

BHUTAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Point of Reference and Tertiary Education
Qualifications in Bhutan



Bhutan Accreditation Council
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FOREWORD

To meet the challenges of the 21st century Bhutan needs to build a knowledge-based society. Tertiary education, through formal settings as well as continuing education programmes, requires a system that is able to facilitate the recognition of diverse kinds of qualifications and create equivalency and professional pathways. A qualifications framework plays an important role in developing degree systems as well as in developing study programmes in tertiary education institutions. It not only facilitates the recognition of qualifications, but it is also important for those who make use of qualifications, particularly learners and employers. In view of these, the Bhutan Accreditation Council (BAC) has developed the Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF).


The framework encompasses all the qualifications that enable comparison of university, vocational, and monastic education. It facilitates lifelong learning and enables individuals to pursue their goals according to their aspirations. It supports and aspires to create alternate pathways to the development of human resource with appropriate capabilities and competitiveness.

Various national qualifications frameworks from around the world have been referred to in order to develop the BQF, thus enabling cross-border mobility of higher education provisions and employment opportunities. Efforts have also been made especially to support accreditation of prior learning experiences for continuing education.

The framework has eight levels according to the latest International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Each level has been described in terms of academic load vis-à-vis credits. The BQF is an instrument that facilitates comparison of qualifications of university,

vocational and monastic education and allows accreditation of prior learning. The aim of establishing the BQF is to clearly define the levels of different qualifications, indicate the pathways between various levels of qualifications including lateral entry, ensure their quality, and enable recognition of qualifications. It also facilitates recognition of prior learning through credit transfer mechanism as well as their knowledge, skills and work experience. With qualifications so obtained, employees may pursue further studies at different levels to obtain higher and wider qualifications.

The BQF is the single national instrument for recognizing all education, training and credit systems in Bhutan based on the validity and rigour of the courses and programmes offered in accredited institutions.

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(Sangay Zam)

Chairperson,

Bhutan Accreditation Council

Secretary, Ministry of Education

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

1. The Tertiary Education Policy of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2010 mandates the development of Bhutan Qualifications Framework (BQF) that classifies all types of qualifications.
2. The Policy also mandates that the degrees that universities and autonomous institutes may offer shall be interpreted in the manner as laid out in the BQF.
3. The Policy states that:
 - 3.1. The BQF for the country will be developed by the Ministry of Education which shall encompass various levels of certificate, diploma and tertiary education programmes.
 - 3.2. The BQF shall help to set out the relationship between the tertiary education system, the technical and vocational education and training, and the school system.
 - 3.3. The levels of the BQF shall have specified characteristic outcomes of the learning and /or competence related to the expectations made of the student in terms of knowledge and understanding, applied knowledge and skills, communication and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, accountability and autonomy.
4. The BQF has been developed to ensure the highest standard of GNH-infused quality education. This is in response to creating an enabling environment for generating new knowledge and developing required competencies in support of a knowledge-based society.

Features

5. The Bhutan Qualifications Framework is a national document pertaining to qualifications and their classification in Bhutan. It is based on a set of criteria that is agreed nationally and also benchmarked with international practices. Therefore, the BQF integrates, harmonizes and links school, monastic, vocational and tertiary education qualifications awarded by education providers both within and outside the country.
6. It defines the learning outcomes of academic levels and credit system based on academic load. This facilitates comparison of programmes among school, technical and vocational institutes, monastic and tertiary education institutes, which will promote the mobility and portability of these qualifications.
7. The BQF also provides education pathways linking the qualifications systematically. This will enable the individual to progress in further education through transfer of credits and recognition of prior learning, acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways, irrespective of time and place in the context of lifelong learning.
8. The BQF provides the potential to attract international scholars and students to Bhutan. It provides tools for the establishment of mutually beneficial alliances with top-quality universities and institutions around the world in order to develop a competitive culture among institutions, ensuring and thereby enhancing quality.
9. The BQF has been developed based on examples and best practices around the world. It has also been aligned to the

International Standard Classifications of Education (ISCED) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). By doing so, this document is in concord with internationally accepted frameworks that enhance collaboration in cross border education and employment.

Objectives

10. The objectives of the BQF are to provide a contemporary and flexible framework that:
 - 10.1. accommodates the diversity of purposes of education and training that Bhutanese avail in and outside Bhutan;
 - 10.2. contributes to Gross National Happiness by supporting contemporary, relevant and nationally consistent qualification outcomes building confidence in qualifications and learning outcomes;
 - 10.3. supports the development and maintenance of pathways, which provide access to qualifications and assist students for lateral movement;
 - 10.4. supports individuals' lifelong learning goals by providing the basis for individuals to progress through education and training and gain recognition for their prior learning;
 - 10.5. provides a platform for national regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for education and training;
 - 10.6. supports and enhances the national and international mobility of graduates and workers through recognition of the value and comparability of Bhutanese qualifications;and

10.7. enables the alignment of the BQF with regional and international qualifications frameworks.

