

# NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR QUALIFICATIONS AND OTHER LEARNING

---

Reports of the Ministry of Education 2009: 24

20.8.2009

**Authors:**

The committee for the preparation of the national qualifications framework

Chair: Hannu Sirén

Secretaries: Carita Blomqvist and Seija Rasku

**Publication title:**

The national framework for qualifications and other learning

**ABSTRACT**

On 21 August 2008, the Ministry of Education appointed a committee to prepare a national qualifications framework describing qualifications and other learning. The task of the committee was to prepare a proposal on the national qualifications framework and to define its levels in terms of knowledge, skills and competences; to determine the criteria according to which the qualifications are placed on the different levels of the national and European qualifications frameworks; and to propose which levels Finnish qualifications should be placed on in the frameworks. The committee's task was also to propose how the national qualifications framework ought to be maintained, updated and developed, and to describe how the quality assurance will be arranged. The committee also had to make a proposal on whether the national framework could be extended to cover all learning in addition to formal qualifications. The committee was also to make a proposal on the necessary legislative reforms.

In its report, the committee describes the European qualifications framework (EQF) and how it relates to other qualification classifications. The committee also describes how qualifications and learning outcomes are described in national legislation. Furthermore, the committee describes the quality assurance procedures for Finnish degrees and education, the current state and practices of recognising learning, and the measures that have been taken in different administrative sectors to promote the recognition of learning. The committee's key proposals are as follows:

- The national qualifications framework will have eight levels based on the EQF. The framework describes the requirements of Finnish qualifications (learning outcomes) in terms of knowledge, skills and competence, which are the criteria agreed upon in European cooperation based on the EQF levels. The dimensions of learning are not, however, distinguished from one another and the EQF levels are specified based on a national perspective.

- The qualifications are placed in the national framework according to the learning outcomes required by the different qualifications. Although a qualification may contain elements from several levels, it is placed on the level it suits best as a whole. Qualifications that are placed on the same level might emphasise different dimensions of learning. The same types of qualifications are primarily placed on the same level.
  
- Finnish higher education degrees are placed in the national qualifications framework according to the three cycle system of the Bologna Process: the first cycle includes university and polytechnic Bachelor's Degrees (level 6). The second cycle includes university and polytechnic Master's Degrees (level 7). The third cycle includes scientific and artistic post-graduate degrees, such as licentiate and doctoral degrees.
  
- Vocational upper secondary qualifications and further vocational qualifications are placed on level 4 and specialist vocational qualifications on level 5. A vocational qualification may be placed on a higher level if the qualification clearly has higher requirements than other qualifications of the same type.
  
- Matriculation examination and the completion of the general upper secondary syllabus are placed on the same level as vocational upper secondary qualification (level 4).
  
- Qualifications from other administrative sectors the requirements of which correspond to those of the vocational upper secondary qualification or further vocational qualification are also placed on level 4. Qualifications from other administrative sectors the requirements of which correspond to those of the specialist vocational qualification are placed on level 5.
  
- Completion of the basic education syllabus is placed on level 2.
  
- The framework will be provided for in an act compiling the qualifications and syllabi as a whole as they are enacted in various statutes. The act will also compile the specific competencies of graduates with higher education degrees. The act will provide for authorisation to describe the levels as well as to enact government decrees placing the specific competencies of graduates on the levels. The statutes, decrees and instructions concerning qualifications and other certificates will also be revised.

- Finnish qualifications will be placed in the EQF by placing them on the levels of the national framework which correspond those of the EQF.
  
- The framework will be maintained in the same manner as similar statutes. The Ministry of Education will present the statutes relating to the national framework and is responsible for the drafting and presentation of the legislative amendments and for hearing the opinions of the other ministries and stakeholders in the drafting stage of the legislation. The mapping of the development and updating needs of the framework that is done in cooperation with the stakeholders will be integrated with the existing forms of stakeholder cooperation and the preparation of the qualifications structure proposals. The expertise of education and qualifications committees will be utilised in the mapping of the development and updating needs.
  
- Prior learning will primarily be incorporated into the qualifications in the national qualifications system and framework.
  
- The qualifications framework should be extended to cover all knowledge skills and competences. The primary focus should be on the broad courses of various administrative sectors that are not included in the qualifications system, but are often completed and have learning outcomes defined by a competent authority. These courses include, for example, those related to professional eligibility and competence and those aiming at developing and improving professional expertise.

Keywords: qualification, learning, learning outcomes, qualification system, (European)  
Qualifications Framework

## CONTENTS

Appendix 1 National framework for qualifications and other learning	6
Appendix 2 Alternative ways of placing upper secondary vocational qualifications in the national framework; comparison of alternatives To the Ministry of Education	6
To the Ministry of Education	7
1 Education policies and principles affecting the work	10
2 European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	11
2.1 Background to and aims of the EQF	11
2.2 Key content of the EQF	12
2.3 The benefits of the EQF	13
2.4 Challenges for the EQF	14
2.5 Key concepts	15
3 The relationship of the EQF to other qualifications classifications	18
3.1 ISCED	18
3.2 The EC classification of vocational training qualifications (85/368/EEC)	19
3.3 Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications	20
3.4 Description of learning outcomes in national legislation	22
<b>3.4.1 Basic education</b>	22
<b>3.4.2 General upper secondary school and matriculation examination</b>	23
<b>3.4.3 Vocational upper secondary education and training</b>	24
<b>3.4.4 Competence-based qualifications</b>	25
<b>3.4.5 Polytechnic degrees</b>	26
<b>3.4.6 University degrees</b>	28
<b>3.4.7 Defence administration and the Border Guard qualifications and education</b>	30
<b>3.4.8 Prison and probation service qualifications and education</b>	32
<b>3.4.9 Police qualifications and education</b>	33
<b>3.4.10 Qualifications and education for the emergency services and emergency response centre</b>	34
3.5 Higher education qualifications framework	36
4 National qualifications framework in other European countries	37
4.1 Overview	37
4.2 National frameworks in Ireland, Scotland and England	38
4.3 National frameworks of other Nordic countries	39
5 National qualifications framework	39
5.1 Basic principles and purpose of the national framework	39
5.2 Proposal for a national framework and the description of its levels	41
5.3 Principles of placing qualifications in the national framework	41
5.4 Proposal for placement of qualifications in the national framework	48
5.5 Qualifications removed from the qualifications system	54
5.6 Statute proposals	56
5.7 Maintenance, updating and development of the national framework	64
5.8 Administrative and economic effects of the national framework	67
6 Quality assurance	68
6.1 Quality assurance in the EQF Recommendation	68
6.2 Quality assurance in education in the sector of the Ministry of Education	69
<b>6.2.1 Quality assurance in higher education</b>	70
<b>6.2.2 Quality assurance in vocational education and training</b>	74
<b>6.2.3 Quality assurance in general education</b>	76
6.3 Quality assurance in education in other administrative sectors	78
7 Placement of national qualifications in the European Qualifications Framework	81
7.1 Placement principles and placement of qualifications in the European Qualifications Framework	81
7.2 Placement of qualifications from an international perspective	81
<b>7.2.1 Criteria and procedures agreed upon at European level</b>	82
<b>7.2.2 Committee's proposal for the Finnish procedure</b>	83
8 Recognition and validation of prior learning	84
8.1 Current status and practices in the recognition of prior learning	84
<b>8.1.1 Recognition of prior learning in general upper secondary schools</b>	85
<b>8.1.2 Recognition of prior learning in vocational education</b>	86

<b>8.1.3 Recognition of prior learning in higher education</b>	87
<b>8.1.4 Recognition of prior learning in education in other administrative sectors</b>	89
<b>8.1.5 Recognition of qualifications and competence acquired abroad for professional eligibility</b>	89
8.2 Promoting the recognition of prior learning	90
<b>9 Expanding the framework into a competence framework</b>	<b>92</b>
9.1 Competence areas outside the qualifications system	92
<b>9.1.1 Specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>9.1.2 Other extensive competence areas</b>	<b>93</b>
9.2 Thoughts on expanding the national framework	96
<b>10 Follow-up measures</b>	<b>97</b>

Appendix 1 National framework for qualifications and other learning

Appendix 2 Alternative ways of placing upper secondary vocational qualifications in the national framework; comparison of alternatives

## To the Ministry of Education

On 21 August 2008, the Ministry of Education appointed a committee to prepare a national framework for qualifications and other learning. The task of the committee was:

1. to make a proposal on a national framework and describe its levels in terms of competence
2. to present the principles according to which qualifications should be placed in the levels of the national framework and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and to make a proposal on the placement of various qualifications within the frameworks
3. to make a proposal on how the national framework is to be maintained, updated and developed
4. to describe how quality assurance is organised
5. to make a further proposal on whether the national framework could be developed from a qualifications framework into a competence framework, so that it could be used to describe competence areas outside the actual qualifications system
6. to make a proposal on the required legislative amendments.

The committee's proposals were required to take into account that in the first stage

- the national framework includes the qualifications specified in the legislation of the education authorities and other administrative sectors
- the national framework does not include components of qualifications, continuing education or other education not leading to a qualification
- the national framework also does not include procedures and requirements through which the authorities grant rights to practise a profession or perform certain work duties.

The Ministry of Education invited Hannu Sirén, Director, Ministry of Education to chair the committee and as its members, Jorma Hirvonen, Head of Training, Ministry of Justice, Jorma Ahola, Counsellor of Education, Ministry of Education, Virpi Levomaa, Development Manager, Defence Command, Jouni Pyy, Lieutenant-Colonel, Ministry of the Interior, Helena Kasurinen, Superintendent, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Sirkka-Liisa Kärki, Counsellor of Education, Head of VET Development Unit, Finnish National Board of Education, Simo Pöyhönen, Education Adviser, Akava, the Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland, Tarja Tuominen, Senior Adviser, Confederation of Finnish Industries EK, Jari-Pekka Jyrkänne, Senior Adviser on education and labour policies, Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK, Inkeri Toikka, Senior Adviser, Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, Petri Lempinen, Senior Adviser on Education Policy, Finnish Confederation of Professionals STTK, Heikki Sederlöf, Executive Director, Finnish Association for Vocational Adult Education and Training, Timo Luopajarvi, Secretary General, Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences ARENE, Johan Hahkala, Executive Director, Vocational Education Providers in Finland KJY, Riikka Lindroos, Rector, Finnish Headmaster's Association, Katri Vehviläinen-Julkunen, Professor, Finnish Council of University Rectors, Eeva-Inkeri Sirelius, Secretary General, Finnish Adult Education

Association, Juhana Harju, Educational Officer, National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL) and Niklas Huotari, President, Union of Finnish Upper Secondary School Students. From 1 January 2009, the representative of the Union of Finnish Upper Secondary School Students was Jyri Rasinmäki, Vice President and from 1 May 2009, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities was represented by Hannele Salminen, Development Manager, and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy by Timo Lähdesmäki, Special Government Adviser. The committee's expert secretaries were Seija Rasku, Counsellor of Education, Ministry of Education and Carita Blomqvist, Counsellor of Education, Finnish National Board of Education.

The deadline for the committee was 30 June 2009. The committee convened eleven times.

On completing its report, the committee respectfully submits it to the Ministry of Education.

Helsinki, 11 June 2009

Hannu Sirén

Jorma Ahola

Carita Blomqvist

Johan Hahkala

Juhana Harju

Jorma Hirvonen

Jari-Pekka Jyrkänne

Sirkka-Liisa Kärki

Petri Lempinen

Virpi Levomaa

Riikka Lindroos

Timo Luopajarvi

Timo Lähdesmäki

Simo Pöyhönen

Jouni Pyy

Jyri Rasinmäki

Seija Rasku

Hannele Salminen

Heikki Sederlöf

Eeva-Inkeri Sirelius

Tarja Tuominen

Katri Vehviläinen-Julkunen

## **1 Education policies and principles affecting the work**

Qualifications frameworks entered the educational policy debate in the European Union in the late 1990s. The background to this was the need to increase the openness and transparency of educational systems and qualifications, promote the validation of prior learning in the spirit of lifelong learning and emphasise the importance of learning outcomes in the provision of education.

The European Council meeting in Lisbon in 2000 concluded that increased transparency of qualifications should be one of the main components necessary to adapt educational systems to the demands of the knowledge society, while the Barcelona European Council in 2002 called for closer cooperation in the higher education sector and an improvement in the transparency and recognition methods in the area of vocational education and training. The guidelines for employment for 2005–2008 in the revised Lisbon Strategy emphasised the need for ensuring flexible learning pathways and increasing student and trainee mobility by improving the definition of qualifications, their transparency and their recognition as well as the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In 2002, a work programme was drawn up as a follow-up measure of a survey on the concrete future challenges of European educational systems, which called for the development of ways to validate non-formal learning. The Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning invited Member States to recognise learning outcomes based on formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The Council Resolutions from 2004 include a description of joint European identification and validation principles pertaining to non-formal and informal learning. In addition, the Resolutions call for the creation and distribution of European tools to validate non-formal and informal learning.

In the spring of 2006, a Resolution on the importance of recognising non-formal and informal learning was adopted. The Resolution emphasises the significance of non-formal and informal learning in personal development, social inclusion and the development of active citizenship. In addition, the Resolution emphasises the importance of recognising competence acquired through non-formal and informal learning for learning motivation and lifelong learning.

In the educational sector, the Lisbon Strategy is being implemented through the “Education and Training 2010” work programme. The joint reports of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the “Education and Training 2010” work programme, adopted in 2004 and 2006, stressed the need to develop a European Qualifications Framework. The framework is one of the common European tools to promote the transparency and comparability as well as the quality of qualifications, the production and implementation of which is an important part of the “Education and Training 2010” work programme as well as the Bologna and Copenhagen processes.

The aim of the Bologna process is to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 and to promote the competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher education in comparison with other continents. This goal will be

achieved by, for example, harmonising qualifications structures and developing quality assurance. Issues relating to the comparability and recognition of qualifications have been central to the Bologna Process. Higher education qualification frameworks have been seen as a one factor promoting transparency and the comparability of qualifications.

The aim of the Copenhagen Process is to improve the performance, quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training through European cooperation and to promote the mobility of students and people with vocational education and training qualifications. More comprehensively, the aim of the Copenhagen Process is to develop a European labour market and to complement the European Higher Education Area. The means to attaining the aims include developing national qualifications systems and frameworks corresponding to the European Qualifications Framework, implementing the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) as well as the European quality assurance framework, promoting the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and making transferring and progressing through vocational education and training, general education and higher education easier.

According to the Government Programme of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's second Cabinet, the education system will be developed overall so that it can meet global challenges and respond to the changes in occupational and demographic structures.

According to the Development Plan for Education and Research for the period 2007–2012, the functioning and clarity of the Finnish qualifications system will be enhanced by preparing a national framework for qualifications and other learning by 2010. The national framework is being prepared in accordance with the recommendation pertaining to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

One of the key aims of the EQF recommendation is the promotion of lifelong learning. The recognition of prior learning is important for the realisation of lifelong learning. Many recent European Union initiatives stress the significance of recognising learning acquired outside formal education. In order to promote the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, the European Commission and Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, published European guidelines on the validation of non-formal and informal learning as principles and practices in April 2009. The document discusses the recognition of competence from various European, national, organisational and individual perspectives and, for example, presents various procedures for recognising and validating competences.

## **2 European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**

### **2.1 Background to and aims of the EQF**

The development of the European Qualifications Framework started in 2004 in response to requests from Member States, the social partners and other stakeholders for a common framework to facilitate the comparison of qualifications. The Commission, with the support of the EQF Expert Group, produced a draft proposing

an eight-level framework based on learning outcomes. The Commission published the proposal for consultation in July 2005 (SEC (2005) 957).

The responses to the consultation demonstrated widespread support among European stakeholders for the Commission's proposal but also requested a number of clarifications and simplification. In response, the Commission amended the proposal, drawing on the input of experts from all the 32 countries involved as well as from European social partners, and then made a proposal based on the amended text in September 2006 (COM(2006) 479 final). The European Parliament and Council discussed the proposal during 2007, which led to the EQF's formal approval in February 2008. The recommendation was adopted on 23 April 2008.

According to the EQF recommendation (2008/C 111/01), the European Qualifications Framework can be used for linking together the qualifications systems of various countries. The EQF facilitates comparison and understanding of qualifications gained in different European countries. The framework has two principal aims: to promote citizens' mobility between countries and facilitate lifelong learning.

The goal of the EQF is to improve the transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications. The EQF should, moreover, enable international sectoral organisations to relate their qualifications systems to a common European reference point and thus show the relationship between international sectoral qualifications and national qualifications systems.

Moreover, the recommendation contributes to the wider objectives of promoting lifelong learning and increasing the employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners. The aim of the recommendation is to contribute to modernising education and training systems, the interrelationship of education, training and employment, and building bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning, with the aim of promoting the validation of learning outcomes acquired through experience.

## **2.2 Key content of the EQF**

The EQF is a common European reference framework which links together various countries' national qualifications systems and qualifications frameworks. Its eight reference levels span the full scale of qualifications from basic to advance. As an instrument for the promotion of lifelong learning, the EQF encompasses all levels of qualifications acquired in general, vocational as well as academic education and training. Additionally, the framework addresses qualifications acquired in basic and continuing education and training. Each level of qualification should, in principle, be attainable through a variety of educational and career paths.

The EQF reference levels are based on learning outcomes that are described as knowledge, skills and competence. Each of the eight levels is defined by describing the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications. The EQF focuses on what a person with a qualification knows, understands and is able to do on completion of the learning process. According to the recommendation, the shift of emphasis to learning outcomes enables taking various

European educational systems into account because comparison based merely on investments (for example, duration of studies) is difficult.

The EQF is compatible with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area developed in conjunction with the Bologna Process. The descriptions of the EQF levels 5 to 8 refer to the descriptions of higher education levels agreed upon as a part of the Bologna process. However, the EQF level descriptions differ in wording from the Bologna level descriptions, which have been drawn up especially for higher education needs. This is due to the fact the EQF as a framework for lifelong learning also includes vocational education and training and work environments up to the highest level.

The EQF is not a substitute for national qualifications systems and/or qualifications, nor does it define them. The EQF does not describe specific qualifications or an individual's competences, and particular qualifications should be referenced to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level by way of the relevant national qualifications systems.

The EQF is non-binding but it is recommended that Member States relate their national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework by 2010, either by referencing their qualification levels to the EQF levels and, if necessary, by developing national qualifications frameworks in accordance with national legislation and practice. Additionally, the Member States should ensure that by 2012 all new qualification certificates, diplomas and 'Europass' documents contain a clear reference to the appropriate EQF level.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the Member States use an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications, and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning as well as promote and apply the principles of quality assurance in education and training when relating higher education and vocational education and training qualifications within national qualifications systems to the EQF. In addition, Member States are recommended to set up a national coordination point in order to support and, in conjunction with other relevant national authorities, guide the relationship between the national qualifications system and the EQF.

Finland has decided to adopt the EQF and proceed in accordance with the recommended schedule. The Finnish National Board of Education was appointed the national coordination point in June 2008 (Ministry of Education decision, reg. no. 2/500/2008).

### **2.3 The benefits of the EQF**

The EQF's primary users are the bodies responsible for national and/or sectoral qualifications systems and frameworks. If the qualifications included in the systems are classified at levels corresponding to those in the EQF, it is easier for private individuals, employers and providers of educational services to compare qualifications gained from different countries and different educational systems.

According to the EQF brochure published by the European Commission, increasing links between qualifications systems of various countries has many beneficiaries:

- The EQF will support greater mobility of learners and workers. It will make it easier for learners to describe their broad level of competence to recruiters in other countries. This will help employers interpret the qualifications of applicants and so support labour market mobility in Europe.
- The EQF should benefit individuals by increasing access to, and participation in, lifelong learning. The EQF will indicate how learning outcomes may be combined from different settings, for example formal study or work, and from different countries, and can thus contribute to reducing barriers between education and training providers, e.g. between higher education and vocational education and training, which may operate in isolation from each other. This will promote progression so that learners do not have to repeat learning.
- The EQF can support individuals with extensive experience from work or other fields of activity by facilitating validation of non-formal and informal learning. The focus on learning outcomes will make it easier to assess whether learning outcomes acquired in these settings are equivalent in content and relevance to formal qualifications.
- The EQF will support individual users as well as providers of education and training by increasing the transparency of qualifications awarded outside national systems, for example by sectors and multinational companies. The adoption of a common reference framework based on learning outcomes will facilitate the comparison and (potential) linking together of traditional qualifications awarded by national authorities and qualifications awarded by other stakeholders. The EQF will thus help sectors and individuals take advantage of the increasing international dimension of qualifications.

## **2.4 Challenges for the EQF**

The challenge for the European Qualifications Framework is for it to be more than just a mere technical tool for classifying qualifications. At its best, the EQF can help to promote important education policy aims and to develop educational and qualifications systems. The implementation of the EQF aims to increase European cooperation and transparency in the development of qualifications systems. Increased cooperation will offer opportunities for peer learning and identifying new perspectives. The challenge is to engage in this cooperation without creating pressures to harmonise education.

The EQF provides an opportunity to examine a qualifications system as a whole, genuinely on the basis of learning outcomes without any barriers. The challenge in drawing up national frameworks and referencing them to the EQF is to overcome traditional views separating qualifications based on systems and not on the basis of learning outcomes. A further key challenge is constructing and indicating lifelong learning paths. Clarifying the validation principles of prior learning is another challenge.

The EQF focuses attention on learning outcomes, which can provide a common language for describing qualifications and increasing the transparency and impact of qualifications. The challenge is to come up with a genuine and truthful examination of qualifications based on learning outcomes throughout Europe. There is a danger that different countries will adopt the learning outcomes approach in very different ways, thus complicating the comparison of qualifications. The aim is to ensure mutual trust by describing learning outcomes clearly and transparently enough so as to render the descriptions of the various systems comparable.

The EQF has been primarily developed to clarify the learning and career paths of citizens, students and employees as well as to promote mobility and the construction of individual learning paths. The implementation must focus on the promotion of these goals and avoid veering towards unnecessary contemplation of the roles of the various actors or even mutual competition. The EQF shifts the focus from educational structures to the examination of knowledge, skills and competences resulting from the education. A specific challenge is presented by the validation and certification of prior learning acquired outside formal education, which is particularly important for adults who are already in employment.

## 2.5 Key concepts

In the context of the European Qualifications Framework and national qualifications framework, the key concepts include the following: qualification, national qualifications system, qualification type, national (qualifications) framework, sector, international sectoral organisation, learning outcomes and competence, knowledge, skills and competence, quality assurance in education and quality assurance system in education.

The definitions below are based on the definitions in the EQF recommendation (2008/C 111/01) Appendix 1.

### *national qualifications system*

means all aspects of a Member State's activity related to the recognition of learning and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. This includes the development and implementation of institutional arrangements and processes relating to quality assurance, assessment and the award of qualifications. A national qualifications system may be composed of several subsystems and may include a national qualifications framework. Subsystems of a national qualifications system may include, for example, a vocational qualifications system and higher education qualifications system.

### *national qualifications framework*

means an instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria and placement in the EQF

levels. The national qualifications framework aims to improve the international comparability of qualifications and to promote validation of prior learning as well as lifelong learning. In addition, the national qualifications framework aims to integrate and coordinate national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

*international sectoral organisation*

means an association of national organisations, including, for example, employers and professional bodies, which represents the interests of national sectors.

*learning outcomes*

means statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, learning outcomes are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

In the Finnish framework, learning outcomes is defined as follows: a combination of knowledge, skills and competence; a wide-ranging ability to utilise knowledge, skills and proficiency in work and study situations and as a member of society.

*competence*

means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

*skills*

means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).

*knowledge*

means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.

*sector*

means a grouping of professional activities on the basis of their main economic function, product, service or technology.

*qualification*

means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

The definition of the concept of ‘qualification type’ is based on the definitions used in the report of the committee on the development principles and status of vocational qualifications in the education system (Reports of the Ministry of Education, 2007:1).

*qualification type*

means an overall category comprising similar qualifications included in the qualifications system and determined by law, such as the matriculation examination, vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications, doctoral degrees.

In addition the committee defined the concepts specific competence of graduates with higher education degrees, quality assurance in education, quality assurance system in education, competence and competence target.

