هيئـة تقويـم التعليـم
Education Evaluation Commission

الإطار السعودي للمؤهلات
Saudi Arabia Qualifications Framework

DRAFT SAQF Level Descriptors

Version 4

Contract No: 469

Contents

Saudi Arabia Qualifications Framework

SAQF Definition

The Saudi Arabia Qualifications Framework is a unified inclusive system that raises the quality of national qualifications. It sets standards and procedures for the development and classification of qualifications based on learning outcomes for national and international recognition.

SAQF Aims

The Saudi Arabia Qualifications Framework (SAQF) aims to:

1. Build an integrated national framework that includes all qualifications in the education and training sectors.
2. Set national unified criteria for learning outcomes based on knowledge, skills and competences.
3. Articulate a common language to ensure the transparency of quality criteria and assist comprehension.
4. Support comparison of the different types of qualifications in KSA to ensure consistency and accuracy of qualifications.
5. Contribute to improving employment capabilities and enhance workforce and competitiveness to participate in the social and economic development.
6. Raise the quality of KSA qualifications.
7. Gain national and international recognition.
8. Develop flexible educational, training and employment progression routes by facilitating enrolment, progression and transferability.
9. Promote lifelong learning.
10. Use classifications to assemble similar qualifications in unified levels to help know the quality, the strength, and the background of these qualifications.
11. Increase employer trust in KSA qualifications.
12. Provide a national register of qualifications, which have met the SAQF standards.

Introduction

In a learner centered national qualifications framework, level descriptors describe levels of learning outcomes in terms of complexity. The level descriptors define what is meant by learning outcomes in terms of what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do having acquired a qualification at a specified level.

Level descriptors are the architecture on which the SAQF is constructed. They have been developed to provide an agreed means of recognising and valuing learning and qualifications.

The intention is that this SAQF architecture is based on the existing education and technical vocational system within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) with enhancement based on international best practice. Thus, the levels are not new to the official qualifications (General, TVET and Higher Education), therefore, some concepts and features will be familiar to education and training stakeholders including the progression of the complexity of learning.

This document illustrates the architectural design of the SAQF in a number of ways, in order to illustrate the whole system and to offer a number of uses. In order to aid comparison and alignment as the document covers the following areas:

- Draft framework with existing qualification titles;
- SAQF architecture descriptions;
- SAQF level descriptor summaries;
- SAQF level descriptor domains: Knowledge; Skills; Competence;
- SAQF descriptor comparison with international frameworks.

Levels and Level Descriptors - Definitions and Usage

Level descriptors provide a guideline on qualification level to educational practitioners involved in their design and development. Qualification developers should use their professional expertise to apply the level descriptors to their own discipline or context. They should also use their knowledge and understanding of relevant leveling tools such as industry specific, professional, or international descriptors.

Levels - Definition

A SAQF level is one of the series of levels of achievement arranged in ascending order from one to ten according to which the SAQF is organized and to which qualifications are fixed. Each level is an indication of the relative learning demand made on the learner, the complexity or depth of achievement, and the learner's autonomy in demonstrating that achievement.

The SAQF levels are described in terms of a range of generic indicators that characterize that particular level.

Level Descriptors - Definition

A level descriptor is a statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of the SAQF that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes and performance criteria that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.

Level descriptors:

- describe the learning outcomes and not the process of learning or the method of assessment;
- are designed to guide the development of components of qualifications within the framework;
- provide a frame from which more specific descriptors can be developed by a variety of different industries, sectors and practitioners;
- enable comparisons between qualifications achieved in different contexts, such as the workplace, community, informal and non-formal learning and formal classroom study, and by a variety of attendance modes; and
- enable employers, learners, teaching personnel, other stakeholders and the public in general to understand the full range of SAQF qualifications.

Conceptual Framework

The SAQF adheres to the following principles.

- One common set of level descriptors for the SAQF should be used in different contexts.
- The level descriptors are designed to meet the needs of general, academic, vocational and occupational qualifications.
- SAQF levels are designed based on the levels in the education system of KSA.
- The level descriptors encompass three domains -
    - Knowledge,
    - Skills - expressed as the application of knowledge,
    - Competence - expressed as autonomy, practice and attributes.
- Level descriptors are cumulative - so the progression is written into the knowledge, skills and competence from one level to the next.
- Level descriptors are applicable to all methods of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and articulation arrangements between awarding bodies.
- Level descriptors are descriptive and not prescriptive.

SAQF level descriptors are designed to act as a guide for:

- writing learning outcomes and associated performance criteria for qualifications and their components;
- setting a qualification at an appropriate level on the SAQF, used together with purpose statements, learning outcomes and assessment methods;
- assisting the clarification of learning within the RPL process at appropriate levels on the SAQF;
- making comparisons across qualifications;
- making articulation arrangements between Awarding Bodies in order to facilitate progression and flexible learning pathways and smooth employment;
- quality assurance, used together with purpose statements, learning outcomes, learning credits and assessment methods.

SAQF Levels

A level is an indicator of relative demand; complexity; depth of study; and learner autonomy. All qualifications within the SAQF will have a level assigned to them, which represents the level of complexity and achievement. SAQF levels are designed based on education system of KSA, therefore most of official qualifications (general education, TVET, higher education) already adhere to SAQF levels, while qualification that are developed by e.g. employers/companies will have to find its place in the framework of SAQF levels.

SAQF consists of ten levels of achievement, from Level 1 to Level 10. The level of the qualification is informed by the SAQF level descriptors and, where appropriate, national occupational and skills standards (NOSS) or other sector and professional benchmarks.

Each qualifications must adhere to a single level that represents the complexity and range of achievement expressed within it and is determined by comparing learning outcomes and performance criteria against the SAQF level descriptors.

The SAQF 10 Levels provide an indication of the complexity of learning for qualifications and their components. SAQF Level 1 is the least demanding while SAQF Level 10 is the most demanding. Each level has its own generic descriptor that describes increases in learning demand by changes to factors such as the depth and complexity of knowledge and the degree of skill, and competence required to demonstrate achievement.

Decisions on setting the appropriate levels for qualifications involve a process of professional judgment, normally made experts with extensive knowledge and experience in the occupational, skills or subject area that the qualification is targeting.

The following table illustrates the levels that each of the education sectors cover.