Scope

11. The BQF is a transparent system that shall serve as a point of reference for all qualifications. It contains information on each qualification for various stakeholders, both local and international. It is envisaged that this document shall ensure public confidence in standards and systems of awarding qualifications in Bhutan.
12. The BQF enables the process of international recognition and cross-border mobility of students, which shall promote accessibility as well as employment through standardization and linkages.
13. The BQF provides basic guidelines for programme design and nomenclature of qualifications thereby providing clarity in their meanings and definitions. This can encourage autonomy and creativity in the development of emerging educational programmes relevant to employment markets and trends.
14. The BQF supports open access to education for individuals who are aspiring to continue higher education through education pathways created. This shall enable interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary pursuit of education and training.
15. The BQF, therefore, creates enabling conditions in the development of knowledge-based society by promoting healthy competition, embracing new technology and enhancing unity, justice and quality of life.

16. The BQF provides a dynamic structure that is in accordance with national priorities, goals and objectives. Its dynamism is promoted by developing and nurturing confidence and trust among all stakeholders who use it. The framework provides the context for guided changes and improvement to the tertiary education system by all users. In addition to being a technical process it is also a social and economic enhancement of individuals and institutions.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Definition of Qualifications

17. Qualifications are certificates, diplomas or degrees that are awarded by any competent authority, having affirmed that one has been successful in completing the study at the determined standard, and has satisfied the determined level of achievement and is able to take on a role, duty or work. Qualifications indicate positive achievement of learning outcomes, not as compensation as a result of failure or coincidence.

Levels of Qualifications

18. The BQF has eight levels as illustrated in the table below. The qualification levels indicate the levels of capabilities.

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

(Note: PE = Primary Education; LSE = Lower Secondary Education; BCSE = Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education; BHSEC = Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate; NC = National Certificate; ND = National Diploma)

19. The criteria for each level of qualifications are described and differentiated in the table below. The details of the descriptors are given in Annexure 1.

BQF Level	Criteria
8	Level 8 qualifications recognise leading experts or practitioners in a particular field. Learning at this level involves the development of new and creative approaches that extend or redefine existing knowledge or professional practice.
7	Level 7 qualifications recognise highly developed and complex levels of knowledge which enable the development of in-depth and original responses to complicated and unpredictable problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the demonstration of high level specialist professional knowledge and is appropriate for senior professionals and managers.
6	Level 6 qualifications recognise a specialist high level knowledge of an area of work or study to enable the use of an individual's own ideas and research in response to complex problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the achievement of a high level of professional knowledge and is appropriate for people working as knowledge-based professionals or in professional management positions.

5	<p>Level 5 qualifications recognise the ability to increase the depth of knowledge and understanding of an area of work or study to enable the formulation of solutions and responses to complex problems and situations. Learning at this level involves the demonstration of high levels of knowledge, a high level of work expertise in job roles and competence in managing and training others. Qualifications at this level are appropriate for people working as higher grade technicians, professionals or managers.</p>
4	<p>Level 4 qualifications recognise specialist learning and involve detailed analysis of a high level of information and knowledge in an area of work or study. Learning at this level is appropriate for people working in technical and professional jobs, and/or managing and developing others.</p>
3	<p>Level 3 qualifications recognise the ability to gain, and where relevant apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning at this level involves obtaining detailed knowledge and skills. It is appropriate for people wishing to continue higher education, people working independently, or in some areas supervising and training others in their field of work.</p>

2	Level 2 qualifications recognise the ability to gain a good knowledge and understanding of a subject area of work or study, and to perform varied tasks with some guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building knowledge and/or skills in relation to an area of work or a subject area and is appropriate for many job roles.
1	Level 1 qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision. Learning at this level is about activities which mostly relate to everyday situations and may be linked to job competence.

20. Each of the levels is described with their respective features signifying expected capabilities of students in terms of:
- 20.1. the depth, complexity and comprehension of knowledge;
 - 20.2. the application of knowledge and skills;
 - 20.3. the degree of autonomy and creativity in decision-making;
 - 20.4. the communication skills; and
 - 20.5. the breadth and sophistication of practices.

Learning Outcomes

21. Learning outcomes are statements that explain what students should know, understand and can do upon the completion of a period of study. Learning outcomes are references for standard

and quality as well as for the development of curriculum in terms of teaching and learning, the determination of credits and the assessment of students. In the BQE, learning outcomes are asserted in three categories:

- levels of qualification;
- fields of study; and
- programme.