*specific competence of graduates with higher education degrees*

means a comprehensive competence area necessary from the perspective of working life completed in a polytechnic or university and acquired after a higher education qualification

*quality assurance in education*

means the procedures, processes or systems, used to ensure and develop the quality of education providers, organisations maintaining educational institutions and higher education institutions as well as the educational and

other activities organised by them. The definition covers both the development of quality and quality management.

*quality assurance system in education*

means an overall system comprising various quality assurance procedures and mechanisms.

*competence/learning target*

means a description drawn up by a competent body (e.g. core curriculum, qualification requirements, and curriculum) on what is expected from an individual so that he/she can be considered as having achieved the required competence/learning. With regard to vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications, this refers to the competencies that are required in working life.

### **3 The relationship of the EQF to other qualifications classifications**

Classifications of qualifications aim at serving the need to compile statistics as well as the needs of educational and employment authorities, and also at promoting professional and academic mobility and the recognition of qualifications. Qualifications classification systems can be specific to the educational level, field of education, profession or, for example, competence-specific. Some international organisations have drawn sectoral classifications and vocational skills classifications. Especially within the European Union, classification systems have been used for comparing education in various Member States.

#### **3.1 ISCED**

UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is a classification of education created primarily for statistical purposes, which can be used for classifying education leading to a qualification and not leading to a qualification. The classification was revised to its current form in 1997.

The ISCED 1997 classification enables comparison of the educational systems of different countries by creating internationally accepted criteria for the classification. The classification is used, for example, in UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat's statistics and indicators when comparing education in different countries. ISCED includes the following classification variables: levels of education, fields of education, placement goal, orientation, national qualifications structure and planned duration. The educational level means the overall level of learning experiences gained from the education and the skills acquired, or the level of competence of the education. There are seven ISCED levels from zero (pre-primary) to six (second stage of tertiary education)

Level 1 of the ISCED classification is reserved for primary education or the first stage of basic education. According to the application guidelines of Statistics Finland, this

level corresponds to the grades 1 to 6 of basic education. ISCED level 2 describes lower secondary or the second stage of basic education. The corresponding level in Finland is the basic education grades 7 to 9. ISCED level 3 describes upper secondary education and level 4 post-secondary non-tertiary education. In the Finnish system, level 3 comprises general upper secondary education and matriculation examinations, vocational upper secondary qualifications and further vocational qualifications. Specialist vocational qualifications are at level 4. Higher education, or tertiary level education, is at levels 5 and 6 in the ISCED classification. Educational level 5 of the ISCED classification (first stage of tertiary education) has been further divided into subclasses 5A (higher education) and 5B (lowest forms of higher education). Level 5A includes Finnish polytechnic degrees as well as first and second-cycle university degrees, while level 5B refers mainly to vocational college qualifications that have been removed from the educational structure in Finland. ISCED level 6 (second stage of tertiary education) includes Finnish postgraduate qualifications; licentiate and doctoral degrees.

### **3.2 The EC classification of vocational training qualifications (85/368/EEC)**

A system for comparing vocational education and training qualifications was adopted through Decision 85/368/EEC of the Council of the European Communities. The aim of the system was to give employees an opportunity to better utilise their qualifications in finding employment in other Member States. This goal was to be attained by establishing practical job descriptions, which would be valid throughout the Community, within certain professions and by providing companies, employees and authorities with the necessary information on the comparability of qualifications completed in different countries.

The annex to the Council Decision described five educational levels. On the basis of the Council Decision, the Ministry of Education issued a recommendation (reg. no. 55/330/97) in 1998 on the placement of Finnish vocational education and training in the levels of the EC classification. According to the recommendation, the Finnish education system does not have levels 1 and 2. Level 3 comprises vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications, while level 4 contains vocational college qualifications and level 5 higher education qualifications.

However, the system proposed in Council Decision 85/368/EEC proved cumbersome and its implementation was at best very patchy. In addition, the Decision proved too inflexible to adapt to changing needs. The centralised approach and continuous and rapid change of competence requirements lead to the published data becoming quickly obsolete.

Since the implementation of Decision 85/368/EEC did not achieve comparability of vocational education and training qualifications and vocational competences and because the Decision had been replaced by several new initiatives, the Commission came to regard the Decision as unnecessary and therefore deemed that it should be repealed. The Decision was repealed through Decision 1065/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council in October 2008.

### 3.3 Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications

The European Community has several directives pertaining to the recognition of professional qualifications and education acquired in another Member State. The directives in question have been enacted as a part of internal market legislation. The 2005 Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications) brings together the previous three recognition systems: the system based on the recognition of professional experience (Directive 1999/42/EC), the recognition system based on the harmonisation of the minimum requirements for professional education (physicians, dentists, veterinarians, pharmacists, architects, nurses and midwives) and the general system of recognition of qualifications (directives 89/48/EEC and 92/51/EEC).

Under Finnish legislation, practising a certain profession or the right to use a particular professional title may require a certain education. For example, the fields of social affairs and health care and teaching have such educational requirements. The decision to grant a person who has acquired his/her education abroad the right to practise his/her profession or use the Finnish professional title rests with the Finnish authorities. If it is a question of an EU/EEA citizen and the qualification has been acquired in an EU/EEA state, the national legislation based on the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications is applied in the recognition of professional competence.

According to the directive on professional qualifications, national educational systems have to be divided into levels in order to define the recognition mechanism. The general recognition system has five levels of qualifications (a–e), the key criteria in the definition of which are the level, nature and duration of the education. A qualification giving entitlement to the recognition of professional qualification can be one level lower than the qualification the receiving Member State requires. If there is a substantial difference between the duration and/or content of the applicant's education and education required by the receiving State, the completion of an aptitude test or an adaptation period can be demanded from the applicant as a compensatory measure.

The criteria for the levels are described in the directive as follows:

- a) an attestation of competence issued by a competent authority in the home Member State pursuant to legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions of that Member State, on the basis of:
  - i) either a training course not forming part of a certificate or diploma within the meaning of points (b), (c), (d) or (e), or a specific examination without prior training, or full-time pursuit of the profession in a Member State for three consecutive years or for an equivalent duration on a part-time basis during the previous 10 years, or
  - ii) general primary or secondary education, attesting that the holder has acquired general knowledge;
- b) a certificate attesting to a successful completion of a secondary course,

i) either general in character, supplemented by a course of study or professional training other than those referred to in point (c) and/or by the probationary or professional practice required in addition to that course, or  
 ii) or technical or professional in character, supplemented where appropriate by a course of study or professional training as referred to in point (i), and/or by the probationary or professional practice required in addition to that course;

c) a diploma certifying successful completion of

i) either training at post-secondary level other than that referred to in points (d) and (e) of a duration of at least one year or of an equivalent duration on a part-time basis, one of the conditions of entry of which is, as a general rule, the successful completion of the secondary course required to obtain entry to university or higher education or the completion of equivalent school education of the second secondary level, as well as the professional training which may be required in addition to that post-secondary course; or

ii) in the case of a regulated profession, training with a special structure, included in Annex II, equivalent to the level of training provided for under (i), which provides a comparable professional standard and which prepares the trainee for a comparable level of responsibilities and functions;

d) a diploma certifying successful completion of training at post-secondary level of at least three and not more than four years' duration, or of an equivalent duration on a part-time basis, at a university or establishment of higher education or another establishment providing the same level of training, as well as the professional training which may be required in addition to that post-secondary course;

e) a diploma certifying that the holder has successfully completed a post-secondary course of at least four years' duration, or of an equivalent duration on a part-time basis, at a university or establishment of higher education or another establishment of equivalent level and, where appropriate, that he has successfully completed the professional training required in addition to the post-secondary course.

According to the Ministry of Education's guidelines (26 Aug 2008), the competent authorities should perform the placement of Finnish qualifications (diplomas) as follows:

*At level a)* i) competence certificates that are required to perform certain tasks, such as the hygiene passport, guard card, etc. ii) comprehensive and upper secondary school leaving certificates

*At level b)* ii) vocational upper secondary qualifications and further vocational qualifications

*At level c)* i) specialist vocational qualifications, vocational college and higher vocational level qualifications

*At level d)* first-cycle university degrees and polytechnic degrees

*At level e)* second-cycle university degrees, second-cycle polytechnic degrees and postgraduate licentiate and doctoral degrees.

In March 2008, the Commission published a document for the coordination group of the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications, in which it describes its view on the relationship between the directive and the European Qualifications

Framework. According to the document, the directive and the framework are completely separate instruments and do not interfere with each other. The decisions on recognising professional qualifications are based solely on the directive. From the national perspective, it is important that diplomas contain information on in which level of the directive and EQF level the qualification is placed. The EQF can provide additional information for the purpose of recognising professional qualifications but it cannot function as the basis of the recognition.

### **3.4 Description of learning outcomes in national legislation**

The international qualifications classification systems described above do not directly correspond to the requirements and needs of the national qualifications framework, even if they are widely recognised as tools for their own purposes.

The legislation on national education, which has developed over the course of history, can be considered as the central point of departure for the national qualifications framework. In Finland, the legislation applies to, for example, the aims, content, and modes of organisation of education as well as the rights and duties of pupils and students. The commonly recognised and accepted national legislative basis provides a good foundation for the national qualifications framework, particularly insofar as it covers competence requirements and learning outcomes. The national qualifications framework cannot include learning outcomes not recognised by providers of education. Instead, the national qualifications framework and successfully described learning outcomes within it can function as a basis for the further development of the content of qualifications and the learning outcomes necessary for awarding the qualifications.

The clarity of the Finnish qualifications system, learning outcomes and competence requirements described in the legislation together with flexible opportunities to proceed through the education system are contributing to the drawing up and implementation of the qualifications framework. The Finnish education system does not have an actual classification of levels; the relationships between qualifications are evident in the fact that lower level studies usually confer the right to pursue higher level education. Provisions on the qualifications and goals of the education are laid down in the legislation for each form of education.

The goals and required learning outcomes of Finnish qualifications insofar as they have been described in national legislation and deemed necessary in the preparation of the national qualifications framework are presented below.

#### **3.4.1 Basic education**

Finland has comprehensive basic education lasting nine years. Provisions on basic education are provided, for example, in the Basic Education Act (Perusopetuslaki 628/1998), Basic Education Decree (Perusopetusasetus 852/1998) and Government decree on General National Objectives and Distribution of Lesson Hours in basic education. In grades 1 to 6, teaching is mostly class teaching and in grades 7 to 9 mostly subject teaching. The Government makes the decision on general national objectives for basic education. The Finnish National Board of Education decides on the objectives and key content of the different subjects and cross-curricular themes,

student counselling and other teaching. The national objectives of education include growth into humanity and into ethical membership of society, the promotion of educational equality and lifelong learning, as well as the necessary knowledge and skills. Education must provide a basis for comprehensive general knowledge and the tools and inspiration for opening up and deepening the individual's worldview. Education must provide aesthetic experiences in various fields of culture and opportunities to develop manual skills and creativity as well as physical skills. Education supports the development of pupils' thinking and communication skills. A school leaving certificate is given to those who have completed the entire syllabus.

After basic education, it is possible to seek a study place in vocational education and training or general upper secondary education. Vocational upper secondary education and training and general upper secondary education are forms of upper secondary education.

### **3.4.2 General upper secondary school and matriculation examination**

According to the General Upper Secondary Schools Act (Lukiolaki 629/1998), students must be supported in growing up to become good, balanced and educated people and members of society as well as to provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills for further studies, the world of work, hobbies and developing an all-round personality. In addition, the education must support the students' prerequisites for lifelong learning and self-development during their lifetime.

Students must be provided with good general knowledge on which to base their further education, civic activities and a good quality of life. Students' knowledge and skills are deepened and they are provided with comprehensive general knowledge about people, society, cultures and the environment. Students are trained to use their information society skills for data acquisition and communication, mastering basic media skills and critically assessing information. Moreover, they are taught cooperation skills, which enable them to work both independently and in groups. Furthermore, the education must provide students with an opportunity to practise varied forms of self-expression and interaction skills, as well as to express themselves both verbally and in writing in both official languages of Finland and in at least one foreign language. With regard to lifelong learning and self-development, education must develop the students' study skills and their ability to evaluate them. Students are supported in recognising their strengths and development needs as learners and in employing the study methods best suited to them. Moreover, they are provided with practise in planning and making their own choices as well as shouldering the responsibility for their own choices.

The education provider draws up the curriculum so that it gives the students the opportunity to make individual study choices. The general upper secondary school syllabus, or a component of it, can be completed in exams organised and evaluated by the education provider, regardless of the way in which the knowledge and skills included in the syllabus have been acquired. Students who have completed the whole syllabus of the general upper secondary school are presented with a school leaving certificate. A general upper secondary school diploma can be completed in art and physical education.

Student assessments aim at guiding the students and encouraging them in their studies as well as developing their self-evaluation skills. Learning and the work done by students must be evaluated comprehensively.

At the end of general upper secondary education, students complete a matriculation examination that establishes whether they have assimilated the knowledge and skills required under the general upper secondary school curriculum and whether they have reached the required maturity. The qualification comprises exams in the mother tongue and literature, the second national language, foreign languages, mathematics and general studies, of which at least four have to be completed.

A student who has successfully passed the matriculation examination is qualified for both polytechnic and university studies. A person who has completed the general upper secondary school syllabus but not the matriculation examination may be accepted as a student in studies leading to a polytechnic degree.

### **3.4.3 Vocational upper secondary education and training**

According to the Vocational Education and Training Act (Laki ammatillisesta koulutuksesta 630/1998) the aim of vocational upper secondary education is to provide students with the knowledge and skills required for attaining vocational skills as well as for independent entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, the aim of the education is to support students in growing up to become good, balanced people and members of society as well as to provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills for further studies, hobbies and developing an all-round personality, as well as to support lifelong learning. When providing vocational education and training, the needs of the world of work are given particular consideration. Education providers must cooperate with the actors in the world of business and industry.

A qualification completed as vocational upper secondary education and training comprises vocational studies supported by on-the-job learning and the studies necessary for the attainment of vocational skills together with studies supplementing it, such as studies in the mother tongue, second national language and foreign languages, mathematics and science, as well as studies in humanities and the social sciences, art and physical education, and health education, in addition to study counselling. Vocational upper secondary qualifications require the attainment of 120 credits.

The Finnish National Board of Education decides on the goals and core contents of the different fields of education and qualifications. The core curricula of vocational upper secondary qualifications are drawn up so that the qualification produces basic competence in the various tasks in the field and the more specialised competence and vocational skills required by the world of work in one sub-field of the qualification. The qualification's core curriculum defines the vocational skill requirements, core content and educational objectives in terms of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences). Moreover, the curriculum defines the key skills for lifelong learning, which refers to, for example, learning and problem-solving skills, interaction and cooperation skills, competence in professional ethics and aesthetics, competence in sustainable development and active citizenship, as well as knowledge of other cultures. The recommendations by the European Parliament and Council,

2005/0221(COD), for the key skills for lifelong learning have been used in defining the key skills for lifelong learning.

The student assessment is used to guide students and encourage them in their studies as well as for developing the students' self-evaluation skills. The learning, working and competence of students must be assessed comprehensively. In education leading to a vocational upper secondary qualification, students' vocational skills must be assessed, in addition to other assessments, on the basis of vocational skills demonstrations conducted in work situations or tasks at the student's workplace, educational institution or other location designated by the education provider. When the student has successfully completed the studies and vocational skills demonstrations included in the qualification, the education provider awards a qualification certificate.

A vocational upper secondary qualification can also be completed as a competence-based qualification that is independent of the manner in which the skills have been acquired. Students can accomplish a competence-based qualification regardless of how the competence necessary for the qualification has been acquired. The qualification committee awards the qualification certificate.

A student who has successfully completed a vocational upper secondary qualification is qualified for both polytechnic and university studies.

#### **3.4.4 Competence-based qualifications**

The Vocational Adult Education Act (Laki ammatillisesta aikuiskoulutuksesta 631/1998) lays down provisions on vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications taken as competence-based qualifications, which can be taken regardless of where the vocational skills have been acquired. In a vocational upper-secondary qualification, students should demonstrate the skills and knowledge that are required to obtain vocational proficiency; in a further vocational qualification, students should demonstrate the vocational proficiency that is required from a professional worker in that particular field; and in a specialist vocational qualification, students should demonstrate mastery of the most demanding work assignments. The qualification committee awards the qualification certificate.

Provisions on the qualifications that may be taken as competence-based qualifications are given by decrees of the Ministry of Education. The Finnish National Board of Education decides on the qualification requirements, which specify the vocational competence required by the qualification, the modules and possible specialisations created by them, as well as the method for demonstrating vocational proficiency and the general criteria for assessment of the qualification. The requirements are prepared in cooperation with representatives of the labour market.

In the qualification requirements for further vocational qualifications, the aim has been to define the vocational competence requirements in such a way that a person with a basic qualification in the field, or who has otherwise acquired corresponding knowledge and skills as well as supplementary and specialised studies and approximately three years of work experience, should be able to pass the further

vocational qualification in question. A small minority of further vocational qualifications are of the type that acceptance onto them takes place in practice directly from the world of work without any basic education. In these qualifications, the vocational competence requirements may be less demanding. The key content areas of these further vocational qualifications are not included in any basic qualification or they are included only partially. The general view is that a specialist vocational qualification requires basic education or corresponding knowledge and skills in the field and approximately five years' work experience. However, the only criterion for being awarded the certificate is that the candidate demonstrates the skills specified in the qualification requirements in the demonstrations.

A person with a further vocational qualification is qualified for polytechnic studies in the corresponding field. Specialist vocational qualifications do not automatically qualify the student for further higher education studies.

According to Government proposal 26/2009 (section 20), a person who has completed a vocational upper secondary qualification, further vocational qualification or a corresponding earlier qualification as referred to in the Vocational Adult Education Act (Laki ammatillisesta aikuiskoulutuksesta 631/1998) may be accepted as a student in studies leading to a polytechnic degree as provided in more detail by decree of the Ministry of Education.

According to Government proposal 7/2009 (section 34), a person who has completed a vocational upper secondary qualification, further vocational qualification or a corresponding earlier qualification as referred to in the Vocational Adult Education Act (Laki ammatillisesta aikuiskoulutuksesta 631/1998) may be accepted as a student in studies leading to a first-cycle higher education degree or both a first-cycle and second-cycle degree.

### 3.4.5 Polytechnic degrees

Provisions on the degrees that can be taken at polytechnics are laid down by the Polytechnics Decree (Valtioneuvoston asetus ammattikorkeakouluista 352/2003).

#### *Polytechnic degree*

The studies leading to a polytechnic degree comprise basic and vocational studies, elective studies, a practical training period and a thesis or final project.

The general aim of the studies leading to a polytechnic degree is to provide the student with: broad overall knowledge and skills with the relevant theoretical background for working as an expert in the field; the knowledge and skills needed for following and advancing developments in the field; the knowledge and skills needed for continuous learning; adequate language and communication skills; and the knowledge and skills required in the field internationally.

The aim of the basic studies is to provide the student with a broad overall picture of the position and significance of the field in question within society, the world of work and internationally, introduce the student to the general theoretical background and communications in the field, and to provide him/her with adequate Finnish and

Swedish language skills, which are required by civil servants and which are necessary for their field; and the written and oral skills in one or two foreign languages, which are required for practising the student's profession and for professional development.

The aim of the professional studies is to introduce the student to the key problem areas and applications as well as their scientific or artistic foundations in the professional field in question in such a way that after graduation the student is capable of independent work in expert duties in the field and as an entrepreneur, as well as able to participate in the development of the work community.

The aim of the practical training is to introduce the student, in a supervised manner, to especially those practical work assignments which are central to professional studies and to the application of these knowledge and skills within working life.

The aim of the thesis or final project is to develop and demonstrate the student's capacity to apply his/her knowledge and skills in a practical expert position related to his/her professional studies.

Persons with applicable first-cycle polytechnic degree are qualified for studies leading to a second-cycle polytechnic degree when, in addition to the qualification, they have at least three years' of work experience in the field in question. In crafts and industrial art, communications and the visual arts, theatre, dance and music, the requirement for work experience may be replaced by a requirement for artistic activities of a corresponding duration. Moreover, persons with an applicable first-cycle polytechnic degree are eligible for studies leading to a second-cycle university degree.

### *Second-cycle polytechnic degree*

The second-cycle polytechnic degree comprises advanced vocational studies, elective studies and a final thesis or final project.

Studies leading to the degree provide the student with broad and advanced knowledge and the skills for developing the professional field and the theoretical skills for working in demanding expert and leadership positions in the field; a profound understanding of the field, its relation to working life and society at large as well as the knowledge and skills needed for following and analysing both theoretical and professional developments in the field; the capacity for life-long learning and the continuous development of one's own expertise; good language and communication skills required in working life; and the knowledge and skills needed to function and communicate in the field internationally.

The aim of advanced professional studies is to provide the student with an opportunity to deepen the application of theory in practice, analytical skills, project management skills, and participation skills in research and development as well as social skills.

The aim of the final thesis or project is to develop and demonstrate the capacity to apply research information and use the chosen methodologies to analyse and solve problems as well as to develop the capacity for independent expert work.

According to Government proposal 7/2009 (section 34), a student can be accepted for studies leading to scientific or artistic postgraduate studies, if he/she has completed a second-cycle polytechnic degree in an applicable field.

### 3.4.6 University degrees

The Government Decree on University Degrees (Valtioneuvoston asetus yliopistojen tutkinnoista 794/2004) lays down provisions on university degrees.

#### *First-cycle university degree*

Studies leading to a first-cycle university degree must provide the student with knowledge of the fundamentals of the major and minor subjects or corresponding study entities or studies included in the degree programme and the prerequisites for following developments in the field; knowledge and skills needed for scientific thinking and the use of scientific methods or knowledge and skills needed for artistic work; knowledge and skills needed for studies leading to a higher university degree and for continuous learning; a capacity for applying the acquired knowledge and skills to work; and adequate language and communication skills.

The education is based on research or artistic activity and professional practices in the field.

The studies leading to the degree may include basic and intermediate studies, language and communication studies, interdisciplinary programmes other studies and work practice for professional development. The degree includes a Bachelor's thesis (6 – 10 credits).

Persons who have completed the first-cycle university degree are qualified for studies leading to a second-cycle university degree. Persons with an applicable first-cycle university degree and at least three years' work experience in the field in question after the completion of the degree are qualified for studies leading to a second-cycle polytechnic degree.

#### *Second-cycle university degree*

Studies leading to the second-cycle university degree must provide the student with good overall knowledge of the major subject or a corresponding entity and conversance with the fundamentals of the minor subject or good knowledge of the advanced studies included in the degree programme; knowledge and skills needed to apply scientific knowledge and scientific methods or knowledge and skills needed for independent and demanding artistic work; knowledge and skills needed for independently operating as an expert and developer of the field; knowledge and skills needed for scientific or artistic postgraduate education; and good language and communication skills.

The education is based on research or artistic activity and professional practices in the field.

The studies leading to the second-cycle university degree may include basic and intermediate studies and advanced studies; language and communication studies; interdisciplinary study programmes other studies, and internship improving expertise. The degree includes a Master's thesis (20 – 40 credits).

Persons who have completed a second-cycle university degree are qualified for studies leading to a scientific or artistic postgraduate degree.

#### *Scientific and artistic postgraduate studies*

The aim of postgraduate education is that the student becomes well-versed in his/her own field of research and its social significance and gains knowledge and skills needed to apply scientific research methods independently and critically and to produce new scientific knowledge within his/her field of research; becomes conversant with the development, basic problems and research methods of his/her own field of research; and gains such knowledge of the general theory of science and of other disciplines relating to his/her own field of research as enables him/her to follow developments in them.

In the field of art and design, the aim of postgraduate education may be, in addition to the above aims that the student gains knowledge and skills for independently conceiving methods of artistic creation or creating products, objects or works which fulfil high artistic demands.

In the fields of fine arts, music, and theatre and dance, the aim of postgraduate education may, in addition to or instead of the above aims, that the student gains knowledge and skills for independently conceiving methods of artistic creation or products or transactions which fulfil high artistic demands.

#### *Doctorate degree*

To be awarded a doctorate, the student must complete the required postgraduate studies; demonstrate independent and critical thinking in the field of research, and write a doctoral dissertation and defend it in public.

In the fields of fine arts, music, art and design, and theatre and dance, a student admitted to postgraduate education may demonstrate in public the knowledge and skills required by the university.