Level	General	Vocational Occupational Professional	Higher Education
10			
9			
8			
7			
6			
5			
4			
3			
2			
1			

SAQF Draft Qualifications Architecture with Existing Qualification Type

The SAQF architecture was built using the following typical qualification types that already exist within the KSA.

	Level	General Education	Technical, Vocational and Educational Training (including occupational learning)	Higher Education
Post-Secondary Levels	10			PhD
	9		Technical Master Degree	Master
	8			Higher Diploma
	7		Bachelors (Technology)	Bachelor's Degree
	6		Diploma	Diploma / Associate Degree
	5		Associate Diploma	Associate Diploma / Higher Education Certificate
	4		Technical Diploma	(Foundation Studies)
General Education	3	General Education Certificate	Secondary Diploma Industrial	
	2	Intermediate Education Certificate	Vocational Certificate	
	1	Elementary School Certificate		

Level Descriptor Domains

Rationale

One of the key purpose of the SAQF, is to establish a common denominator for the meaning of various concepts and make the learning outcomes more understandable to stakeholders and general public. Besides the employment and mobility between the education sectors, the clarity on the learning outcomes is intended to foster also the international mobility of learners and facilitating the choice of learning pathways (including the possibility to alternate between work and learning).

Level descriptor domains are one of the instruments aiming at more transparency and clarity of the learning-outcomes based qualifications and belong to the architecture of the levels and level descriptors. They typify the complex combination of various dimensions of learning outcomes. The domains for level descriptors are thus a result of development and elaboration of an outcome based approach to design and development of qualifications.

Context specific nature of level descriptor domains

The level descriptors and the pertaining domains are not universal category. The key concepts associated to learning, the recognition of learning and the level of complexity of learning are a result of decades of developments and differ substantially from context to context. In one country "competence", "skill", "knowledge", etc. might have different meaning than the same concepts in another country.

In the plethora of different categorizations, each approach has its strengths and weaknesses, and each of them has been developed in a particular socio-economic situation and educational context.

Level descriptor domains are thus a matter of each individual cultural setting and education tradition. Normally they arrived at as a compromise rather than as a definite key to describing all of the elements of qualifications in a framework. Most national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) define domains using wording that is most

Functional and behavioral aspects of learning outcomes

While some of outcome categories are more functional and focus on what is needed to perform a job (occupational profile), others emphasize the behavioral aspect of learners such as personality, social, ethical aspects, personal attitude, beliefs, social skills, motivation etc. The latter is a result of an in-depth analyses and holistic approach viewing an individual in a more holistic and integrated fashion in relation to learning and work.

Generic and specific learning outcomes

Besides the differentiation between functional and behavioral aspects, the systems tend to differ also between generic and discipline or profession specific outcomes of learning. The latter are closely linked to the learning disciplines, occupation domains, academic and professional fields. Both aspects are highly relevant for employability and further learning pathways of individuals.

Domains of level descriptors in SAQF

The SAQF reflects the needs, aspirations and specifics of the education, society and economy of the KSA. It was developed in cooperation with the stakeholders and experts so that the level descriptor domains are relevant for a variety of stakeholders in education and employment realms.

SAQF level descriptor domains are looking at a wider range of outcomes and traits of an individual at the point of entering the world of work or continuing his studies. Thus, besides characteristics of learning it takes into account also knowledge and skills in the context of working place. In other words, it covers functional and behavioral dimensions of learning outcomes and aims at describing what an individual knows, understands and is able to do in working and learning contexts, including his personal attitudes.

On the other axis the level descriptors account for the discipline specific and generic aspect of qualification in each of the three domains. Discipline-specific is sometimes referred to as qualification- or program-specific (e.g. in the higher education sector). Including both aspects emphasizes that a learner must be skilled and knowledgeable both in the trade, craft, profession or academic discipline he learned as well as be prepared to work in a wide range of jobs in a modern diversified economy. The latter contributes to employability in a wider range of jobs and allows more flexibility on the labor market.

Based on these principles the SAQF level descriptor domains are typified into
- **Knowledge,**
- **Skills and**
- **Competence**.

The domains of knowledge and skills are relatively clear and easy to understand, whereas competences represent a more complex category and are often causing confusion and ill interpretation.

Skills are relatively commonly understood as being directly related to knowledge and are perceived as the application of knowledge. However, some frameworks have utilized a wider description which relates skills to the demonstration of activities in simulated conditions. Competences are attributed a broad range of meanings and definitions. While some NQFs describe competence as an overarching category referring to the ability of learners to apply knowledge and skills in a self-directed way, others relate competence solely to the demonstration of knowledge and skills in real time and work situations.

SAQF level descriptors were developed having in view the relevance of qualification on the labor market, hence the understanding of qualifications as the application of knowledge and skills in the workplace context. This however does not exclude the importance of learning outcomes for further studies and research if such is the purpose of qualification.

In the light of overarching nature of the SAQF, the development of level descriptor domains followed drivers such as the desire for the integration of Occupational Standards; international alignment; Lifelong Learning; meeting the changing labor market requirements; and learner mobility between the sectors and internationally.

It should be also noted that:

- many qualifications are likely to reflect aspects of all three domains; however, some might focus on one or two of the three;
- descriptors describe the level rather than any of the other characteristics of learner qualification and their components;
- Descriptors are indicative of achievement at a particular level; they do not distinguish performance within a level.
- framework levels are not related to years of study.

The SAQF learning domains are defined and explained as follows:

Knowledge

Knowledge encompasses data, facts, information, concepts, ideas, issues, trends, themes and theories. It also includes theory and concepts gained as a result of experience of performing various tasks. Expertise is particularly connected to the experience and an individual's (professional) career. There is a distinction between general knowledge (also fundamental or basic), which is essential and not related to profession, academic field or occupation, and knowledge that is specific to specific profession, occupation or sector, subject discipline or academic field. In the SAQF knowledge also refers to:

- Descriptors that focus on depth and breadth of subject specific knowledge in general or specialized contexts;
- Learning outcomes that focus on the acquisition of theoretical understanding;
- Requiring the learner to offer evidence he/she knows and understands terms used in a specified discipline, facts, rules and conventions, methods, principles or theories.

