** FINAL DRAFT **

Transnational Qualifications Framework

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

For

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

Developed by the TQF Management Committee
October 2008

The TQF Management Team:

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This document was drafted and shortly completed thereafter at the first TQF MC Meeting held Singapore' National Institute of Education from 6 – 10 October 2008.

It is a working document which will be circulated to senior officials of the 32 Small States of the Commonwealth for their comments before and at cluster meetings that will be held in the three sub-regions: Asia-Pacific, Africa – Mediterranean, Caribbean.

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COMMUNIQUE

The Transnational Qualifications Framework Management Committee (TQFMC) comprising of Mr. Kaylash Allgoo, Dr. Richard Wah, Mr. Michael Bradshaw, Mr. Franz Gertze, Mr. Abdul Hannan Waheed and Dr. Yvonette Marshall held its first meeting in Singapore from 6th to 10th October 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to develop a consultative document for the implementation of the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) for Virtual Universities for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). This document explains the concept and suggested procedures and guidelines of the VUSSC TQF that would apply to any of the 32 members of the small states of the Commonwealth that wishes to use VUSSC.

The issues that were discussed and agreed at the meeting related to the following:

1.0 Architecture and structure of TQF

- Level descriptors

  The TQFMC proposes a ten (10) level qualifications framework. This proposal is premised on the fact that most of the member states have or are developing NQFs with ten levels. The level descriptors have been drafted and are included in the consultation document. It is imperative to note that where qualification types are added it is done for illustrative purposes only. The actual registration of qualifications will employ the quality assurance mechanisms that have been collectively agreed to by Small States of the Commonwealth.

- Qualifications assurance guidelines

  The quality assurance mechanism for the TQF adopts a flexible directive approach rather than being prescriptive. It relies exclusively on the quality assurance systems of the National Quality Assurance Agencies (NQAAs) of the member states or other recognized QAA, as such agencies tend to have a legitimate status. Guidelines have been drafted to which we hope the providers and NQAAs would subscribe. These guidelines are predominantly informed by the UNESCO guidelines for quality provision of cross-border higher education. A difference is that the TQF is based on voluntary membership premised on acceptance of its guidelines prior to the registration of qualifications.

  Although qualifications nomenclature is not uniform across the small states, there is a groundswell of common activities relating to quality assurance of education and training in these member

states. This would strengthen the growth and the expansion of the TQF.

- Qualifications guidelines

  The TQFMC was also mandated to develop guidelines for translation of qualifications. To this end proposals are made with regard to different qualification types, credits, **translation criteria and credit transfer**. Attention was also given to processes leading to the registration of qualifications onto the TQF.

2.0 Implementation strategy and processes

- Conclusion of consultative process

  One of the outcomes of this meeting was the draft consultative document on the TQF. This document is now made available to member states for their comments. All commentaries will be collated and incorporated where justified and a final document will be circulated to all member states.

  It is also envisaged that cluster meetings will be held as part of the consultation process. These cluster meetings need to be held in the three regions – Africa, Asia-Pacific and Caribbean and facilitated by TQF MC members from the relevant regions before 31st March 2009. While the TQF MC appreciates the huge costs of these cluster meetings, it submits that without them the TQF will not be sustainable as well as to have "buy in" by member states.

  All member states are encouraged to submit preliminary comments (as per template found at page 43 of the document) not later than 10th January 2009 to the TQFMC via the BaseCamp or the Chairperson of the TQFMC at kallgoo@mqa.mu. Commonwealth of Learning (COL) must ensure that the consultative document is submitted to interlocutors and senior officials in all member countries. They too must have access to BaseCamp.

  As soon as possible after all cluster meetings have been conducted, a face to face meeting of TQFMC will be convened to amend and finalise the consultative document. The intention is to present a collectively agreed TQF document via COL to the Ministers of Education at their next meeting.

- The design of VUSSC Portal

  The TQFMC is aware that COL is in the process of developing the VUSSC/TQF portal. This is a crucial step in the implementation of

the TQF. Following our discussions with COL, we recommend that the elements contained in the draft TQF document inform the design of the VUSSC/TQF portal.

- Strategic Plan for TQF
  TQFMC has also identified the need to work on a strategic plan. The aim of the plan is to clarify the direction that we ought to take together, to outline the procedures and processes and to spell out marketing and financial aspects. This is expected to be done in early 2009 after the appointment of the VUSSC Education Specialist.

3.0   Forging the way forward

In pursuance with the terms of reference of TQFMC, the following persons were elected:

Mr. Kaylash Allgoo	Chairperson
Mr. Michael Bradshaw	Vice Chairperson
Dr. Richard Wah	Vice Chairperson

It is recommended that the Chairperson of the TQFMC be an ex-officio member of the VUSSC Management Committee.

Important issues for consideration towards implementation of the TQF include:
- The conclusion of the consultation process
- Design of the VUSSC portal; and
- Strategic plan for TQF

4.0   Funding and staffing

We have noted the significant progress made in the recruitment of the VUSSC Education Specialist and we recommend the recruitment/appointment of a part-time administrative assistant. These milestones are valued however, more clarity is required on how the TQF activities will be funded and sustained.

Consultation of the draft document both virtually and through cluster meetings, the development and registration of qualifications and further development and maintenance of the portal as well as quality assurance

are all costly and COL should assist in this regard by sourcing the required funds.

5.0 The evolving nature of the consultative document

The proposed draft document does not claim to be complete but is by its very nature consultative and evolving. Dynamics of quality assurance that maybe outstanding will be included as and when appropriate.

6.0 The Role, Responsibilities and Reporting lines

The reporting line adopted by the TQFMC is the following:

The TQFMC was nominated by the national representatives of National Qualifications Authorities who participated in a VUSSC TQF meeting, hosted by COL in February 2008. The TQFMC has elected its own chair and two vice chairs. The Committee reports to the VUSSC Management Committee that was approved at the meeting of Interlocutors' at their bi-annual meeting, held in London in July 2008. For this reason the TQFMC recommends that its chair becomes a member of the Management Committee of the VUSSC Initiative.

Furthermore, the VUSSC Management Committee will cooperate with COL to oversee the activities of the VUSSC, working directly with the VUSSC Education Specialist, who will be an employee of COL from January 2009. The President of COL reports on VUSSC to the Ministers of Education at their triennial meeting and will carry out this task with the assistance of the VUSSC Management Committee.

The TQFMC requests COL to communicate the appointments to the Ministers of Education of the small states.