#### *Licentiate degree*

A student admitted to postgraduate education may be awarded the licentiate degree when he/she has completed the part of the postgraduate studies assigned by the university and the specialisation education possibly included in the degree.

The licentiate degree includes a licentiate thesis, in which the student demonstrates good conversance with the field of research and the capability of independently and critically applying scientific research methods.

In the field of music and in the field of theatre and dance, the licentiate degree may include a public demonstration of knowledge and skills, instead a licentiate thesis.

### **3.4.7 Defence administration and the Border Guard qualifications and education**

Regulations guiding education and the development of competence in the Defence Administration sector are divided into three categories: those pertaining to personnel, conscripts and the National Defence University. The Act on the Defence Forces (Laki puolustusvoimista 551/2007) lays down provisions on the training of Defence Forces personnel. The Conscription Act (Asevelvollisuuslaki 1438/2007) concerns performing a person's civic duty, i.e. military service. The Act on Women's Voluntary Military Service (Laki naisten vapaaehtoisesta asepalveluksesta 194/1995) lays down provisions on the training of women voluntarily performing military service. The Act on Voluntary National Defence (Laki vapaaehtoisesta maanpuolustuksesta 556/2007) lays down provisions on voluntary military training guided and supervised by the Defence Forces. Provisions on the training needed for crisis management are provided in the Act on Military Crisis Management (Laki sotilaallisesta kriisinhallinnasta 211/2006). The National Defence University Act (Laki Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulusta 1121/2008) issues provisions on education leading to qualifications in military science as well as on the position and duties of the National Defence University.

The Border Guard Act (Rajavartiolaitaki 578/2005) and the Border Guard Administration Act (Laki rajavartiolaitoksen hallinnosta 577/2005) lay down provisions on the education provided by the Finnish Border Guard.

Military qualifications are a part of the general qualifications system administered by the Ministry of Education and they are included in the Government decree on a higher education qualifications system. The military science qualifications provided by the National Defence College are the following:

- Bachelor of Arts (Military Science), which is a first-cycle university degree
- Master of Arts (Military Science), which is a second-cycle university degree
- General Staff Officer's Degree and Doctor of Arts (Military Science), which are postgraduate degrees.

The provisions of the decree on university degrees apply to the objectives and scope of the military science degrees as well as to the structure and other requirements of the studies.

In the Defence Administration sector there is also a great deal of education falling outside the qualifications system. The aim of the education is to create the competence for ensuring military capacity. The competence required by the capacity is created within the Defence Forces' training system. The Defence Forces' education system comprises education systems of salaried personnel and conscripts.

The education of the Defence Forces' salaried personnel comprises basic, further and continuing education, training relating to job rotation as well as various educational events and briefings. It is possible to participate in professional military studies and continuing education in the Defence Forces.

Individuals being trained for the post of an officer complete, in addition to military science studies, professional military studies and qualifications, through which they can acquire, for example, the qualifications for an airman or a watch-keeping officer.

The Finnish Border Guard relies on the National Defence University for the education of its officers. Because the Defence Forces and the Border Guard do not have the right to award vocational qualifications, the vocational studies are classified as continuing education. The Border Guard provides vocational education in the border security sector for individuals being trained as officers. The continuing education develops the competence of the Defence Forces' and Border Guard's personnel. The vocational education of the border guardsmen in the Finnish Border Guard is the responsibility of the Border and Coast Guard Academy, which provides education stipulated as a competence requirement for a post in the Border Guard (basic border guardsman and coast guardsman education) The Border and Coast Guard Academy is likewise responsible for research undertaken in the sphere of authority of the Border Guard.

The brigade-level units are in charge of developing the expertise needed in the duties of non-commissioned officers. The professional military studies comprise two study modules. Sotilasammattillinen opintokokonaisuus 1 (Military vocational study module 1) is the basic study module. At the basic level, students are expected to work in accordance with the requirements of the work environment and norms of the work community as well as in the manner required under the guidelines, when making choices pertaining to attainment of goals in accordance with their own skills and the objectives jointly set with the employer. Sotilasammattillinen opintokokonaisuus 2 (Military vocational study module 2) is a mid-level study module. At the mid-level, students use their knowledge gained independently and comprehensively from experience and utilise expert information in their work and when training and guiding others. In addition, they carry out their daily duties in accordance with the objectives specified in performance reviews, and these activities are evaluated and documented in accordance with the principles of continuous evaluation. Sotilasammattilliset mestariopinnot (Military master-level studies) are the highest level of studies. At the master level, students are able to control their management and training methods in order to produce the desired effect and to set objectives that are in line with the performance capabilities of the group, and actively steer the group towards attaining the goals. In addition, they plan and evaluate the functioning of the work community. At the master level, students are responsible for steering, coordinating and managing people, issues and resources.

The conscript education system is an overall system comprising the call-up system, and the separate education systems for conscript and reserves. The peacetime units of the Defence Forces and specifically appointed Border Guard administration units train troops for wartime through military service in accordance with the plan. The training of reservists assigned to wartime troops is continued in accordance with the troops' life cycle plans in refresher training, voluntary training and training events commissioned by the National Defence Training Association.

The education systems of the Defence Forces and the Border Guard are developed in tandem with the overall education in society. The aim is that qualifications completed in the Defence Forces and the Border Guard can be used in the general education

system and the knowledge acquired in the general education system is utilised in the Defence Forces and the Border Guard.

### **3.4.8 Prison and probation service qualifications and education**

Provisions on the education for the prison and probation services are issued in the Act on The Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services (Laki Rikosseuraamusalan koulutuskeskuksesta 1316/2006) and the Decree on The Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services (Asetus Rikosseuraamusalan koulutuskeskuksesta 1448/2006). The aim of the Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services (RSKK) is to offer education leading to a qualification and vocational continuing education for the prison and probation services, as well as to conduct research and development in the field.

The vocational qualification in the prison and probation services sector is the Basic Examination in Prison Services, which is the entry-level qualification for the position of prison officer in the Prison Service. The entrance requirement for education leading to the Basic Examination in Prison Services is an upper secondary qualification. The Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice, is responsible for providing the Basic Examination in Prison Services. Other education for personnel in the prison and probation services comprises introductory and further education of personnel who have gained competence through qualifications in the general education system and the bachelor's degree programme in prison and probation services (degree title: Bachelor of Social Services) at Laurea polytechnic, which is part of the qualifications system administered by the education authorities and the implementation of which also includes the participation of the Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services. Provisions issued under the Polytechnics Act apply to the bachelor's degree programme in prison and probation services and the qualification to which it leads.

The Government Decree on the Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services lays down provisions on the Basic Examination in Prison Services. The qualification produces knowledge that supports the goal-oriented and safe enforcement of imprisonment, which respects the human dignity and rights of the prisoners and has an individual and social impact. The aim of the studies leading to the Basic Examination in Prison Services is to provide the student with practical basic knowledge and skills as well as their theoretical grounds for working in supervisory and control duties within the prison services. Moreover, the aim is to provide the student with the prerequisites to follow and promote the development of the prison and probation service sector, an overall understanding of the social position and significance of prison and probation services, the capability to participate in continuing education and requisite communications and language skills.

The Basic Examination in Prison Services consists of 53 study weeks and it comprises basic and vocational studies, training that advances professional skills and a final project. The degree regulations of the Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services set out more detailed provisions on, for example, the qualification and the curriculum.

The content of the education leading to a qualification in prison and probation services and other training is continuously developed to correspond to the competence

requirements in the field, while pedagogically it is developed by following the development of the general education system.

### 3.4.9 Police qualifications and education

Provisions on police education are issued in the Act on Police Training (Laki poliisikoulutuksesta 68/2005) and the Government Degree on Police Training (Valtioneuvoston asetus poliisikoulutuksesta 283/2005) and later amendments. Maintaining and developing the competence of the police administration's personnel and national education and training activities are the responsibility of a special educational institution. The Police College of Finland is responsible for police training recruitment, student selection, diploma and advanced studies, leadership training, further training, and research and development in the police sector. Moreover, it is the Police College's duty to ensure the quality and development of the education and other activities and to periodically participate in external evaluations.

The police qualifications are the Diploma in Police Studies and the Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination. The entrance requirement for education leading to a police qualification is an upper secondary qualification. In the Police College of Finland, it is also possible to take a Bachelor in Police Command degree, which is included in the qualifications system administered by the education authorities and is a polytechnic-level degree for police officers. In addition to the provisions of the Act on Police Training, the provisions of the Polytechnics Act and rules there under are applied, where applicable, to the degree and its related education. People who have successfully completed the Bachelor in Police Command degree are qualified to apply a master's degree programme in the contract universities (the universities of Tampere and Turku)

In addition to education leading to a qualification, the Police College of Finland organises training that advances professional skills and continuing education as well as specialisation studies in the police sector.

#### *Diploma in Police Studies*

The aim of the Diploma in Police Studies is to provide the student with an understanding of the role of the police as the maintainer of the system of government and social order as well as of public order and security. The student is provided with the skills needed to perform his/her duties in surveillance, emergency activities, crime prevention and license administration. He/she will also be aware of the significance of preventive activities in all police activities and he/she will have internalised the objectives and ethical principles of policing activities. Furthermore, he/she will possess the professional skills corresponding to the requirements of the time and capability to develop his/her professional skills and progress in his/her career to become a specialist or supervisor. The aim of the education is to improve the students' general employability, by strengthening, for instance, learning skills, problem-solving skills, interaction and communications skills as well as their ethical knowledge.

The duration of studies for the Diploma in Police Studies is 110 study weeks (165 credits). The Diploma in Police Studies consists of basic studies and vocational studies. The vocational studies include a 6–7.5-month fieldwork period and at the end

of basic studies the student completes a supervised work placement period of about seven months. The Diploma in Police Studies qualifies the student for the post of Senior Constable.

#### *Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination*

The Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination meets working life needs by producing competent and responsible group supervisors who have a thorough knowledge of managing daily police work, such as field commanders, field group leaders and investigation group leaders in the competence areas of general police work management, the management of field operations and management of investigations. The general objective of the Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination is for the student to attain a level of skills and a knowledge base in the competence areas of management work and leadership that can function as a foundation for working as a supervisor in daily policing activities, in various interaction situations and in developing as a supervisor. The competence areas are also taken into account when planning on-the-job learning. The special objective of individual study modules is that the student attains a level of knowledge and a skills base that provides him/her with a foundation for working as a supervisor in police operations as a field commander, field group leader or investigation group leader or vice leader.

Those who have completed the Diploma in Police Studies and worked for at least two years in the profession can apply to the Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination degree programme. The qualification requires the attainment of 45 credits (30 study weeks). The Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination confers eligibility for the posts of Sergeant, Detective Sergeant and Senior Detective.

#### **3.4.10 Qualifications and education for the emergency services and emergency response centre**

Provisions on the qualifications for the emergency services and activities of the emergency response centre have been issued in the Act on the Emergency Services College (Laki Pelastusopistosta 607/2006) and the Government Decree on the Emergency Services College (Valtioneuvoston asetus Pelastusopistosta 658/2006). The aim of the Emergency Services College is to provide basic vocational education and training in emergency services and emergency response centre activities, education leading to a polytechnic degree for emergency services officers, preparatory training for incidents in normal conditions and emergency conditions and, for its part, to promote research and development in the field of emergency services, coordinate the research activities and, where necessary, other applicable activities falling within the college's field of activities. According to the Act on the Emergency Services College, the college also provides vocational further training in emergency services and emergency response centre activities as well as in civilian crisis management.

The qualifications for the emergency services sector and the emergency response centre are Fire Fighter, Emergency Response Centre Operator and Sub-Officer. In addition, education in emergency services is given in polytechnics. A Fire Officer's Training Programme leading to a Bachelor of Engineering degree is arranged in cooperation with Savonia Polytechnic. The provisions of the Polytechnics Act and

rules there under apply to the degree programme leading to the Fire Officers' polytechnic degree.

### *Fire Fighter*

The aim of the Fire Fighter qualification is that the individuals who have completed the qualification have internalised the values of emergency services and health care, have the competence to work in the rescue services and are willing to develop their work and professional skills in a changing and developing operational environment. They know how to plan and implement instructions, guidance and citizens' safety training and can perform fire inspections of residential and similar properties. In addition, they know and are well-trained in the basics of rescue services, are able to operate as members of a rescue unit in accidents and know the principles of managing a rescue unit. They are well-trained in the basics of first aid, are capable of working as basic-level paramedics and as a member of a rescue unit in basic medical duties. In addition, they know the basics of emergency preparedness and general civil defence and the principles of volunteer fire services and are willing to cooperate closely with voluntary and part-time personnel as well as with other stakeholders.

The Fire Fighter qualification requires the attainment of 90 credits and it qualifies students for the posts of Fire Fighter and Fire Fighter-Paramedic. The key study modules in the qualification are extinguishing and rescue services, first aid and accident prevention. The qualification is completed in the Fire Fighter qualification training programme.

### *Sub-Officer*

The aim of the Sub-Officer qualification is that the individuals who have completed the qualification understand the significance of goal-oriented accident prevention in the safety work of the emergency services and know and are well-trained in the various procedures in accident prevention required of sub-officers. In addition, they know how to encourage and motivate staff (in their shift) in accident prevention and are willing to develop their own competence in accident prevention over the course of their future career. They know how to plan and manage the rescue unit and rescue team activities in accidents and are willing to develop their own competence as managers of rescue activities. They are also capable of working as the head (responsible officer) of a small fire station and in responsible special duties in the sphere of operations of the emergency services.

The Sub-Officer qualification requires the attainment of 60 credits. The qualification is an immediate supervisor qualification which qualifies the holder for the posts of sub-officers in fire and rescue departments. The priority areas of the qualification are personnel management, the management of emergency services and accident prevention. The key study modules in the Sub-Officer qualification include accident prevention, the management of emergency services, civil defence, and studies relating to the final thesis.

### *Emergency Response Centre (ERC) Operator*

The aim of the ERC Operator qualification is that the individuals are aware of the values and legal provisions guiding and governing the emergency response centre, emergency services, police, social and health care authorities. They have a thorough knowledge of the characteristics and related risk assessments of assignments undertaken by the emergency services, police, social and health care authorities on the basis of information on the events and are capable of giving consideration to the measures relating to occupational health and safety and joint operations of the above-mentioned authorities. They are well-trained in the use of equipment required by the work of an emergency response centre operator, the requisite theoretical and ethical background and the applications required for performing the work. They are also capable of encountering people in crisis situations and understand the importance of psychiatric care during and after a crisis.

The ERC Operator qualification requires the attainment of 90 credits. The qualification qualifies the holder for the post of emergency response centre operator. The education is jointly organised by the Emergency Services College and the Police College of Finland. The aim is to train students in the comprehensive handling of emergency calls from receiving a call to instructing the client. The studies include a great deal of training in the college's simulator, and a practical training period (9 ECTS) in an emergency response centre

### **3.5 Higher education qualifications framework**

A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area has been created as a part of the Bologna Process. In accordance with the communiqué of the 2003 Berlin conference of the ministers in charge of higher education, the aim should be to describe qualifications in terms of their workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. The 2005 ministerial conference in Bergen approved the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, which is a framework for the entire European Higher Education Area. The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area comprises three cycles which describe in general terms the learning outcomes required by the qualifications in each cycle.

In 2005, a Ministry of Education committee presented a proposal for a higher education qualifications framework (Reports of the Ministry Education, 2005:4). The aim of the framework is to describe Finnish higher education qualifications in a uniform, understandable and comparable manner. In the higher education qualifications framework, Finnish higher education qualifications are described by criteria agreed upon through European cooperation: the workload, level of the qualifications and general learning outcomes determined for them, eligibility for further studies and professional competence. The starting level of each qualification is also specified. In the framework, the higher education qualifications are divided into first, second and third cycle qualifications. The first-cycle degrees include the bachelor's degree and polytechnic degree. The second-cycle degrees include the master's degree and the polytechnic master's degree. The third-cycle qualification is the doctoral degree, which may include a licentiate degree.

The comments received on the committee's proposal considered the proposal to be worthwhile for the most part. Apart from a few exceptions, the description of the learning outcomes was commented on only in general terms. The majority of higher education institutions considered a general description as desirable, while other, on the other hand, wanted a more detailed national description to facilitate their own development work. No decision on the higher education qualifications framework has been made on the basis of the committee's proposals. The descriptions of learning outcomes contained in the higher education qualifications framework have been taken into account in the proposal for the national framework for qualifications and other learning.

## **4 National qualifications framework in other European countries**

### **4.1 Overview**

Most European Union Member States have decided to draw up or further develop their national qualifications frameworks to take into consideration the EQF and its requirements. The fact that the work to draw up national frameworks has commenced in many countries demonstrates that increasing the transparency and comparability of qualifications is needed at all levels (the European Union, national and education providers) and that the basic principles of the EQF have been widely accepted. However, it is only in the next few years that information will become available, for example, on which basis the national frameworks have been drawn up and the extent to which learning outcomes feature in them.

The Commission's review of July 2008 emphasises that the situation with regard to national frameworks is in a state of flux. In the review, it is interesting to note that almost all the countries participating in the Education and Training 2010 work programme have announced that they are preparing a qualifications framework covering the whole education system. Many countries (including Belgium, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic) have announced that they are preparing an eight-level framework. It is not clear from all the responses whether the intention is to draw up several or just one general framework. Greece clearly states that it has a higher education qualifications framework in place but that framework covering the entire education system is only just being planned.

According to the Commission's report published in May 2009, frameworks are being planned in countries outside the European Union's Member States. Almost all (30 out of 32) the countries participating in the Education and Training 2010 work programme are preparing a national framework covering all the educational sectors. Four of the countries participating in the Education and Training 2010 work programme have a comprehensive national framework in place (Ireland, France, Malta and Great Britain). The preparation of the framework in various European countries has proceeded at different speeds. The majority of countries are at the orientation or planning phase of the framework. For example, Holland is still considering the benefits and problems of a comprehensive framework. Austria and Germany are approaching the testing phase and the Czech Republic the implementation phase.

In addition to European countries, at least South Africa, Australia, Malaysia and New Zealand have qualifications frameworks. However, their foundations differ from those

of European countries. The South African framework was drawn up to ease the transition of the educational system and its key aim was to increase the number of students in higher education. In Australia, the main principle in the preparation of the national framework has been the effort by educationally independent areas and national level representatives to achieve coherence and clarity in the education system.

## 4.2 National frameworks in Ireland, Scotland and England

Qualifications frameworks have been in use for longest in Ireland, Scotland and England. These countries essentially differ from continental Europe in that they do not have as comprehensive legislation on the provision of education and qualifications as most countries in continental Europe. In Ireland, Scotland and England, the qualifications framework, and for the most part the qualifications structure, is based on long-term cooperation and agreements between various actors. Because qualifications frameworks have been in use for several years in these countries, their basic premises differ from frameworks based on the EQF that are currently being prepared.

In England, the national qualifications and credit framework has eight levels preceded by the so-called entry level. Higher education qualifications have their own framework. The frameworks are used mostly for comparing different education and training, but the granting of qualifications is also largely regulated through them. Further information on the British frameworks is available at [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk).

The Scottish qualifications framework, spanning the whole spectrum of the education system, has 12 levels. The differences between the levels are based on the following factors: the complexity and depth of knowledge and understanding; eligibility for the associated academic, vocational or professional practice; the degree of integration, independence and creativity required; the range and sophistication of practical applications; and the role(s) in relation to other learners/workers in carrying out tasks. The level descriptors are based on five areas: knowledge and understanding (mainly subject-based); practice (applied knowledge and understanding); generic cognitive skills (e.g. evaluation, critical analysis); communication, numeracy and IT skills; and autonomy, accountability and working with others. In addition to the level, the Scottish qualifications framework presents qualifications in terms of credits based on the workload required. Further information on the Scottish qualifications framework is available at [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk).

The Irish qualifications framework, introduced in 2003, has ten levels. Each level is based on nationally agreed standards on knowledge, skills and competences, which have been described in terms of learning outcomes. The process-like quality of the implementation of qualifications frameworks is well-demonstrated by the information given to the Commission by Ireland in July 2008, according to which the foundations for the implementation of the framework in the field of education were laid in 2004 and for vocational education in 2006. The implementation is still underway. With regard to higher education qualifications, Ireland has already participated in the national and European qualifications frameworks self-certification process as a part of the Bologna Process. Further information on the Irish qualifications framework is available at [www.nqai.ie](http://www.nqai.ie).

Ireland and England will soon publish their own national reports, drawn up in cooperation with international experts, on how the national qualifications and framework levels are placed within the EQF.

#### **4.3 National frameworks of other Nordic countries**

A higher education qualifications framework was approved in Iceland in 2007. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with educational institutions, teachers and employment representatives, is currently preparing a framework which would cover upper secondary level education and which would be incorporated into the higher education qualifications framework. Educational legislation has been reformed for this purpose.

Norway plans to place its higher education qualifications in a higher education qualifications framework drawn up within the Bologna Process. In addition, decisions have been made to develop qualifications frameworks relating to vocational upper secondary and higher education levels. No decisions have been made thus far on general upper secondary education. Even though a framework covering both the entire education and qualifications system is considered a possibility, no decisions on preparing one have been made.

Sweden is preparing for the implementation of the EQF. The main principle is currently that the preparation is based on the official education system, but it is possible that other qualifications or other courses creating competence will be included in the framework.

A proposal for a national qualifications framework was drawn up in Denmark in March 2009. According to the proposal, the framework will have eight levels. The decisions on which Danish qualifications are to be placed in which level have not been made except with respect to higher education qualifications. The Danish higher education qualifications are placed at levels 5 to 8. Denmark is planning to complete the placement of qualifications and levels in the EQF by October 2010. The final decision on approving the framework will be done by the ministries responsible for the Danish qualifications.

### **5 National qualifications framework**

#### **5.1 Basic principles and purpose of the national framework**

The Finnish national framework is based on the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. In addition, the preparation of the framework is guided by the aim stated in the Development Plan for Education and Research for 2007–2012 to improve the functioning and clarity of the Finnish qualifications system by preparing a national framework for qualifications and other learning by 2010.

In accordance with its task, the Committee's basic principle is that in the first phase the national framework will include only the qualifications defined in the legislation of the educational and other administrative sectors. In addition, specific competences of graduates with higher education qualifications in educational and other

administrative sectors are to be placed in the framework. The specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees refer to a broad range of competences that are necessary from the perspective of working life and which have been completed in a polytechnic or university after the completion of a higher education qualification. The specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees are discussed in more detail in chapter 9.1.1. The national framework will not specifically include components of qualifications, continuing education or other education not leading to a qualification. Neither does the national framework include procedures and requirements through which various authorities grant rights to practise a profession or undertake certain work duties.

In the Committee's view, the aim of the national framework is:

- to increase national and international transparency and the comparability of qualifications
- to improve the functioning and clarity of the qualifications system
- to facilitate mobility within the education system
- to unify and increase recognition of prior learning
- to specify the principle of lifelong learning and emphasise a perspective focusing on a learning orientation and learning outcomes

The preparation of the national framework also has indirect benefits, the most important of which are:

- an increasing focus on competence and learning outcomes,
- more attention is being paid to the quality of qualifications,
- working life requirements are being given greater consideration in the development of qualifications requirements,
- the coherence of concepts used in qualifications and when describing them is increasing.

The national framework is a description of Finnish qualifications and specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees. The aim of the framework is to describe Finnish qualifications and the specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees in a coherent, understandable and comparable manner, while simultaneously harmonising the terminology used. The framework promotes the description of Finnish qualifications and their learning outcomes. The national framework increases and facilitates international mobility from Finland abroad and vice versa.

The national framework defines the relationships between qualifications and the specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees. This will improve the clarity of the qualifications system and makes mobility within the education system easier. Defining the relationship between qualifications and the specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees will promote entry into further and supplementary education and improve the recognition of prior learning when progressing within the qualifications system.

The national framework describes the learning outcomes provided/required by Finnish qualifications through criteria agreed upon through European cooperation: as

knowledge, skills and competences. To keep the descriptions succinct and clear, the various dimensions of learning outcomes are not separated in the descriptions. The key aim of the national framework is to focus greater attention on the learning outcomes provided/required by the qualifications. A further aim of the framework is to assist educational institutions and higher education institutions to focus more on competence targets and learning outcomes when developing their curricula and educational and learning programmes. Moreover, clear and understandable descriptions of learning outcomes will improve the quality of education and the transparency and understandability of the education system in Finland. The objectives set for qualifications and specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees and their attainment act as the basic principle in evaluating quality.