Skills

Skills are the application of knowledge within a practice or real work situations. They can be described as a set of physical and cognitive qualities that are acquired through learning, training or practice. Skills are often associated to dexterity, accuracy and speed of performing a particular task or operation. In the SAQF the skills are referred to with the following categories:

- Descriptors that focus on the demonstration of what a learner has achieved in terms of abilities to use knowledge in practice;

- Learning outcomes that focus on the attainment and demonstration of ability to perform tasks and operations related to a subject discipline, profession or trade;

- Learning outcomes that refer to the demonstration of the ability to use methods and analytical approaches in research and further study related tasks and assignments;

- Requires the learner to offer evidence that they can use what they have learned;

- Performing tasks and solving problems using learned practical, logical and creative knowledge and skills;

- Proficiency in use of language (Arabic or foreign languages) as per the requirements of the employment or subject discipline.

Competence

Competence is a more complex concept. Competence relates to the individual's ability and performance in real life, which implies interaction in various social situations, cultural settings and working conditions. In other words, the competences only fully emerge when an individual is put into a practical context related to his work and life.

Competence is a category that considers a learner unique traits and reflects a *learner-centered approach* to education and training. In conjunction with knowledge and skills, competence is about personal attributes, values, ethical aspects, responsibilities, level of autonomy in performing tasks and operations.

The complexity of SAQF domain of competences is described with three sub-categories:

1. **autonomy and responsibility** in the application of knowledge and skills;
2. the **practice** of knowledge and skills in real and work situations;
3. wider **attributes** relating to the behavioral and social dimension of learning, work attitude, and ethical considerations.

Autonomy and Responsibility

Refers to the following:

- Capability or abilities that are demonstrated through activities or behaviors that are required for further study or employment;

- Descriptors that represent the demonstration or the potential for performing practical activities in cooperation, supervision or in various degrees of autonomy and ability to lead others;

- Learning outcomes that describe performance expressed in terms of autonomy, responsibility and accountability;

- evidence that a learner has taken on the responsibility and independence to apply knowledge and skills in situations of work or further learning.

Practice

Refers to the following:

- Occupational performance or output from the application of skills and knowledge;

- Descriptors that represent the level of performance that a learner needs to demonstrate to successfully complete a task, assignment or job;

- Learning outcomes that describe demonstrable/practical performance that is essential for employment or further learning;

- Requiring the learner to perform observable activities.

Attributes

Refers to the following:

- Abilities, capabilities and personal qualities developed in any context that can be applied to an occupation, professional or academic career;

- Ability to use social skills such as leadership, communication, group work cooperation in practice

- Cognitive skills that require certain personal attributes such as problem solving and improving one's own learning and performance;

- Ability to demonstrate ethical consideration in various work, cultural and social situations;

- Ability to take in consideration values, norms and beliefs of society in various working, cultural and social situations;

- Learning outcomes that relate to the development of enabling skills such as independent enquiry, research, self-evaluation, time management, effective communication, creativity and critical thinking;

- Ability to continuously improve knowledge, skills and competence, within personal, social and employment-related perspectives;

- Ability to understand and keep up to date with advancing knowledge in own professional area or occupation;

- Ability of learning that can readily be transferred from a learning environment to a work place environment, from one learning institution to another or from one workplace environment to another.

Note: Not all attributes need to be present at all levels of derived learning outcomes.

Rationale

The SAQF level descriptors are related to the description of learning outcomes and their related performance criteria. They are designed to guide the development of qualifications and provide a scheme for comparing and matching learning outcomes and performance criteria.

The SAQF level descriptors are defined in a general and neutral language in an attempt to reflect a complex and diverse national education system and to cover all levels and types of qualification. This approach aims at improving the readability and comparability of qualifications, which helps various stakeholders (especially employers) to better understand qualifications and enables the comparison of qualifications within the KSA education system and internationally.

National Relevance

There is no single way of developing and defining level descriptors. It is virtually impossible to fully capture and typify the complexities of a national qualifications system and respective learning outcomes. The descriptors that relate to subject discipline, profession or occupation are relevant to the transparency of education and training in particular sectors of economy and thus catering for the specific needs of the labor market and national economic strategies. The cross-cutting (general or generic) knowledge, skills and competences allow to promote particular policies related to the employability of learners and their mobility in the labor market.

The Function of Level Descriptors

When used in comprehensive national qualifications frameworks – covering all types and levels of qualifications – level descriptors need to respond to the following challenges:

- They need to be sufficiently detailed and multifaceted to capture the institutional complexities of the national qualification system;
- They need to encompass generic and refer to subject or discipline-specific knowledge, skills and competence;

- They need to be sufficiently general to accommodate different parts of education and training systems;
- They must be able to reflect how knowledge, skills and competence increase in breadth, depth and complexity when moving from lower to higher levels;
- They need to act as a reference point for international comparison.

The Context for SAQF Level Descriptors

The SAQF is part of the development of education as a function of the greater national aims with lifelong learning, meeting labor market requirements and learner transition all being of importance. The SAQF is a framework that is intended to support the development of skills and competence for transforming economy, personal development, mobility and employability and drive career paths, including improved opportunities for transferability between academia, training and employment. The SAQF intends to bring employers and wider stakeholders to the fore and to make qualifications and their development relate more closely to employment and economic needs within the entire Kingdom.

As part of this endeavor the level descriptors:
- need to provide a tool for dialogue and thereby serve the interests and needs of different stakeholders (especially employers);
- need to be able to serve as a reference point for institutional comparison and development;
- need to provide a reference point for qualifications currently outside the official national education sectors, potentially allowing for their inclusion in the progression routes;
- must facilitate the progression of learners within and between education sectors and flexible exit and entry to and from the world of work;
- must allow stakeholders to identify areas where further development is required.

Therefore, the level descriptors have been developed so that they guide learning outcomes of SAQF registered qualifications, while being as comprehensive as

possible to cover the expectations of a wide range of stakeholders from both the education sector and the world of work.

The level descriptors are also devised to act as a guide for those who are interested in qualification development that is related to the labor market. It is imperative that the descriptors are understandable to employers in all sectors and it is of crucial importance that the descriptors represent the employment requirements.

Subject discipline specific and generic learning outcomes as an integral part of the SAQF level descriptors

The SAQF introduces a set of basic characteristics of a qualification, which all are based on learning outcomes. Those characteristics are measurable, which means that the SAQF introduces also the methodology with standards, tools and guidelines for the development of qualifications, quality assurance of those qualifications, and how to use them by various stakeholders.

One of those characteristics is – **the level**, which represents the complexity of learning outcomes embedded within the qualification. The value of the SAQF level ranges from 1 (as the lowest) up to 10 (as the highest level of complexity).