7.0 Conclusion

Significant progress has been made and the TQFMC takes pleasure in presenting the first draft, by the end of October 2008, of the TQF Guidelines, Level Descriptors and Quality Assurance Procedures for comments from the member countries. The successful implementation of the TQF requires commitment and buy-in of all Small States of the Commonwealth. The importance of section 2.0 is vital to ensure collective understanding, commitment and networking to realize the full potential of VUSSC.

Most importantly, the proposed TQF relies on national quality assurance systems. The TQF does not aim to substitute national QA systems, but strives to achieve coherence through being a translation instrument for qualifications. The Ministers of Education conceived a collaborative system for capacity building of learning in our nations and the TQF is a fitting response to their noble aspirations. The TQF also encourages human resource development for QA systems in the member countries and strengthening south-south co-operation.

We wish to thank firstly SAQA, Dr. James Keevy and Mr. Samuel Isaacs, who assisted us during the first part of the week for their invaluable contributions. Equally, we must thank Dr.Roli Degazon-Johnson of the Commonwealth Secretariat for her insightful contributions and COL for their usual support. Finally we wish to sincerely express our thanks to NIE and especially Mr Jacques See for his untiring humour, friendship and continuous support. We also wish to place on record our appreciation to the Government of Singapore for hosting us.

The fate of this worthwhile initiative is in our hands.
Let's mould it together and ensure it works.

Acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
APQN	Asia-Pacific Quality Network
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CCEM	Committee of Commonwealth Education Ministers
CKLN	Caribbean Knowledge Learning Network
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
MQA	Mauritius Qualifications Authority
NQAA	National Quality Assurance Agency
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
RVQ	Regional Vocational Qualification
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SQA	Seychelles Qualifications Authority
TQF	Transnational Qualifications Framework
TQFMC	Transnational Qualifications Framework Management Committee
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCSIS	University Consortium for Small and Island States
UKQAA	United Kingdom Quality Assurance Agency
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VUSSC	Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth

CHAPTER ONE – SITUATING THE CONCEPT

1. Introduction

The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) is an initiative of the Ministers of Education of the 32 small countries that account for two-thirds of Commonwealth member states. It is not a tertiary institution but a world-spanning collaborative network for strengthening and developing the existing institutions in these States. Ministers asked the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to facilitate the project.

At present 30 Commonwealth small states participate in the VUSSC initiative: Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Lesotho, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland, The Bahamas, The Comoros (non-Commonwealth), The Gambia, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Following a request from the participating VUSSC countries in March 2007 to "create mechanisms to support the accreditation of qualifications and transfer of credits between countries", a process was initiated to analyze and find commonalties between existing qualifications frameworks, with the view of using these as a basis for the development of a qualifications framework for VUSSC qualifications across member countries, hence developing a Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF).

A concept document for a TQF for the recognition of qualifications offered by the VUSSC was developed based on a review of existing qualifications systems in small states of the Commonwealth that was conducted in 2007. The concept document was presented to senior officials in February 2008; an updated draft was endorsed by VUSSC interlocutors in July of the same year.

1.1   Definition of a Qualifications Framework

The following is a broad "working definition" of a qualifications framework, based on a range of existing definitions.

> **A qualifications framework is an instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims to integrate and coordinate qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access,**

progression, comparability and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

The intention of this "working definition" is not to replace other national or regional definitions, but instead to create a point of reference from which the concept of a TQF can be developed.

1.2   Overview of the VUSSC Transnational Qualifications Framework

In developing the TQF concept, the following unique characteristics of the VUSSC were taken into consideration:

- The VUSSC is premised on a virtual mode for distance education that is expected to improve access to educational opportunities, enhance the quality of teaching and reduce costs.
- All member countries use English as a common language when working across borders.
- Participating VUSSC countries are all small states that share at least some common challenges in the face of globalisation and the increased mobility of highly skilled professionals.
- The 30 participating VUSSC countries are located across the globe within at least six regional groupings (SADC, ECOWAS, COMESA, EU, Asia-Pacific, and CARICOM), which presents challenges to effective credit transfer.

Definition of a Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF)

The TQF is defined as a translation instrument for the classification of VUSSC qualifications according to set criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, to improve credit transfer and promote common accreditation mechanisms between participating VUSSC countries.

It is important to note that the TQF is first and foremost a 'translation instrument' and it is not intended to replace any existing sectoral, national or regional qualifications frameworks or quality assurance systems, but rather provides a means by which different frameworks can be compared and related.

The TQF, as a translation instrument, will rely heavily on existing national standards development and quality assurance systems, only providing an alternative where a country has no such systems, or in some cases, prefers to adhere to the broader transnational criteria.

The TQF is a unified qualifications framework that includes both higher education qualifications and post-secondary technical and vocational qualifications offered through the VUSSC.

THE VUSSC TRANSNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (TQF)

The main components of the VUSSC TQF are:
- Qualifications Levels
- Qualification Types
- Quality Assurance Criteria

1.3   Rationale

The development of a VUSSC TQF was in direct response to the request from participating VUSSC countries in March 2007 to "create mechanisms to support the accreditation of qualifications and transfer of credits between countries". It is indeed a difficult task to develop an instrument that will fully meet the needs of all members. The phenomena of qualifications frameworks are in different stages of their development in different countries around the globe. Therefore, in order to develop one that meets the needs of the majority, it is important to find commonalities between existing qualifications frameworks with the view of using these as a basis for the development of a qualifications framework for the VUSSC registered qualifications across member countries – a Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF).
The VUSSC TQF is intended to be used by small states of the Commonwealth to both register and access quality assured programmes. In this regard, the VUSSC TQF should be reflective enough of all the member states in order for them to identify with it.

The guidelines, descriptors and quality assurance mechanisms used in the VUSSC TQF were adapted from a wide array of quality assurance agencies within member countries to ensure that the scope and depth were adequate and appropriate. The development of the VUSSC TQF was informed by the review of existing qualifications systems in small states of the Commonwealth conducted in 2007. The VUSSC TQF is not intended to replace existing sectoral, national or regional qualifications systems, but rather to introduce a separate and flexible model for VUSSC to employ as a mechanism for registering qualifications based on the principles of simplicity, incrementalism and local involvement.

