities and processes of training providers is referred to as 'accreditation'. Within this paper these processes are termed 'registration' in order to differentiate registration of providers against quality standards from that of processes of accreditation of achievement standards (i.e. educational or competency standards and/or certification standards). Both terms accreditation and registration assume the notion of initial approval and ongoing review.

Not all functions necessarily fall under the remit of one agency. Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012: 10) indicate that countries typically divide these functions across different types of agencies. The types of agencies noted include:

- **Accreditation agencies.** These can be single or multiple agencies, such as industry standard setting bodies, or an education system wide or specific education sector agency.
- **Qualifications agencies and awarding bodies.** These include national qualifications authorities with the authority to accredit and award and/or quality assure qualifications included in a NQF. In some cases, e.g. England Wales and Northern Ireland, the awarding organisations are themselves regulated in their use of major national qualifications.
- **Self-accrediting and/or awarding providers.** Providers may have self-accrediting and/or awarding status conferred through legislation or through delegation from another agency, e.g. Australian universities.
- **Provider registration and monitoring agencies.** These agencies have the responsibility for the approval and monitoring (e.g. audit or evaluation⁶) of providers delivering qualifications within the remit of the agency. In some cases the responsibility for approval or monitoring may be delegated to other agencies.
- **Licensing agencies and professional bodies.** Licensing agencies can be those within government agencies, or specific to industry or professional bodies.
- **External quality agencies such as those responsible for the ISO standards.**

The number and type of agencies and the balance of responsibilities of these agencies, as well as the mechanisms used to undertake the listed functions are determined by the particular characteristics and contexts of each country's education and training systems and NQF (Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al.: 2012: 9).

Bateman, Keating, Burke et. al. (2012: 9) note that the following four key processes form the basis of quality assurance of qualifications design and the provision of education and training:

- **Accreditation of qualifications:**

Accreditation is the process by which a qualification gains national recognition within an NQF and by which such things as the complexity and volume of learning are endorsed as appropriate for the type of qualification. Achievement standards (such as competency, educational, or occupational) form the basis of the qualification and could include completion rules. The options include public providers taking the lead in establishing achievement standards, or an agency responsible for the development

⁶ Quality audit refers to a systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining audit evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria are fulfilled (AS/NZS, 2003: 1). Some countries may refer to audit activity as an external independent review or evaluation or assessment. For other countries the term 'evaluation' reflects a focus on the value of specified outcomes.

and endorsement of achievement standards, or multiple industry agencies responsible for developing and endorsing these achievement standards.

- **Registration of education and training providers⁷:**

Registration is the process by which providers are approved to deliver NQF qualifications, such as confirming that the provider has the finances, facilities, instruction and learning materials, and appropriately trained staff to deliver programs. It could also include providers improving the quality of their educational provision through on-going self-assessment or internal quality assurance processes. Strategies for monitoring compliance or provider performance include audit/evaluation, on-going monitoring, penalties and the publication of outcomes achieved by providers⁸. Registration may be through internal processes, or external processes through the registration authority registering all providers or some providers, or conferring categories of registration, including effective self-registration with cyclical reviews for low risk providers.

- **Supervision of assessment systems that lead to the award of a qualification:**

Supervision of the assessment system is the means of assuring that the learning that is specified in a NQF qualification has been gained by a student who is to be awarded a qualification. Supervision of the assessment system may be regulatory in nature and include monitoring strategies, but may also include other strategies such as review processes focusing on whether appropriate judgments have been made about the level of achievement required to award a qualification. Options include provider based assessments that are reviewed and quality assured through internal processes and may include review by an external moderator, or samples of assessments are reviewed by the external agency, and if necessary the results are adjusted, or assessment results are issued by the external agency.

- **Regulation of the issuance of certificates:**

The regulation of the issuance of certificates is a key feature within a qualifications system. Certification models range from awarding bodies or agencies (e.g. City and Guilds in the United Kingdom) to the issuance of NQF qualifications being linked to provider registration (e.g. Australia). In many countries government ministries are the main certification issuers (e.g. France). Options include provider based qualifications being internally quality assured, or awarding body licenses the provider to issue the

⁷ In some countries and across some regions the term 'accreditation' is used to describe what this paper describes as the registration of providers.