Level descriptors, as a tool for measurement of the SAQF level, are designed to measure the level of all kinds of learning outcomes: in all fields; any complexity; all domains of learning achievements; and independent to modes of learning (formal, non-formal and informal learning). This means that the level descriptors in the SAQF are generic enough in regard to subject disciplines and learning, but very specific and precise in regard to levels.

In order to cover all possible learning achievements in a simple and transparent way, the SAQF level descriptors are organized into 3 domains (see also above):

(1) Knowledge ➔

➔**(2) Skills** (as application of Knowledge) ➔

➔ **(3) Competence** (as application of Knowledge and Skills in a practical workplace, expressed by Autonomy and Responsibility; Practice; and Attribute).

Knowledge, skills and competences are a major factor in the innovation, productivity and competitiveness of all modern organizations. Growing internationalization, the change and implementation of new technologies mean that all learners, in addition to keeping their discipline specific and job-related learning outcomes, should possess the cross-discipline learning outcomes that will enable them to adapt to change. Therefore it is important to have a certain set of learning outcomes independent to their subject specific interests. These are general or generic learning outcomes (e.g. communication and literacy, numeracy, ICT etc.). Those learning outcomes contribute to individual's employability, motivation and success in further study and in the work place. They cater for effective lifelong learning of all learners, better competitiveness and their sustainable employability.

These key learning outcomes for lifelong learning are important for all learners independently of their subject specific interests. Thus, the SAQF introduces them as an integral part of the SAQF level descriptors in all three level descriptor domains.

Generic learning outcomes, which are important for individuals, the economy and society, should be identified and introduced during the development or review of qualifications.

Level Descriptors - The Stakeholders

In relation to qualifications, the SAQF recognizes two general groups of stakeholders:

.

1. **Education Stakeholders** - The level descriptors are intended for use by education stakeholders:

    - to allocate a level and a number of credits to qualifications;
    - as a guide for mapping entry and progression routes within and across the education and training sectors;
    - as a guide to qualification design/review and increasing emphasis on learning outcomes.

2. **Labor Market Stakeholders** - The level descriptors are intended for use by labor market stakeholders to:

    - better understand the relationship between knowledge and skills and employment;
    - help develop job descriptions and career;
    - help clarify recruitment;
    - ensure effective skills acquisition, development and utilization;
    - undertake skills audits and for developing skills and learning strategies; and for planning personal and staff development.

Reading the descriptors

SAQF levels are designed so that:

- Descriptors are intended to inform and guide the level setting for qualifications.
- Descriptors are cumulative. Therefore, it is assumed that qualifications at one level encompass the learning levels and indicators at the levels before it.
- It is not expected that qualifications or parts of qualifications reflect all the descriptors at a level.

SAQF Level Descriptor Summaries

The level descriptor summaries were developed as reference points for the development of detailed level descriptors and to give overviews of the learning, learning outcomes and achievement at each of the 10 levels. Again these are for

guidance only but in themselves may assist practitioners in the development and understanding of learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessment for SAQF qualifications.

Level	Level Summary (Learning outcomes, learning evidence)
10	Demonstrate a significant and original contribution to a specialized field of research, demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engage in critical dialogue with peers. Learning outcomes at this level relate to discovery and development (generation) of new knowledge and skills through research and presented in the form of a thesis, scientific or professional publications, articles, inventions, innovations etc.; outcomes at this level relate to the highest specialized skills for initiating and taking forward change in theory and application related to a scholarly or scientific field. They also relate to the high level transferable skills required for managing conceptual frameworks or organizational structures. Learning at this level leads to the development of new and creative approaches that extend or redefine existing knowledge or professional practice and thereby contribute to advancement science or scholarship. Evidence of achievement at this level illustrates the ability to address problematic situations that involve many complex and interacting factors through initiating, designing and undertaking research, development or strategic activities.
9	Demonstrate a mastery of a complex and specialized area of knowledge and skills; employ advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical and professional activity; able to critically evaluate theories, methods and analytical approaches and develop new ones. The

responsibility, autonomy, ability to innovate and generate new knowledge are at a high level.

Learning outcomes at this level relate to the learning, investigation and research that is at the height of a field of learning. The outcomes relate to problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar contexts related to a specified field of highly complex study.

Learning at this level enables highly developed, investigative techniques for solving of problems or situations of the highest complexity. It relates to the development or integration of methods and approaches to address real problems that involve many interacting factors.

Evidence of achievement at this level illustrates the taking of responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that initiate or underpin substantial change or development. It should reflect the application of complex theoretical and methodological perspectives to specialized areas of study or work to bring about new knowledge.

8	Demonstrate high-level specialist knowledge in applied fields, professions or academic disciplines; Is up-to-date with knowledge-based professional development, practice or research; high level of independence and leadership skills. Learning outcomes at this level relate to high-level action learning or being recognizably innovative in a tangible field of learning or practice. Outcomes include the development or integration of theory or practice to innovate or redefine the relations of existing theories/findings. Learning at this level results in illustrating the adaptability, flexibility, ability to cope with change and ability to exercise initiative and solve problems autonomously within a real time highly complex profession or field of study.

	Evidence of achievement at this level illustrates the taking of responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that are underpin substantial change or development, as well as exercising general autonomy and judgment.
7	Demonstrate the possession of a comprehensive, coherent and systematic body of complex knowledge in the learned field and the underlying theories and principles; critical evaluation of conceptual frameworks using evidence from a range of sources.

Learning outcomes at this level relate to knowledge and critical understanding of principles in established specified fields of study and the application of those principles in a range of real and complex contexts. This level includes knowledge of methods of enquiry and the ability to critically evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems.

The outcomes include an understanding of the limits of the knowledge and methods acquired and how this influences analyses and interpretations in a work context.

Learning at this level relates to the ability to refine and use high-level professional knowledge methods and skills to address the problems that knowledge-based professionals or professional management face.

Evidence of achievement at this level illustrates taking responsibility for the testing or application of different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought in learning, enquiry and working practice. |
| 6 | Demonstrate the generation and application of ideas through a good command of specialized knowledge and skills; formulate responses to defined but complex real or work related problems and situations; analyze and interpret technical and research information and apply it to practice. |

Learning outcomes at this level relate to an inclusive range of knowledge and skills which may be vocationally specific or of a general nature and require detailed theoretical and conceptual understanding from subject learned;

Learning at this level involves high levels of knowledge, understanding of theoretical concepts, a high level of work expertise in job roles and competence in managing and training others.