The decision to use a ten (10) level system for situating qualifications on VUSSC TQF was conforming to international trends as well as was on the popular existence of this model among member states. In this regard, the choice of descriptors was also based on international best practice and popular use among small state members. However, while the proposed VUSSC TQF sought to describe all the ten levels, a decision was taken to focus on qualifications at level four (Certificate) and five (Diploma) at this time. The qualifications at these levels generally include training that is competency based. Further, it was in this context that the issue of credit level descriptors

was discussed in the VUSSC TQF document to help work out the level of learning in individual modules and units. It was agreed that ten (10) notional hours be applied to one (1) credit. Similarly, this decision was based on international best practice as well as commonality in use among member states.

Any qualifications framework must be informed by accepted quality assurance practices. While those listed in the VUSSC TQF document are not intended to replace those in National and Regional Quality Assurance Agencies, they are intended to be a guide to NQAA's and RQAA's as to the criteria that the VUSSC TQF will use to accept the registration of qualifications on its portal. This practice is intended to ensure that the rigor, transparency and integrity usually associated with quality assurance are adhered to.

CHAPTER TWO - THE TQF

This chapter identifies the different aspects of the transnational qualifications framework. The Qualifications guidelines enable the delineation of the conceptual framework providing at the outset consistent reference to the qualifications table and its descriptors. Besides a brief overview of the different qualification type is proposed in this chapter.

2.0   Qualifications Guidelines

2.1   Qualification types:

1.   Certificates (Levels 1 - 4),
2.   Diplomas (Levels 5 - 8),
3.   Associate Degree (Level 6),
4.   Foundation Degree (Level 7),
5.   Bachelor's Degrees (Levels 7 - 8),
6.   Graduate Certificates (Level 7)
7.   Graduate Diplomas (Level 7)
8.   Postgraduate Certificates (Level 8),
9.   Postgraduate Diplomas (Level 8),
10.   Masters Degrees (Level 9),
11.   Doctoral Degrees (Level 10).

2.1.1 Credits:

A credit is a "currency" providing a measure of learning outcomes achieved in notional hours at a given level. It is awarded for learning that has been achieved and verified through reliable and valid assessment. In the TQF system 1 credit equates 10 notional hours of learning at the appropriate level – e.g. a minimum of 120 credits at Certificate level 4 and a minimum of 240 credits at Diploma level 5.

2.1.2 Qualifications criteria:

These will specify the complexity, volume and level of learning expected for the qualification, and describes the expected outcomes of the qualification in the form of a broad profile of the learner's competencies.

2.1.3 Modularisation and credit transfer:

All qualifications should consist of modules[1] that are registered separately on the TQF. It is possible for the same modules to be used in more than one qualification. Modules will be translated onto the TQF via level descriptors and registered at a particular level based on the TQF guidelines.

The registration of modules on the TQF should help sending and receiving institutions with the evaluation of credit transfers of VUSSC registered qualifications. The facilitation of student mobility through TQF translation process will provide greater learning pathways towards a qualification that are not present in many small states. For example, an institution could identify modules available on VUSSC that have not been or cannot be developed by it. Those modules could then be used to complete a programme of study of that institution which could lead to a national qualification. Clearly the final qualification would be made up of VUSSC registered and national modules and therefore could be co-branded provided it is registered on TQF. This process has significant implication for curriculum design, quality assurance and increased programme offerings for institutions in small states.

While credit transfers are the responsibility of the receiving competent provider, collectively agreed VUSSC TQF guidelines can be used to negotiate such processes between sending and receiving institutions if there is some disagreement of credit transfers from one institution to another.

To successfully transfer credits the following criteria are suggested:

1. The educational institution from which the qualification was gained must be recognized by the relevant national or regional accrediting body.
2. The original certificates and official transcripts, or notarized copies from the educational institutions where qualifications were awarded, are provided. If these are not in English official translations must be submitted with the documentation.
3. Course(s) was/were completed no more than ten years before the date of application for credit, unless the course content is still valid and taught as part of the current programme.
4. Assessment documentation and evidence are presented for moderation before credit transfer is confirmed.

Translation of a qualification onto the TQF will be at a level where at least 60% of the credits making up that qualification are at that level and at least 20% of

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[1] Modules are separate units of study. Synonyms use in various countries include: courses, units and papers. These units are studies usually put together to make up programmes of study that lead to qualifications.

the remaining credits are at higher levels.

2.1.4   The Qualifications Table.

The following qualifications table is proposed:

LEVEL	QUALIFICATIONS TITLES	MINIMUM CREDITS
10	Doctoral Degree	360
9	Masters Degree	240
8	Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma; Bachelor's Degree with Honours	120
7	Bachelor's Degree Graduate Certificate and Diploma;	360
6	Advanced/ Higher Diploma Associate Degree/ Foundation Degree	240
5	Diploma	240
4	Advanced Certificate	120
3	Certificate III	40
2	Certificate II	40
1	Certificate I	40

 The qualifications titles of the VUSSC TQF are examples only, to encourage flexibility and the accurate assignment to a level. Each qualification on the Framework describes what a learner needs to know or what they must be able to do.

It is generally agreed that learners' achievements can be recognized in a number of contexts. Their knowledge and skills will be transferable between qualifications and providers.

THE VUSSC TRANSNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (TQF)

The names of the qualifications (the qualification definitions) allow for the

- comparability of qualifications;
- easy understanding of qualifications; and
- international recognition of qualifications

Each qualification on the Framework will have a statement of learning outcomes. This includes statements about:

- what the whole qualification represents in terms of the application of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes; and
- the components of the qualification which, in their combination, make up the wholeness of the qualification.

2.1.5 Certificate

Certificates may be used in a wide range of contexts across all levels up to and including level 7, and are often used to prepare candidates for both employment and further education and training.

Certificates I-III has a minimum credit requirement of 40 credits. Advanced Certificate has a minimum credit requirement of 120 credits. Entry to Certificates I-III is open. Entry to the Advanced Certificate is from a Higher/Senior Secondary Certificate or from the completion of a relevant qualification from at least level 3. Certificates awarded beyond level 7 may be termed graduate or post-graduate.

Advanced Certificate may be used in a wide range of contexts and are often used to prepare candidates for both employment and further education and training.

2.1.6 Diploma

A diploma is a qualification that commonly has a wider theoretical base than a certificate and more specialized, technical, professional or managerial competencies.

Diplomas often prepare learners for self-directed application of skills and knowledge. These qualifications often build on prior qualifications or experience and recognize capacity for initiative and judgment :

- across a broad range of educational and vocational areas
- in technical, professional, and/or management roles.

A diploma must have at least 240 of credits contributing to the qualification at level 5. Diploma awarded at level 6 maybe termed advanced or higher. Diplomas awarded beyond level 7 maybe termed graduate or postgraduate.