⁸ For example in England, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspect and regulate services of those providing education and skills for learners of all ages. Its website includes inspection reports, information pertaining to outstanding providers in terms of their overall effectiveness and examples of good practice.

qualifications, which are subject to quality procedures, or awarding body issues the qualifications on the basis of its own assessments or moderated assessments of the providers.

2.3.2. Design options for quality assurance

Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012: 11) note that the ‘form in which a country develops its quality assurance processes is dependent on a range of factors, essentially based on the national or regional context’. There is no one formula for the development of a quality assurance system, nor one model design.

Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012) note that there are three key components related to ensuring the integrity of NQF qualifications:

- ‘processes for the construction of qualifications and standards, including completion rules for the qualification;
- clear processes for registration and monitoring of providers, as well as a system for moderating and/or validating assessment, and for the awarding of qualifications; and
- establishment and governance of agency/ies for maintaining the quality assurance of qualifications, developing standards and accrediting providers’.⁹

Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012: 11-15) outline the options for each of these three key components of a NQF and a national quality assurance system. Although the focus of their work relates specifically to TVET it can be equally applied to higher education.

- **Establishing achievement standards**

For countries, there are multiple options for the construction of achievement standards; especially in relation to the structure of the achievement standards as well as the processes through which they are developed and approved.

Table 1: Options for establishing achievement standards

	Forms	Examples of Processes
Competency, Occupational and Assessment standards	<p>Common sets of agreed achievement statements such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competency standards which refer to the knowledge, skills and competence required by a person to do a job • Occupational standards, which refer to the tasks involved in occupations and its sub structures; • Assessment standards, which 	<p>Public providers take the lead in establishing standards.</p> <p>Single agency responsible for the development and endorsement of standards.</p> <p>Multiple industry agencies responsible for developing and endorsing these standards.</p>

⁹ Bateman et. al. (2012: 11)

	Forms	Examples of Processes
	refer to statements of learning outcomes to be assessed and methodology used.	
Qualifications or Certification standards	<p>Qualifications that are linked to achievement standards.</p> <p>Sets of national qualifications within a national skills or qualifications framework.</p> <p>Certification standards that define the rules applicable to obtaining a qualification (e.g. certificate or diploma) as well as the rights conferred.</p>	<p>Providers establish own qualifications that are accredited by a single or multiple agencies.</p> <p>Central and/or multiple agency develops qualifications and self-accredits or has the qualifications accredited by another agency.</p> <p>Single qualifications agency develops or delegates the development of qualifications and accredits qualifications.</p>
Educational standards	<p>Educational standards can encompass a number of different elements such as statements of learning objectives, content of curricula, entry requirements and resources required to meet learning objectives and relevant assessment methods.</p> <p>The level of specificity can vary from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadly written and flexible curriculum • More detailed curriculum that is broken into discrete components with assessments linked to the components. 	<p>Providers are responsible for the development of their educational standards, which is not externally accredited or endorsed.</p> <p>Central agencies develop educational standards which are accredited and used by providers.</p> <p>Some providers may be responsible for the development of their own educational standards.</p>

Source: Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012: 11-12)

Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012) note that the quality assurance of achievement standards is often considered separate from a national or sectoral qualifications framework, however the structures are linked and complement each other.

• **Registering, monitoring and oversight of assessment in TVET provision**

Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012) indicate that there are diverse approaches to quality assuring education and training provision. Table 2 summarises options for registration and monitoring providers, conducting assessment and awarding qualifications.