Evidence of achievement at this level illustrates the ability to identify and use relevant knowledge, methods and techniques to address broadly defined, complex problems for those with professional, technical or managerial responsibilities. Evidence of achievement shows an ability to work autonomously, supervising others and taking responsibility for solutions.

5

Demonstrate the evaluation of information, using analysis to determine solutions to a range of unpredictable complex problems; Develop techniques for retrieval and interpretation of information.

Learning outcomes at this level relate to the ability to identify and use theories, concepts and methods to address problems that are well defined and perform investigation of practical problems in the learned field. Outcomes relate to subject discipline specific activities and the use of techniques, instruments and tools that relate to an occupation.

Learning at this level leads to understanding different perspectives or approaches within an area of study or work that demand a broad range of skills, require theoretical understanding and ability for autonomous enquiry.

Evidence of achievement at this level illustrates the taking responsibility for overall courses of action within broad parameters.

4	Demonstrate a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad set of knowledge or a range of specialized skills; evaluate information and propose solutions to a range of ordinary and extraordinary problems.

Learning outcomes at this level relate to knowledge and skills that relate to a range of occupational sectors and further study. Outcomes also relate to demonstrating knowledge of terminology and the use of relevant methods to complete tasks and solve problems.

Learning at this level leads to obtaining detailed knowledge and skills that prepare for further learning, working independently or supporting others.

Evidence of achievement at this level illustrates taking responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures within limited parameters. |
| **3** | Demonstrate knowledge and understanding on theoretical/conceptual level and ability to put theory into practical effect.

Demonstrate ability to access and analyze information independently and make reasoned judgments in working setting.

Learning outcomes at this level relate to selecting and using relevant knowledge, ideas, skills and procedures to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems.

Evidence of achievement at this level illustrates the ability to take responsibility for completing routine tasks and procedures, and exercising autonomy and judgment within narrow contexts. |
| **2** | Demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding in a broad range of areas; employ a range of skills within a limited range of contexts; undertake directed (simple) activities/tasks under supervision and with some responsibility for the outcomes. |

	Learning outcomes relate to knowing basic facts for further learning or job related tasks. They include the ability to learn new skills and knowledge in a supervised environment. Level 2 includes basic writing and explaining skills. Evidence of achievement at this level illustrates the ability to work and learn in known conditions and guidance, taking some degree of responsibility for the outcomes of performed tasks.
1	Demonstrate basic knowledge and understanding in a narrow range of areas; employ basic skills within a limited range of contexts of everyday life; The learning outcomes at this level relate to the performance of basic tasks in a controlled environment under supervision. The learner is able to display ability to learn basic information and basic repetitive skills. Learning at this level leads to ability to act on basic instructions; to use rehearsed processes to complete tasks; and to apply learning in everyday situations under direct guidance or supervision. Evidence of achievement at this level illustrates the use of skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out tasks and activities in familiar contexts, with appropriate guidance.

SAQF Level Summaries and Rationale

The summaries and the rationale were driven by stakeholders through a number of workshops, focus groups and higher level Advisory Committees as well as a number of one to one meetings. Importantly these included major employers in KSA, the military and health services, the Ministries of Labor and Education with other major education and skills stakeholders such as Saudi Skills Standards, TVTC and the Human Resource Development Fund and its major projects and departments.

The following detailed level descriptors are the outcomes of this major consultancy.
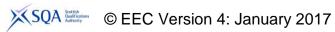
SAQF Level Descriptors

		Knowledge	Skills	Competence		
LEVEL 10						
		Theoretical, Factual	**Practical Application of Knowledge**	**Autonomy and Responsibility**	**Practice**	**Attributes**
Level 10		• Systematic understanding and expertize of a discipline and methods of research; • Critical analysis and evaluation of complex information, concepts methods and theories necessary to create new knowledge; • Development of new knowledge gained through original research that significantly contributes to a discipline or field of work.	• Conceiving, designing, and conducting an independent process of research; • Cognitive and technical skills to critically analyze and synthesize complex datasets, information, concepts and theories; • Developing knowledge, designing techniques and revising/modifying processes that result in strategic organizational or professional change and advancing of science and technology.	• Performing broad independence, judgment and leadership as a practitioner or scholar; • Decision making that delivers a strategic or technological change, innovation and invention; • Assuming a leadership role for the actions of others in addressing and solving complex problems and issues. • Leading in complex professional situations in relation to organizational change or change management;	• Substantial original research or work that merits publication and application; • Developing original and innovative responses to professional or organizational issues or problems; • Developing innovative/unique outcomes from critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex areas in professional and academic contexts; • Initiating the advancement of professional practice;	• Displaying professional and academic values in relation to technological, social or cultural advancement; • Aware of ethical and cultural implications of technology and science. • Exhibiting and promoting integrity and ethical practice in relation to research and advancement of knowledge;

	Knowledge	Skills	Competence		
	Theoretical, Factual	Practical Application of Knowledge	Autonomy and Responsibility	Practice	Attributes
Level 9	• Critical interpretation and comprehension of knowledge in a discipline or field of work; • Developing or integrating methods and analytical approaches to research that contributes to extending knowledge in a discipline or field of work; • Theoretical understanding of concepts and practices at the forefront of a discipline or field of work.	• Using a range of specialized skills, techniques, practices which are informed by forefront developments; • Planning, developing and implementing the research and innovation projects in service or product development; • Utilizing, assessing and critically reviewing a significant range of methods, techniques and practices which are associated with a discipline or field of work; • Integrating a range of knowledge, skills, and strategic planning within a discipline or field of work.	• Substantial autonomy and initiative in professional and academic activities; • Taking responsibility for planning a course of action that initiates or underpins a substantial change or developments; • Independent development and design of new strategic approaches or concepts for development of a discipline or organization; • Leadership role in making an identifiable contribution to change, new thinking or practices.	• Resolves complex issues in relation to professional codes or practices; • Formulating or creating (innovative) solutions for complex tasks using project management principles; • Capable of strategic, creative and critical thinking to plan a course of action; • Identifying, integrating, defining and investigating new and abstract problems or issues.	• Committing to integrity and ethical practice; • Determination to resolve complex challenges; • Committing to critical analysis of and reflection on new and complex ideas; • Exhibiting awareness of academic and professional practice impact on social and ethical issues. • Receptive to critical challenge.