2.1.7 Associate Degree or Foundation Degree

An Associate or Foundation Degree is a programme designed to facilitate student successful progression to the full degree or directly to employment. These degrees focus on learning within a work context, underpinned by both vocational and academic understanding, and enable learners to demonstrate learning outcomes that are explicitly relevant to employment and professional requirements. The associate and the foundation degree will have at least 240 credits of which at least 90 will match the level 6 descriptor.

2.1.8 Bachelor's Degree

A Bachelor's Degree is a systematic, research-based, coherent, introduction to the knowledge, ideas, principles, concepts, chief research methods and to the analytical and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject or subjects. A programme leading to this qualification usually involves major studies in which significant knowledge is available. Programme content is taken to a significant depth and progressively developed to a high level, which can provide a basis for post-graduate study and professional careers. A bachelor's degree requires a minimum of 360 credits from levels 4 to 7, of which at least 120 will match the level 7 descriptor. A maximum of 20 credits should be at level 4 (such that the integrity of the qualification at the higher levels is maintained).

A programme of study leading to a Bachelor's Degree builds upon prior study, work or experience and is open to those who have met the specified entrance requirements.

A person who holds a Bachelor's Degree may be able to enrol for the Postgraduate Diploma or a Masters Degree.

2.1.9 Bachelor's Degree with Honours

A Bachelor's Degree with Honours may be awarded to recognise advanced or distinguished study of a level 7 Bachelor's Degree. This may occur by recognising outstanding achievement in a 480 credit (or more) Bachelor's Degree especially in relation to work of a research nature (typically at level 8);

or achieving at least 120 credits at level 8 following a level 7 Bachelor's Degree (either as part of an integrated Honours degree or as a separate qualification).

2.1.10   Masters Degree

A Masters Degree is normally designed to extend the principal subject or subjects of the qualifying degree or may build on relevant knowledge and skills derived from advanced occupational experience. A Masters Degree contains a significant element of supervised research, normally embodied in a thesis, dissertation or substantial research paper. The Masters Degree requires a minimum of 240 credits, with at least 120 matching the level 9 descriptor. Where the Masters degree builds upon a four (or longer) Bachelor's Degree, it can be fewer than 240 credits but no fewer than 120 credits.

Masters degrees usually build on undergraduate degrees, bachelor with Honours degrees or postgraduate diplomas. They may also build on extensive professional experience of an appropriate kind. They are demonstrably in advance of undergraduate study, and require students to engage in scholarship and/or research.

Providers of courses leading to masters qualifications are responsible for establishing entry requirements. The minimum entry qualification for a 240 credit masters degree is a Bachelor's degree or equivalent. For a masters degree of fewer than 240 credits, normally the minimum entry qualification is a Bachelor's degree with honours or a postgraduate diploma.

Admission as a candidate for a masters degree is based on the evaluation of documentary evidence (including the academic record) of the applicants ability to undertake postgraduate study in a specialist field of enquiry or professional practice. The candidate must have attained, through formal study, professional or other experience, a high order of knowledge about the principal subject(s), and have demonstrated interest in, and an aptitude for scholarship.

An applicant who holds either a Bachelor's degree with honours or a postgraduate certificate or diploma may be exempted from all or some of the taught courses.

A person who holds a masters degree which includes a substantial component of research may be considered for admission to a programme of advanced study and/or original research leading to a doctoral degree.

2.1.11 Doctoral Degree

The Doctoral degree recognizes a substantial original contribution to knowledge in the form of new knowledge or significant and original adaptation, application and interpretation of existing knowledge.

A Doctoral Degree is a research qualification that is at a significantly higher level than the Masters degree, reflecting scholarly independence, and is awarded in recognition of research which has made a substantial and original contribution to knowledge. The doctoral programme will be equivalent to a minimum of 3 years of full-time study, or 360 credits matching the level 10 descriptor.

Typical programs and entry pathways are:

- the *research doctorate*, which is primarily achieved through supervised research, with entry from a research or part-research <u>Masters degree</u>, or a <u>Bachelor's with Honours degree</u> (First or Second Class, upper division);
- the *professional doctorate*, which may be undertaken through varying combinations of coursework and research, with entry from a combined research and coursework <u>Masters degree</u>, a <u>Bachelor's with Honors degree</u> (First or Second Class, upper division) or equivalent and requires significant professional practice either prior to and/or as part of the programme.

2.1.12 Registering qualifications on the TQF:

The *transnational qualifications criteria* cover three critical areas:
- demand for the qualification;
- fitness for purpose of the qualification; and
- assessment design.

A qualification that meets the transnational qualifications criteria will be registered on the TQF – such a qualification will be referred to as a "TQF registered qualification". Any education and training provider within a participating VUSSC country that meets the broad quality-assurance criteria, and is accredited on a sectoral, national and/or regional level, will be able to offer such a registered qualification.

THE VUSSC TRANSNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (TQF)

2.2   VUSSC'S TQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS:

2.2.1 Definition:

Level descriptors refer to the statements describing the ***characteristics*** of the generic outcomes of each of the ten (10) levels in the TQF. Characteristics consist of the knowledge, skills/competencies and attributes that participants should possess or be able to demonstrate on completion of a programme/course/module.

2.2.2 Dimensions of the Level Descriptors:

▸ Level descriptors are broad, generic qualitative statements that indicate specific learning outcomes at a given level on the TQF.

▸ Level descriptors take account of different types of learning at the same level, including:

  ▸ Knowledge (and understanding)

  ▸ Skills

  ▸ Wider personal and professional competencies.

▸ Levels are not intrinsically related to period of study.

▸ The descriptors are intended to integrate academic, technical-vocational education and training (TVET) and professional aspects of learning; and, apply to all learning contexts – class work, practical work, work-based learning, etc.

▸ They are not intended to be prescriptive but rather flexible enough to provide a guideline to practitioners involved in the design and delivery of the curriculum for any field of study.

▸ The descriptors have been developed with the intention that the curriculum specialist will use his/her professional expertise to translate them into his/her own field of study.

▸ The level descriptors can be used to aid the assessment of claims for recognition of prior learning.

▸ Level descriptors are designed to act as a guide to pitch a qualification (and its associated learning programme) at the appropriate level on the TQF.

▸ Level descriptors should also help in making comparisons across qualifications in a variety of fields and disciplines pitched at the same level of the TQF.