The aim is that the framework harmonises and promotes the recognition of prior learning and thus supports lifelong learning.

## **5.2 Proposal for a national framework and the description of its levels**

The Committee proposes that the Finnish national framework is based on the European Qualifications Framework and therefore the national framework will also have eight levels. The solution aims at transparent European comparability and the attainment of the objective stated in the Development Plan for Education and Research of improving the clarity of the Finnish qualifications system.

The descriptors of the EQF levels have been compared with the learning outcomes provided/required by Finnish qualifications. Learning outcomes corresponding to the descriptors of the EQF levels is also provided by Finnish qualifications. However, the Committee decided that the descriptors of the EQF levels must be clarified in the national framework. Despite this further clarification, the descriptors in the national framework are quite general and the aim is to further specify them by field in core curricula and qualification requirements or other similar documents.

The level descriptors in the national framework do not distinguish between the different dimensions of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence). The word ‘learning outcomes’, in the sense defined by the Committee is used as the heading for the level description. In cases where there are no applicable qualifications in Finland for some EQF level, this level is described in the national framework under the same criteria as all the other levels, but at least in the first phase of the framework development work, no qualifications or other extensive competence area will be placed at the level.

The Committee’s proposal for the description of the national framework levels is presented in table 1 in chapter 5.4. The level descriptors, grouped according to the various dimensions of learning outcomes and which the Committee has used as support when drawing up final descriptors, are included in Appendix 1.

## **5.3 Principles of placing qualifications in the national framework**

The Committee proposes that the qualifications defined in the legislation of the educational administration and other administrative sectors be placed in the national framework on the basis of learning outcomes provided/required by the qualification in

question so that even if a qualification includes elements from various requirement levels of the framework, the qualification is placed at the level which suits it the best. Different dimensions of learning outcomes may be emphasised in qualifications placed at the same level. The qualifications will be placed in the framework primarily so that the qualifications included in the same type of qualification are also at the same level in the national framework.

#### *Polytechnic and university degrees*

With regard to polytechnic and university degrees, the Committee made its decision earlier on the basis of what had been agreed at European and national levels. Individual Finnish higher education qualifications and their requirement levels were not assessed individually by the Committee; instead Finnish higher education qualifications have been placed in the qualifications framework according to the cycle thinking established under the Bologna Process: the first cycle includes Bachelor degrees taken in polytechnics and universities, which are placed at level 6 of the framework. The second cycle includes Master degrees taken in polytechnics and universities, which are placed at level 7 of the framework. The third cycle includes scientific and artistic postgraduate qualifications, such as licentiate and doctoral degrees, which are placed at level 8 of the framework. A corresponding proposal was made in the Ministry of Education's committee proposal for a Finnish higher education qualifications framework (Ministry of Education reports 4/2005). There were no objections to the placement of qualifications in the aforementioned cycles in the comments to the proposal. The placement corresponds to the formal competence provided by the degree in question (464/1998).

#### *Vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications*

Finnish vocational qualifications are based on functional modules of working life and competences required in labour market. As a general rule vocational qualifications form a continuum in various vocational sectors. Vocational upper secondary qualifications primarily serve as entry level qualifications for the labour market, sector or profession and demonstrate mastery of the basic competence in the field. Vocational upper secondary qualifications produce basic competence for various tasks in the field and a more specialised competence and the vocational skills required by the world of work in one sub-field of the qualification. In addition to individuals entering the world of work, vocational upper secondary qualifications are suitable for those changing professions. As a general rule, further vocational qualifications demand more advanced competence, but due to the needs of working life, some further vocational qualifications are also entry level qualifications to the field or profession. Specialist vocational qualifications require special expertise in the field.

The field-specific experts from the National Board of Education have tentatively assessed the placement of vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications at the requirement levels of the national framework for qualifications and other competence prepared by the Committee. The experts regarded the placement as very challenging because vocational qualifications include various training programmes/fields of competence as well as extremely varying components of qualifications. In the view of the National

Board of Education's experts, vocational upper secondary qualifications and further vocational qualifications are primarily at level 4 and specialist vocational qualifications at level 5.

Vocational qualifications are developed in cooperation with working life representatives. Over the last few years, vocational skills requirements in the world of work have increased such that the three-year vocational upper secondary qualifications now include comprehensive field-specific competence and specialised competence in one sub-field of the qualification. This means that almost everyone completing a vocational upper secondary qualification must be well-trained in comprehensive basic knowledge in the field and must be able to solve special problems in their own area of expertise. Correspondingly, they must be able to independently perform duties in their field also in changing circumstances. Moreover, they must be able to monitor routine duties performed by assisting personnel. It is essential for the Finnish working culture that professionals must know how to act and that they are also free to act without continuous guidance from above.

Further vocational qualifications demonstrate the professional skills required from a professional, which either correspond to a vocational upper secondary qualification or, more often, is more advanced competence. However, in the view of National Board of Education's experts, the differences between the requirements for vocational upper secondary qualifications and further vocational qualifications are not sufficient to warrant the placement of vocational upper secondary qualifications and further vocational qualifications at different levels in the framework. Their placement is comparable to licentiate and doctoral degrees, which have been placed at the same requirement level despite differences in competence requirements.

According to the experts, a few vocational upper secondary qualifications and further vocational qualifications differ in their competence requirement when compared with other qualifications in the same qualification type, warranting their placement in a level lower or higher than level 4. There are only a few vocational qualifications falling in level 3 or between levels 3 and 4. These are older qualifications developed several years ago, the core curricula of which are waiting to be reformed. Qualifications at the level or falling between levels 3 and 4 include the Vocational Qualification in Data Processing, Vocational Qualification in Fishery, Further Qualification for Gunsmiths and Further Qualification for Glassblowers.

The vocational upper secondary qualification at level 5 is the Vocational Qualification in Air Traffic Control and the further vocational qualification at level 5 is the Further Qualification in the Construction Industry. The entrance requirement for the Vocational Qualification in Air Traffic Control is a prior upper secondary qualification. The qualification requires a great deal of independence and responsibility. Individuals with this qualification need to be able to manage and apply comprehensive theoretical knowledge in a changing work environment and problem situations, often in an international working environment, and they must continuously assess and develop their competence. The Further Qualification in the Construction Industry emphasises supervising capabilities, that is to say the ability to manage issues and people. In addition, the qualification requires extensive theoretical knowledge and practical skills in unpredictable environments.

As a general rule, the specialist vocational qualifications are placed at level 5. There are some qualifications among the current specialist vocational qualifications that are older and in need of updating in near future. The vocational skills requirements of these qualifications do not necessarily reach the level 5 but fall between levels 4 and 5. A few specialist vocational qualifications surpass the competence requirements of level 5. According to the National Board of Education's evaluation, specialist vocational qualifications placed at level 6 include the Specialist Vocational Qualification in Management, Specialist Vocational Qualification in Psychiatric Care and Specialist Vocational Qualification for Construction Site Managers. Level 6 includes especially those specialist vocational qualifications that have vocational skills requirements which emphasise great responsibility, demanding management and entrepreneurship or the use of extensive theoretical knowledge and practical skills in unpredictable environments or working in an international operating environment.

With regard to further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications, the preliminary assessment of the National Board of Education's experts supports the assessment of the vocational qualifications taskforce appointed by the Ministry of Education. In its report (Ministry of Education reports 2005:28), the taskforce assesses the current state of the vocational qualifications system. The data collected by the taskforce demonstrates that the content of approximately one-third of the current further vocational qualifications are positioned in the type of sub-fields in working life that are not comprehensively covered by any vocational upper secondary qualification. These further vocational qualifications function as entry level qualifications for a field or profession, but are usually more focused with regard to their content. It would appear that the requirement level of these further vocational qualifications is also lower than that of other further vocational qualifications. According to the data collected by the taskforce, the key content of approximately one-fourth of the specialist vocational qualifications are positioned in the type of sub-fields of working life which not are comprehensively covered by any vocational upper secondary qualification. However, there would seem to be no difference in the average requirement level of these qualifications when compared with other specialist vocational qualifications.

On the basis of the preliminary requirement assessment for vocational qualifications and after having compared alternative ways to place vocational qualifications in the national framework (Appendix 2), the Committee proposes that the current vocational qualifications (= vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications) are placed in the national framework in such a way that qualifications belonging to the same qualification type are placed at the same level in the national framework. Vocational upper secondary qualifications and further vocational qualifications are placed at level 4 and specialist vocational qualifications at level 5. However, in special cases, individual vocational qualifications may be placed at one level higher than the basic qualification, if the requirement level of the qualification clearly differs from other qualifications of the same type. At the moment, the requirement level of vocational qualifications with a lower level than the general requirement level of the qualification type is to be defined to correspond to the increased professional skills requirements and the requirement level of the qualification type when reforming the core curricula of the qualifications in question. At the moment, there is an ongoing review of the core curriculum of vocational upper secondary qualifications and competence-based qualifications by the

National Board of Education. The core curricula of all vocational upper secondary qualifications are to be reviewed so that new core curricula (qualification requirements) are in use by 2010 at the latest.

In accordance with the Development Plan for Education and Research for 2007–2012, the Ministry of Education is developing qualifications in vocational education and training. When developing vocational qualifications and their core curricula, all the qualifications in a certain educational or vocational field are examined as a whole so that they correspond to the field-specific competence needs in an efficient and coherent manner. The Ministry of Education has launched a development project on the vocational qualifications system and appointed a steering group for the project in March 2009. The operational management of the project is the responsibility of the National Board of Education, which will be implemented in accordance with the policy decisions made by the steering group.

The aim of the project is:

1. to determine the field-specific needs to increase the flexibility of the vocational qualifications system by increasing the number of elective components in the qualifications by combining qualifications into larger vocational-specific qualifications that cross vocational boundaries and by increasing students' opportunities to choose units for their qualifications from other qualifications of the same or other qualification types.
2. to assess by field, in conjunction with the above, whether the vocational upper secondary, further vocational and specialist vocational qualifications and the qualification requirements and qualifications framework levels defined comprise a set of skills that correspond to the current needs of the field, and if not, how they should be changed.
3. to present proposals on the development needs of the qualification committee system and the resources required by the proposals.
4. to present proposals on the development needs for the recruitment and assessment competence of assessors of qualifications achieved and the resources required by the proposals.

The implementation of the project must take into account the progress of the overall reform of vocational adult education and the preparation of the national qualifications framework.

Proposals affecting the 2010 Government budget must be made by 6 April 2009. Other surveys and the final report of the project must be completed by 28 February 2010.

The Committee proposes that an assessment of those vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications which differ from the other qualifications of their type with regard to their requirement level is carried out in conjunction with the project described above. On the basis of this assessment, a decision will be made on what kinds of changes it will be appropriate to make to the qualifications system and individual qualifications so that the qualifications would form a clear entity.

In the Committee's view, it is essential that the determination of the qualification's requirement level is based on the competence targets/vocational skills requirements of the qualification. When determining the requirement level, it is important to take into account the various dimensions of competence so that the qualification fulfils the requirement level description in the national framework in full, not merely with regard to one dimension of competence. The Committee considers it necessary that, in conjunction with the development project described above, an assessment is made of an alternative in which the national qualifications system is more unambiguous with regard to the qualifications' requirement levels so that qualifications belonging to the same qualifications type are placed at the same level. At the same time, it would be appropriate to also determine whether the specialist vocational qualifications at level 6 are more like specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees. After the assessment and possible changes, the placement of vocational qualifications within the requirement levels of the national framework will be clarified.

#### *Matriculation examination and general upper secondary school syllabus*

In the Committee's view, it is natural to place the matriculation examination and the general upper secondary school syllabus at the same requirement level with the majority of vocational upper secondary qualifications (level 4) because they require competence that makes the students eligible for higher education. The learning outcomes provided/required by the vocational upper secondary qualifications, the matriculation examination and general upper secondary school syllabus is at the same level even though the knowledge, skills and competence receive different emphasis in the qualifications.

#### *Basic education syllabus*

The completion of basic education is not regarded a qualification in Finland. Pupils complete the basic education syllabus and a basic education certificate is awarded to those who have successfully completed the entire syllabus. After basic education, it is possible to seek a study place in vocational education and training or general upper secondary school. Basic education provides the basis for education leading to a qualification, so the Committee considers it important that the competence required by it is included in the national framework. In the Committee's view, learning outcomes produced by the basic education syllabus is at requirement level 2, which is the level preceding those of current vocational qualifications, matriculation examination and general upper secondary school syllabus.

#### *Defence administration and Border Guard qualifications and training*

Military qualifications are a part of the general qualifications system administered by the education authorities, so they are placed in the framework in the same way as corresponding university degrees: Bachelor of Military Science (level 6), Master of Military Science (level 7), General Staff Officer's Degree (level 8) and Doctor of Military Science (level 8).

In the Committee's view, the competence requirements of the military vocational study modules 1 and 2 meant for salaried personnel of the Defence Forces and the basic education for border guards and coastguards meant for Border Guard personnel

correspond to further vocational qualifications and are consequently placed at requirement level 4 of the national framework. The competence requirements of military master-level studies correspond to the requirements of specialist vocational qualifications, so they are placed at level 5 of the national framework.

#### *Prison and probation service qualifications*

The bachelor's degree programme in prison and probation services (Bachelor of Social Services) is part of the general qualifications system, so it is placed in the framework in the same way as corresponding polytechnic degrees.

The Basic Examination in Prison Services requires prior upper secondary level education. Sixty credits from the qualification count towards a polytechnic qualification in prison and probation services, so the requirement level of the qualification can be seen as surpassing that of the general upper secondary qualification and vocational upper secondary qualification and be considered as corresponding to that of a polytechnic degree. In the Committee's view, the competence requirements and professional skills requirements of the qualification correspond to further vocational qualifications (vocational skills required from a professional) but does not attain the requirement level of a specialist vocational qualification, so it is natural to place it at the same national framework level as further vocational qualifications (level 4).

#### *Police qualifications*

The Bachelor of Police Command degree is part of the general qualifications system, so it is placed in the framework in the same way as corresponding polytechnic degrees (level 6).

The Diploma in Police Studies and Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination require prior upper secondary level education. In the Committee's view, the Diploma in Police Studies corresponds to further vocational qualifications with regard to its competence requirements, so it is placed in the same national framework level (level 4). The competence targets of the Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination emphasise the ability to work as a supervisor and manage field activities and an investigation team in daily police operations. In the Committee's view, the qualification likewise corresponds with regard to its competence requirements to specialist vocational qualifications, so it is placed at level 5 of the national framework.

#### *Emergency services and emergency response centre qualifications*

The Fire Officer's Training Programme leading to a Bachelor of Engineering degree is part of the general qualifications system, so it is placed in the framework in the same way as corresponding polytechnic degrees (level 6).

A person who has completed the general upper secondary school syllabus, the matriculation examination, vocational upper secondary qualification or a further vocational qualification is eligible for the Fire Fighter and Emergency Response Centre (ERC) Operator Examinations. In the Committee's view, the competence requirements of the Fire Fighter and ERC Operator Examinations correspond to

vocational upper secondary qualifications or further vocational qualifications. Therefore, it is natural to place them at level 4 of the national framework.

The competence requirements of the Sub-Officer Examination emphasise extensive knowledge and skills in safety work and accident prevention and the ability to plan and manage the activities of a rescue unit and rescue team often in unpredictable accident situations, as well as the ability to work as an immediate supervisor. Therefore, the competence requirements of the qualification correspond to those of specialist vocational qualifications and consequently the qualification should be placed at level 5 of the national framework.

#### *Qualifications removed from the qualifications system*

Qualifications that have been removed from the qualifications system are not placed in the framework. However, because there are still many individuals in the labour market and education system both in Finland and abroad who have completed a qualification or syllabus which has been removed from the qualifications system, the Committee comments on these qualifications and syllabuses later in chapter 5.5 of its report.

### **5.4 Proposal for placement of qualifications in the national framework**

The Committee proposes that the qualifications, syllabuses and specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees defined in the legislation of the educational administration and other administrative sectors are placed in the national framework in the following manner, as presented in the table 1:

**Table 1** The requirement levels for the Finnish national framework and the positioning of Finnish qualifications in the framework

NB: Only the word ‘qualification’ is used in the table and column headings but the column lists those qualification types, syllabuses, specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees and, where necessary, also individual qualifications, which the Committee proposes to be placed at the requirement level in question.

<b>National requirement level</b>	<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	<p>Possesses the basic knowledge and skills which are needed for studying and working in a clear operating environment under direct supervision.</p> <p>Takes responsibility for learning under supervision. Is capable of communicating verbally and responds to simple written communication in his/her mother tongue.</p>	
<b>Level 2</b>	<p>Possesses the basic knowledge and cognitive and practical basic skills in his/her field that are needed to be able to utilise this knowledge in performing duties</p>	Basic education syllabus

	<p>and solving routine problems. Follows simple rules and uses normal equipment and tools in a supervised operating environment demanding some independent action.</p> <p>Shoulders responsibility and shows initiative.</p> <p>Takes responsibility for learning. Knows how to communicate verbally and produce normal text. Basic language skills in at least one official language and one foreign language.</p>	
<b>Level 3</b>	<p>Possesses facts, principles, processes and general concepts and certain cognitive and practical skills in his/her field, which are needed for performing the duties and problem-solving. Chooses and applies basic methods, tools, materials and information. Tailors his/her action to the circumstances and the operating environment when solving problems.</p> <p>Takes responsibility for completing his/her duties and works safely within a work community. Possesses the capability to work in an entrepreneurial manner in someone else's service. Evaluates his/her own competence and actions pertaining to work or studies.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate diversely and interactively in various situations and to produce varied texts. Possesses the capability to communicate at an international level and interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.</p>	
<b>Level 4</b>	<p>Possesses knowledge of the facts and theory in extensive contexts and certain cognitive and practical skills in his/her field and is capable of utilising this knowledge and skills when</p>	<p>Upper secondary school syllabus and matriculation examination</p> <p>Vocational upper secondary qualifications</p>

	<p>solving special problems in his/her field. Works independently in generally predictable but possibly changing operating environments.</p> <p>Takes responsibility for completing his/her duties and works safely and responsibly within a work community. Possesses the capability for financial, productive and systematic activities and to organise work. Possesses the capability to oversee routine tasks performed by others. Possesses the capability to work in an entrepreneurial manner in someone else's service or as an independent entrepreneur. Evaluates his/her competence and improves actions relating work or studies. Develops him/herself and his/her work.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate diversely and interactively in various situations and to produce varied and also field-specific texts. Can communicate at an international level and interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.</p>	<p>Further vocational qualifications</p> <p>Basic Qualification in Prison Services</p> <p>Certificate in Police Studies</p> <p>Fire Fighter Qualification</p> <p>Emergency Response Centre Operator Qualification</p>
<p><b>Level 5</b></p>	<p>Possesses comprehensive and/or specialised knowledge of the facts and theory and cognitive and practical skills in his/her field and is capable of utilising this knowledge and skills in a creative manner when solving special problems in his/her field. Understands the boundaries of knowledge in different fields.</p> <p>Possesses the capability to manage and oversee operating environments that change unpredictably. Possesses the capability to oversee tasks performed by others. Possesses good capability to work as an independent entrepreneur in the field. Evaluates and develops</p>	<p>Specialist vocational qualifications</p> <p>Vocational Qualification in Air Traffic Control</p> <p>Further Qualification in the Construction Industry</p> <p>Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination</p> <p>Sub-Officer Qualification (rescue services)</p>

	<p>his/her as well as others' performance and work.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate verbally and in writing both to audiences in the field and outside it. Possesses the capability to communicate at an international level and interact in his/her field in one official language and at least one foreign language.</p>	
<p><b>Level 6</b></p>	<p>Possesses comprehensive and advanced knowledge of his/her field, including the critical understanding of theories, key concepts, methods and principles. Understands the extent and borders of professional duties and/or disciplines. Possesses advanced skills, demonstrating mastery of the issues, the capability to apply knowledge and creative solutions, which are required in a specialised professional, scientific or artistic field to solve complex or unpredictable problems.</p> <p>Possesses the capability to manage complex professional activities or projects and the capability to work independently in expert duties in the field. Possesses the capability to make decisions in unpredictable operating environment. Possesses the basic prerequisites for working as an independent entrepreneur in the field. Possesses the capability to take responsibility for the evaluation and development of not only his/her competence but also that other individuals and groups.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate adequately verbally and in writing both to audiences in the field and outside it. Possesses the capability to communicate at an international level and to interact in one official</p>	<p>Bachelor degrees in polytechnics</p> <p>Bachelor degrees in universities</p> <p>Specific competences of graduates with Bachelor degree</p> <p>Some specialist vocational qualifications</p>

	language and at least one foreign language.	
<b>Level 7</b>	<p>Understands comprehensive and highly specialised concepts, methods and knowledge corresponding to the special competence in his/her field, which are used as the basis for independent thought and/or research. Understands questions pertaining to the field and interfaces between different fields and evaluates them and new knowledge critically. Possesses the capability to solve demanding problems in research and innovation activities, where new methods and procedures are developed and knowledge from various fields is applied and combined.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for independent work in demanding expert duties in the field or as an entrepreneur. Possesses the capability to manage and develop complex, unpredictable and new strategic approaches. Possesses the capability to manage work and/or people. Possesses the capability to evaluate the activities of individuals or groups. Possesses the capability to accumulate knowledge and practices in his/her field and/or take responsibility for the development of others.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate verbally and in writing both to audiences in the field and outside it. Possesses the capability to communicate at an advanced international level and to interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.</p>	<p>Master degrees in polytechnics</p> <p>Master degrees in universities</p> <p>Specific competences of graduates with Master degrees</p>
<b>Level 8</b>	Understands extensive knowledge areas and contexts. Possesses the most advanced and/or specialised and most profound knowledge, skills and/or theories, which are placed at the most advanced and/or specialised level of the	<p>Licentiate degrees except for the Licentiate of Veterinary Medicine, Licentiate of Dentistry and Licentiate of Medicine.</p> <p>Doctorates</p>

	<p>field and interface between different fields. Possesses the capability to apply knowledge in a creative way. Possesses the capability to create new knowledge in accordance with good scientific practise. Possesses the capability for independent and reliable scientific and professional research. Possesses the capability to develop vocational fields of activity and/or disciplines. Possesses the capability to develop and apply new ideas, theories, approaches or processes in the most demanding of operating of environments.</p> <p>Possesses the capability to work independently in the most demanding expert duties in the field or as an entrepreneur. Possesses the capability to manage work and/or people. Possesses the capability to come up with syntheses and critical evaluation as needed for solving complex problems in research and/or innovation activities, as well as for extending and redefining knowledge or professional practices. Possesses the capability to accumulate knowledge and practices in his/her field and/or take responsibility for the development of others.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate verbally and in writing to a good level with both the scientific community and the general public on issues pertaining to his/her own research area or discipline and/or professional field. Possesses the capability to communicate at an advanced international level and to interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.</p>	<p>Specialist Degree in Medicine Specialist Degree in Dentistry Specialist Degree in Veterinary Medicine</p> <p>General Staff Officer's Degree</p>
--	--	--

## 5.5 Qualifications removed from the qualifications system

The determination of the requirement level of the qualifications and syllabuses that have been removed from the qualifications system is difficult because education leading to a given qualification has differed in duration at different times and definitions of their competence targets are difficult to find. Furthermore, the competence targets are not necessarily based on learning outcomes but on the duration of the studies and study subjects. For these reasons, it is difficult to determine the requirement level of qualifications that have been removed from the qualifications system.

Since the eligibility and competence requirements for working in certain professions or duties and the eligibility for further studies have clearly been provided under the pertinent legislation, the Committee does not consider it urgent or even necessary for the future work on the national framework that the requirement levels of qualifications and syllabuses that have been removed from the qualifications system be determined. However, with a view to possible future work, brief descriptions of the key qualifications that have been removed from the qualifications system are presented below.

### *Earlier general education preceding the upper secondary level*

The primary school was originally a four-year, later six-year, educational institution. According to the Decree on Primary Schools (Kansakouluasetus 1866), the subjects studied at primary schools were religion, the mother tongue and writing, geography, history, arithmetic and morphology, natural history, drawing, singing, gymnastics and crafts. After completing the fourth grade of the primary school, it was possible to apply for the five-year lower secondary school, which in turn made pupils eligible for the three-year general upper secondary school. Together, the lower and general upper secondary school formed the secondary school system, on which provisions were laid down in the School Regulations (Koulujärjestys 1872).