	Knowledge	Skills	Competence		
	Theoretical, Factual	**Practical Application of Knowledge**	**Autonomy and Responsibility**	**Practice**	**Attributes**
Level 8	• Theoretical knowledge and conceptual understanding that integrates the principal areas of a discipline or work; • Specialized knowledge in a subject discipline, profession or a field of work which is based on new concepts; • In-depth understanding and analyzing new developments in the subject discipline, profession or field of work.	• Select and evaluate theoretical concepts, methodologies, and tools for research and analyses. • Innovative and creative practical skills in a subject discipline or field of work; • Integrating skills and knowledge from a variety of sources.	• Demonstrating self-reliance and creativity in seeking further knowledge; • Taking independent and autonomous actions when acquiring new knowledge and skills in a social, cultural or occupational context; • Dealing with professional or academic issues with originality and creativity; • Taking responsibility for leading others in achieving strategic performance; • Contributing to strategic decisions.	• Supporting current professional practice; • Evaluating and managing professional work processes, resources or learning; • Utilizing a wide range of advanced and specialized skills in support of established practices in a discipline or occupation; • Critically defining, conceptualizing, analyzing and evaluating problems and issues in academic and working context.	• Fostering professional relationships to bring about change, innovation, development or new thinking in a profession or occupation; • Adopting academic and professional values and ethics; • Self-critical within academic and professional practice; • Demonstrating a leadership trait in professional practice; • Initiating confident and transparent communication with peers.

	LEVEL 7				
	Knowledge	**Skills**	**Competence**		
	Theoretical, Factual	**Practical Application of Knowledge**	**Autonomy and Responsibility**	**Practice**	**Attributes**
Level 7	• Broad understanding and critical view of the principal theories, concepts and terminology of a discipline or field of work; • Knowledge in a range of different perspectives or schools of thought that underpin the discipline, profession or field of work; • Specialist knowledge informed by current developments of a discipline or field of work.	• Applying advanced skills, techniques, practices and creativity in specified discipline or field of work; • Practicing routine methods of enquiry, investigation and research for a defined project; • Critically evaluate the approaches and methods to solving problems; • Utilizing well-developed cognitive or technical skills for the analysis and evaluation of complex information.	• Working effectively in peer relationships, under guidance and autonomously; • Taking structured decisions in contexts that require self-directed work, learning and innovation; • Demonstrating the potential for management of complex technical or professional activities and project teams; • Decision-making in unpredictable work or learning contexts.	• Using theoretical principles for complex tasks in discipline or field of work; • Using advanced techniques for developing solutions to complex problems related to a discipline, profession or field of work; • Utilizing a range of sources to make judgments and decisions; • Analyzing and interpreting information for complex decisions and innovation.	• Awareness relating to the importance of building professional relationships; • Displaying confidence and the potential for leadership and entrepreneurialism; • Being respectful, team oriented and approachable in social and professional contexts; • Developing a personal attitude towards values and ethics.

	LEVEL 6				
	Knowledge	**Skills**	**Competence**		
	Theoretical, Factual	**Practical Application of Knowledge**	**Autonomy and Responsibility**	**Practice**	**Attributes**
Level 6	• General understanding of the theoretical concepts within the discipline or field of work; • Analytical approach to understanding problems and interpreting information; • Integration of concepts from related fields.	• Using a range of skills applicable to the discipline or field of work that confirms theoretical understanding; • Adapting and using a range of practical and technical skills in a defined work or learning context; • Using knowledge to foster creativity and innovative practical solutions; • Using methods of investigation to inform actions.	• Managing and organizing own work in the context of learning or work activities; • Finding and developing arguments within the discipline or the field of work; • Taking responsibility for evaluating own work performance in accordance with predefined standards; • Responsible for own personal development and learning.	• Taking the lead in implementing agreed plans and activities in familiar or defined contexts; • Planning and organizing new tasks in innovative way. • Managing the implementation of agreed plans; • Utilizing analytical and creative problem-solving techniques.	• Displaying an awareness of own actions on others; • Being receptive to learning, innovation and feedback for improvement; • Adopting good time management practices; • Taking ownership for own learning and supportive of others.

	LEVEL 5				
	Knowledge	Skills	Competence		
	Theoretical, Factual	Application of Knowledge	Autonomy and Responsibility	Practice	Attributes
Level 5	• Aware of the basic theoretical concepts that underpin the discipline or field of work; • Knowledge of a discipline or a field of work that is informed by relevant literature; • Retrieval and interpretation of information relevant to progress in the discipline or field or work.	• Applying creative solutions to specific problems in a field of work or learning; • Reviewing facts and actions, methods and results; • Transferring existing knowledge to new situations or scenarios; • Practicing skills in both routine and non-routine contexts.	• Self-management within the guidelines of work or learning contexts that are usually predictable; • Supervising the routine tasks of others and taking some responsibility for the improvement of work practices or learning activities; • Responsible for own performance in learning or in an occupational and entrepreneurial context.	• Using a professional approach within a determined area of work or learning; • Analyzing and connecting facts and principles to bring about improvements and innovation; • Using routine technical skills, techniques and practices associated with an occupation or business; • Planning and organizing routine tasks.	• Valuing own work and acting on feedback for further development; • Willingness to participate in communication and open discussions; • Confidence in asking for support in unfamiliar contexts; • Desire to innovate and use new methods and technology to process and obtain a variety of information and data. • Confidence in taking up risks and responsibilities in the entrepreneurial context

	LEVEL 4				
	Knowledge	**Skills**	**Competence**		
	Theoretical, Factual	**Practical Application of Knowledge**	**Autonomy and Responsibility**	**Practice**	**Attributes**
Level 4	• Technical knowledge of a discipline or field of work; • Knowledge of processes, resources and terminology in a certain discipline or field of work; • Basic practical and theoretical knowledge that will contribute to further learning.	• Build on existing knowledge as a foundation for further learning or work; • Perform calculations for a range of procedures and contexts; • Select and use appropriate tools, resources, procedures and techniques safely; • Relate knowledge to practical contexts and explain or interpret statements, facts, definitions.	• Limited autonomy to undertake further learning; • Carrying out work that is not always defined, with some independence, creativity and responsibility; • Managing own time for tasks; • Illustrating awareness of the impact of own activities and actions; • Works under guidance as a member of a team.	• Performing defined tasks related to learning or an occupation to a given standard; • Using routine practices or techniques associated with a discipline or occupation; • Producing and responding to detailed communication in a range of contexts. • Identifying possibilities for improvement and innovative solutions in routine processes and working practice.	• Demonstrating creativity and a range of employability attributes to participate in work; • Being communicative in a structured work or learning environment; • Displaying a positive attitude towards others and peers; • Complying with ethical standards.