2.2.3 Level Descriptors:

The framework has ten (10) levels, seven (7) of which are situated at undergraduate level and three (3) of which are at postgraduate level. In each case, such level represents bands of qualifications sharing similar characteristics (level descriptors). Level descriptors are not ceiling of each level but they are indicators of the complexity of the quantum of the learning being done. It is very important to note that the "illustrative examples of qualifications" in the table below are provided ONLY as examples of qualifications that may exist at those levels.

VUSSC'S TQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS			
Levels	**Descriptors** **Holders Of This Qualification Will:**	**Illustrative Examples Of Qualifications**	**Min. Credit**
10.	• acquire and possess a systematic understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice. • be able to create and interpret new knowledge at a most advanced frontier of a field of work or study through original and advanced research of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline and merit publication. • possess the most advanced and specialized skills and techniques to be able to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge or to solve critical problems or to refute or redefine existing knowledge. • demonstrate authority, innovation, autonomy, integrity and personal responsibility to the production or development of innovative ideas or processes in the context of an academic	**Doctoral degrees**	

	discipline, field of study or area of professional practice.		
9.	• have a logical understanding of a body of highly (seek another term) specialized knowledge some of which is at the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice, as a basis for original thought and/or the conduct of research and/or enquiry. • have a comprehensive understanding of the research skills and/or relevant established techniques applicable to their own research or to advanced scholarship that can be used to create and interpret knowledge. • demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge to solve problems, together with a practical understanding of how knowledge can be managed to transform work or study. • possess a conceptual understanding of how to analyze and critically evaluate current research in their academic discipline, field of study or work and to apply where appropriate to solve problems.	**Masters degrees** – MA MSc M.Phil MBA, MEngineering/ME	
8.	• have systematic, extensive and comparative knowledge of the key aspects of their academic discipline, field of study or work. • possess an ability to deploy accurately established analytical tools and/or techniques and enquiry within their academic discipline, field of study or work. • be able to use their knowledge, understanding and skills of a wide range of concepts, ideas and information to devise and sustain arguments and/or to solve problems. • display a critical understanding of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge and how it is developed. • possess the ability to manage their own learning and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (e.g. refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).	**Bachelor's** (Hons) Postgraduate Certificates Postgraduate Diplomas	
7.	• have advanced knowledge of a field of work or	**Bachelor's**	

	study, involving a critical understanding of the well-established principles and including an understanding of some advanced aspect(s) of their area(s) of their field of work or study; where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context. • have an understanding of the limits of that knowledge and how this influences analysis and interpretation based on that knowledge. • possess advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in their specialized field of work or study. • be able to manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision making in unpredictable work or study contexts.	**degree** BA BSc BE BNursing	
6.	• possess an in-depth knowledge and critical understanding of the ideas, concepts and principles in their field of work or study • have knowledge of the methods of enquiry in the subject, and use a range of techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, proposing solutions to problems arising from that analysis • demonstrate an ability to critically evaluate and apply the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems • apply those concepts and principles more widely • have an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations • effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis, in a variety of forms, to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively • have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.	**Advanced Diploma** of Higher Education Associate degrees National Vocational Qualifications Regional Vocational Qualifications	
5.	• have broad knowledge and understanding of the main underlying ideas, concepts and	**Diploma** of Higher Education	240

	principles in a field of work or study • be able to use their knowledge, understanding and skills to critically evaluate and determine appropriate methods and procedures to respond to a range of problems of a generally routine nature. • display qualities and transferable knowledge and skills necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility. • communicate the results of their field of study or work accurately and reliably using a range of different modalities. • identify and articulate their own learning needs within defined contexts and undertake guided further learning in new areas.	Associate degrees National Vocational Qualifications Regional Vocational Qualifications	
4.	• have a broad knowledge and understanding of the main underlying concepts and principles in a field of work or study. • demonstrate a basic understanding of the major theories, principles, ideas and concepts of their particular area of study. • be able to use different approaches to identify, evaluate and solve problems of a generally routine nature. • be able to use their knowledge, understanding of a particular subject area to communicate accurately and reliably with structured and coherent arguments, • use their knowledge, understanding and skills to undertake further learning within a structured and managed environment. • possess the qualities and transferable skills needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility	**Certificates**	120
3.	• demonstrate a knowledge of basic concepts and principles in a field of work or study; • have command of analytical interpretation of information • express informed judgment	**Upper Secondary Education:** Certificate III National	

	• be able to display a range of known responses to familiar problems	Vocational Qualifications National Certificates	
2.	• demonstrate a narrow range of applied knowledge and basic comprehension in a field of work or study • display a narrow range of skills in a field of work or study • be able to use known solutions to familiar problems	**Lower Secondary Education:** Certificate II National Vocational Qualifications National Certificates Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) awards	
1.	• demonstrate basic literacy and numeracy skills	Entry Level 1: Certificate I Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) awards	

The development of this table draws heavily from various QAAs especially from the UKQAA, NZQA, MQA, NQA and SQA.

2.3   QUALITY ASSURANCE PRINCIPLES

2.3.1 INTRODUCTION

2.3.2 Concept

In the concept document, Transnational Qualifications Framework for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (May 2008) it is stated that most TQF qualifications will form a subset of qualifications already registered elsewhere. In some cases, unique qualifications may be developed through the VUSSC for specific purposes, but even in such cases, it is recommended that the qualifications be registered on at least one national qualifications framework. It is further stated that "the TQF will be first and foremost a translation instrument with no regulatory capacity" (p 99)[2]

It is within this context that the approach of **guidelines** (and not standards/criteria) for quality assurance at National Quality Assurance Agency (NQAA)[3] is recommended.