Table 2: Options for registering, monitoring and oversight of assessment in TVET provision

	Forms	Examples of Processes
Registration¹⁰	Public providers that self-register or are	Registration is through internal processes

¹⁰ Registration processes include formal acknowledgement by a competent body that a provider meets relevant quality standards. Under NQFs it is usual for a provider to be registered in order

	Forms	Examples of Processes
	<p>directly registered by government</p> <p>Public providers with a small number of private providers where the public provider or an external agency registers the private providers.</p> <p>Open TVET market with multiple providers with an external registration agency.</p> <p>Open market with registration agencies for all providers and teachers and instructors within the providers.</p>	<p>and boards or councils that may include industry representatives.</p> <p>The public providers review and or auspice the private or non-public providers.</p> <p>The registration authority registers all providers or some providers, or it gives categories of registration, including effective self-registration with cyclical reviews for low risk providers.</p>
Monitoring	<p>Front end audits of provider facilities, finances, probity, teacher capability and training and assessment materials.</p> <p>Audits of outcomes through reviews of student assessments as well as qualification progression and completion rates, employment outcomes, user satisfaction, continuation of further study.</p>	<p>Audits are conducted on a cyclical basis, with the option of different cycles for different categories of providers.</p> <p>Audits can be scheduled in different ways, e.g. as a one off major review or undertaken at short notice.</p>
Assessment	<p>All assessments are designed and administered by the provider.</p> <p>Assessments are provider based, but externally moderated by the external agency.</p> <p>Assessments are developed by an external agency but administered by the provider (e.g. common assessment tasks).</p> <p>Assessments are conducted by the external agency.</p>	<p>Provider based assessments are reviewed and quality assured through internal processes than may include review by an external moderator.</p> <p>Samples of assessments are reviewed by the external agency, and if necessary the results are adjusted.</p> <p>Assessment results are issued by the external agency.</p>
Awarding	<p>The provider issues the qualification.</p> <p>Providers issue the qualification, but on behalf of and within quality assurance procedures of the awarding body.</p> <p>The awarding body issues the qualifications; this can be a government ministry.</p>	<p>Provider based qualifications are internally quality assured.</p> <p>Awarding body licenses the provider to issue the qualifications, which are subject to quality procedures.</p> <p>Awarding body issues the qualifications on the basis of its own assessments or validated and moderated assessments of the providers.</p>

Source: Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012: 13-14)

- **Agency remit**

to deliver and assess accredited programs and issue awards. Some agencies differentiate between two processes:

- Formal acknowledgement that the provider meets key generic quality standards
- Formal acknowledgement that the provider meets specific quality standards related to the provision of teaching, learning and assessment of a specific program.

For the purpose of this paper, registration of providers is the term used for both processes.

Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012) indicate that quality assurance systems are often managed by a number of agencies that supervise, audit or conduct the various quality assurance processes that have been outlined above. In some countries, all functions may reside within one agency, but in other countries the responsibility for quality assurance may be shared. These agencies can be:

- ‘Government run and will typically be a branch of a government department;
- More independent bodies established through legislation – statutory bodies; or
- Industry or professional bodies that may or may not be endorsed by government or a government agency, and which have established strong national and/or international reputations for quality in their TVET fields (for example the Royal Society of the Arts in the United Kingdom).¹¹

Table 3: Agencies: Options for setting standards and qualifications, registering providers and awarding qualifications.

	Forms	Examples of Processes
Standards and qualifications	<p>A single national qualifications authority or separate TVET and higher education authorities that can have one, several or all of the following functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Standards setting for some (TVET or higher education) or all qualifications – a qualifications framework; - Developing and/or accrediting TVET standards; - Developing and accrediting TVET qualifications; - Issuing or delegation of the issuing of TVET qualifications. <p>A single national qualifications authority or separate TVET and higher education authorities together with a separate awarding body or bodies.</p> <p>A qualifications authority, awarding body(ies) and industry sector standards setting bodies.</p>	<p>These different configurations will require different sets of relationships between the different agencies and between the agencies and the TVET providers.</p>
Providers	<p>The registration of providers through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The qualifications authority; or • The awarding bodies; or • A separate provider registration body. 	<p>Provider registration can be in different forms and through different processes as outlined above.</p>
Awarding organisations	<p>Self-awarding providers.</p> <p>Providers are delegated to award specific qualifications or clusters of qualifications by the qualifications or awarding bodies.</p> <p>Awards are issued by the qualifications authority, awarding body(ies) and/or professional and industry bodies.</p>	<p>The processes will be influenced by the configuration of agencies and their functions.</p>

Source: Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012: 14-15)

¹¹ Bateman et. al. (2012: 14)

For AMS who are considering the development of an NQF and implementing a national or sector specific quality assurance system, Appendix 1 includes some design questions.