The Primary Schools Act (Kansakoululaki 1958) added two more compulsory further study years to the end of the six-year primary school, which were known by the name 'kansalaiskoulu', civic school. The civic school included compulsory general knowledge subjects although the emphasis was on practical courses aiming at vocational skills. In each region of the country, these courses could be tailored to meet to the working life needs in the area.

With the introduction of the comprehensive school system, the primary school system was abolished. All the primary schools became the current grades 1 to 6 of basic education. Further classes, i.e. the grades 7 and 8, were assimilated with the lower secondary schools into the comprehensive school grades 7 to 9.

### *Earlier vocational basic education in vocational institutions*

Before the reform of secondary education in the 1980s, education provided in vocational institutions belonging to different administrative sectors was organised in accordance with the provisions under various laws. The education was not harmonised. The extent of primary school-based education corresponding to

vocational upper secondary education varied from one term to four school years. In practice, the majority of education that could be considered as vocational upper secondary education and training, lasted at least two years. For example, in general vocational institutions, the duration of studies was 2 to 3 years, in vocational special educational institutions 2 to 4 years for the most part, in horticultural and forestry institutions 2 years, in the hotel and catering institutions 2 to 2.5 years, in business colleges 1 to 2 years and in nursing training 2.5 years with another year of specialisation. Education with a shorter duration could be found especially in agriculture, handicraft, home economics and some health care and nursing tasks. According to the educational classification of Statistics Finland introduced in 1971, all vocational education lasting under three years with at least 400 hours of teaching was classified as lower secondary education while education lasting at least three was classified as upper secondary education.

In conjunction with the reform of the secondary school system, vocational basic education was reformed and harmonised gradually between 1982 and 1988 so that the duration of all comprehensive school-based education became 2 to 3 years and the duration of all vocational college and higher vocational college level (later higher vocational level) education became at least four years. Comprehensive school-based education included a so-called general study period, which lasted for half a year to one year, while general upper secondary education-based education lasted from half a year to one year less. Some fields had so-called separate study modules with no general study period either at the institution or college level. In addition, various fields offered one-year further studies in the form of adult education. In practice, technical colleges never transferred to the reformed secondary education structure; instead, application to them took place after the completion of a vocational upper secondary qualification or a general upper secondary qualification. These types of qualifications, removed from the current qualifications structure, include qualifications for technicians and engineering qualifications of vocational colleges, later the higher vocational level. In accordance with the act on youth-level education and polytechnic trials (Nuorisooasteen koulutuksesta ja ammattikorkeakoulujen kokeiluista annettu laki 391/1991), it was possible to complete combined studies in at least two school years.

In 1993–1994, all the vocational qualifications were reformed so that the general study periods were removed and it was decided that the duration would vary according to the field and qualification from 80 study weeks to 80 + 40 study weeks or 120 study weeks. The extent of vocational college and higher vocational level qualifications varied from 80 to 160 study weeks. Eventually, both vocational college and higher vocational level qualifications were transformed into polytechnic degrees.

Currently, all qualifications completed in vocational upper secondary education and training, last three years. The transfer to a comprehensive three-year system was undertaken for education that had commenced in 1999–2001 onwards. The three-year duration brought with it general eligibility for further studies in higher education both in polytechnics and universities.

### *Professional qualifications*

The act on vocational qualifications (Laki ammatillisista pätevyystutkinnoista 424/1967) and the act that repealed it (32/1972) were in force between 1968 and 1994.

The act laid down provisions on the possibility of completing vocational qualifications and higher vocational qualifications. According to section 11 of the Vocational Qualifications Act (Ammattitutkintolaki 306/1994), which repealed the act on vocational qualifications, where appropriate, the National Board of Education can decide to accept a qualification completed in accordance with the act on vocational qualifications as a qualification corresponding to a further vocational qualification or a specialist vocational qualification as provided under the Vocational Qualifications Act. On 22 March 1995, the National Board of Education made a decision (25/103/95) which covered all the qualifications in the act on vocational qualifications.

## 5.6 Statute proposals

In the Committee's view, the national framework for qualifications and other learning and objectives pertaining to its implementation are so important that the framework must be ensured a strong foundation and good visibility. The national framework for qualifications and other learning must be seen as an overall system which enables the comprehensive review of the education and qualifications system and competence not only in the sector of the Ministry of Education but also in other administrative sectors. The framework provides a way of comparing education in other administrative sectors with education in the Ministry of Education's sector, or how it can be recognised in education within the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education. Laying down provisions on the framework will also consolidate the international transparency of the national framework for qualifications and other learning and demonstrate commitment. The attainment of these goals requires legislation.

The Committee believes that laying down provisions on the national framework requires provisions at the level of legislation, since the legislation in force does not enable provisions to be issued on the national framework. Enabling legislation must either be added to the legislation on qualifications and education in the Ministry of Education's sector as well as other administrative sectors or a separate act must be enacted providing such authorisation.

The Committee has decided to propose a separate act so that the Finnish education and qualifications system and the learning outcomes provided/required by it can be reviewed comprehensively. The fact that no legislation contains comprehensive provisions on the qualifications in the different administrative sectors also supports the idea of enacting a separate act.

The Committee proposes that the act be called the "Act on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning". The Act would bring together all the qualifications as they have been provided for under different legislation. Hence, the act would be summary legislation in nature. The act would also include specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees. In addition, the act would present the requirement levels of the national framework at a general level, determine the principles for a more precise description of the requirement levels, determine their correspondence to the EQF levels and confer powers to describe the requirement levels and lay down provisions on the placement of qualifications and specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees within the requirement levels by Government decree. If required, the act could also define the key concepts, e.g. qualifications and special competence, and thus harmonise the terminology in various

administrative sectors and educational levels. It is likely that during the enactment of the act, it will become necessary to amend the legislation on universities and polytechnics and possibly other acts in different administrative sectors, insofar as they would contain provisions on specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees.

The Committee considers it important that the name of the act makes it clear that it also concerns a competence framework. This requires including the specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees in the act. In accordance with its mandate, chapter 9 of the Committee's report contains a preliminary description of what kinds of competence could later be considered for inclusion and on what principles. This matter requires further consideration and the Committee hopes to gain more insights on the matter during the circulation of the report for comments and seminars to be organised on the framework.

The Committee proposes that the Decree on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning lays down provisions on the classification of the requirement levels and placement of qualifications and specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees in the national framework levels. The decree will also contain competence descriptions at the eight levels. The proposal for the decree is only a draft of what the decree could contain, and not a finalised piece of legislation.

The decrees, provisions and guidelines pertaining to qualification and degree certificates and other certificates must also be reviewed.

The Committee proposes that an Act and a Decree on the National Framework for Qualifications and other Learning are enacted on the national framework as follows:

### **Act on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning**

#### *1 §. Scope of Application*

The Act lays down provisions on the classification of the requirement levels (*National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning*) of qualifications, syllabuses and specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees coming under the national qualifications system.

#### *2 §. National Qualifications System*

The qualifications and syllabuses coming under the national qualifications system are:

- the basic education syllabus as referred to in the Basic Education Act (Perusopetuslaki 628/1998)
- the general upper secondary school syllabus and matriculation examination as referred to in the General Upper Secondary Schools Act (Lukiolaki 629/998)
- vocational upper secondary qualification as referred to in the Vocational Education and Training Act (Laki ammatillisesta koulutuksesta 630/1998) and

the Vocational Adult Education Act (Laki ammatillisesta aikuiskoulutuksesta 631/1998)

- further vocational qualification and specialist vocational qualification as referred to in the Vocational Adult Education Act (Laki ammatillisesta aikuiskoulutuksesta 631/1998)
- Bachelor and Master degrees in polytechnics as referred to in the Polytechnics Act (Ammattikorkeakoululaki 351/2003)
- Bachelor and Master degrees in universities and scientific and artistic postgraduate and doctoral degree as referred to in the Universities Act (Yliopistolaki 645/1997)
- Bachelor of Military Science, Master of Military Science, General Staff Officer's degree and Doctor of Military Science as referred to in the National Defence University Act (Laki Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulusta 1121/2008)
- Basic Examination in Prison Services as referred to in the Act on The Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services (Laki Rikosseuraamusalan koulutuskeskuksesta 1316/2006)
- Diploma in Police Studies, Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination and Bachelor in Police Command degree as referred to in the Act on Police Training (Laki poliisikoulutuksesta 68/2005)
- vocational qualifications for the emergency services and emergency response centre activities as referred to in the Act on the Emergency Services College (Laki Pelastusopistosta 607/2006)

### 3 §. *Specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees*

Specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees are

- ... as referred to in the Polytechnics Act
- ... as referred to in the Universities Act
- Senior Staff Officer Course as referred to in the National Defence University Act (Laki Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulusta 1121/2008)

### 4 §. *Classification of the requirement levels*

The qualifications and syllabuses and specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees coming under the national qualifications system shall be divided into eight requirement levels corresponding to the levels in the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Qualifications Framework of 23 April 2008.

The requirement level of the qualification, syllabus or specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees shall be determined by describing the learning outcomes required by the qualification, syllabus or special competence as a combination on knowledge, skills and competence such that the required learning outcomes increase from the level 1 to the level 8 with regard to all dimensions of learning outcomes.

5 §. *Enabling provision*

A Government decree shall be enacted on the more detailed descriptions and placement of the qualifications, syllabuses and specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees coming under the national qualifications system on the basis of the learning outcomes required by them on the basis of requirement levels referred to in section 4.

6 §. *Entry into force*

This Act enters into force...

**Government Decree on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning**

1 §. *Classification of the requirement levels, description of learning outcomes and the placement of the qualifications, syllabuses and specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees within the levels of the national framework for qualifications and other learning*

National requirement level/European Qualifications Framework level	Learning outcomes	Qualifications
<b>Level 1</b>	<p>Possesses basic knowledge and skills, which are needed for studying and working in a clear operating environment under direct supervision.</p> <p>Takes responsibility for learning under supervision. Possesses the capability to communicate verbally and responds to simple written communication in his/her mother tongue.</p>	
<b>Level 2</b>	<p>Possesses the basic knowledge and cognitive and practical basic skills in his/her field which are needed to be able to utilise this knowledge in performing duties and solving routine problems. Follows simple rules and uses normal equipment and tools in a supervised operating environment demanding some independent action.</p> <p>Shoulders responsibility and shows initiative.</p> <p>Takes responsibility for learning.</p>	Basic education syllabus

	<p>Knows how to communicate verbally and produce normal text. Basic language skills in at least one official language and one foreign language.</p>	
<b>Level 3</b>	<p>Understands facts, principles, processes and general concepts and certain cognitive and practical skills in his/her field needed for performing duties and problem-solving. Chooses and applies basic methods, tools, materials and information. Tailors his/her action to the circumstances and the operating environment when solving problems.</p> <p>Takes responsibility for completing his/her duties and works safely within a work community. Possesses the capability to work in an entrepreneurial manner in someone else's service. Evaluates his/her own competence and actions relating to work or studies.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate diversely and interactively in various situations and to produce varied texts. Possesses the capability to communicate at an international level and to interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.</p>	
<b>Level 4</b>	<p>Possesses knowledge of the facts and theory in extensive contexts and certain cognitive and practical skills in his/her field and is capable of utilising this knowledge and skills when solving special problems in his/her field. Works independently in usually predictable but possibly changing operating environments.</p> <p>Takes responsibility for completing his/her duties and works safely and responsibly within a work community. Possesses the capability for</p>	<p>Upper secondary school syllabus and matriculation examination</p> <p>Vocational upper secondary qualifications</p> <p>Further vocational qualifications</p> <p>Basic Qualification in Prison Services</p> <p>Diploma in Police Studies</p> <p>Fire Fighter Qualification</p> <p>Emergency Response Centre Operator Qualification</p>

	<p>financial, productive and systematic activities and organising work. Possesses the capability to oversee routine tasks performed by others. Possesses the capability to work in an entrepreneurial manner in someone else's service or as an independent entrepreneur. Evaluates his/her competence and improves actions relating to work or studies. Develops him/herself and his/her work.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate diversely and interactively in various situations and to produce varied and field-specific texts. Can communicate at an international level and interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.</p>	
<b>Level 5</b>	<p>Possesses comprehensive and/or specialised knowledge of the facts and theory and cognitive and practical skills in his/her field and is capable of utilising this knowledge and skills in a creative manner when solving special problems in his/her field. Understands the knowledge boundaries in different fields.</p> <p>Possesses the capability to manage and oversee operating environments which change unpredictably. Possesses the capability to oversee tasks performed by others. Possesses the capability to work as an independent entrepreneur in the field. Evaluates and develops his/her as well as others' performance and work.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate verbally and in writing both to audiences in the field and outside it. Possesses the capability to communicate at an international level and to interact in his/her field in one official language and at least one foreign</p>	<p>Specialist vocational qualifications</p> <p>Vocational Qualification in Air Traffic Control</p> <p>Further Qualification in the Construction Industry</p> <p>Finnish Police Sergeant's Examination</p> <p>Sub-Officer Qualification (rescue services)</p>

	language.	
<b>Level 6</b>	<p>Possesses comprehensive and advanced knowledge of his/her field, including the critical understanding of theories, key concepts, methods and principles. Understands the extent and boundaries of professional duties and/or disciplines. Possesses advanced skills, which demonstrate mastery of issues, and the capability to apply knowledge and design creative solutions, which are required in a specialised professional, scientific or artistic field to solve complex or unpredictable problems.</p> <p>Possesses the capability to manage complex professional activities or projects and the capability to work independently in expert duties in the field. Possesses the capability to make decisions in unpredictable operating environments. Possesses the basic prerequisites for working as an independent entrepreneur in the field. Possesses the capability to take responsibility for the evaluation and development of not only his/her competence but also that of other individuals and groups.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate adequately verbally and in writing both to audiences in the field and outside it. Possesses the capability to communicate at an international level and to interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.</p>	<p>Bachelor degrees in polytechnics</p> <p>Bachelor degrees in universities</p> <p>Specific competences of graduates with Bachelor degree</p> <p>Some specialist vocational qualifications</p>
<b>Level 7</b>	<p>Possesses comprehensive and highly specialised concepts, methods and knowledge corresponding to the special competence in his/her field, used as the basis for independent thought and/or research. Understands issues pertaining to the field and interfaces between various fields and evaluates them</p>	<p>Master degrees in polytechnics</p> <p>Master degrees in universities</p> <p>Specific competences of graduates with Master degrees</p>

	<p>and new knowledge critically. Possesses the capability to solve demanding problems in research and innovation activities, where new methods and procedures are developed and knowledge from various fields is applied and combined.</p> <p>Possesses the capability to work independently in demanding expert duties in the field or as an entrepreneur. Possesses the capability to manage and develop complex, unpredictable and new strategic approaches. Possesses the capability to manage work and/or people. Possesses the capability to evaluate the activities of individuals or groups. Possesses the capability to accumulate knowledge and practices in his/her field and/or take responsibility for the development of others.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate verbally and in writing both to audiences in the field and outside it. Possesses the capability to communicate at an advanced international level and to interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.</p>	
<b>Level 8</b>	<p>Understands extensive knowledge areas and contexts. Possesses the most advanced and/or specialised and most profound knowledge, skills and/or theories, which are placed at the most advanced and/or specialised level of the field and interface between the various fields. Possesses the capability to apply knowledge in a creative way. Possesses the capability to create new knowledge in accordance with good scientific practice. Possesses the capability for independent and reliable scientific and professional research. Possesses the capability to develop vocational fields of activity and/or disciplines. Possesses the capability to</p>	<p>Licentiate degrees except for the Licentiate of Veterinary Medicine, Licentiate of Dentistry and Licentiate of Medicine.</p> <p>Doctorates</p> <p>Specialist Degree in Medicine Specialist Degree in Dentistry Specialist Degree in Veterinary Medicine</p> <p>General Staff Officer's Degree</p>

	<p>develop and apply new ideas, theories, approaches or processes in the most demanding of operating of environments.</p> <p>Possesses the capability to work independently in the most demanding expert duties in the field or as an entrepreneur.</p> <p>Possesses the capability to manage work and/or people.</p> <p>Possesses the capability to come up with syntheses and critical evaluations needed for solving complex problems in research and/or innovation activities as well as for extending and redefining knowledge or professional practices.</p> <p>Possesses the capability to accumulate knowledge and practices in his/her field and/or take responsibility for the development of others.</p> <p>Possesses the capability for continuous learning. Knows how to communicate verbally and in writing to a high level with both the scientific community and the general public on issues pertaining to his/her own research area or discipline and/or professional field. Possesses the capability to communicate at an advanced international level and to interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.</p>	
--	---	--

2 §. *Entry into force.*

This Decree enters into force...

### **5.7 Maintenance, updating and development of the national framework**

If provisions are laid down for the national framework as the Committee proposes through an Act and a Decree on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning, the Committee believes that it will be appropriate to manage the maintenance of the framework in the same way as other corresponding legislation. The Ministry of Education will report on the legislation pertaining to the framework and, as the reporting ministry, will also be responsible for preparing amendments to the legislation as well as hearing other ministries and stakeholders in the preparation stage of the legislation.

Because the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning is a key tool both for labour markets and the educational system, which will promote mobility and increase opportunities for lifelong learning as well as increase the visibility of opportunities for developing competence and learning paths, a mechanism or mechanisms are needed to monitor the functioning of the framework and to assess, together with stakeholders, the updating and development needs of the framework.

According to the EQF Recommendation, the Commission will assess and evaluate, in cooperation with the Member States and after consulting the stakeholders concerned, the action taken in response to the Recommendation and will report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the experience gained and implications for the future by 23 April 2013. In the Committee's view, it would be natural to time the evaluation of the Finnish National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning so that it can be utilised as a part of the evaluation performed in cooperation with the Commission and other Member States.

It would be natural to link the evaluation of the need to update and develop the framework together with stakeholders with existing forms of stakeholder cooperation and the preparation of the proposals for the qualifications structure. The evaluation could take advantage of the competence of the education and qualification committees. It is the duty of the education committees to follow, assess and anticipate the development of competence required in education and working life and to make proposals on how to develop education. For their part, it is the duty of the qualification committees to monitor the functioning of competence-based qualifications in their fields and, if necessary, present initiatives on how to develop the system. Evaluating the need to update and the competence needs of the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning is a natural part of the development of education and the competence-based qualifications system. If necessary, the education and qualification committees may make proposals on the need to update the national framework with regard to their own field. It would be natural to link the drawing up of such proposals with the preparation and discussion of the proposals for the qualifications structure, which already forms part of the duties assigned to the education and qualifications committees. The evaluation of the need to update and develop the framework by the education and qualifications committees requires that the members of the education and qualifications committees are trained on working with the framework.

If it is necessary to update the national framework with regard to the qualifications or specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees of other administrative sectors, other ministries can likewise make a proposal to the Ministry of Education on the need to update the framework.

The implementation of the national framework applies to all actors in the education sector. The determination of the level of the qualifications on the basis of the learning outcomes required by them emphasises the significance of learning outcomes in the provision of education. Learning outcomes approach is already commonplace, especially in vocational upper secondary education and training. In recent years, learning outcomes have received increasing emphasis, partly due to the impact of the higher education qualifications framework, although there is room for improvement in

the descriptions of learning outcomes. The implementation of the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning will require training and, for example, training for teachers. In addition, the framework and the introduction of the principle of lifelong learning into practice will bring a new dimension to student counselling, for example.

In accordance with the EQF Recommendation, the Ministry of Education has designated the National Board of Education as Finland's national coordination point to support and, in conjunction with the other relevant national authorities, guide the relationship between the national qualifications system and the European Qualifications Framework. According to a decision of the Ministry of Education (reg. no. 2/500/2008) the duties of the national coordination point include:

- to participate in the development of the national qualifications framework and the implementation of the EQF
- to disseminate information to stakeholders and the public on the EQF, the national qualifications framework and the placement of qualifications within the frameworks
- to guide and advise various stakeholders in the application of the frameworks
- to participate in and promote cooperation on national and European qualifications frameworks
- to perform other duties specified by the Ministry of Education.

In the National Board of Education, the work relating to the national coordination point has been divided mainly between two units.

The Qualifications Unit participates in the development and the implementation of the national framework particularly with regard to vocational upper secondary qualifications (vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications, specialist vocational qualifications). The work takes place mostly as part of the preparatory work on the proposals for the qualifications structure and in conjunction with the preparation and implementation of the national core curriculum and the requirements of competence-based qualifications. A central duty in developing qualifications and core curricula is defining the qualifications and the vocational skills requirements of their components in cooperation with working life representatives. Steering the application of the framework is linked to the implementation of the core curricula. The Qualifications Unit is also responsible for qualifications certificates and their appendices meant for international use. The Head of the Qualifications Unit acts as Finland's head representative, appointed by the Ministry of Education, in the Commission's Advisory Group, which is responsible for the overall coherence and promoting transparency of the process of relating qualifications systems to the EQF.

The Recognition and International Comparison of Qualifications Unit is responsible for general communications on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence, monitoring framework activities in other countries and answering individual questions on Finnish and foreign qualifications. The unit participates actively in the framework activities, especially with regard to higher education qualifications. The Recognition and International Comparison of Qualifications

website has links to the Ministry of Education's qualifications framework website and the Commission's EQF website. Information will be added once the work of NQF Committee is completed. The Head of the Recognition and International Comparison of Qualifications Unit participates in meetings of the national coordination points coordinated by the Commission and acts as the deputy member in the Commission's Advisory Group. Thus far, the cooperation between the coordination points has not actively commenced.

## **5.8 Administrative and economic effects of the national framework**

In the Committee's view, the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning will not significantly increase the administrative work of the Ministry of Education and other ministries. There will be a momentary increase in the workload, when the framework needs to be updated or otherwise improved. However, this administrative work is similar to any work pertaining to the maintenance and development of legislation.

The national framework will increase the administrative workload, especially official communications, guidance and advice as well as international cooperation with regard to the national framework, within the National Board of Education, which has been appointed as the national coordination point for Finland. It was agreed in the performance agreement between the Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education that the National Board of Education will support the implementation of the EQF and the national framework in 2009 by drawing up a steering and communications plan and a website with information on the European and national framework in Finnish, Swedish and English. In addition, the changes required by the EQF and the national framework will be made to the core curricula of the qualifications and Certificate and Diploma Supplements by 2010.

The national framework will not significantly affect the workload of education providers and the administration of higher education institutions. It is likely that there will be a slight increase in administrative work as by 2012 every new qualifications certificate, diploma and Europass document must include, in addition to the current information, a mention of the EQF level of the qualification in question. Changing the certificate information will also require the development of information systems.

The implementation of the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning will require extensive dissemination of information and the training of various parties. It will be especially important to train the members of the education and qualifications committees, if the aim is for the committees to evaluate the need to update and develop the framework. Moreover, it will be important to ensure training for personnel in municipalities providing education leading to or preparing for qualifications, syllabuses and specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees, vocational education providers, higher education institutions and educational institutions providing education for other administrative sectors. The introductory training of various parties on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning will require setting aside financial resources for education.

## 6 Quality assurance

### 6.1 Quality assurance in the EQF Recommendation

The EQF recommendation recommends that Member States promote and apply the principles of quality assurance in education and training when relating higher education and vocational education and training qualifications within national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework. When implementing the framework, it is recommended that quality assurance is carried out in accordance with the following principles:

- Quality assurance policies and procedures should underpin all levels of the European Qualifications Framework.
- Quality assurance should be an integral part of the internal management of education and training institutions.
- Quality assurance should include regular evaluation of institutions, their programmes or their quality assurance systems by external monitoring bodies or agencies.
- External monitoring bodies or agencies carrying out quality assurance should be subject to regular review.
- Quality assurance should include context, input, process and output dimensions, while giving emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes.
- Quality assurance systems should include the following elements:
  - clear and measurable objectives and standards, guidelines for implementation, including stakeholder involvement,
  - appropriate resources,
  - consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review,
  - feedback mechanisms and procedures for improvement,
  - widely accessible evaluation results,
- Quality assurance initiatives at international, national and regional level should be coordinated in order to ensure overview, coherence, synergy and system-wide analysis.
- Quality assurance should be a cooperative process across education and training levels and systems, involving all relevant stakeholders, within Member States and across the Community.
- Quality assurance orientations at Community level may provide reference points for evaluations and peer learning.