The TQF Management Committee is equally conscious of the fact that a significant amount of commendable work was already done to improve quality assurance systems at international level. UNESCO, INQAAHE's Guidelines for Good Practice, The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education's Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area have all contributed to the development of guidelines for quality assurance of education and training

Most of the Small States of the Commonwealth are also members of the United Nations and/or INQAAHE and may already have accepted/approved these guidelines. Needless to say, therefore, that guidelines like these are useful and have informed the development of the VUSSC quality assurance system. Many of these guidelines are copied without any amendment but are subject to change throughout the approval stages. The direct copying and extensive reliance on these already agreed standards and guidelines stems from the fact that NQAAs in the Small States of the Commonwealth also are members of bodies like UNESCO,
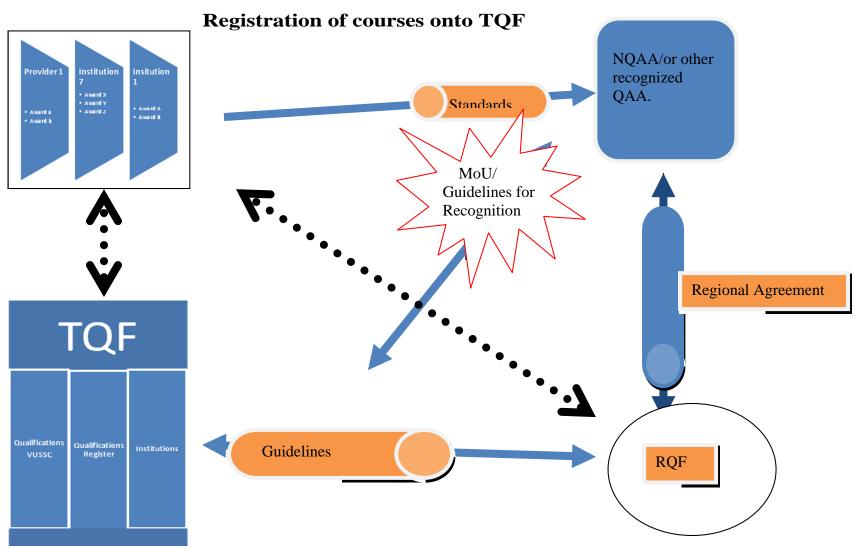
After considering various national and regional Quality Assurance (QA) approaches the following model was adopted for TQF's QA for the registration of courses (Diagram 1).

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[2] Transnational Qualification Framework for the Virtual Universities for Small States of the Commonwealth. Concept Document. May 2008.

[3] References to NQAA include other QAAs if an NQAA is not available..

Diagram 1

Registration of courses onto TQF

Provider 1	Institution 7	Insitution 1
• Award a • Award b	• Award X • Award Y • Award Z	• Award A • Award B

Standards

NQAA/or other recognized QAA.

MoU/ Guidelines for Recognition

Regional Agreement

TQF

Qualifications VUSSC	Qualifications Register	Institutions

Guidelines

RQF

Note: Dotted lines refer to registration process of courses that have already been quality assured by the NQAA or other recognized authority. *Countries may through their NQAA/Ministry request that their qualification be pitched on the TQF either through an official document in the form of an MoU or through established regional agreements with the RQF*

2.3.3 Assumptions of this system are:

2.3.3.1   That the TQF's role includes:
   a. Registering of qualifications.
   b. Ensuring the QA of NQAs are aligned to TQF QA benchmarks
   c. Development and maintenance of IT systems for learners, qualifications and providers.
   d. Being a translation and not an accreditation instrument.
   e.

2.3.3.2   The standards that the courses and providers must meet are determined and monitored by the relevant NQAA.

These standards should be easily aligned to TQF level descriptors.

2.3.3.3   The linkages between NQAAs and RQF

Is via collective agreement amongst countries in that region. E.g. CARICOM, PRQR, SADC. Such linkages to resolve around collective negotiations of QA of each of the countries.

2.3.3.4   The linkages between NQAAs and TQF could be via RQF or directly.

2.3.3.5   Directly (NQAAs – TQF):

This linkage would be via consensus/resolution/negotiation amongst NQAAs, and between the NQAAs and TQF. Such a document would include benchmarks/guidelines for recognition. This relationship however, is enabling and voluntary[4] rather than prescriptive or regulatory.

2.3.3.6   Via RQF (NQAAs – RQF – TQF):

This linkage would include guidelines which have been arrived at through consensus/resolution/negotiation amongst RQFs, and between RQFs and TQF managements.

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[4] Voluntary refers to the agreement to adhere to the principles and guidelines of VUSSC TQF that have be collectively agreed to.

2.3.3.7   Translation process from NQAA to TQF could be via RQF or directly:

2.3.3.8   Directly (NQAAs – TQF):

This translation is operational under the consensus/resolution/negotiation collectively between NQAAs and TQF. Such a document would include benchmarks/guidelines for assessing materials, delivery and QA.

2.3.3.9   Via RQF (NQAAs – RQF – TQF):

This linkage would include consensus/resolution/negotiation collectively between RQF and TQF managements[5].
It is equally true that the challenges faced by the Small States of the Commonwealth are unique. The quality assurance guidelines for the TQF thus have to be tailored to meet these challenges that are unique to the Small States. It becomes obvious then that whilst the QA approaches, processes and guidelines for the TQF would resemble similarities with ones that are already in existence there would be some distinct differences as well.

As is the case with all other quality assurance systems, there must be agreement in terms of this proposed model. There must be agreement in terms of global considerations, principles, standards and guidelines of quality assurance that to a great extent common to all, regardless of size and development level of the particular nation. They should be applicable to providers both internally and/or externally, to an agency or similar entity.

There is no certainty whether or not all of the members of the Small States of the Commonwealth have NQAAs. Any entity in such a country should none-the-less either enter into agreements with the TQF and/or a NQQA from one of the members where the qualifications may have to be registered.

These guidelines aim to address the implementation of quality assurance principles in an international context and are not very prescriptive but based on generally accepted quality assurance principles.

The guideline*s* are designed in such a fashion to cater for national, regional and transnational requirements for Small States of the Commonwealth whilst at the same time incorporating international perspectives that will facilitate interchanges with other Small States (on a regional basis and extra-regionally) and collaboration with existing initiatives.

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[5] What if the different pathways produce different results?

Some of the basic requirements of any quality assurance system in education and training are:

- Functional QA systems
- Goals and Objectives of Quality Assurance
- Official status
- Independence/Governance/Autonomy
- Reporting lines, frequency, format, not for control but rather for continuous improvement
- Follow-up procedures
- Recognizing Internal Quality Assurance
- Transparency and Integrity of Quality Assurance procedures
- Appeals mechanism
- Commitment to cooperation across national borders
- Demonstrating Quality

2.4   Guidelines

2.4.1 Guidelines for education and training institutions/providers

All providers have the primary responsibility to commit themselves to quality of their activities and the standards of qualifications provided in their name, no matter where or how it is delivered.