3. Regional Qualifications Frameworks

There are now several regional qualifications frameworks (RQF) in the world (ETF, 2010; Keevy, 2012) that act as reference points for countries that have a common interest in having transparent, linked qualifications systems that facilitate cross border recognition, mobility and trade. These RQFs are sets of level descriptors operating in a geographic region that form reference points for other tools such as national or sector qualifications frameworks.

RQFs operate differently from the national qualifications frameworks that relate to them – for example they are usually less regulatory and have more communicative purposes than NQFs, they have a range of regional policies, accords, conventions and protocols supporting them, they are not underpinned by enforceable legislation and they have limited, mostly voluntary, institutional arrangements for governance and management.

Countries find RQFs a more effective mechanism to achieve regional objectives than through the specific NQFs in the countries in the region. This is explained by the fact that their purpose of the RQF is commonly understood; benefits to sectors are clearly identifiable; differences between different types of national education and training are accommodated; communities of trust are developed and governance is made possible through regional representation. Thus the member countries of a RQF see the national benefits of their own NQF supplemented by also achieving regional objectives through the RQF.

Quality assurance functions of RQFs are also distinctive from those of national frameworks. The focus of a RQF is developing a zone of trust between the member states (Coles and Oates, 2004). To foster a trusted environment there needs to be an appreciation by people in key agencies (e.g. learning providers, qualifications bodies, professional bodies, employers, employee organisations) that the regional qualifications framework is helpful for understanding the qualifications systems in other countries. These people must also appreciate that the RQF is portraying an accurate picture of the qualifications systems in their own country. Therefore even without a formal quality assurance process a RQF makes demands on national systems for transparency in national processes. In this respect a regional framework acts as a quality assurance tool. Member states belonging to a RQF will enhance a zone of trust by making explicit the qualifications system (with the help of an NQF) and the quality assurance processes that are associated with it. AMS that cannot make this commitment to explicit description will inevitably weaken trust in a reference framework.

The means by which regional framework seek consistently high quality and up-to-date descriptions of member state qualifications systems and quality assurance arrangements vary but common elements are:

- a voluntary code of practice outlining how member countries are expected to maintain commitment to the framework;
- agreed reference qualification levels and descriptors e.g. the ARQF structure;
- agreed range of functions e.g. to contribute to recognition of qualifications in other countries;
- quality assurance arrangements, to make explicit national arrangements;
- a specification for a referencing process, to allow levels of NQFs to relate to the regional levels;
- collaborative management, to ensure smooth evolution and deepening trust; and
- monitoring arrangements, to identify challenges to the zone of trust.

4. Regional quality assurance

4.1 Regional quality assurance frameworks

There are a range of various regional initiatives or frameworks related to both TVET and Higher Education. Some of these frameworks are directly related to TVET, such as:

- East Asia Summit Technical and Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework (EAS TVET QAF); and
- European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET¹².

Whereas other frameworks are more relevant to the higher education sector, and in some instances include TVET. They include:

- Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards: quality assurance;
- Quality assurance principles for Asia Pacific Region – Chiba Principles¹³;
- International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) Good Practice Guidelines¹⁴;
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area¹⁵; and
- ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework.

Below is a table summarising key aspects of a selection of quality assurance frameworks.

Table 4: Analysis of selected quality assurance frameworks

Framework	Agency Quality Assurance	Audit	Provider Quality Assurance
EAS TVET Quality Assurance Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles • Quality Standards • Quality indicators Quality standards related to agency include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Registration 	QA of providers includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit to ensure that they continue to meet the quality standards. • Data on provider performance¹⁶ and compliance is collected and analysed and used to inform registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality standards related to providers¹⁸ include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Registration • Accreditation. Standards focus on establishment, accountability and

¹² http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11108_en.htm

¹³ http://www.aei.gov.au/About-AEI/Policy/Documents/Brisbane%20Communique/Quality_Assurance_Principles_pdf.pdf

¹⁴ [http://www.inqaahe.org/admin/files/assets/subsites/1/documenten/1231430767_inqaahe---guidelines-of-good-practice\[1\].pdf](http://www.inqaahe.org/admin/files/assets/subsites/1/documenten/1231430767_inqaahe---guidelines-of-good-practice[1].pdf)

¹⁵ <http://www.enqa.eu/files/ENQA%20Bergen%20Report.pdf>

¹⁶ Performance data relates to the four aspects in the Quality Indicators.