22. Essentially learning outcomes of GNH-inspired tertiary education shall be characterized by constant interaction of theory and practice. While laying the foundation for the development of a holistic individual it is important to imbibe a common set of core skills that focus on the following:

- knowledge;
- practical skills including information management;
- social skills and responsibilities;
- GNH values and principles including mindful leadership;
- communication and ICT skills;
- accountability and autonomy;
- problem-solving and scientific skills; and
- innovation and entrepreneurial skills.

23. Learning outcomes for fields of study which are more specific are developed through employers, research partners and other relevant parties.

24. The benefit of articulating and framing learning outcomes are focused and emphasized on student achievement and attainment including the processes involved. They shall be assessed and accredited whether formal, non-formal or informal.

Credit and Academic Load

25. Credit is the quantitative measure that represents the volume of learning or academic load to attain the set learning outcomes.
26. Academic load is a quantitative measure of all learning activities required to achieve a defined set of learning outcomes. These activities include lecture, tutorial, seminar, practical, self-study, retrieval of information, research, fieldwork, and preparing for and sitting of examinations. Ten hours of notional student learning time is valued as one credit.
27. The uniformity in meaning and understanding of the definitions of credit and academic load facilitates the comparability of the various national qualifications frameworks, eases student mobility, supports curriculum development and simplifies recognition at the international level.
28. The credits will be awarded based on the amount of time and effort a learner invests in carrying out the activities and for demonstrating the understanding, application and creation of knowledge.
29. The learning outcomes will be assessed using the appropriate assessment tools available in various forms like practical, presentation, assignments, symposium, quizzes, tests and examinations.

30. Wherever possible, the BQF allows the transfer of credit points to other learning programmes to ensure that a learner does not have to repeat any learning they have successfully completed. The Bhutan Accreditation Council, universities and autonomous institutions, and other authorized awarding bodies shall decide the number of credit points that can be transferred into their programmes. The minimum credit for each BQF level that can be accredited is given in Appendix 2.
31. Diploma programmes may be designed in conjunction with the degree programmes so that access from the end of the diploma programme to the start of the second year of the degree shall be possible.

Profile

32. Profile refers to:
 - 32.1. a discipline or disciplines contained in a qualification, for example a bachelors majoring in English and Environment;
 - 32.2. a conglomeration of qualifications from different disciplines but having similar emphases, for example, a masters can be obtained by research, course work with in-depth knowledge or professional training related to practice; and
 - 32.3. qualifications at the same level but having different purposes, for example, skills certificate based on competency, technical certificate which leads to a technical employment or pre-university qualification for entry into university.

33. Two or more tertiary education institutions may offer integrated joint or double degree educational programmes leading to a single degree. The learner may spend a part of the programme at an institute and move to another to complete the programme. In such cases, the participating institutions share the responsibility for the overall programme which they endorse with their degree.

Education Pathways for Individual Development

34. The BQF underlines the point of integration and overlaps of different qualifications in terms of types and levels. This is performed through regulations on accumulation and transfer of credits, accreditation of prior experiential learning, the mechanism of relatedness in fulfillment of the requirements to a higher level of education and the use of certificates and diplomas.
35. Students have the right to apply and be considered for admission to a higher level upon successful completion of a level of study. Their right for such entrance, however, is not automatic as students may need to fulfill additional requirements for the higher qualification.
36. The BQF, by linking qualifications, simplifies the process and supports students by indicating all possible opportunities and learning pathways for individual progress. The BQF generates various alternative pathways with points of entry and exit that recognise individual achievements, thus intensifying access and social boundaries by accrediting prior learning acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning. The detailed procedure for the Accreditation of Prior Learning is given in

Appendix 3.

37. The BQF educational pathways make lifelong learning a reality as these give opportunities to individuals with knowledge and skills acquired from experience and self-learning, to be assessed and given the opportunity to attain higher qualifications although they do not have basic qualifications.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Descriptions of Qualification Levels

1. The descriptors exemplify the nature and characteristics of the main qualification at each level, demonstrates the nature and characteristics of change between qualifications at different levels. They provide clear points of reference at each level and describe outcomes that cover the major qualifications. However, the BQF may accommodate diversity and innovation for new qualifications as the need for them arises.
2. The qualification descriptors are in two parts.
 - 2.1. The first part is the statement of outcomes, achievement of which is assessed and which a student should be able to demonstrate for the award of the qualification. This part facilitates higher education providers in designing, approving and reviewing academic programmes.
 - 2.2. The second part is the statement of the wider abilities that the student is expected to have developed. It will be of assistance to higher education providers during discussions with employers, and others with an interest in the general capabilities of holders of the qualification.
3. The qualifications at the levels 6, 7 and 8 use the title 'degree' for both undergraduate and postgraduate awards at all levels.
4. At most levels there may be more than one type of qualification which can be achieved. Short programmes are often offered as continuing professional development opportunities. The qualification descriptors provide points of reference that will

help institutions determine at which level of the BQF any qualifications resulting from such programmes should be placed.