Providers are therefore expected to:

a. Ensure that they deliver relevant quality qualifications and services.
b. Develop, maintain or review current internal quality management systems so that they make full use of the competencies of stakeholders such as academic staff, administrators, students and graduates and take full responsibility for delivering higher education qualifications comparable in standard in their home country and across borders.
c. cooperate with competent quality assurance and accreditation bodies
d. Share good practices by participating in sector organisations and inter-institutional networks at national and international levels.
e. Develop and maintain networks and partnerships to facilitate the process of recognition by acknowledging each other's qualifications as equivalent or comparable.
f. Where relevant, use codes of good practice such as the TQF guidelines.
g. Provide accurate, reliable and easily accessible information on the criteria and procedures of external and internal quality assurance and the academic and professional recognition of qualifications they deliver and provide complete descriptions of programmes and qualifications, preferably with

descriptions of the knowledge, understanding and skills that a successful student should acquire. Higher education institutions/providers should collaborate especially with quality assurance and accreditation bodies and with student bodies to facilitate the dissemination of this information.

h. Ensure the transparency of the financial status of the institution and/or educational programme offered.

2.4.2 Guidelines for quality assurance and accreditation bodies

National Quality assurance and accreditation bodies are responsible for assessing the quality of education provision in a given country. These NQAAs have different types of quality assurance systems. Some of these bodies have a legal status and others are non-governmental bodies. Furthermore, some differences exist in the terminologies used, the definition of "quality", the purpose and function of the system including its link to the funding of students, institutions or programmes, the methodologies used in quality assurance and accreditation, the scope and function of the responsible body or unit, and the voluntary or compulsory nature of participation. Whilst the diversity is appreciated, it is also noted that there are common features of these systems.

Within this context, it is recommended that quality assurance and accreditation bodies:

a) Ensure that their quality assurance and accreditation arrangements include national, regional and TQF relationships. This can mean giving attention to assessment guidelines, ensuring that standards and processes are transparent, consistent and appropriate to take account of the shape and scope of the national education and training system, and adaptability to changes and developments in cross-border provision.

b) Sustain and strengthen the existing regional and international networks or establish regional networks in regions that do not already have one. These networks can serve as platforms to exchange information and good practice, disseminate knowledge, increase the understanding of international developments and challenges as well as to improve the professional expertise of their staff and quality assessors. These networks could also be used to improve awareness of disreputable providers and dubious quality assurance and accreditation bodies, and to develop monitoring and reporting systems that can lead to their identification.

c) Establish links to strengthen the collaboration between the bodies of the sending country and the receiving country and enhance the mutual

understanding of different systems of quality assurance and accreditation. This may facilitate the process of assuring the quality of programmes delivered across borders and institutions operating across borders while respecting the quality assurance and accreditation systems of the receiving countries.

d) Provide accurate and easily accessible information on the assessment standards, procedures, and effects of the quality assurance mechanisms on the funding of students, institutions or programmes where applicable as well as the results of the assessment. Quality assurance and accreditation bodies should collaborate with other actors, especially higher education institutions/providers, academic staff, student bodies and academic recognition bodies to facilitate the dissemination of such information.

e) Apply the principles reflected in current international documents on cross-border higher education such as the Guidelines for the TQF, UNESCO, and the EQF Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education.

f) Reach mutual recognition agreements with other bodies on the basis of trust in and understanding of each other's professional practice, develop systems of internal quality assurance and regularly undergo external evaluations, making full use of the competencies of stakeholders. Where feasible, consider undertaking experiments in international evaluation or peer reviews.

g) Consider adoption of procedures for the international composition of peer review panels, international benchmarking of standards, criteria and assessment procedures and undertake joint assessment projects to increase the comparability of evaluation activities of different quality assurance and accreditation bodies.

2.5   *Processes for Quality Assurance.*

2.5.1 How to Register Qualifications on TQF.

To register qualifications, TQFMC should work through the NQAAs and other recognized accreditation authorities on issues of comparability of qualifications. **This is a very important and non negotiable requirement for registration of qualifications on the VUSCC website.** Providers will have access to course materials made available on the VUSSC website but when the courses are translated into a qualification, the latter must be quality assured

through NQAA and comply with national standards, and, the TQF guidelines. Providers are able to directly approach TQFMC for registration of their qualification however, this is discouraged.[6] Special forms will be made available on the VUSSC – TQF website for use by education providers for making application through relevant NQAAs or RQFs for registering their courses/qualifications on TQF.

2.5.2 Courses developed within BootCamp before setting up of TQF.

There are a limited number of such courses. Modification of the courses previously developed within BootCamp might be necessary before translating these courses to meet NQAA standards and TQF guidelines. These courses need to be quality assured so that they can be registered and put onto the VUSSC - TQF.

The TQFMC facilitates the quality assurance of such courses as a matter of priority and registers them as standalone courses on the VUSSC website.

2.5.3 Programmes of Study/Courses developed by particular education providers before setting up of TQF

It is known that there are a number of institutions in VUSSC member countries that have courses available that they would like to register on the VUSSC website. Such courses can only register onto the VUSSC website if they have been quality assured by a NQAA (or recognized QAA) which is one of the group of VUSSC countries that subscribes and adheres to the guidelines of TQF.

2.5.4 Programmes of Study/Courses to be developed within particular education providers

Once the TQF guidelines have been collectively agreed to by VUSSC countries they will become available on the VUSSC website. Any institution developing a new qualification will need to ensure that these guidelines and the NQAAs standards and QA are complied with for their countries to be available on the VUSSC website.

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[6] Due possible issues arising between NQAAs and TQF MCom. The modulus operandi of TQF is one of trust and mutual recognition between TQF and NQAAs which provides for an enabling structure and registration on NQAAs must be a pre-requisite of being registered on TQF. Otherwise who will quality assure the providers, TQF MCom cannot do this, and VUSSC specialist will be over loaded.

2.5.5 Ensuring the QA of NQAAs are aligned to TQF QA benchmarks

NQAAs must subscribe and adhere to Quality Assurance Guidelines of TQF for qualifications of that country to appear on the VUSSC website. There is an understanding that the guidelines are agreed to and that they will submit to periodic review.

2.6 VUSSC – TQF Portal

Building on the existing VUSSC electronic infrastructure, the TQF portal consisting of:

- a searchable database of registered qualifications (offered through the VUSSC) including details as registered on the TQF (level, credits, etc.), as well as details relating to the qualification's possible registration on another qualifications framework
- a searchable database of education and training providers that have been accredited (by sectoral, national and regional qualifications agencies) to offer TQF registered qualifications
- an interactive site, in the form of a Wiki, where agencies and providers can participate in informal discussions of TQF procedures and guidelines.

Nationally registered/quality assured awards and qualifications may be registered on the VUSSC – TQF.