Framework	Agency Quality Assurance	Audit	Provider Quality Assurance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation. <p>Standards focus on establishment, accountability and improvement.</p>	<p>policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data on provider performance¹⁷ and compliance is made public. <p>Quality indicators support the evaluation and continuous improvement processes of agencies and providers.</p>	<p>improvement.</p> <p>Standards include self-monitoring and self-assessment.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> INQAAHE Good Practice Guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses: Governance arrangements (including mission statement or objectives, ownership and governance structure is appropriate, external quality assurance is a major activity) Resources (in relation to adequacy of human and financial resources) Quality assurance including continuous improvement approach, self- assessment and external review at regular intervals Public accountability – reports and decisions are public including of its own external review Collaboration with other agencies Policies related to import and export of qualifications (cross border) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External review includes clear standards, assessment methods and processes, decision criteria, and other information <p>Specifications on the characteristics, selection and training of reviewers</p> <p>System to ensure equivalent process of review for all institutions</p> <p>Independent decision making</p> <p>Process for appeals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with provider: Recognition that primary responsibility for quality assurance rests with the provider. Agency has clear expectations of providers that may be promulgated in standards or factors or precepts that have been subject to consultation with stakeholders. Review process includes provider self- assessment, external peer review and follow up procedure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chiba Principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses both approval and audit of institutions and programs. <p>Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent and autonomous. Mission statement, goals and objectives are clearly defined. Human and financial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses both institution, program and institution & program <p>Standards are publicly available</p> <p>Stakeholder involvement</p> <p>Internal and external assessment (quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality assurance is embedded within provider goals and objectives. <p>Internal quality management system is in place.</p> <p>Quality assurance strategy is implemented.</p> <p>Process for periodic</p>

¹⁸

These are suggested only.

¹⁷

Performance data relates to the four aspects in the Quality Indicators.

Framework	Agency Quality Assurance	Audit	Provider Quality Assurance
	<p>resources are adequate and accessible.</p> <p>Policies, procedures, reviews and audit reports are public.</p> <p>Standards, audit methodology, and decision criteria are clear.</p> <p>Periodic review of activities, effects and value.</p> <p>Cooperates across national borders.</p> <p>Undertake research and provide information and advice.</p>	<p>audit)</p> <p>Audit undertaken in a cyclical basis</p> <p>Public reports</p> <p>Appeals process</p>	<p>approval, monitoring and review of programs and awards.</p> <p>Quality assurance of academic staff is maintained.</p> <p>Accuracy of provider information about its programs, awards and achievements.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal status Adequately resourced Clear mission statement, goals and objectives Independent Processes, criteria and procedures used should be pre-defined and publicly available Have procedures for own accountability Undertake external quality assurance activities on a regular basis (provider or program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims and objectives of quality assurance processes, and the procedures should be public. <p>Formal criteria should be explicit and published</p> <p>Process for external quality assurance should be fit for purpose</p> <p>Reports should be published</p> <p>Follow up procedures</p> <p>Periodic reviews should be on a cyclical basis.</p> <p>Agencies should produce summary reports outlining the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal policies and procedures for quality assurance and standards for programs and awards. <p>Formal processes for approval, monitoring and periodic review or programs.</p> <p>Assessment of students using published criteria and regulations.</p> <p>Quality assurance of teaching staff.</p> <p>Appropriateness of learning resources and student support.</p> <p>Collection, analysis and use of relevant information for effective management of programs.</p> <p>Accurate information regarding programs and awards offered.</p>

Source: Bateman, Keating, Gillis et. al. (2012: 22-23)

4.2 Benchmarking national quality assurance frameworks

The AQR¹⁹ proposes in the Criteria for referencing the following for Criteria 6:

¹⁹ AQR was endorsed by ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) in August 2014, the ASEAN Education Ministers (ASEM) in September 2015, and the ASEAN Labour Ministers (ALMM) ad-referendum in May 2015.