	Knowledge	Skills	Competence		
	Theoretical, Factual	**Practical Application of Knowledge**	**Autonomy and Responsibility**	**Practice**	**Attributes**
Level 3	• General knowledge applicable to learning or a field of work; • Factual or procedural knowledge specific to learning or a field of work; • Basic knowledge of search and retrieval techniques for information.	• Use general concepts to carry out tasks for a defined area of learning or work; • Obtain information from a range of sources for learning or work; • Apply a variety of communication methods for a specified context in learning or work; • Select appropriate tools and resources for a specific task.	• Responsible for completion of routine tasks in work or learning; • Under supervision, plan, prepare, and organize own learning; • Follows instructions to complete a routine task.	• Performing work and tasks that are standardized and relatively transparent; • Using a range of information for working in routine and planned contexts; • Communicating information related to specific tasks in familiar contexts; • Using defined procedures to resolve problems.	• Able to recognize the need to adapt behavior in new circumstances; • Identifying own strengths and weaknesses relative to work and learning with guidance; • Capability of structured communication in cooperation with peers and superiors; • Positive attitude towards the use of technology; • Able to manage his own time and punctuality.

	LEVEL 2				
	Knowledge	**Skills**	**Competence**		
	Theoretical, Factual	Practical Application of Knowledge	Autonomy and Responsibility	Practice	Attributes
Level 2	• Basic factual knowledge for learning or a field of work; • Knowledge of the types of information relevant to learning or a field of work; • Facts and processes for dealing with defined problems.	• Follow instructions necessary to achieve a task; • Completing well-defined, routine tasks; • Writing and explaining in an understandable form; • Selecting and using simple information.	• Working and learning under known conditions and supervision; • Taking some responsibility (under guidance) for the outcomes of simple activities or tasks; • Meeting task deadlines; • Being aware of the consequences of actions.	• Completing routine tasks under supervision; • Responding to basic communication for structured tasks and activities; • Following instructions safely while performing a defined task; • Selecting and using basic resources safely with guidance.	• Demonstrating employability attributes for work etiquette, appropriate dress and hygiene; • Can communicate own emotions to others; • Being respectful during a conversation with others; • Awareness that feedback can support improvement.

	LEVEL 1				
	Knowledge	**Skills**	**Competence**		
	Theoretical, Factual	Practical Application of Knowledge	Autonomy and Responsibility	Practice	Attributes
Level 1	• Knowledge of basic facts and procedures to complete simple tasks; • General foundation knowledge for everyday life; • Memorizing and recalling facts and information.	• Carrying out simple tasks and routine activities in the context of everyday life; • Reading and understanding basic texts; • Using basic resources safely; • Using basic oral and written communication; • Carrying out basic numerical skills.	• Working or learning under direct supervision in a structured context; • Using rehearsed processes to complete a task or activities; • Listening and complying with simple instructions; • Carrying out basic planned tasks.	• Performing simple tasks in a controlled environment under supervision; • Using information and basic repetitive skills to perform sequenced tasks; • Responding to instructions in routine situations. • Observe and replicate action, process or activity.	• Desire to listen and learn; • Cooperative behavior in routine situations; • Demonstrating respect for others in performing tasks; • Showing awareness of basic code of conduct, norms and values in all circumstances.

ISCED Descriptions for Education Programs

The following table makes approximate comparisons between the SAQF levels, existing qualification types in the KSA with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). This is intended to develop the concept of international comparison, context and articulation between KSA qualifications and the those amongst all other United Nations (UN) members.

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) belongs to the UN International Family of Economic and Social Classifications, which are applied in statistics worldwide with the purpose of assembling, compiling and analyzing cross-nationally comparable data. ISCED is the reference classification for organizing education programs and related qualifications by education levels and fields. ISCED is a product of international agreement and adopted formally by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) Member States.

ISCED is designed to serve as a framework to classify educational activities as defined in programs and the resulting qualifications into internationally agreed categories. The basic concepts and definitions of ISCED are therefore intended to be internationally valid and comprehensive of the full range of education systems.

ISCED classifies education programs by their content using two main cross-classification variables: levels of education *(see Section 9)* and fields of education *(see Annex IV)*. ISCED 2011 presents a revision of the ISCED 1997 levels of education classification. It also introduces a related classification of educational attainment levels based on recognized educational qualifications.

ISCED 2011 rests on three components:
  I.   Internationally agreed concepts and definitions;
  II. The classification systems;
  III. ISCED mappings of education programs and related qualifications in countries

worldwide.

The basic units of classification in ISCED are the national (and sub-national) education program and the related recognized educational qualification.

ASOC Levels

The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) is one of the main international classifications for which the International Labor Organization (ILO) is responsible. It belongs to the international family of economic and social classifications. ISCO is a tool for organizing jobs into a clearly defined set of groups according to the tasks and duties undertaken in the job. Its main aims are to provide: a basis for the international reporting; comparison and exchange of statistical and administrative data about occupations; a model for the development of national and regional classifications of occupations; and a system that can be used directly in countries that have not developed their own national classifications. The 4 main Arab Standard Occupation Classifications (ASOC) levels are based on the ISCO framework.

This comparison develops the relationship between educational levels and occupational skills levels. However, it should be noted that this is only an approximate representation and is also not an official comparison and will not bear a relationship to some sectors. Also ASOC level are not intended to be representative of qualification levels or groups of learning outcomes.

Skill

ASOC and ISCO define skill as the ability to carry out the tasks and duties of a given job. For the purposes of ISCO-88, two dimensions of skill are used to arrange occupations into groups. These are skill level and skill specialization.