5. The Bhutan Accreditation Council will review the need for any additional qualification descriptors, or amendment to them, in the light of the development of other points of reference, such as benchmark statements or other international needs.
6. The types of qualifications corresponding to these levels are explained below.

Primary Education (Level 1)

1. The learner has a given and uneven knowledge base. This is largely factual, theory based and its meaning in the broader context of the discipline may be absent. The learner has an elementary awareness of the discipline and some knowledge of the terminology.
2. Within the limits of his/her knowledge and understanding of the discipline, the learner can begin to operate skills of manipulation of knowledge. There is a growing awareness of how knowledge is processed in order to achieve informed judgements. Within the limits, the learner can use simple processes in routine/guided contexts such as the application of the rules, explanation, and the combination of given ideas to inform a task. S/he can work within a routine and defined context.
3. With regards to generic transferable skills, the learner:

- 3.1. can usually meet obligations to others (peers / tutors); can work cooperatively with others (group working);
 - 3.2. is mostly guided in use of learning resources (learning resources);
 - 3.3. is beginning to develop the ability to evaluate own strengths and weaknesses within criteria largely set by others (self evaluation);
 - 3.4. can manage information with guidance and a defined context, and is learning to collect data from a range of straightforward sources (management of information);
 - 3.5. can exercise a limited level of discretion and judgement about possible actions, and operate under general supervision and quality control system (autonomy);
 - 3.6. is developing ability to communicate in the academic context and there is evidence of progress towards reporting practical procedures in a clear manner (communications);
 - 3.7. can apply given tools / methods with guidance to a well-defined problem (problem-solving).
4. Considering the subject specific practical skills, the learner:
 - 4.1. can operate in predictable, defined contexts that require use of a specified range of standard techniques (application);
 - 4.2. is able to act with limited autonomy, under direction or supervision, within defined guidelines (autonomy in skill use).

Lower Secondary Education (Level 2)

1. The learner has a largely given knowledge base that is probably uneven and tends to be factual but there is awareness and increasing understanding of some areas of theory. S/he has a growing familiarity with the structure of knowledge and terminology of the discipline. The learner has a general awareness of any issues concerning values in the main areas of study.
2. Within the limits of his/her knowledge and understanding, the learner is becoming aware of or familiar with the use of the skills of manipulation of knowledge and how they are applied to knowledge in order to make an informed judgement. For example, within routine or guided context there is an ability to extract information, the ability to interpret and combine a range of ideas for communication to others. S/he works largely within a routine and defined context.
3. With regards to generic transferable skills, the learner:
 - 3.1. can generally meet obligations to others (peers/tutors); can work cooperatively with others and is learning the effect of groups on own behaviour (group working);
 - 3.2. is mostly guided in use of learning resources but when challenged can begin to seek own resources and to use them critically (learning resources);
 - 3.3. is beginning to develop the ability to evaluate own strengths and weaknesses within criteria largely set by others (self evaluation);

- 3.4. can manage information with guidance and a defined context, and is learning to collect data from a range of straightforward sources and is beginning to learn how to undertake simple research tasks (management of information);
 - 3.5. can undertake directed activity with limited autonomy and accept increasing responsibility for outcomes within time and other constraints (autonomy);
 - 3.6. is developing ability to communicate reasonably effectively in the academic context and there is evidence of progress towards reporting practical procedures in a clear concise manner (communications);
 - 3.7. can apply given tools/methods with initial guidance to a well-defined problem (problem-solving).
4. Considering the subject specific practical skills, the learner:
 - 4.1. can operate in predictable, defined contexts that require use of a specified range of standard techniques (application);
 - 4.2. is able to act with limited autonomy, under direction or supervision, within defined guidelines (autonomy in skill use).

Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education (Level 3)

1. The learner has largely given possibly uneven and limited factual and conceptual knowledge base. S/he has an appreciation of

the breadth of the field of study and the relevant terminology. The learner has some awareness of the ethical issues in the main areas of study and is developing the ability to discuss and relate them to own personal beliefs and values.