Table 5: Criteria 6

Criterion	Comments
<p>The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are described. All of the bodies responsible for quality assurance state their unequivocal support for the referencing outcome.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referencing reports need to explain the main national quality assurance systems that operate in the education, training and qualification system. Other quality assurance measures that could be addressed include, for example, qualification requirements for teachers and trainers, accreditation and external evaluation of providers or programmes, relationship between bodies responsible for quality assurance from different levels and with different functions. <p>A range of competent quality assurance bodies are important to the referencing process, such as the following but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the government ministries; • qualifications bodies, particularly those with national oversight of the system or of the major sectors (general, vocational, higher education) but also those bodies that assess learning, validate non-formal and informal learning, issue awards and certificates; • quality assurance bodies such as those that set standards for learning in general, vocational and higher education and those that evaluate institutions or programmes; • bodies that set occupational, vocational and educational standards in a country or employment/education sector; • bodies that manage the development and implementation of NQFs, especially the NQFs that regulate standards in sectors and nationally; and • bodies that disburse public funds to learning institutions and require compliance with quality criteria. <p>Benchmarks for evaluating quality assurance processes for all education and training sectors may be based but not limited to the following quality assurance framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework (includes the quality principles, agency quality standards and quality indicators) • the INQAHE Guidelines of Good Practice for Quality Assurance (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education)²⁰ • ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (ASEAN Quality Assurance Network)²¹.

²⁰ Requirements for full member.
²¹ Requirements for full member.

Appendix 1: Options for national qualifications system design

There is no one model of a national qualifications and quality assurance system. AMS that have as yet not established NQFs or QAFs has an opportunity to develop initial design options.

A1.1. System wide design questions

Area of focus	Questions
Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions may need to separate TVET from Higher Education? <p>Will the NQF notionally ascribe levels to TVET and to Higher Education? Will there be overlap?</p> <p>In relation to an NQF, will qualification types be notionally ascribed to TVET and to Higher Education and to secondary schools? Will there be overlap?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there are perceived separate sectors (especially TVET and Higher Education), will different quality assurance standards for both registration and accreditation processes differ?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment and of accreditation of achievement standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What form will the achievement standards take (will there be a hybrid mix?)? <p>Will TVET system be based on occupational/ competency/assessment standards? Will these standards be national? If not national, e.g. developed by a provider, will another set of standards be developed via other group/s for other providers? If so could this lead to a perception of inequality of qualifications? How will this inequality be addressed?</p> <p>What will be the approach taken for higher education providers? Will the format of educational standards be specified?</p> <p>If national approach to achievement standards is taken, who will be responsible for developing national standards?</p> <p>Will providers be required to develop and seek approval of curriculum²² to meet national/provider achievement standards?</p> <p>Will universities, especially government funded universities, be required to meet accreditation requirements?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will registration be separated into two functions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Approval to exist' • 'Approval to deliver specific qualifications'? <p>OR will 'Approval to deliver' be linked to accreditation processes related to individual provider developed curriculum?</p> <p>Will the market be open to public, non-government and NGO providers etc?</p> <p>Will registration apply to public, non-government and NGO providers?</p> <p>Will universities, especially government funded universities, be required to meet registration requirements?</p>

²²

Educational standards

Area of focus	Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and assessment 	<p>Will a minimum requirement be set for all trainers/assessors? TVET? Higher Education? Both?</p> <p>Will a national register of trainers/assessors be maintained? What will be its purpose? Who will be responsible for maintenance?</p> <p>Who will be responsible for training national qualifications? Assessing national qualifications? Will there be a specific register for trainers and/or assessors of national qualifications?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awarding/Certification requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who will be responsible for issuing provider accredited qualifications? Who will be responsible for issuing national qualifications? The following broad options could apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-awarding providers Providers are delegated to award specific qualifications or clusters of qualifications by the qualifications or awarding bodies Awards are issued by the qualifications authority, awarding body(ies) and/or professional and industry bodies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will monitoring of the system include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Front end audits of provider facilities, finances, probity, teacher capability and training and assessment materials. Audits of outcomes through reviews of student assessments as well as qualification progression and completion rates, employment outcomes, user satisfaction, continuation of further study. <p>Will assessments within national qualifications be subject to review processes? How will assessments within provider accredited qualifications be reviewed?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can pathways be enhanced between provider groups (and their qualifications), e.g. private providers, TVET providers and universities? How will RPL and credit transfer be addressed? <p>How can a focus on pathways be enhanced in the system design?</p>