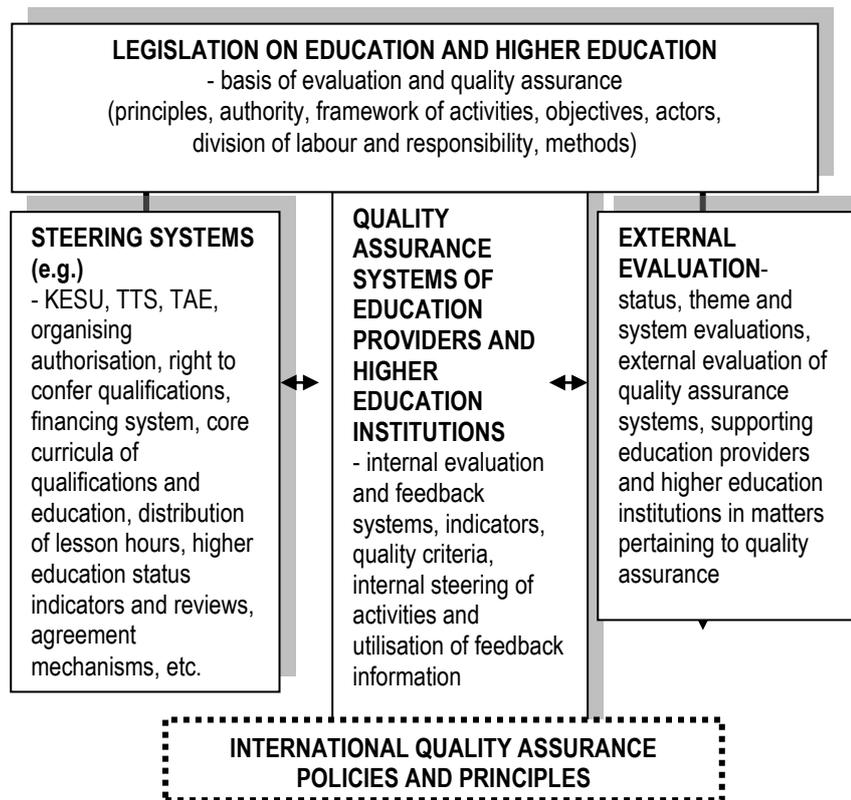
The principles of quality assurance are considered as having a key role in ensuring the reliability and development of higher education and vocational education and training.

The national framework does not require a quality assurance system of its own. However, in the Committee's view, the principles of quality assurance presented in the EQF recommendation must be considered as part of quality assurance measures and their development in each educational sector. In order to ensure the reliability and quality of education and learning outcomes, it is crucial to consider how quality assurance is linked, for example, to learning outcomes and, on the other hand, to the evaluation of whether the learning outcomes have been attained. The description of

this matter is particularly important from the perspective of international comparison. The quality assurance system in Finnish education is described in more detail in chapters 6.2 and 6.3.

## 6.2 Quality assurance in education in the sector of the Ministry of Education

In the Ministry of Education's sector, the quality assurance system of education can be considered as comprising the national steering system for education policy, evaluation systems of education providers and external education evaluation activities. The quality assurance system is based on legislation. International policies on quality assurance in education are being increasingly reflected in the national quality assurance system.



**Figure 1** Elements of the national quality assurance system for education

The quality assurance measures or systems of education providers, maintaining organisations and higher education institutions comprise one key element of the quality assurance system. Legislation on education and higher education institutions lays down provisions on the education providers' and higher education institutions' obligation to evaluate education. Legislation in various sectors is based on trust and gives education providers, maintaining organisations and higher education institutions extensive powers in matters pertaining to the evaluation of education and quality assurance. The actors determine their own quality assurance systems and set the quality assurance criteria within the guidelines and framework provided by educational policy. In self-evaluation processes, the most popular methods and frameworks include evaluation for development, for example multiple constituency or peer review, frameworks of comprehensive quality assurance or self-developed

models and indicators. However, self-evaluation of an education provider, maintaining organisation or a higher education institution must be systematic and regular.

Another key element in a quality assurance system is external evaluation. External evaluation is organised by the Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council. In addition to the Evaluation Councils, evaluations and various monitoring activities are performed by numerous other bodies, such as the National Board of Education, the State Provincial Offices, the Academy of Finland and international bodies and, to some extent, also the National Audit Office of Finland and state auditors. In October 2008, the Ministry of Education made a decision on a national education evaluation plan for 2009–2011, which has been drawn up in cooperation with the Finnish Education Evaluation Council, the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council and the National Board of Education. The aim of the evaluation plan is to increase the impact, stability and predictability of the external evaluation of education. The plan is based on the strategies, policies and working plans determined by the Councils for them.

Education policy is the third element of quality assurance. In general terms, steering means the mechanisms through which the activities are regulated and the objectives set for the activities are implemented. In the educational sector, steering can be considered as comprising normative steering, performance steering, financial steering, the evaluation of education, information steering and other administrative steering. Other mechanisms can also be considered as being related to steering, such as judicial review and appeals.

Joint policies and recommendations on education quality assurance agreed upon at the European Union level play an increasingly important role in the development of national quality assurance systems in education. Quality assurance cooperation is at its most advanced in the higher education sector, in which the Bologna Process has provided joint frameworks for quality assurance in higher education. The Copenhagen Process has similar aims with regard to vocational education and training. As for general education, quality assurance has primarily been a national focus of development, which is nevertheless affected by European Union policies.

### **6.2.1 Quality assurance in higher education**

The main responsibility for the quality of teaching, research and development, scientific research and other activities rests with the higher education institutions themselves. They, like other Finnish education providers, must conduct self-evaluations of the education they provide and its effectiveness and participate in external evaluations of their activities, the results of which are made public. Therefore, provisions on the evaluation of higher education can be found in the legislation on universities and polytechnics.

The external evaluation of higher education is primarily the duty of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC), the activities of which are based on the decree issued on it (1320/1995, 465/1998, 548/2005, 965/2007). According to the decree, it is the duty of FINHEEC to 1) assist institutions of higher education and the Ministry of Education in evaluations; 2) conduct evaluations for the authorisation of the polytechnics; 3) organise evaluations of the activities of higher education

institutions and evaluations relating to higher education policy; 4) initiate evaluations of higher education and promoting its development; 5) engage in international cooperation in evaluation; and 6) promote research on the evaluation of higher education. The Evaluation Council is also in charge of higher education evaluation duties in the autonomous province of the Åland Islands. The evaluation of research activities of higher education institutions are the duty of the Academy of Finland.

The framework for evaluating higher education institutions is international. Over the last decade, the construction of the European Higher Education Area EHEA, the so-called Bologna Process, has largely determined the direction of quality assurance in higher education. The communiqués of the meetings of ministers of education, which are held every two years, have brought something new every time to quality assurance, especially since 2003. As a result, Finland has developed an audit method for the overall evaluation of higher education institutions, which is compatible with the European Standards and Guidelines. In addition to the Bologna Process, there have been ongoing discussions on quality assurance in higher education in various European Union bodies.

The main focus of FINHEEC's evaluations is currently audits of higher education institutions' quality assurance systems. Their main aim is to support the higher education institutions in developing their quality assurance systems to correspond to European quality assurance principles and to demonstrate that competent and coherent national quality assurance at the higher education level is in place in Finland. The audits focus on the entire quality assurance system of each higher education institution and the quality assurance of their basic duties. The basic principle of the audits is evaluation for development, which has strong roots in Finnish evaluation practice. In other words, the aim is also to collect and disseminate good practices, promote their dissemination in higher education and thus to develop higher education as a whole.

The development phase of the audit model took place in 2005–2007. Currently, the audits follow the second edition of the Audit Manual for 2008–2011. The intention is to audit the quality assurance systems of all Finnish higher education institutions by the end of 2011. According to the feedback from the higher education institutions, the audits have clearly provided tools for the internal management of higher education institutions as well as provided guidance to higher education institutions on developing their activities as a whole.

In addition to the audits, FINHEEC carries out evaluations of Centres of Excellence and evaluations of fields of education as well as thematic evaluations. Evaluations of university Centres of Excellence have been performed for over a decade and those at polytechnics for slightly less. The methodology of the evaluations of Centres of Excellence has been continuously developed in both sectors. In the selection round carried out in 2008, the method for evaluating university Centres of Excellence was almost entirely reformed. Examples of thematic evaluations in recent years include the international evaluation of polytechnic postgraduate degrees, carried out in 2004, the evaluation of doctoral education, carried out in 2006, and the evaluation of university centres, performed in 2009. An evaluation of the reforms to the national degree structure will be carried out in 2010.

Throughout its existence, FINHEEC has actively participated in international and, especially, European cooperation, and has both developed and maintained connections with evaluation organisations and networks in different countries.

Finland has participated in international evaluations of higher education policy. The OECD evaluated Finnish higher education policy in the country survey of 1994 and the polytechnic policy and system in 2002. Finland has also participated in the OECD's thematic evaluation, which was completed in 2008, and the feasibility survey for a research project measuring the learning outcomes of higher education students, which was initiated by the OECD.

The key legislation for universities with respect to starting new education leading to a degree includes the Universities Act, the Government Decree on University Degrees, the Decree of the Ministry of Education on specifying the educational responsibility of universities and Ministry of Education's decrees on university master's degree programmes. The Government Decree on University Degrees (794/2004) lays down provisions on what degrees can be studied at which university. The appendix to the Decree lists the fields of education, degree titles and universities where the degrees can be completed.

Provisions on the more detailed division of the educational responsibility between universities are laid down in the decree of the Ministry of Education (585/2005). The decree lays down provisions on what fields, subject groups and advanced studies universities can provide in each field of education. A university cannot start providing or drop advanced studies without an amendment to the decree. The decree also lays down provisions on specialisation studies. The definition of educational responsibility is considered to be part of the core area of higher education policy and the aim of the procedure is to ensure that higher education is provided to an appropriate extent, to prevent overlap in the provision of education and consequently that resources are optimally allocated.

Therefore, if a university wishes to start new education leading to a degree, it can decide on the matter within the limits of its existing educational responsibility. If, on the other hand, it wants to open completely new fields of education, the university must apply for a change in its educational responsibilities. Nowadays, decisions on new subject-based educational responsibilities are quite rare and the focus has shifted to separate master's degree programmes. Universities can make a proposal on these to the Ministry of Education, which, since 2005, has annually issued a decree on amending the decree on master's degree programmes (569/2005). The change in focus has also meant that the significance of subject-based education leading to a degree has changed: new bachelor's degree level education is rarely started, instead universities opt for new, usually thematic and multidisciplinary master's degree programmes, most of which are also taught in English.

Another significant document for the quality assurance of new education leading to a degree is the guidelines on the planning of joint and double degrees, issued in August 2007. The guidelines were prepared in collaboration between the National Board of Education (NARIC/ENIC), the higher education institutions and the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) utilising international recommendations and reports.

From the perspective of granting degrees by polytechnics, the essential provisions are laid down in the Polytechnics Act (351/2003). According to the Act, the Government can authorise a municipality or federation of municipalities or a registered Finnish organisation or a foundation to run a polytechnic. The requirements for granting the authorisation are that the polytechnic is required with respect to the educational need and fulfils the quality and other requirements set for a polytechnic. The Government can also revoke the authorisation in part or in full. The authorised party has the right to maintain a polytechnic, which provides polytechnic education in accordance with the educational task set out in the accreditation. The educational task of a polytechnic specifies, among other things, the educational fields of the polytechnic. Changing the educational fields of a polytechnic requires a Government decision on amending the authorisation.

According to the Government Decree on Polytechnics, education leading to a degree shall be organised as degree programmes. Degree programmes are study modules planned and organised by the polytechnic, which focus on a particular area requiring professional expertise and its development. The Ministry of Education decides on the degree programmes on a proposal of the polytechnic so that the decision includes the title of the degree programme, orientation alternatives (if required), the field of education, degree and degree title, the duration of the degree programme in study weeks and the extent of practical training. Therefore, opening new degree programmes leading to a qualification requires a decision of the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Education's criteria on degree programme proposal, the fulfilment of which is a requirement for a positive decision from the Ministry of Education for launching a degree programme, constitutes part of the quality assurance for both Bachelor and Master degrees in polytechnics. In addition, the Ministry of Education requires that the committees for each field of education of the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences ARENE consent to the degree programme proposal before the decision on the degree programme is made.

The quality evaluation of the entire polytechnic system commenced when temporary polytechnics were made permanent in the 1990s. FINHEEC evaluated the establishment projects of each temporary polytechnic and the permanent authorisation proposals on the basis of both the written authorisation proposals and an evaluation visit. The decisions to make polytechnics permanent were made on the basis of FINHEEC's quality evaluation. On the basis of this quality evaluation, the first polytechnics received permanent status in 1996 and the last were made permanent in 2000.

Due to the commencement of quality evaluations at the establishment phase of the polytechnics and the obligation referred to in the Polytechnics Act on the requirements of authorisation and quality evaluations, all polytechnics have developed their quality assurance systems systematically since the mid-1990s and in addition to the above, carried out numerous internal and external evaluations.

### 6.2.2 Quality assurance in vocational education and training

Legislation on vocational education and training and vocational adult education and training gives the education providers extensive discretion on matters pertaining to the organisation of education and use of financing allocated to education as well as quality assurance. The aim of national steering on vocational education and training is to set objectives on vocational education and training and on its quality as well as to ensure that they are attained. The key steering mechanisms in quality assurance include legislation governing the activities and funding, the authorisation of providers of vocational education and training, the degree structure and core curricula, the principles for financing the activities, performance-based funding and the qualifications requirements of teaching personnel. Additional steering mechanisms include the education and research development plan confirmed by the Government, the Budget and development and information steering by the educational authorities.

The aims of vocational education and training, the provision of education and qualifications, teaching and other educational responsibilities are defined in the Vocational Education and Training Act and Decree and the Vocational Adult Education and Training Act and Decree. The Government decides on the national objectives of education and common studies and their scope. The Government decision on the qualifications structure and common studies in vocational upper secondary education and training (213/1999) lays down provisions on the scope of vocational upper secondary qualifications, the division of studies into vocational studies and on-the-job learning supporting them, common studies supplementing vocational skills and freely elective studies, and common studies and their scope. Provisions on available qualifications are laid down in decrees of the Ministry of Education. The Finnish National Board of Education decides by qualification and study programme/competence area on the objectives of the qualifications in the core curricula it has confirmed. Vocational education and training must be organised in accordance with the provisions pertaining to it. Administrative decisions on education always include a student's right of appeal to a higher authority.

The provision of vocational education and training requires authorisation by the Ministry of Education to provide vocational upper secondary education and training or vocational continuing education. The authorisation is granted on application by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education may grant the authorisation to provide education to a municipality, federation of municipalities, a registered organisation or foundation or an unincorporated state enterprise. Education can also be provided in a state educational institution. The authorisation requires that the education is necessary and that the applicant possesses the professional and economic prerequisites to provide the education in an appropriate manner. The authorisation permit to provide vocational upper secondary education and training lays down provisions on the level of education, fields of education, qualifications, teaching language, municipalities in which the education can be provided, the number of students, special educational tasks, form of provision of the education and other matters pertaining to the provision of education. The authorisation permit to provide vocational continuing education lays down provisions on the educational tasks, including provisions on the teaching language, fields of education, the number of student years of education leading to competence-based qualifications and other vocational continuing education and the number of apprenticeship agreements, as well

as on special educational tasks and working life development and service tasks and other matters pertaining to the provision of educations and qualifications.

The Ministry of Education may change the authorisation, even without an application, if the education offered significantly differs from the educational needs. The Ministry of Education can also revoke the authorisation if the education does not fulfil the requirements set for the granting of the authorisation or the education is otherwise provided contrary to the law or the provisions pursuant to it.

The providers of vocational upper secondary education and training must accept the curriculum for the education, which is based on the core curriculum decided on by the National Board of Education. The curriculum is accepted separately for teaching in Finnish, Swedish and the Sámi language and, where necessary, in other languages. When a student has successfully completed the studies and vocational skills demonstration included in the qualification, the education provider will award a qualification certificate for the completed qualification. The qualification certificate comprises a leaving certificate and certificate of skills demonstration and it is awarded by the education provider. The certificate of vocational competence tests is signed by the Chair of the body responsible for planning and implementing the vocational skills demonstrations.

The qualifications committees working under the auspices of the National Board of Education are responsible for arranging and supervising competence-based qualifications. The qualifications committee makes an agreement on arranging the competence tests with authorised education providers and, when necessary, organisations or foundations with adequate expertise for arranging competence-based qualifications. The qualifications committees must conclude enough agreements so that all the examinees have sufficient opportunities to take part in competence tests. Completing a competence-based qualification does not require preparatory training, although many students participate in the education. Preparatory training for a competence-based qualification is organised as self-motivated education funded by the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education, as labour policy adult education funded by the administrative sector of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, and as personnel education funded by enterprises. The education providers decide on the content of the preparatory education and how to provide it in accordance with the qualification requirements provided by National Board of Education. The qualifications committee awards a qualification certificate to a person who has successfully completed all the modules of the qualification.

Legislation on vocational education and training obligates the providers of vocational education and training to self-evaluate their education, its impact and take part in external evaluations of their activities. The implementation of the evaluation obligation under the legislation requires that the education provider has an operating system in place with the appropriate and effective quality assurance procedures. Education providers can decide independently on these procedures. The system is specific to each provider and comprises the principles and procedures that the organisation's activities should systematically follow. The system can be documented in the form of a quality manual but more important than the form is that the system functions in practice and encourages systematic activities and their further development.

The Ministry of Education adopted a quality assurance recommendation for vocational education and training in January 2008. The aim of the recommendation is to support providers of vocational education and training in developing their activities towards excellence. The recommendation is based on the Common European Quality Assurance Framework for Vocational Education and Training (CQAF) and is an important part of the Finnish implementation of the measures agreed upon in the Copenhagen Process. Currently, a national quality strategy for vocational education and training is being prepared. In addition, preparations are being made for introducing the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training, EQARF, on which the European Parliament and the Council issue a proposal for recommendation in spring 2009.

The aim of external evaluations of vocational education and training is to ensure the implementation of legislation on vocational education and training and to support the development of the education and to improve the conditions for learning. Education providers are legally obligated to participate in external evaluations of education. The evaluations are organised by the Finnish Education Evaluation Council or another evaluation body appointed by the Ministry of Education. The National Board of Education is responsible for monitoring learning outcomes. Evaluations are usually based on the principle of evaluation for development, which means that they aim to support education providers in developing their activities and to produce information to support decision-making by both education providers and the education authorities. The Ministry of Education decides on the external evaluations of vocational education and training in its education evaluation plan.

### **6.2.3 Quality assurance in general education**

The national legislation and decisions on the operating framework constitute the underlying principles of quality assurance in both basic education and general upper secondary education: legislation on basic education and general upper secondary education and the core curricula of basic education and general upper secondary education. The legislation specifies the basic premises of the activities, framework and objectives of the education, including the subjects and distribution of lesson hours. The national core curriculum drawn up by the National Board of Education specifies the objectives and key content of the teaching as well as the principles for assessing students. Basic and general upper secondary education must comply with the norms and criteria issued on them. Administrative decisions, such as student selection and students' final assessment always include a student's right of appeal to a higher authority.

Municipalities are obligated to provide basic education for children at the compulsory school age. Municipalities can provide the services themselves or in cooperation with other municipalities or can acquire them from a registered organisation or foundation, which the Government has accredited as a provider of basic education, or from a state educational institution. The municipality is responsible for ensuring that all the services are provided in accordance with the Basic Education Act.

The Government may accredit a registered organisation or foundation as a provider of basic education. The authorisation requires that the education is based on a special

educational need and that the education provider and the municipality in which the education is to take place have agreed upon the matter. Authorisation to provide education in foreign languages, special needs education, education based on a specific worldview or pedagogic system, and education provided in a folk high school for students other than children at the compulsory school age can be granted on the basis of a regional or national educational need even if the education provider had not concluded the abovementioned agreement. Authorisation may also be awarded for education being provided abroad.

The authorisation requires that the applicant possesses the professional and financial prerequisites to provide the education in the appropriate manner. Education may not be provided for financial gain. The authorisation specifies the municipalities in which the education shall be provided, the language of instruction, special educational tasks, the form in which the education is to be provided and other necessary terms for providing the education. Changes to the authorisation are at the discretion of the Ministry of Education. The Government may revoke the authorisation to provide the education if the education does not fulfil the preconditions required by the authorisation or the education provided is in violation of the Basic Education Act or the provisions pursuant to it.

The provision of general upper secondary education requires authorisation by the Ministry of Education. The authorisation may be granted to a municipality, federation of municipalities, registered organisation or foundation. Authorisation may also be awarded for education being provided abroad. Education can also be provided in a state educational institution. The authorisation requires that the education is necessary and the applicant possesses the professional and financial prerequisites to provide the education in the appropriate manner. The authorisation specifies the municipalities, in which the education shall be organised, the language of instruction, special educational tasks, the form in which the education is to be provided and other necessary conditions for providing the education. Changes to the authorisation are at the discretion of the Ministry of Education.

Providers of basic education and general upper secondary education must accept an educational curriculum based on the core curricula provided by the National Board of Education. The curriculum is accepted separately for teaching in Finnish, Swedish and the Sámi language and, if necessary, in other languages. A basic education certificate is awarded to those who have completed the entire syllabus of basic education and general upper secondary education. The certificate is awarded by the education provider.

At the end of general upper secondary education, the students participate in the national matriculation examination which is organised twice annually. The examination is the responsibility of a separate Matriculation Examination Board. The student must complete the general upper secondary syllabus to receive the general upper secondary certificate. In addition, students must participate in the matriculation examination, on the successful completion of which they are presented with a separate diploma awarded by the Matriculation Examination Board. The matriculation examination is used to ascertain whether students have assimilated the knowledge and skills required by the general upper secondary school curriculum as well as the required maturity. The qualification comprises exams in the mother tongue and

literature, the second national language, foreign languages, mathematics and general studies. The matriculation examination results of the students can be compared on a regional basis and with respect to the examination period and thus contribute to the equality of education and increase the usability of the results when applying for further studies.

The national production of statistics and indicators and separate evaluations carried out nationally form part of quality assurance in basic education and general upper secondary education. The main responsibility for drawing up evaluations on national basic education and general upper secondary education rests with the Finnish Education Evaluation Council. Decisions are made annually in the Ministry of Education's programme on education evaluations on the future evaluations to be performed by the Finnish Education Evaluation Council. In addition, statistics and indicators are used for monitoring all quantitative changes, such as student numbers, the rate of completion of studies and teacher resources.

Education providers have extensive powers in matters pertaining to the provision of education and the use of Government transfers granted for education as well as quality assurance of their operations. Legislation obligates education providers to self-evaluate their education, its impact and take part in external evaluations of their activities. Decisions on the self-evaluation of the education and its forms are at the discretion of the education provider. In these activities, education providers utilise various quality assurance systems. The aim of local evaluation is to support the development of the operations.

### **6.3 Quality assurance in education in other administrative sectors**

Military science qualifications of the Defence Forces and the Finnish Border Guard, the bachelor's degree programme in prison and probation services (Bachelor of Social Services) and the Bachelor in Police Command degree are part of the general qualifications system under the Ministry of Education, so their quality assurance follows the quality assurance principles in higher education described in chapter 6.2.1. *Quality assurance of the comprehensive competence areas in the Defence Forces*

The Defence Forces feedback system comprises student feedback, teacher feedback, feedback discussion events and official documents. The education development plan drawn up once a year covers the National Defence University and defence branch, arms and sector-specific academies. Moreover, the quality assurance of the teaching comprises internal and external teaching audits. In addition, the system includes regular seminars on best practices. The impact of the development of competence and competence produced by the education is evaluated by collecting delayed feedback. Officers and non-commissioned officers who have completed their studies a few years earlier and their superiors are asked to respond to a questionnaire, which aims at determining how well the education system has managed to produce the competence needed in working life.