2. Within the limits of his/her knowledge and understanding, the learner is learning to use the skills of manipulation of knowledge to make informed judgements. Her/his abilities to use these skills can be applied independently in relatively simple and familiar contexts or with guidance or structure when working with greater complexity. S/he learner begins to work beyond routine and defined context.
3. With regards to generic transferable skills, the learner:
 - 3.1. meets obligations to others (peers/tutors), and usually adapts in recognition of the effects of groups on own behaviour (group working);
 - 3.2. is gaining in confidence in use and access to a range of learning resources with some ability to evaluate the source (learning resources);
 - 3.3. is generally able to evaluate own strengths and weaknesses within criteria largely set by others (self evaluation);
 - 3.4. can manage information with guidance and a defined context, and collect data from a range of straightforward sources and is gaining in confidence to undertake simple research tasks with external guidance (management of information);
 - 3.5. can engage in self-directed activity with broad guidance

and evaluation accepting responsibility for the quality and quantity of output (autonomy);

3.6. is developing ability to communicate effectively in a format appropriate to the discipline/s and there is evidence of progress towards reporting practical procedures in a clear and concise manner, and can present familiar information to an audience (communications);

3.7. can apply given tools/methods to a well-defined problem and shows emerging recognition of the complexity of associated issues (problem-solving).

4. Considering the subject specific practical skills, the learner:

4.1. can operate in predictable, defined contexts that require use of a specified range of standard techniques (application);

4.2. is able to act with limited autonomy, under direction or supervision, within defined guidelines (autonomy in skill use).

Certificate (Level 4)

1. This level includes the certificates of post-higher secondary education and other higher national certificates.

2. Certificates are awarded to students who have demonstrated the knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study

an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study.

3. The certificates such as the vocational certificates are conferred as formal recognition to individuals who has shown the capabilities that have been acquired or practiced competently in the conduct of a task or work.
4. The learner at this level is able to:
 - 4.1. interpret and use technical information;
 - 4.2. assist and use the scientific work process and the techniques of designing;
 - 4.3. identify the impact of regulations, laws and contracts upon work process;
 - 4.4. prepare the estimated cost of work process and its operation;
 - 4.5. utilize techniques and capabilities to search for and use data in decision making, having considered social, scientific, and relevant ethical issues;
 - 4.6. communicate effectively and convey information, ideas, problems and resolutions to others they work with;
 - 4.7. attain team interpersonal skills that are appropriate to employment;
 - 4.8. be a responsible member of society; and
 - 4.9. use independent learning skills in further education.

5. The holders of certificates shall have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.
6. The Certificate holders shall have a sound knowledge of the basic concepts of a subject, with the ability to take different approaches to solving problems. They will be able to communicate accurately and will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility. The Certificate may be a first step towards obtaining higher level qualifications.

Diploma (Level 5)

1. This level includes diplomas of post-higher secondary education, foundation degrees and higher national diplomas.
2. The Diploma holders are considered as Foundation Degree. Diploma is a specific level or qualification, which identifies and individual who has knowledge, practical skills, managerial abilities and more complex and higher responsibilities than those expected at the certificate level.
3. Diplomas are awarded to students who have demonstrated:
 - 3.1. knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of their area(s) of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed;
 - 3.2. ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those

- principles in an employment context;
- 3.3. knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study; and
 - 3.4. an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.
4. Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:
 - 4.1. use knowledge, comprehension and practical skills at work;
 - 4.2. assess and decide, taking into account social, scientific and ethical issues with autonomy;
 - 4.3. possess study skills in adapting to ideas, processes and new procedures for career development;
 - 4.4. acquired team and interpersonal skills that are appropriate to employment;
 - 4.5. communicate effectively and to transmit information, ideas, problems and resolutions cogently to experts and non-experts; and
 - 4.6. identify problems in their field of study.
 5. The Diploma holders shall have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

6. Holders of qualifications at this level will have developed a sound understanding of the principles in their field of study with the ability to apply those principles more widely. They will have learned to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. Their studies may well have had a vocational orientation, for example ND2, enabling them to perform effectively in their chosen field. Holders of qualifications at this level will have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.