Source: Adapted from Bateman 2014

A1.2. Agency design questions

Consideration should be given to the following specific questions related to national quality assurance agencies.

Agency area	Questions
Standards and qualifications - accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the agency scope of responsibility include registration and accreditation of TVET and Higher Education? Will different processes apply to the different sectors? Will it include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards setting for some (TVET or higher education) or all qualifications – a qualifications framework; • Developing and/or accrediting TVET and/or HEd standards; • Developing and accrediting TVET and/or HEd qualifications; • Issuing or delegation of the issuing of TVET and/or HEd qualifications? <p>Will HEd qualifications be based on learning outcomes? Will TVET qualifications be based on competencies?</p> <p>Will standards development be focussed on all key industry areas or only a select few?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be only one registering agency? <p>Should it be a stand-alone agency with a degree of independence? How will this agency and its processes be sustainable?</p> <p>Will all providers be required to be registered to be able to provide NQF qualifications?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be one accrediting agency? Where will this agency be situated? <p>Should it be a stand-alone agency with a degree of independence? How will this agency and its processes be sustainable?</p> <p>Will all providers be required to have approval to provide NQF qualifications?</p> <p>Will separate processes apply to universities (who may be self-accrediting) as opposed to non self-accrediting providers?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be a national register? Will this national register hold registered providers and the programs that they are approved to deliver? Will it contain all nationally accredited qualifications? Will self-accrediting university programs be required to undertake the same or different processes for its qualifications to be listed? How will it be made public? <p>Will there be public access to outcomes of monitoring and audit (e.g. sanctioned providers) or provider evaluations?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be a national student database or should some or all providers be required to maintain their own? <p>Will there be a national data standard? How will data be collected?</p>

Source: Adapted from Bateman 2014

Glossary

Accreditation	The official approval of achievement standards, including qualification or unit(s) of a qualification, usually for a particular period of time, as being able to meet particular requirements defined by an accrediting agency.
Accredited qualifications	Qualifications which have been granted approval by an accrediting agency or organisation as having met specific requirements or standards of quality.
Accrediting agency	Accrediting agencies are those competent bodies (such as national qualifications agencies, national accreditation agencies, official review boards or other nationally approved bodies or agencies with the responsibility to approve qualifications) that manage program and qualification accreditation under national legislation. Accrediting agencies function within a quality assurance system.
Achievement standards (in education and training)	<p>Statement approved and formalised by a competent body, which defines the rules to follow in a given context or the results to be achieved.</p> <p>A distinction can be made between competency, educational, occupational, assessment, validation or certification standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • competency standard refers to the knowledge, skills and/or competencies linked to practising a job; • educational standard refers to statements of learning objectives, content of curricula, entry requirements and resources required to meet learning objectives • occupational standard refers to statements of activities and tasks related to a specific job and to its practise; • assessment standard refers to statements of learning outcomes to be assessed and methodology used; • validation standard refers to statements of level of achievement to be reached by the person assessed, and the methodology used; • certification standard refers to statements of rules applicable to obtaining a qualification (e.g. certificate or diploma) as well as the rights conferred²³.
Certifying and/or awarding body	Body issuing qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas or titles) formally recognising the achievement of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) ²⁴ of an individual, following an assessment and validation procedure.
Competence	Competence is an ability that extends beyond the possession of knowledge and skills. It includes: i) <u>cognitive competence</u> involving the

²³ CEDEFOP (2011)