As for conscripts and reservists, the quality is ensured through surveys aimed at conscripts and reservists. A final questionnaire is given to all conscripts before they are discharged (approximately 9,000 respondents/survey). The survey aims at establishing the conscripts' satisfaction with the training they have received, including

leadership and instructor training. The quality of reservist training is measured after each refresher training event through a reservist survey and a unit performance evaluation. In addition, the competence of the troops as a wartime unit is measured towards the end of the military service (specialised training period) in combat exercises organised by the defence branches.

The feedback received from the feedback system and questionnaires is used to develop the training, its contents and the norms governing the training.

#### *Quality assurance in the training of the Finnish Border Guard*

In accordance with the pedagogic strategy of the Border and Coast Guard Academy drawn up in 2008, quality assurance of the education is part of the steering and management system of the Border Guard. It covers all the activities of the academy and is integrated into its everyday operations. The evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is systematic and supports the student's process of professional growth. In the Border and Coast Guard Academy, the evaluation of the quality of the activities and service ability is also one of the performance indicators. In addition to qualitative evaluations, quantitative data and averages are compiled from the feedback.

The Border and Coast Guard Academy also studies the impact of its teaching in order to gain an insight into the successful assimilation of knowledge and skills received during the study process both at the level of the individual and the work community. The quality and effectiveness of the teaching are studied in the Border and Coast Guard Academy both in the short and long term. The monitoring system for the quality and effectiveness of the education aims at developing teaching content and methods and the education planning process, and consequently the continuous improvement of the quality of education.

The Academy has a common operating principle for feedback measuring the quality of education that students can use to evaluate their own learning, teaching and learning environment. In addition to the above, a teacher can, in order to improve his/her teaching, collect feedback that takes into account the special features of its provision with methods of his/her choice, either verbally or in writing. Delayed feedback gives important information on whether the course has had an impact on the student's work behaviour and attitudes and in this way the performance of the whole organisation. In addition, it provides information on the correlation between the education and work as well as on future training needs both from the perspective of the course participants and supervisors. Student feedback is used as a development tool.

#### *Quality assurance in education leading to the Basic Examination in Prison Services and in continuing education in the prison and probation services*

According to the Act on the Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services, provisions on the aims, scope, structure and other principles of education leading to the qualification are issued by Government decree and are further detailed in the degree regulations of the Training Institute. If necessary, provisions on other training will be issued by Government decree. The Board of Directors of the Training Institute,

appointed for a four-year term by the Ministry of Justice, adopts the curriculum also for training other than education leading to a qualification.

The steering of the activities and funding of the Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services is based on a performance agreement between the Criminal Sanctions Agency and the Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services, which specifies the objectives for each performance period, the key strategies, and the resources allocated for the activities and the performance evaluation principles.

In accordance with the Decree on the Training Institute for Prison and Probation Services, the task of the Board of Directors is to decide on the operating policies of the Training Institute and the negotiation objectives for performance negotiations with the Ministry of Justice (Criminal Sanctions Agency), to monitor and promote the attainment of the set objectives and to address and respond to other wide-ranging and important matters in the Training Institute's sector. It is the duty of the Director of the Training Institute to manage and develop the activities of the Training Institute and to be responsible for the activities' effectiveness, quality and the attainment of the objectives.

In accordance with its strategy, the Training Institute carries out evaluations of education from the perspectives of both students and teachers by collecting feedback on the training provided and its usability in working life from the students, teachers and working life representatives. In addition, external evaluations are commissioned, for example, surveys on the impact of the education.

#### *Quality assurance of police qualifications and training*

The key principles on quality assurance of police qualifications and training are contained in the Act on Police Training. According to the Act, it is the task of the Police College of Finland to be responsible for the police diploma as well as advanced studies and further training, to ensure the quality and development of its education and other activities and to participate at regular intervals in external evaluations.

#### *Quality assurance of qualifications and education for the emergency services and emergency response centre*

The key principles of quality assurance in vocational education and training leading to a qualification in emergency services and emergency response centre operations are laid down in the Act on the Emergency Services College. According to the act, it is the task of the Act on the Emergency Services College to ensure the quality and continuous development of its education and other activities as well as the quality assurance of its activities. The College evaluates and develops its activities, for example, using various student surveys. The effectiveness of the studies is examined through surveys aimed at people who have already worked a few years. At the same time, employers' have been asked for their opinion on the competence of their employees. The key steering mechanisms for quality assurance include performance agreements between the Ministry of the Interior and the College and longer term operating and financial and plans. The performance agreement includes a set of indicators describing the quality and effectiveness of the activities.

## **7 Placement of national qualifications in the European Qualifications Framework**

One of the tasks of the Committee was to make a proposal on the placement of national qualifications in the European Qualifications Framework. The EQF Recommendation recommends the Member States relate their national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework by 2010, in particular by referencing, in a transparent manner, their qualification levels to the EQF levels and, where appropriate, by developing national qualifications frameworks.

In many European countries, work on the framework is progressing so that firstly a national qualifications framework is constructed and then national qualifications are placed in the EQF. However, on the basis of the background work carried out before the appointment of the Committee, it appeared that in Finland it would be possible to draw up a proposal on the placement of qualifications in the European framework in the work of the same Committee.

### **7.1 Placement principles and placement of qualifications in the European Qualifications Framework**

The Committee proposes that Finnish national qualifications are placed in the European Qualifications Framework through the national framework.

The learning outcomes required by Finnish qualifications are well-suited to the EQF descriptors. Finnish legislation has issued provisions on the learning outcomes at various levels and these descriptors are parallel to the descriptors of the EQF.

Learning outcomes as one of the basic principle in the provision of education is nothing new in Finland. Upper secondary vocational education and training has been based on learning outcomes for a long time. A proposal on the learning outcomes required by higher education qualifications was drawn up as early as in 2005 and higher education institutions have utilised it in their work. The proposal has also been utilised in the preparation of the national qualifications framework.

The levels of the national framework have been described so that the descriptors of the levels correspond to the correspondingly numbered level in the EQF. In practice this means that if a qualification is placed on the basis of the required competence at level 4 of the national framework, the EQF level of the qualification is also 4.

### **7.2 Placement of qualifications from an international perspective**

The placement of national qualifications in the European Qualifications Framework requires confidence that all countries implement the placement on the basis of uniform criteria based on the EQF Recommendation. The primary criteria for placing the qualifications are the learning outcomes.

The system is based on trust, but trust also requires internationally available information on what has been done and how, who has been involved and what are the bases of national solutions. In the way, the national frameworks can promote mobility and the comparability of qualifications.

### 7.2.1 Criteria and procedures agreed upon at European level

In order to increase information and trust, the EQF Advisory Group appointed by the Commission approved the recommendations for common criteria and procedures to support and guide the referencing of national qualifications to the EQF levels. Special emphasis is put on ensuring that the information on the procedure and placement is drawn up and/or validated by a competent national authority and that it is transparent. The basic principle for the criteria and procedures has been the procedure for higher education qualifications frameworks approved as a part of the Bologna Process.

According to the EQF Recommendation, the Member States will support the Commission's intention of implementing the measures presented in the recommendation in particular by facilitating cooperation, exchanging good practice and testing, inter alia through voluntary peer reviews, and developing support and guidance material.

Recommended criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications include the following:

1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point (NCP), are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.
3. The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.
5. The national quality assurance system for education and training refer to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).
6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.
7. The referencing process shall involve international experts.
8. The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be

published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately each of the criteria.

9. The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.
10. Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.

The recommendation contains an explanatory memorandum which clarifies the nature of the recommendations and individual recommendations. The basic principle is that the document indicates the general direction of the referencing process and that the recommendations on the criteria and procedures are only put to the test for real on their introduction. The background memorandum also emphasises that the link to credit systems and validation is non-mandatory and should reflect existing national or European practices. The stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies means that the quality assurance bodies agree with the documentation provided in the referencing process. As for international experts, it is stated that their participation in the referencing of national qualifications to the EQF or in drawing up a report on the matter would be important. The national framework is being drawn up through national actors.

Ultimately, each country decides how it proceeds in the matter. Thus far, there is very little experience of referencing national qualifications to the EQF. The referencing process is under way in England and in Ireland. In both countries national frameworks have been in use for several years. Currently, many European Union countries are in the process of drawing up either integrated or separate (higher education/other education) national qualifications frameworks. Referencing qualifications to the EQF is planned to take place only later. Finland may well be one of the first continental European countries to complete the referencing of its qualifications.

### **7.2.2 Committee's proposal for the Finnish procedure**

The Committee proposes that a report complying with the above recommendation is drawn up in English on the placement of Finnish qualifications in the European Qualifications Framework. The report will provide answers to each point in the recommendation.

After the report is completed, it will be presented to a foreign expert (recommendation 7), who will be chosen separately and who will be asked to provide an outside opinion on the clarity of the report and suggest possible improvements. The report can also be discussed in the Commission Advisory Group, which is responsible for the overall coherence of the referencing processes. Some of the recommendation points have already been answered at least indirectly by the Committee's report (e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8). Because the report is directed primarily at foreign readers, a more detailed description from a slightly different perspective than from that of the Committee's

report may be required on some (e.g. 1, 2 and 4). A round for comments to be organised on the Committee's report will meet either in part or in full recommendations 1, 4 and 6. The recommendations 9 and 10 refer to future procedures.

At the end of the process, the English report will be published. The Ministry of Education is coordinating the process.

## **8 Recognition and validation of prior learning**

The learning outcomes based approach, the provision of education, recognition and validation of competence, prior learning and qualifications frameworks are all linked together. The national qualifications framework, in which learning outcomes are described at a general level, will create opportunities for defining in more detail the learning outcomes in the core curricula and qualification requirements as well as in curricula in educational institutions or higher education institutions. When learning outcomes required by a qualification are defined, it is also easier to assess prior learning in relation to it.

The recognition and validation of prior learning is important for the realisation of lifelong learning. Effective procedures for the recognition and validation of prior learning can promote entry into education and shorten study times. As a result of preventing overlap in education, savings on the overall study time can be achieved.

The recognition and validation of prior learning benefits the individual, the educational institution or higher education institution, the employer and all of society. The opportunity to recognise and validate prior learning could motivate individuals to enter study and lifelong learning. From an individual's perspective it is useful to learn to assess one's prior learning and have this learning recognised. From the point of view of an educational institution and higher education institution, it is useful to get highly motivated students. For employers, the recognition of prior learning could be part of human resources management and improve understanding of their personnel's competence. The recognition and validation of learning may also help to define the educational needs of the personnel. It is important for society that overlap in education is prevented as it saves both human and economic resources.

### **8.1 Current status and practices in the recognition of prior learning**

The practices for recognising prior learning vary according to administrative and educational levels. The practices are based on the legislation of each administrative or educational level. The key legislation on recognising prior learning includes legislation concerning student selection, the use and validation of prior learning, qualifications and the competence required by them and the appeals process.

A description of the recognition of prior learning, especially from a legislative basis, follows below. No exact information has been compiled on how common the recognition of prior learning is in the different educational levels, how it is carried out, or how it is recorded or registered, etc. With regard to all educational levels, it can be stated that in general the recognition of prior learning acquired in formal training

works well, but there is little experience and no established practices for the recognition of prior learning acquired elsewhere.

### **8.1.1 Recognition of prior learning in general upper secondary schools**

According to the General Upper Secondary Schools Act, a person who has completed the basic education syllabus or corresponding earlier syllabus is eligible for general upper secondary studies. A person can also be accepted as a student if the education provider considers that he/she has adequate requirements for completing the studies. With regard to general upper secondary schools, this legislation has mainly been applied to immigrants and to people who have acquired their education abroad. When accepting students to general upper secondary education which follows a curriculum with an emphasis on one or more subjects, the education provider may also consider the applicant's other education, hobbies or other supplementary competences.

Students have the right to get their prior studies or otherwise acquired learning evaluated and recognised. Through the recognition of prior learning, a student's prior learning can be considered equal to compulsory, specialised or applied studies included in the general upper secondary school syllabus. The recognition of students' prior learning is performed according to provisions issued under the General Upper Secondary Schools Act on student assessment and the decisions pertaining to it. If necessary, the learning must be demonstrated in the way required by the education provider. The decision to recognise prior learning is taken on request before the beginning of the studies or a study module pertaining to the prior learning in question. More detailed provisions on the recognition of prior learning and the procedures pertaining to it could be issued by Government decree.

The recognition of studies and other learning applies to students at general upper secondary school who have competence that has been acquired in various ways, such as through qualifications, modules of qualifications, other completed studies or working life. The recognition of working life competence is emphasised particularly with regard to adult students. The structure of general upper secondary studies enables the recognition of a considerable number of studies and learning acquired elsewhere, particularly in applied general upper secondary school courses but also in compulsory and specialisation studies.

Even though the matriculation examination is the final examination of general upper secondary school, a person not studying in a general upper secondary school is eligible to take the matriculation examination if he/she has completed

- 1) the general upper secondary syllabus or a corresponding foreign general upper secondary syllabus
- 2) a vocational qualification lasting at least two and a half years
- 3) a qualification or studies shorter than that referred to in point 2 above but at least two years in duration in basic education or a corresponding qualification based on an earlier syllabus and supplementary studies required by the Examination Board.

A person studying for a vocational qualification can participate in the matriculation examination when he/she is still a student in education leading to the qualification in

question. The student can take the examination at the earliest after having completed studies lasting a year and a half.

### **8.1.2 Recognition of prior learning in vocational education**

According to the Vocational Education and Training Act, a person can be accepted for education leading to a vocational upper secondary qualification if he/she has completed the basic education syllabus or corresponding earlier syllabus. A person can also be accepted as a student if the education provider considers that he/she has adequate requirements for completing the studies. On special grounds pertaining to the applicant, the education provider can decide to accept a maximum of 30 per cent of the students selected for each selection unit regardless of the selection score. These kinds of special grounds can include a lack of vocational basic education and training, difficulties in comparing transcripts, reasons relating to hobbies or learning difficulties.

The students have the right to get their prior studies or other acquired learning corresponding to the key objectives and requirements of the curriculum evaluated and recognised. The students may include prior learning in the qualification and use it to replace compulsory, elective or free-choice studies. If necessary, the equivalence of the prior learning must be demonstrated by a vocational skills demonstration, for example. In the demonstrations, the students can demonstrate both the prior learning acquired during their studies and earlier. The decision to recognise prior learning is carried out before the beginning of studies or a study module pertaining to the competence in question.

In accordance with the Decree on Vocational Education and Training, students must apply for the evaluation and recognition of their studies or learning acquired elsewhere. The application must be made in good time before the beginning on the above-mentioned studies or study module. The students must present an account of their studies or competence required for the evaluation of competence. Grades for studies acquired elsewhere or competence acquired otherwise included in the studies are recorded in the qualifications certificate.

In practice, education providers most often recognise general upper secondary studies and prior studies for another vocational upper secondary qualification. Studies recognised are usually core subjects included in a qualification (modules complementing vocational skills). The recognition of prior learning shortens study times in educational institutions of large and mid-sized education providers but not significantly in educational institutions of smaller education providers. The study time generally shortens for people who have a prior qualification. Shortening the study time is dependent on the qualification and issues relating to the scheduling of education. The recognition of prior learning gained through work experience varies depending on the education provider.

Competence-based qualifications are qualifications independent of the method of acquiring the vocational skills. The assessment in competence tests, as in other forms of vocational education and training, is based on a criteria-based assessment of the vocational skills. The reliability of assessing competence tests is ensured through extensive tripartite cooperation. Vocational upper secondary qualifications, further

vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications can be accomplished as competence-based qualifications. As a general rule, competence tests do not require education. The competence defined in the requirements of competence-based qualifications is ensured in the test itself. Competence tests are usually completed as a part of preparatory training for competence-based qualification. In practice, almost all students participate in preparatory training for a competence-based qualification in accordance with their personal study programme, and provisions on this are laid down in the Vocational Adult Education and Training Act. The completion of a competence-based qualification merely on the basis of work experience or competence acquired otherwise has been rare: less than ten per cent of all qualifications passed.

The competence-based qualifications system aims at tailoring the demonstration process of each adult participant and the required acquisition of vocational skills on the basis of the recognition of prior competence/learning. First, the test organiser or education provider steers the person applying for the qualification or student on the basis of his/her competence to the correct qualification and then to either completing the whole qualification or parts of it or to acquiring the missing vocational skills. Prior vocational skills and competence are accepted in the qualification insofar as the student can present reliable, previously documented demonstration of the competence, which is accepted by the tripartite evaluators.

### **8.1.3 Recognition of prior learning in higher education**

According to current legislation, an applicant can be accepted as a university student if the university deems that he/she possesses adequate knowledge and competence for the studies regardless of his/her previous education. A polytechnic can accept students who the polytechnic deems to possess adequate knowledge and skills for the studies. The idea is that the higher education institution evaluates whether the applicant possesses such competence/prior learning that he/she can be considered eligible for higher education studies. The higher education institution must decide on the eligibility before the selection process.

The legislation allows for flexible accreditation of prior learning in higher education institutions. According to the legislation on universities, students can include in their degrees studies performed in Finnish or foreign higher education institution or other educational institution and replace studies included in the qualification with other studies of the same level at the discretion of the university. Similarly, at the discretion of the university, students can include in their degrees and replace studies included in the qualification with competence demonstrated in other ways. According to the legislation, polytechnics must ensure that, in accordance with the regulations on degrees, students have the right to include in their qualifications studies performed in Finnish or foreign higher education institution or other educational institution and replace studies included in the qualification with other studies of the same level or a corresponding apprenticeship or work experience.

Legislation on universities and polytechnics lays down provisions on the students' right to appeal decisions made by a higher education institution. The appeal procedure is an internal process of the higher education institution. The legislation for polytechnics on appeals pertains to the evaluation of completed studies and the

accreditation of studies completed elsewhere. According to legislation on universities, students can appeal the evaluation of previously completed studies. In addition to doctoral and licentiate dissertation and master's thesis included in specialisation studies, these types of completed university studies include written and oral examinations, papers presented or artistic or other completed studies which form part of the university curriculum.

The general competence targets (defined learning outcomes) of higher education qualifications form the basis for evaluating competence. According to the committee that examined the recognition of prior learning in higher education institutions (Ministry of Education reports 2007:4), studies completed at universities are recognised to a greater extent than studies completed at polytechnics for both university and polytechnic degrees. Polytechnic studies have not been perceived as having offered enough theoretical and methodological competences nor study and learning skills, which are needed at university. Good knowledge of contents of previously completed studies promotes their recognition.

The legislation on higher education institution also often lay down general guidelines on recognition of prior learning. For example, a prior final project included in a qualification completed previously cannot be recognised and studies included in an upper secondary qualification or studies leading to some other competence cannot be included in polytechnic degrees. The policies of many universities stipulate that prior studies can only be recognised to the extent that they do not exceed the scope of the qualification when taken together with the completed studies. If a maximum level has been decreed for studies that can be recognised, it is most often a maximum of half the studies. The same completed studies cannot be recognised twice, with the exception of university language and communications studies.

The accreditation of all prior learning in higher education institutions is a relatively new matter and competence acquired outside formal education is recognised and validated only rarely. The accreditation of prior learning acquired outside formal education was not possible in universities before the Government Decree on University Degrees, which entered into force 1 August 2005. Provisions on the recognition of studies by polytechnics are laid down in the Polytechnics Decree, which entered into force 1 August 2003. Most of the regulations on polytechnic degrees provide more detailed and precise provisions on the accreditation of prior learning acquired outside formal education than the corresponding university regulations.

Finnish legislation also covers the recognition of prior learning acquired abroad. This is important from the perspective of international mobility. There are numerous international agreements and recommendations on the academic recognition of qualifications and studies, the most important of which is the Council of Europe and UNESCO Convention. The 1997 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the so-called Lisbon Convention) defines the basic principles on the recognition of studies and qualifications and covers in detail the recognition of qualifications and study modules leading to eligibility for higher education and the recognition of higher education qualifications as well as the recognition of qualifications of refugees. The Convention entered into force in Finland on 1 March 2004. In Finland, the Convention applies to

all universities, polytechnics, the National Defence University and the Åland Polytechnic. Finnish legislation covers the obligations of the Lisbon Convention.

#### **8.1.4 Recognition of prior learning in education in other administrative sectors**

Military science qualifications of the Defence Forces and the Finnish Border Guard, the bachelor's degree programme in prison and probation services (Bachelor of Social Services) and the Bachelor in Police Command degree are part of the general qualifications system under the Ministry of Education, which means that they follow the principles on the recognition of competence in higher education described in chapter 8.1.3.

In other respects, the education in these administrative sectors complies with the same principles on the recognition of competence as the general education system under the Ministry of Education. Recognition systems in other administrative sectors recognise and validate competence acquired in studies in particular. Students have the right to have their studies completed elsewhere or competence acquired otherwise accredited insofar as they comply with the objectives and key content of the syllabus. The decision on accreditation and the recognition of competence is carried out by the educational institution in question. The challenge is to keep developing the rules and practices that can assist in recognising competence acquired in other ways, especially knowledge and skills accumulated through work experience.

#### **8.1.5 Recognition of qualifications and competence acquired abroad for professional eligibility**

In Finland, a decision by the competent authority is needed for demonstrating general eligibility for civil service posts and for practising regulated professions when the qualification has been conferred by a foreign educational institution.

The National Board of Education decides on the professional competence given by a foreign qualification e.g. for the following regulated professions: teachers, law qualifications, social workers, social instructors and emergency services personnel. If the validation of professional competence is sought by an EU/EEA citizen whose qualification was completed in an EU/EEA country, the National Board of Education can require an aptitude test or adaptation period to be undertaken before granting eligibility. Aptitude tests for the above professions have been drawn up in cooperation with Finnish higher education institutions and educational institutions. The aptitude test demonstrates that the applicant possesses the competence required for working in the profession in Finland. When making decisions, the National Board of Education also takes other prior learning and work experience into account, in addition to the actual qualification.

In Finland, a right to practice a profession is required, for example, by veterinary surgeons, public administration auditors, chartered accountants, chartered public accountants, lawyers and medical professionals. The National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health has established practices for, for example, licensing physicians who have acquired their qualifications abroad.

## 8.2 Promoting the recognition of prior learning

There is a great deal of experience on the recognition of competence and qualifications acquired through formal education, so the following section pays particular attention to the recognition of prior learning acquired in other ways. When attention started to focus more on the recognition of competence acquired outside formal training, a distinction between recognition and validation of prior learning was made at the conceptual level. The recognition of prior learning can be considered from the perspective of both the educational institution and the student. The student aims to understand the competence he/she has acquired earlier and analyse it in terms of learning outcomes, so that he/she can describe and demonstrate his/her learning outcomes. The educational institution or higher education institution evaluates the learning outcomes presented by the student and their relationship to the competence target of the studies and on the basis of this grants recognition. Recognition is the granting of official status to prior learning that can be acquired either in formal, informal and non-formal learning.

The legislative basis on the recognition of prior learning is good in Finland and the responsibilities of the various actors are clear. Practical problems in implementation relate to, for example, trust, the complexity of evaluating competence, deficiencies in the descriptions of the required competence and, especially at the higher level, to the suspicion that education received outside formal education cannot correspond to the learning outcomes acquired through formal learning.

In recent years, an effort has been made to promote the recognition of prior learning. In 2004, a Ministry of Education committee drew up the principles for accrediting and recognition of studies received in general upper secondary schools and vocational upper secondary education, prior studies and competence acquired in other ways (Recognition of prior learning in the educational system, Ministry of Education reports 2004:27). In 2007, a Ministry of Education committee drew up the report Recognising prior learning in higher education institutions (Ministry of Education reports 2007:4).

With respect to higher education institutions, this work has been continued by the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences and the Finnish Council of University Rectors. The committee report published in March 2009, "Oppimisesta osaamiseen: aiemmin hankitun osaamisen tunnustaminen ja tunnustaminen" ("From learning to competence: recognition and validation of prior learning"), gives recommendations on recognition and validation processes from the perspective of higher education institutions and students, as well as proposals for further development. According to the view of this so-called AHOT committee, the recognition and validation of prior learning constitutes a field of activity comprising practical processes and procedures. The recognition of prior learning in higher education institutions is a question of both national and international education policy. These policies ultimately aim at higher education that corresponds to the needs of society and at assuring its quality. The key issue in developing recognition and validation procedures is the national qualifications framework and the definition of competence targets/learning outcomes.