Bachelor Degree (Level 6)

1. This level includes bachelor's degrees, bachelor's degrees with honours, graduate certificates and diplomas, and professional graduate certificates.
2. A Bachelors degree prepares students for general employment, entry into postgraduate programme and research as well as highly skilled careers. It enables the individuals to take up responsibilities, which require great autonomy in professional decision-making.
3. The Bachelors degree is conferred on individuals who are able to:
 - 3.1. demonstrate knowledge and comprehension on fundamental principles of a field study, acquired from advanced textbooks and other resources;
 - 3.2. use the knowledge and comprehension through methods

- that indicate professionalism in employment;
- 3.3. argue and solve problems in their field of study;
 - 3.4. show techniques and capabilities to search and use data to make decisions having considered social, scientific and relevant ethical issues;
 - 3.5. communicate effectively and convey information, ideas, problems and solutions to others;
 - 3.6. apply team and interpersonal skills which are suitable to employment; and
 - 3.7. possess independent study skills to continue further study with a high degree of autonomy.
4. Typically, the holders of the qualification will be able to:
- 4.1. apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects;
 - 4.2. critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and incomplete data, to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution, or identify a range of solutions, to a problem; and
 - 4.3. communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.
5. The Bachelors Degree holders shall have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
- 5.1. the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;

- 5.2. decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts;
and
- 5.3. the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.
6. Holders of a bachelor's degree will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, the holder will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. The holder of such a qualification will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate them effectively.
7. Holders of a bachelor's degree shall have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances.
8. Bachelor's degrees form the largest group of higher education qualifications. Typically, learning outcomes for these programmes would be expected to be achieved on the basis of study equivalent to three full-time academic years and lead to awards with titles such as Bachelor of Arts, BA (Hons) or Bachelor of Science, BSc (Hons). In addition to bachelor's degrees at this level are short courses and professional 'conversion' courses, based largely on undergraduate material, and taken usually by those who are already graduates in another discipline usually leading to graduate certificates or graduate diplomas.

Master Degree (Level 7)

1. This level includes master's degrees, integrated master's degrees, postgraduate certificates, and post graduate diplomas.
2. A Masters degree provides for the furtherance of knowledge, skills and abilities obtained at the Bachelors level. The entrance to masters is usually based on proven capabilities to pursue postgraduate studies in the selected fields.
3. A Masters degree is conferred on students who are able to:
 - 3.1. demonstrate continuing and additional knowledge and comprehension above that of the Bachelors degree and have capabilities to develop or use idea usually in the context of research;
 - 3.2. use the knowledge and comprehension to solve problems related to the field of study in new situations and multi-disciplinary contexts;
 - 3.3. integrate knowledge and manage complex matters;
 - 3.4. evaluate and make decision in situations without or with limited information by considering social responsibilities and related ethics;
 - 3.5. deliver clearly the conclusion, knowledge and the rationale to experts and non-experts; and
 - 3.6. demonstrate study skills to continuously progress on their own with a high degree of autonomy to do so.
4. Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- 4.1. deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
 - 4.2. demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level; and
 - 4.3. continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.
5. The Masters degree holders will have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
- 5.1. the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
 - 5.2. decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; and
 - 5.3. the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.
6. The students at this level will have shown originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show originality in tackling and solving problems. They will have the qualities needed for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgement, personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable professional environments.

7. Master's degrees are awarded after completion of taught courses, programmes of research or a mixture of both. Some Masters degree like MPhil will require longer, research-based programmes.
8. Master's degrees are distinguished by an increased intensity, complexity and density of study. They include planned intellectual progression that often includes a synoptic/research or scholarly activity.
9. Some Master's programme may be offered in the form of integrated masters covering several levels most of them at level 6.

Doctoral Degree (Level 8)

1. A doctoral degree provides for the further enhancement of knowledge, skills and abilities obtained at the Masters level. It generally provides the graduate with the abilities to conduct independent research.
2. This level of qualification is conferred on the students who are able to:
 - 2.1. show a systematic comprehension and in-depth understanding of a discipline and mastery of skill and research methods related to the field of study;
 - 2.2. show capabilities to generate, design, implement and adopt the integral part of research process with scholarly strength;

- 2.3. contribute to the original research that has broadened the boundary of knowledge through an in-depth dissertation, which has been presented and defended according to the international standards including writing in internationally refereed publications;
 - 2.4. make critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;
 - 2.5. communicate with peers, scholarly communities and society at large concerning the field of expertise; and
 - 2.6. promote the technological, social and cultural progress in a knowledge-based society in the academic and professional contexts.
3. Typically, the holders of this level qualification will be able to:
 - 3.1. make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences; and
 - 3.2. continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.
 4. The holders will have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

5. Doctoral degrees are awarded for the creation and interpretation, construction and/or exposition of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research.
6. Holders of doctoral degrees will be able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding. Holders of doctoral degrees will have the qualities needed for employment that require both the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and an innovative approach to tackling and solving problems.
7. Doctoral programmes that may include a research component but which have a substantial taught element (for example, professional doctorates), lead usually to awards which include the name of the discipline in their title (for example, EdD for Doctor of Education or MD for Doctor of Medicine). Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge. The titles PhD and DPhil are commonly used for doctoral degrees awarded on the basis of original research.
8. Higher doctorates may be awarded in recognition of a substantial body of original research undertaken over the course of many years. Typically a portfolio of work which has been previously published in a peer-refereed context is submitted for assessment. Most higher education awarding bodies restrict candidacy to graduates or academic staff of several years' standing.