Skill Level

ASOC and ISCO define skill level as a function of the complexity and range of tasks and duties to be performed in an occupation. Skill level is measured operationally by considering one or more of:

- the nature of the work performed in an occupation in relation to the characteristic tasks and duties defined for each ISCO-88 skill level;

- the level of formal education defined in terms of the ISCED-97 required for competent performance of the tasks and duties involved; and

- the amount of informal on-the-job training and /or previous experience in a related occupation required for competent performance of these tasks and duties.

Skill specialization is considered in terms of four conceptual concepts:

- the field of knowledge required;

- the tools and machinery used;

- the materials worked on or with;

- the kinds of goods and services produced.

Definitions of ISCO Skill Levels

Definitions of each of the four ISCO skill levels are summarized in the below table also. Each definition provides examples of:

- the typical or characteristic tasks performed at each skill level;

- the types of skill required (in broad terms);

- the typical occupations classified at that skill level.

Level	SAQF	ISCED Level	ISCED	Description and Rationale
10	Doctorate	8	Second stage tertiary education	Programs at level 10 (ISCED level 8), or doctoral or equivalent level, are designed primarily to lead to an advanced research qualification. Programs at this ISCED level are devoted to advanced study and original research and are typically offered only by research-oriented tertiary educational institutions such as universities. Doctoral programs exist in both academic and professional fields. These programs usually conclude with the submission and defense of a thesis, dissertation or equivalent written work of publishable quality, representing a significant contribution to knowledge in the respective field of study. Therefore, these programs are typically based on research and not only on course work
9	Master's	7		Programs at level 8 and 9 (ISCED level 7), or Master's or equivalent level, are often designed to provide participants with advanced academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competence, leading to a second degree or equivalent qualification. Programs at this level may have a substantial research component but do not yet lead to the award of a doctoral qualification. Typically, programs at this level are theoretically based but may include practical components and are informed by state of the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and other tertiary educational institutions
8	Higher Diploma	6/7		
7	Bachelor's	6	First stage tertiary education	Programs at level 7 (ISCED level 6), or Bachelor's or equivalent level, are often designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competence, leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification. Programs at this level are typically theoretically based but may include practical components and are informed by state of
6	Diploma	5		

				the art research and/or best professional practice. They are traditionally offered by universities and equivalent tertiary educational institutions Programs at levels 5 and 6 - academic tertiary education programs below the level of a Bachelor's program (ISCED level 5), or short-cycle tertiary education, are often designed to provide participants with professional knowledge, skills and competence. Typically, they are practically based, occupationally specific and prepare learners to enter the labor market. However, these programs may also provide a pathway to other tertiary education programs.
5	Associate Diploma	4		Programs at level 4 (ISCED level 4), or post-secondary non-tertiary education, are typically designed to provide learners who completed ISCED level 3 with non-tertiary qualifications required for progression to tertiary education or for employment when their ISCED level 3 qualification does not grant such access. Post-secondary non-tertiary education provides learning experiences building on secondary education, preparing for labor market entry as well as tertiary education. It aims at the learner acquisition of knowledge, skills and competence lower than the level of complexity characteristic of tertiary education.
4	Foundation			
3	Secondary	3	Upper Secondary	Programs at level 3 (ISCED level 3), or upper secondary education, are typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary education or provide skills relevant to employment, or both
2	Intermediate	2	Lower Secondary	Programs at levels 1 and 2 (ISCED level 2), or lower secondary education, are typically designed to build on the learning outcomes from primary education. Usually, the aim is to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and human development upon which education systems may then expand further educational opportunities.
1	Elementary			

Why are there 10 levels?

The 10 levels suggested match the existing qualifications with the exception of the inclusion of the new level 4.

All of the qualifications that have been included in the draft framework are in existence in the sequence listed. The 10 levels are clearly recognizable in the existing qualifications within the KSA system. All have learning programs and clear bodies of knowledge and learning.

The 10 levels also allow relatively easy translation across frameworks within the GCC and other Arab states as well those of New Zealand and Australia. This should also allow a smoother relationship with the emerging GCC meta-framework developments.

Also as there is no departure from known qualifications current relationships with countries such as the US and those of Europe to which many Saudis go for graduate programs would not be affected. Indeed, they should be enhanced by the tight defining of the system of qualifications.

What is Level 1?

The Elementary School Certificate is the first tangible point of assessment in KSA. It is assessed as an accumulative body of knowledge at the end of grade 6 in all schools and is a universal test for all. Starting here with the framework allows a distinct, natural and known output point. It is understood by all stakeholders including parents.

It would also seem to be the first level where any learner can reference his/her learning for progression or employment purposes. Although learning at this level is basic and generic it is a useful reference for entry into the labor market in a job that requires any basic skills.

Is there a level below level 1?

There is a learning level below level 1; however, level 1 does reference basic literacy and numeracy skills, so any level below this represents a skill level that is difficult to define or specify at this stage. Also learning at this level currently has no recognized programs (?) of learning.

Therefore, it is recommended that when the time is right - like many new and mature frameworks - we consider these levels as entry or access levels. That is levels that could give entry to the recognized system of qualifications but not within it.

What titles are we using?

The titles that populate the draft are those that are used by NCAAA, TVTC, SSS and EEC. It is not clear at this stage whether these titles are indeed comprehensive, understood by all or used generically.

Therefore, it is recommended that the SAQF determines nomenclature that is universal across all three education sectors. This nomenclature should have clear definitions aligned as closely to current titles but with further definition in line with the final agreed level descriptors.

Why do we have a level 4 with no existing qualifications?

All Secondary school graduates currently have to complete a full pre undergraduate year in order to gain entry into any public university and as a minimum for most private universities. This year of study is currently clearly defined. Although it is not certificated, the year has a generic learning program with a body of post-secondary knowledge, which is similar across all universities. Also the year is formally assessed with internal transcripts being offered.

While the program of study is taken in universities, it is clearly defined as not being a part of undergraduate studies, hence the lack of certification or credit value. Therefore, it would seem clear that this is a separate level of learning that is post-secondary yet pre degree level.

It is not certificated but should - in line with the prescriptions of the SAQF - have distinct learning outcomes and therefore be certificated.

Why are there 3 school age or secondary levels?

Again these three levels represent the existing, clearly defined learning programs with assessment points. They are universally understood and each level has existing certification.

Having three levels recognizes learning and progression at distinctly defined levels. Therefore, in the future further there will be the opportunity to develop appropriate programs at these levels within more employment related areas that meet the needs of existing or emerging industries.