Currently, there are varied practices in recognising and validating prior learning in higher education institutions, which should be harmonised at the national level and by educational field. The majority of recommendations of the AHOT committee are concerned with mechanisms and processes. According to the committee's view, there are no significant differences in these mechanisms and processes within each educational field. The definition of processes at the level of the higher education institution as well as within various fields of education makes recognition and validation work more coherent and develops their quality. However, issues resulting in differences in the different fields of education include the expiry of prior competence, the number of credits received and the recognition and validation of competence resulting from work experience. Working on these and developing them require further studies in each educational field both at the level of degree programmes and qualifications. Moreover, the AHOT committee was of the opinion that the recognition and validation of prior learning is part of developing higher education and the educational administration. Therefore, the recommendations highlighted developing curricula and individual study plans towards a more competence-based approach and creating more advanced mechanisms in order to recognise and validate the competence and prior learning of people with international studies. In addition, there is a need to clarify learning paths between higher education sectors and within the same sector.

The recommendations of the AHOT committee on the recognition and validation of prior learning concern comprehensive, significant study modules or qualification modules. It comes within the autonomy of higher education institutions to determine what the comprehensive or significant study modules and qualification modules are. A responsible teacher can make a decision on the substitution for an individual course or study unit.

It is very challenging but simultaneously important to retain the quality aspect in recognition and validation procedures both at level of processes and curricula. At the process level, recognition and validation procedures can be linked to the quality system of the higher education institution.

The AHOT committee also drew up five proposals for further development work on the recognition and validation of prior learning. These concerned the development of a competence-based approach, strengthening the competence of personnel, internationalisation, developing the compilation of statistics and registration and promoting lifelong learning through recognition and validation procedures.

As a follow-up measure to the above, a project on the recognition and validation of prior learning in higher education institutions (AHOT), jointly coordinated by the University of Turku and Haaga-Helia Polytechnic, was launched in May 2009. The project, lasting until the end of April 2011, aims to increase the competence of higher education personnel in recognising and validating prior learning and competence in evaluation practices and the planning of steering, to deepen cooperation between higher education institutions in recognition and validation practices for each field of education, to develop recognition practices in cooperation with working life representatives, to prepare the development of curricula complying with the EQF and to produce research, survey and evaluation material on the implementation of the AHOT project's recognition and validation process and development priorities. The

aims are being implemented through degree programmes, consultancy, development meetings, employment-oriented sub-projects and educational field-specific cooperation.

In its second interim report, the steering group for the overall reform of vocational adult education and training (AKKU steering group) notes that will be necessary to develop the provision of education and funding principles in upper secondary vocational education and training, vocational further education and training and higher education so that they promote the recognition and validation of prior competence and the personalisation of education. Moreover, it will be important to draw up national recommendations on the principles and procedures of recognising and validating prior competence in cooperation with education providers and working life representatives and to disseminate them for use by education providers. It will also be important to develop teachers' competence in recognising prior competence by channelling funding for the continuing education of teaching personnel towards making recognition, validation and personalisation more effective. Good practices pertaining to the recognition, validation and personalisation of competence will be disseminated through education and development projects.

## **9 Expanding the framework into a competence framework**

The task of the Committee was to draw up a proposal on whether the national framework could be expanded from a qualifications framework into a competence framework, so that it could be used to describe competence areas outside the actual qualifications system.

According to the view of the Committee, it is imperative to move from a qualifications framework towards a competence framework. Otherwise, it will be impossible to fully attain the benefits offered by the framework. A mere qualifications framework will not adequately promote the attainment of the principles of lifelong learning.

### **9.1 Competence areas outside the qualifications system**

The following section covers the extensive competence areas which were brought up by the Committee and assesses their applicability as a part of a competence framework.

#### **9.1.1 Specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees**

The specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees refers to comprehensive and extensive competence areas necessary from the perspective of working life completed in a polytechnic or university after the completion of a higher education degree. The specific competences are created from the perspective of working life and there needs to be a long-term need for them in the labour market. They must be based on professional competence required in working life and, in addition, they must provide significant added value in developing special professional competence needed in working life. The specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees do not result in formal qualifications, such as teaching qualifications. Provisions on formal qualifications are laid down in the legislation of

various administrative sectors and the creation of specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees is not intended to change or increase the criteria on eligibility.

Specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees merely refer to more comprehensive development of competence, which requires extensive and profound learning and education. The scope of specific competences ranges from 30 to 60 credits. The competence required by specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees can be attained through a variety of training and learning methods (incl. specialisation studies, other forms of continuing education, personnel training, labour policy training, independent studies, and apprenticeship-type continuing education). For this reason, specific competences contain competence-based tests, which make it possible to complete them regardless of the way the competence has been acquired and supports on-the-job learning. Higher education institutions are responsible for describing specific competences, accept the tests and award the certificates. Competence created by the specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees expands, deepens and specialises professional competence in higher education. The competence is of the type typical to higher education, which means that it emphasises, for example, generic skills and abstract thought. Higher education institutions can accept competence-based tests for specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees, regardless of how the competence required by them has been acquired.

In the Defence Forces and Finnish Border Guard, the Senior Staff Officer Course can be categorised as specific competence of graduates with higher education degrees. The aim of the Senior Staff Officer Course is to provide officers or specialist officers with the competence to work in General Staff Officers' duties within their defence and arms branches during war, other crises and peacetime. These duties include planning, the development and management duties of staff and military institutions. The Senior Staff Officer Course develops the student's ability to develop as a leader in his/her own work community. The General Staff Officer Course requires the attainment of a minimum of 60 credits.

In the Committee's view, it is already now possible to place the specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees in the framework and it proposes that they are placed so that the specific competence of graduates with higher education degrees is placed at the same level as the qualification granting eligibility for the specific competence.

### **9.1.2 Other extensive competence areas**

Extensive competence areas can be described, for example, on the basis of whether they are linked with a particular qualification or competence criteria (e.g. pedagogical studies leading to a teacher's qualification) or whether they are undertaken to voluntarily improve competence and vocational skills (e.g. various PD/professional development studies or driver's license and language qualifications). The competence areas that emerged in the Committee's discussions are described below. The description is by no means meant to be exhaustive but to serve as an example and impetus for further development work in expanding the framework towards a competence framework.

### *Competence areas relating to qualification and competence criteria*

Competence and study areas which are a qualification or competence requirement in a certain profession or task clearly constitute their own area. This refers to regulated professions. In Finland, a regulated profession means a profession or a task, the practice of which requires specific education as set out under an act or decree. In some cases, the qualification or competence can be produced by a particular comprehensive training course, which produces the required competence. Therefore, the completion of a certain qualification is not always required.

In international comparisons, Finland has relatively few regulated professions and most of them are in the health care sector. All education leading to a qualification in a regulated profession has been specified at a level complying with the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications, on the basis of which the qualification should be recognised in other EU/EEA countries as well. Almost all requirements for working in a regulated profession are based on qualifications or components of qualifications in the official qualifications system. Examples of regulated professions in Finland, their legislative bases and education or qualifications leading to them are given below.

The Act on Health Care Professionals (Laki terveydenhuollon ammattihenkilöistä 559/1994) and Decree on Health Care Professionals (Asetus terveydenhuollon ammattihenkilöistä 564/1994) list the following regulated professions: trained masseur, practical nurse, psychotherapist, orthopaedic technician, pharmaceutical dispenser, dental hygienist, dental technician, foot therapist, trained naprapath, trained osteopath, midwife, laboratory technologist, optician, radiographer, nurse, oral hygienist, public health nurse, physiotherapy assistant, assistant nurse, chiropodist, trained chiropractor, dental specialist, medical specialist, dentist, pharmacist, psychologist, speech therapist, dietician, hospital physicist, hospital geneticist, hospital chemist, and hospital microbiologist.

Examples of regulated professions in the social sector (272/2005 and 608/2005) include practical nurse for social and health care, kindergarten teacher, social instructor and social worker.

As in most European Union Member States, the teaching profession is regulated. The Teaching Qualifications Act (Asetus opetustoimen henkilöstön kelpoisuusvaatimuksista 986/1998) lays down provisions on the qualification requirements for personnel in education. Pedagogical studies for teachers comprising 60 credits are required from almost all teachers. The qualification requirements also lay down provisions on teaching in foreign languages and qualification requirements for teachers using a specific pedagogic system (e.g. Steiner or Montessori method).

Requirements for veterinary surgeon's qualifications are issued in the act on practising the profession of veterinary surgeon (Laki eläinlääkäriin ammatin harjoittamisesta 29/2000).

According to the Library Decree (Kirjastoasetus 1078/1998), training in the library and information services sector, a Further Qualification in Information and Library

Services, or at least a vocational upper secondary qualification with a supplementary 20 study weeks of subject and vocational studies in library and information services may be required of certain library personnel.

Provisions on position in the Church are laid down in Episcopal conference decisions, the Church Act (Kirkkolaki 1054/1993) and Church regulations (Kirkkojärjestys (Church Order) 649/2000 and 1955/1993). For example, the post of a deacon requires a Bachelor of Social Services degree or a Registered Nurse's degree with at least 90 credits of theological studies and studies on the church and its work.

Various administrative sectors have a large number of individual regulated professions. These include driving instructor (358/2003), crane operator (truck-mounted crane operator and tower crane operator 403/2008), charge man (122/2002), patent agent (639/1969), and diver or a person working underwater (127/2002). Numerous military vocational and other competences are studied in the Defence Forces, through which both the Defence Forces personnel and conscripts can get, for example, qualifications as a driver, rock blaster, diver, airman or watch-keeping officer. The Border and Coast Guard Academy provides the basic training for eligibility for the position of border or coast guard, and the advanced course which is the qualification for the posts of senior border guard and senior coast guard (269/2000). The Finnish Customs and Finnish Railways, VR, also have training courses that have to be completed for working in certain posts. These training courses include locomotive engineer training and railway guard training as well as a vocational course in the customs sector and a customs course.

#### *Competence areas aiming at development of competence and professional skills*

Another distinctive group are the established, widely known and popular competence areas which are used for supplementing, updating or expanding competence acquired in earlier education leading to a qualification or acquired otherwise.

Especially in higher education, there is a wide range of PD (professional development) studies available in various administrative sectors, which are connected with the development of an individual's own competence. Participation in PD studies is usually voluntary and individuals can participate in them according to their own needs and schedule. The content can also be chosen quite freely. PD studies often include a personal study plan and the studies take place alongside work.

Polytechnics offer specialist vocational studies, which are comprehensive continuing education programmes of 30 to 60 credits based on a polytechnic degree. Specialisation studies in universities are studies required for professional development that supplement the qualifications system, which the universities provide as courses of a minimum of 20 study weeks for people with higher education degrees or others with adequate study prerequisites. Corresponding specialisation studies are also available in other administrative sectors, for example, police chief specialisation studies intended for people with a Master of Laws degree employed by the police.

In connection with vocational upper secondary education and training, other activities closely related to vocational education and training can be provided for students. Vocational institutions may provide various forms of preparatory education, for

example, rehabilitation instruction and guidance for the disabled, preparatory education for immigrants and preparatory instruction and guidance for vocational education and training ('job start'). In addition, courses in home economics can be organised. These various forms of education that focus on coaching, rehabilitation, guiding and preparation as well as teaching in home economics, which last between 20 to 40 study weeks, are training courses based on the core curriculum confirmed by the National Board of Education.

Various computer driving licenses are an established and popular phenomenon in working life. The national recognition rate of driving licences relating to computer and information work and their international comparability is good.

National Certificates of Language Proficiency are language skills tests aimed at adults and are based on an act (964/2004) and Government decree (1163/2004). Certificates of Language Proficiency test language skills in practical situations where adults have to speak, listen, write or read a foreign language either in Finland or abroad. A Certificate in Language Proficiency can be taken in the following languages: English, Spanish, Italian, French, Swedish, the Sámi language, German, Finnish, and Russian.

Folk high schools organise long-term education or so-called long courses, which are training programmes lasting from four weeks to several months. They improve students' working life skills and vocational competence. Folk high schools draw up their own objectives and contents for liberal adult education programmes and classify the education they provide as self-motivated adult education. Some of the folk high schools have directed their education towards student groups in need of special support. They provide individuals with learning difficulties or suffering from work exhaustion with educational rehabilitation. Folk high schools also organise integration education for immigrants.

Military service lasts from half a year to a year. During the military service, the conscripts complete a combatant's qualification. In addition, it is possible to complete a non-commissioned officer course, reserve officer course and leadership and instructor training during the military service. In addition, there are various courses through which some conscripts gain qualifications, for example, as a defence forces driver, rock blaster and diver.

## **9.2 Thoughts on expanding the national framework**

According to the Committee's opinion, prior competence and learning should primarily be placed in qualifications included in the official qualifications system and national framework for qualifications and other competence. The Committee wishes to promote the more flexible recognition of prior learning and competence as part of official qualifications. More attention should also be paid to considering comprehensive competence areas acquired in sectors other than the Ministry of Education from the perspective of learning outcomes and they should be accredited more flexibly as part of qualifications in the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education.

Even though the work of the Committee has focused on the recognition of competence and prior learning within official qualifications, the Committee proposes that the

framework be expanded into a competence framework. At this stage, specific competences of graduates with higher education degrees have been included in the framework in addition to official qualifications. Previous chapters have also considered the placement within the national framework's requirement levels of some comprehensive competence areas in other administrative sectors, such as military vocational training programmes and the basic education for border guards and coastguards.

If progress is made in moving in the direction of a competence framework, one issue that might arise includes the type of comprehensive areas which are widely studied and for which a competent body has determined the competence requirements. Without clear competence requirements and defined learning outcomes it will be impossible to decide where any given competence area should be placed in the framework. The competent body for placement in the framework would be the Ministry of Education.

## 10 Follow-up measures

In chapters 5 to 8 of this report, the Committee covers the follow-up measures relating to developing the content and activities of the national framework for qualifications and other learning relating, for example, to new legislation, the comprehensive review of the qualifications system, promoting the recognition of competence and prior learning, the role of the various actors in the maintenance, development and dissemination of information on the framework, as well as expanding the framework into a competence framework. The following is a summary of immediate measures following the publication of Committee's report.

The Committee proposes that the Ministry of Education coordinate the follow-up measures. The Committee's report will be extensively circulated for comments in August. On the basis of the comments, changes will be made to the report, especially with regard to competence requirements/learning outcomes and legislative proposals.

The Ministry of Education will appoint a committee with a similar composition to the current Committee to coordinate future work. Follow-up work will concern communications, the necessary changes to the report, legislative preparation and the development of the framework into a competence framework. The National Board of Education as the national coordination point of the qualifications framework is, for its part, responsible for the provision of information and training.

The Committee's report will be translated into English and Swedish. The Ministry of Education will coordinate the preparation of the report on the Finnish framework for qualifications and other learning and the referencing of its levels to the European Qualifications Framework that is being drawn up for international use and in accordance with criteria agreed upon in international cooperation as referred to in chapter 7.2.

Legislative preparatory work for an act and a decree on the national qualifications framework and other learning will begin in autumn 2009. The preparation will take into account feedback given in comments and opinions compiled in seminars that will be organised on the national framework.

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR QUALIFICATIONS AND OTHER LEARNING				Appendix 1				
component/level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Knowledge	Possesses the basic knowledge and skills needed for studying and working in a clear operating environment under direct supervision.	Possesses the basic knowledge and cognitive and practical basic skills in his/her field that are needed to be able to utilise this knowledge in performing duties and solving routine problems.	Possesses facts, principles, processes and general concepts which are needed for performing tasks and problem-solving.	Possesses knowledge of the facts and theory in extensive contexts and is capable of utilising this knowledge and skills when solving special problems in his/her field.	Possesses comprehensive and/or specialised knowledge of the facts and theory and is capable of utilising this knowledge and skills in a creative manner when solving abstract problems. Understands the boundaries of knowledge in different fields.	Possesses comprehensive and advanced knowledge of his/her field, including the critical understanding of theories, key concepts, methods and principles. Understands the extent and boundaries of professional duties and/or disciplines.	Understands comprehensive and highly specialised concepts, methods and knowledge corresponding to the special competence in his/her field, which are used as the basis for independent thought and/or research. Understands questions pertaining to the field and interfaces between various fields and evaluates them and new knowledge critically.	Understands extensive knowledge areas and contexts. Possesses the most advanced and/or specialised and most profound knowledge, skills and/or theories, which are placed at the most advanced and/or specialised level of the field and interface between different fields. Possesses the capability to apply knowledge in a creative way. Possesses the capability for creating new knowledge in accordance with good scientific practise.
Work method and application (skills)	Possesses the basic knowledge and skills needed for studying and working in a clear operating environment under direct supervision.	Possesses the basic knowledge and cognitive and practical basic skills in his/her field that are needed to be able to utilise this knowledge in performing duties and solving routine problems. Follows simple rules and uses normal equipment and tools in a supervised operating environment demanding some independent action.	Possesses certain and certain cognitive and practical skills which are needed for completing tasks and solving problems. Chooses and applies basic methods, tools, materials and information. Tailors his/her action to the circumstances and the operating environment when solving problems.	Possesses certain cognitive and practical skills which are needed when solving special problems in his/her field Works independently in usually predictable but possibly changing operating environments.	Possesses comprehensive cognitive and practical skills which are needed when solving abstract problems creatively Works independently in changing operating environments.	Possesses advanced skills, which demonstrate mastery of issues, the capability to apply knowledge and come up with creative solutions, which are required in a specialised professional, scientific or artistic field to solve complex or unpredictable problems.	Possesses the capability to solve demanding problems in research and innovation activities, where new methods and procedures are developed and knowledge from various fields is applied and combined.	Possesses the capability for independent and reliable scientific and professional research. Possesses the capability to develop professional fields of activity and/or disciplines. Possesses the capability to develop and apply new ideas, theories, approaches or processes in the most demanding of operating of environments.
Responsibility, management and entrepreneurship		Shoulders responsibility and shows incentive.	Takes responsibility for completing his/her duties and works safely within a work community.  Possesses the ability	Takes responsibility for completing his/her duties and works safely and responsibly within a work community.  Possesses the	Possesses the capability to manage and oversee operating environments that change unpredictably.	Possesses the capability to manage complex professional work or projects and the capability to work independently in	Possesses the capability for independent work in demanding expert duties in the field or as an entrepreneur.  Possesses the	Possesses the capability to work independently in most demanding expert duties in the field or as an entrepreneur.  Possesses the capability to manage work and/or

			to work in an entrepreneurial manner in someone else's service.	capability for financial, productive and systematic activities and organising work. Possesses the capability to oversee routine tasks performed by others.  Possesses the capability to work in an entrepreneurial manner in someone else's service or as an independent entrepreneur.	Possesses the capability to oversee tasks performed by others.  Possesses the capability to work as an independent entrepreneur in the field.	expert duties in the field. Possesses the capability to make decisions in unpredictable operating environments.  Basic capability to work as an independent entrepreneur in the field.	capability to manage and develop complex, unpredictable and new strategic approaches. Possesses the capability to manage work and/or people.	people.
Evaluation			Evaluates his/her own competence and actions relating to work or studies.	Evaluates his/her own competence and improves actions relating to work or studies. Develops him/herself and his/her work.	Evaluates and develops his/her own as well as others' performance and work.	In addition to the evaluation and development of his/her own competence, is able to take responsibility for the development of individuals and groups.	Possesses the capability to evaluate the activities of individuals or groups. Possesses the capability to accumulate knowledge and practices in his/her field and/or take responsibility for the development of others.	Possesses the capability to come up with syntheses and critical evaluations as needed for solving complex problems in research and/or innovation activities as well as for extending and redefining knowledge or professional practices. Possesses the capability to accumulate knowledge and practices in his/her field and/or take responsibility for developing others.
Key skills for lifelong learning	Takes responsibility for learning under supervision.  Possesses the capability to communicate verbally and responds to simple written communication in	Takes responsibility for learning.  Knows how to communicate verbally and produce normal text.	Possesses the capability for continuous learning.  Knows how to communicate diversely and interactively in various situations and to produce varied texts.	Possesses the capability for continuous learning.  Knows how to communicate diversely and interactively in various situations and to produce varied, also field-specific texts.	Possesses the capability for continuous learning.  Knows how to communicate verbally and in writing both to audiences in the field and outside it.	Possesses the capability for continuous learning.  Knows how to communicate adequately verbally and in writing both to audiences in the field and outside it.	Possesses the capability for continuous learning.  Knows how to communicate verbally and in writing both to audiences in the field and outside it.	Possesses the capability for continuous learning.  Knows how to communicate verbally and in writing well with both the scientific community and the general public on issues pertaining to his/her own research area or discipline and/or

	his/her mother tongue.	Basic language skills in at least one official language and one foreign language.	Possesses the capability to communicate at an international level and to interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.	Can communicate at an international level and interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.	Possesses the capability to communicate at an international level and interact in his/her field in one official language and at least one foreign language.	Possesses the capability to communicate at an international level and interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.	Possesses the capability to communicate at an advanced international level and to interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.	professional field.  Possesses the capability to communicate at an advanced international level and to interact in one official language and at least one foreign language.
--	------------------------	---	---	--	---	--	--	---

Appendix 2	
ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF PLACING UPPER SECONDARY VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK; COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES	
<p><b>Alternative 1</b></p> <p>Qualifications defined in the legislation are placed in the national framework so that the qualifications included in the same type of qualifications are always placed at the same level.</p>	<p><b>Alternative 2</b></p> <p>Qualifications defined in the legislation are placed in the national framework so that the qualifications included in the same type of qualifications are primarily placed at the same level. However, individual vocational qualifications may be at the one level lower or higher if the requirement level of the qualification clearly differs from other qualifications of the same type.</p>
<p><b>Strengths of alternative 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Need to make at most only technical amendments to the current substantive legislation on forms of education.</li> <li>+ Will improve the clarity and transparency of the Finnish qualifications system because the national framework would describe the qualifications system as a whole and combine the qualifications types with the EQF levels.</li> <li>+ Will promote international comparability and recognition of qualifications at a general level.</li> <li>+ Small workload. Would implement the minimum requirements of the EQF recommendation with little national effort.</li> <li>+ Simple and clear.</li> <li>+ The work would produce, for example, communications materials describing the Finnish qualifications system, which could also be utilised in international cooperation and when disseminating information on the framework.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strengths of alternative 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Would make competence and learning outcomes visible through the national frameworks both nationally and internationally.</li> <li>+ Would make the qualifications system more transparent and comparable than alternative 1. The closer the national framework levels are to the EQF levels, the easier international comparison and recognition become.</li> <li>+ The strength is, on the one hand, the primary emphasis on clarity and simplicity and, on the other hand, the flexibility enabled by the range of variation.</li> <li>+ The work will produce, for example, communications materials describing the Finnish qualifications system, which could also be utilised in international cooperation and when disseminating information on the framework.</li> <li>+ The greater emphasis than alternative 1, on the importance of attaining learning outcomes and evaluation in the provision of education and thus more effective steering by the framework as well as its importance for developing education and research.</li> <li>+ Would take the framework more in the direction of a competence framework.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses of alternative 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Would not serve the comparison of competence objectives of qualifications types, for example, with regard to mobility of individuals (description of competence requirements of qualifications at a general level).</li> <li>– Would not sufficiently emphasise the competence targets of each qualification or the learning outcomes produced by the qualification.</li> <li>– Would not promote the recognition and validation of prior competence as effectively as alternative 2.</li> <li>– All qualifications in the same type of qualifications would have to be defined in the future as being equal with regard to the requirement level, regardless of what the working life needs in each field are. As a result, the qualifications objectives could sometimes be under- or over-evaluated with regard to working life needs, in order that the qualification would fit the existing qualifications type classification and the EQF level of that qualifications type.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses of alternative 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– May require amendments in other legislation (incl. determination of competence targets).</li> <li>– Construction of the framework would require more work than alternative 1 but could still be implemented within the time frame included in the EQF recommendation.</li> <li>– Not as clear as alternative 1 because qualifications included in the same type of qualifications could belong to different levels of the national framework. If there were a great number of exceptions in the placement of qualifications based on legislation in the education/qualifications system, the boundaries of the qualifications types would become blurred.</li> <li>– May reflect on the regard for the qualifications and applications to education leading to the qualification.</li> <li>– May affect the regard for the qualifications and vocational fields of the same type of qualifications.</li> </ul>