Appendix 2: Minimum Credit of Prior Experiential Learning

Prior learning may be accredited. The following table gives the maximum volume of learning that can be accredited at various levels and qualifications.

BQF Levels	Qualifications	Total Credit	Accreditation of Certified Learning	Accreditation of Experiential Learning
7	Master	180	60	60
	Postgraduate Diploma	120	40	40
	Postgraduate Certificate	60	20	20
6	Honours Degree	480	320	160
	Bachelors Degree	360	220	140
	Graduate Diploma	120	40	40
	Graduate Certificate	60	20	20
5	Diploma	240	120	60

For the other levels, the acceptance of APL towards further education awards shall be an admission decision based on each individual case. The maximum volume of APL outlined above is provided only for the guidance of applicants and departments but does not constitute an entitlement.

Appendix 3: Accreditation of Prior Learning

Definitions

1. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) refers to the formal recognition of prior learning gained outside the university through formally assessed and certified programmes.
2. Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) is that which has been assessed and achieved through a formal programme of study, typically further or higher education programmes or professional programmes.
3. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is the formal recognition of prior learning gained outside the University through other experience in work, the community or a related setting, which is judged and recognized by the University to be worthy of credit contributing to an award of the university. Credit is not awarded on the basis of experience per se: it is awarded on the basis of what is learned through reflecting on experience.

General Application requirements

4. Applicants wishing to be awarded credit for APL will be advised, in the first instance, to discuss the matter with the institute concerned, who will ensure that the applicant is informed of the institute's recognition procedure.
5. Applications for APL for taught programmes shall be made before the student enrolls on their intended programme of study for which they are seeking to transfer prior learning. Students who apply after the start of their programme may

be disadvantaged, for instance, they may not be reimbursed for tuition fees already paid for courses from which they are subsequently exempted.

6. Applications for APL for taught programmes must consist of a written request, stating the tertiary education award in respect of which the student seeks APL, and submit evidence of previous learning in the form of:
 - a. award certificate(s);
 - b. transcript(s);
 - c. a copy of the curriculum/syllabus or programme specification;
 - d. a piece of work or special assignment;
 - e. a portfolio of evidence (for prior experiential learning only).
 - f. Recommendation from the supervisor/s.
7. The content of accreditation of prior experiential learning submissions will vary in accordance with the nature of the experiences and of the learning that has resulted from that experience. Each institution has an approved procedure for supporting applicants in preparing documentation and considering requests for the accreditation of prior experiential learning.
8. Research students may apply for exemption from the generic research undertaken following enrolment on their programme of study. The person who heads the programme (who is

also the APL Assessor for this programme) will meet with students individually and advise them as to the appropriate documentation required.

Criteria

9. When considering evidence for APCL, the assessors shall:
 - a. confirm (against a transcript of credit or award certificate) that credit has been awarded by an agency or a recognised institution;
 - b. confirm (against a transcript of credit or award certificate) that the learning activity has been given a credit rating or judge the level and amount of credit on the basis of the year and volume of study at another recognised institution, or confirm the level and volume of study successfully undertaken in an overseas university or similar institution;
 - c. assess the evidence submitted against the requirements and learning outcomes of the relevant degree programme and the constituent modules;
 - d. confirm that the learning has been in a subject area relevant to the programme of study.
10. The APCL assessor may request additional information from the applicant or consult with colleagues, if required.

Credit Grading

11. Subject to relevance, credit for study at another institution will be given at the same or equivalent tariff and level as that

awarded by the other institution.

12. The re-grading of credit which is the conversion of credit previously awarded at one academic level (either as part of the requirements for an academic award or in the context of a general credit rating activity) to another academic level for the purpose of meeting the requirements of a different academic level.
13. Credit achieved at a higher level may exempt a student from courses at a lower level (i.e. downgraded credit). However, it is not permitted to offset credit achieved at a lower level from modules at a higher level (i.e. upgraded credit).
14. Students shall not receive more than one allocation of credit on the basis of a single learning activity.
15. Learning should have taken place within five years prior to the enrolment date for the intended programme of study, unless the applicant can provide supporting evidence which gives an account of ways in which learning achieved through the learning has been applied actively and updated within the said time.
16. The content of APEL submissions will vary in accordance with the nature of the experience and of the learning that has resulted from that experience but might include the following elements:
 - a. the statement of the claim;
 - b. a brief curriculum vitae to provide a context for the claim;
 - c. reflection on the relevance of the learning to the programme against which the claim is being made;