²⁴ CEDEFOP (2011)

	use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially; ii) <u>functional competence</u> (skills or know-how), those things that a person should be able to do when they work in a given area; iii) <u>personal competence</u> involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation; and iv) <u>ethical competence</u> involving the possession of certain personal and professional values ²⁵ .
Education Sectors	Education Sectors refer to the main subgroups within education and training e.g. schools, technical and vocational education, and higher education.
Informal learning	Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective ²⁶ .
Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes are clear statements of what a learner can be expected to know, understand and/or do as a result of a learning experience.
Level descriptor	A general statement that summarises the learning outcomes appropriate to a specific level in a qualifications framework. Level descriptors are usually grouped in domains of learning.
National Qualifications Framework	Instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria or criteria for levels of learning achieved. This set of criteria may be implicit in the qualifications descriptors themselves or made explicit in the form of a set of level descriptors. The scope of frameworks may be comprehensive of all learning achievement and pathways or may be confined to a particular sector, for example initial education, adult education and training, or an occupational area. Some frameworks may have more design elements and a tighter structure than others; some may have a legal basis whereas others represent a consensus of views of social partners ²⁷ .
Non-formal learning	Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view ²⁸ .
Programme	The arrangements made for the teaching and learning of a body of knowledge, set of skills and of wider competences. A learning programme can lead to a qualification.

²⁵ Coles and Werquin (2006), p. 23.

²⁶ CEDEFOP 2011, p. 54.

²⁷ Coles and Werquin (2006)

²⁸ CEDEFOP Glossary (2011)

Provider	An organisation that plans and delivers education/training and assessment services that often leads to the award of qualifications or components of qualifications.
Qualification	Qualification is a formal certificate issued by an official agency, in recognition that an individual has been assessed as achieving learning outcomes or competencies to the standard specified for the qualification title, usually a type of certificate, diploma or degree. Learning and assessment for a qualification can take place through workplace experience and/or a program of study. A qualification confers official recognition of value in the labour market and in further education and training ²⁹ .
Qualifications Framework	Instrument for development and classification of qualifications (at national or sectoral levels) according to a set of criteria (such as using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes ³⁰ .
Qualifications system	Qualifications system includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalising national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, quality assurance processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent. One feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit framework of qualifications ³¹ .
Quality assurance	Quality assurance is a component of quality management and is 'focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled' ³² . In relation to education and training services, quality assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in the design, delivery and award of qualifications within an education and training system. Quality assurance ensures stakeholders interests and investment in any accredited program are protected.
Quality indicators	Formally recognised figures or ratios used as yardsticks to judge and assess quality performance ³³ .
Quality principles	Overall intentions and direction of a quality framework or an organisation with regard to quality assurance.
Quality standards	Technical specifications which are measurable and have been drawn up by consensus and approved by an organisation recognised at

²⁹ Coles and Werquin (2006)
³⁰ CEDEFOP Glossary (2011)
³¹ Coles and Werquin (2006)
³² AS/NZS (2006)
³³ CEDEFOP Glossary (2011)

	regional, national or international levels. The purpose of quality standards is optimisation of input and/or output of learning ³⁴ .
Referencing	Referencing is a process that results in the establishment of a relationship between the national qualifications framework and that of a regional qualifications framework.
Regional qualifications framework	A broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region. A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country.
Registering agency	Registering agencies are those competent bodies responsible for approving education and training providers e.g. national qualifications agencies, official review boards or other nationally approved bodies or agencies. Registering agencies function within a quality assurance system.
Registration of providers	<p>Registration processes include formal acknowledgement by a registering agency that a provider meets relevant quality standards. Under NQFs it is usual for a provider to be registered in order to deliver and assess accredited programs and issue awards.</p> <p>Some agencies differentiate between the two processes, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal acknowledgement that the provider meets key generic standards • formal acknowledgement that the provider meets specific standards related to the provision of teaching, learning and assessment of a specific program. <p>For the purpose of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, registration of providers is the term used for both processes.</p>
Validation of learning outcomes	Confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against pre-defined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of achievement standards, including qualification or unit(s) of a qualification. Validation typically leads to certification ³⁵ . This includes the notion of recognition of prior learning or accreditation of prior learning.

³⁴ CEDEFOP Glossary (2011)

³⁵ Adapted from CEDEFOP (2011)

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