VUSSC PORTAL

Level	Qualifications	Level Descriptors	TQF – Documents to be posted on VUSSC	Course Materials (Showing on some courses of qualifications)
				Hotel Marketing II Catering II Beverage II
	BA (Tourism)		QA Guidelines	Hotel Marketing I Catering I Beverage I
	Dip (Hotel / Catering)		QA Procedures	Foundation English Basic Accounting Etiquette

THE VUSSC TRANSNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (TQF)

2.6.1 Qualifications

Qualifications registered on VUSSC will be listed and linked to courses that make up the qualifications.

2.6.2 Providers

Information of providers to be listed for students.e.g. providers' details and courses etc

Next Steps

As a next step, it is important to establish a TQF website through which to offer credible online programmes that are offered by institutions in small states. Online courses for VUSSC participants are planned to begin in the second half of 2008 and these will be increased in number as the frequency of face-to-face workshops are reduced over the next two years. With a greater number of ICT-competent educators in small states, a more online approach to capacity building will be adopted while small states start to become providers of online education.

CONCLUSION

In establishing the VUSSC's TQF the TQFMC has devised various mechanisms for translating the vision of the Ministers of Education. Adopting and implementing the transnational qualifications framework will pave the way to successful cooperation among the small states of the Commonwealth. However, the small states will still face new challenges. To be able to stand tall against these challenges, VUSSC Member Countries need to maintain their sense of community such as that manifested during the last VUCCS Interlocutors meeting in July 2008.

The benefits of being an active member of VUSSC are many. They include:

- Being part of a virtual university as a network to help countries collaborate and strengthen the capacity of national education institutions

- Sharing course materials and programmes to open courseware and open educational resources developed.

- Being able to use a range of materials that are quality assured, free, conform to different Creative Commons copyright licenses, and usually customisable.

THE VUSSC TRANSNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (TQF)

- Being able to use the translation point of TQF to the transfer of courses, qualifications and learners between countries.

- Being able to offer educational programmes that are co-branded with VUSSC.

- Having their NQAA and providers details available on VUSSC portal.

- Recognition of VUSSC's TQF by 32 states. Course providers acquire prestige for their Certificates and learners will have wider choices in choosing the courses they want to follow.

- Mobility of learners throughout the participating countries through credit transfer

- Mobility of labour force across small states

- Capacity building using South-South cooperation as similar challenges face most of the small sates

- Support in establishing QA systems and NQF in countries willing to upgrade their education and training sector

- Availability of panoply of courses and qualifications for small states which requires them

The TQFMC needs to exert leadership and commitment through partnership with all Small States of the Commonwealth and ensure that the member States buy into this project. . To move forward this south-south cooperation, more effectively, the TQFMC would take into consideration the need to engage relevant partners from both within and outside VUSSC to jointly implement the TQF. UNESCO should collaborate with COL in this laudable initiative to advance the same cause. "32 voices are better than 1 voice" as this will definitely contribute to leverage on the acceptance of the TQF by the more advanced economies.

For this initiative to be successful it is essential that commitment from all 32 member states as well as international organisations in this area such as UNESCO and UCSIS are obtained and sustained.

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GLOSSARY

Accreditation
Process through which a legally responsible agency or association grants public recognition to a school, institute, college, university, or programme of study that meets minimum established educational standards.

Assessment
The process of gathering evidence to determine whether a learner has met the required standards. Assessment is also used as part of the learning process to assist the learner in making progress.

Certification
Process of formally validating knowledge, know-how and/or skills and competences acquired by an individual, following a standard assessment procedure, leading to the award of qualification by an accredited awarding body.

Competence
Proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development.

Credit
Credit is a 'currency' providing a measure of learning outcomes achieved in notional hours at a given level. It is awarded for learning that has been achieved and verified through reliable and valid assessment.

Credit Accumulation
The process of gaining credits towards a qualification within an institution (or closed system, e.g. all qualifications offered by a single awarding body).

Credit Transfer
The process by which credits gained in one institution or system may be recognized in another institution or system.

Curriculum
Set of actions followed when developing a learning programme, including defining training goals, content, methods (including assessment) and materials.

Learning outcomes
Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, defined in terms of performance criteria based on knowledge, skills, attitudes and competence.

THE VUSSC TRANSNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (TQF)

Learning programme
Programme of studies or training defined by a curriculum that may consist of one or more modules, units, subjects or courses or any combination of those elements.

Level
Position where a qualification is located on a qualifications framework based on level descriptors.

Level Descriptor
A definition of the characteristics of a qualification that would lead to it being assigned to a particular level.

Modularisation
A system in which qualifications consist of a number of modules, each of which can be certificated independently. Sometimes, this is known as 'unitisation' and 'modularisation' is used to refer to a system in which learning programmes consist of a number of components.

Module
A component of a larger qualification, which is certificated independently. (Sometimes, it means a component of learning and teaching within a programme, not indepently certificated).

Notional Learning Hours
These include all formal and informal learning activities, practical work and practice, and all assessment-related activity.

Provider of education and training
Education and training body (institution, organisation, company, centre, collaborative partnership or consultancy) which delivers learning programmes that are directed to a specified NQF standard(s) and/or qualifications and manages the assessment thereof.

Qualification
Formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a recognised awarding body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes.

Qualifications framework
Instrument for the classification of qualifications according to an established set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, thereby improving the transparency, access, progression, comparability and quality of qualifications.

Quality assurance
Generic term for all activities that provide assurance that the educational and training services of an organisation are continually being delivered effectively, to the required standard, and in line with published goals and objectives.

THE VUSSC TRANSNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (TQF)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
To recognize and validate competencies for purposes of certification obtained outside the formal education and training systems.

Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF)
A framework that consists of a set of agreed principles, practices, procedures and standardized terminology intended to ensure effective comparability of qualifications and credits across countries in a region.

Registration
Process of providing an institution with the opportunity to establish a formal, publicly recognised relationship with the relevant national body (competent authority).

Skills
Ability to apply knowledge to complete tasks and solve problems. Skills are described as both cognitive (employing logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).

Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF)
Translation instrument for the classification of VUSSC qualifications according to set criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, to improve credit transfer and promote common accreditation mechanisms between participating VUSSC countries.

Validation
Process through which a legally responsible agency or association determines if a provider-based and/or national qualification meets minimum established criteria for registration on the qualifications framework.

Comments by:

Name:

Designation:

Country:

TQF FRAMEWORK		
1	**Levels** **Descriptors**	
2	**QAS Systems**	
3	**Framework**	
4	**Other**	

Please forward your comments to Mr Kaylash Allgoo at kallgoo@mqa.mu or post on basecamp colkm.updatelog.com/login