- d. outcome cross-referenced to the full evidence;
 - e. full evidence e.g. maintenance of log book, industrial experiences.
17. The types of evidences may include:
- a. practice-based documents;
 - b. reports based on reflection on practice;
 - c. video/audio tapes and analysis relating to the learning outcomes;
 - d. analysis of issues arising in preparing for practice;
 - e. analysis and description of practice activities;
 - f. analysis of training activities in relation to the practice;
 - g. statements from line-managers in relation to practice.
18. There must be sufficient evidence to provide the Selection Committee with the details of experiential learning to be taken into account for assessment leading to accreditation. The Committee will look for equivalencies of competence, for example, between learning at work and having gained a specific qualification. Evidence can be accepted from a wide range of sources, providing that it is:
- a. *Sufficient*: Keep in mind that the portfolio should be concise and sufficient evidence for the purpose intended.
 - b. *Recent*: How recent the experience is can determine its value, certain skills and knowledge, for example, can quickly become redundant.

- c. *Authentic*: For certain evidence to be accepted it may require endorsement or a reference from relevant sources e.g. employers.
 - d. *Relevant*: The specifications of a job or the requirements of a particular qualification will determine the relevance of the evidence.
19. Evidence must not be solely assessed by the staff who has advised the claimant. APEL claims are subject to the same quality assurance processes as learning derived from taught programmes of study.
20. The Committee operates on the procedure for considering requests for the accreditation of prior experiential learning which include the following stages:
- a. allocation of a member of academic staff to advise the candidate;
 - b. specification of what the claim must entail, particularly clarity on the nature and purpose of evidence of learning to be submitted by the candidate;
 - c. agreement on assessment work to be submitted (e.g. portfolio, presentation, submission of artefacts, examinations);
 - d. agreement on submission dates;
 - e. agreement on tutorial arrangements (including monitoring progress towards submission, reviewing drafts etc);
 - f. clarification of arrangements for assessment (including

assessment criteria, internal and external moderation);

- g. feedback to the claimant; the feedback on the shortcomings and/or any additional evidence necessary for the acceptance of the claim in case of rejection.

GLOSSARY

Bhutan Qualifications Framework: an explanation or description of the national education system that is understood at the international level, which clarifies all qualifications and academic achievement in tertiary education and how these qualifications are linked.

Award: a degree, diploma, certificate or other similar formal mark of recognition of successful completion of a programme of study e.g. BA, PgD, BSc(Hons), M Phil.

Learning outcome: a statement of what students should know, understand and can do upon the completion of a period of study as the outcomes of the learning process.

Academic Load: a quantitative measurement for all learning activities required to achieve the learning outcomes.

Credit: a quantitative measurement that represents the learning volume of the academic load to achieve the respective learning outcomes.

Competent authority: the competent official or organisation empowered and/or accredited to execute various functions such as award, certification and inspection.

Joint Award: arrangements under which the university may collaborate with one or more awarding institutions to provide programmes leading to a single award made jointly by both institutions.

Double Degree: sometimes called a combined degree, conjoint degree, dual degree, or simultaneous degree programme, involves a student's working for two different university degrees in parallel, either at the same institution or at different institutions (or in different

countries), completing them in less time than it would take to earn them separately. The two degrees might be in the same subject area (especially when the course is split between countries), or in two different subjects.

Level: a measure of intellectual progress as seen in the demands of the programme that follow. The year of study may be used as a proxy for a level though the second year material, for example, may not necessarily provide intellectual progress for the third year study.

Qualifications Level: an award level described with generic outcomes or a qualifications descriptor which characterizes typical qualification.

Profile: a specific subject or a field of study for a qualification or features which are different in conglomeration of qualifications of various disciplines which has a similar emphasis or level.

Qualification: a certificate, diploma or degree which is awarded by a tertiary education provider that is authorized to confer or to award the qualification and to affirm the earned learning outcomes.

Qualification Descriptor: a generic statement that explains the main learning outcomes for qualifications at a particular level.

Point of Reference: a non-prescriptive indicator that explains the articulated links between qualifications, learning outcomes and/or other related concepts to enable an individual to progress from one qualification to another.

Recognition of Prior Learning: a verification process of an individual's achievement of a set of learning outcomes acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning irrespective of time and place.

Tertiary Education or Training Provider: an authorized organization

or other body of persons which conducts tertiary education or training programmes including skills training programmes leading to the award of a tertiary qualification and/or their representatives.

Certified Programme: programme that measure, evaluate and promote the learners' knowledge and skills meeting the standards prescribed and leading to higher qualification as a mark of credibility.

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