



Creating a National Qualifications Framework in the United States

It's time for the United States to have a fully developed and functioning qualifications framework, and a group of stakeholders has recently begun this important work. The multi-phased plan has been organized by ECE to include a wide range of participants that will oversee the development, implementation, and maintenance of a United States Qualifications Framework (USQF).

What has been done?

The USQF Advisory Council was established in May 2022. This council, along with other interested stakeholders, will oversee the design and development of a proposed national qualifications framework to serve the interests of US learners, qualification holders, educators, employers, licensing bodies, policy makers, and related stakeholders.

Who is involved?

The original members of the Advisory Council include participants from the following entities:

- AACRAO
- Association of International Credential Evaluators, Inc. (AICE)
- Credential Engine
- Corporation for a Skilled Workforce
- Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc (ECE)
- National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES)
- National Student Clearinghouse

Interested and Supporting Stakeholders

In addition to the organizations active on the Advisory Council, interest in and support of the USQF effort has been expressed by other individuals and organizations representing US higher education, employers, licensing boards, trade organizations and business groups. Opportunities for involvement in future phases still exist!

Why?

The United States does not have a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) currently. The development of a USQF will assist with recognition, mobility, and interoperability by helping stakeholders understand new and existing qualifications.

The USQF will provide a widely accepted tool to address the needs of lifelong learners and the labor market and will contribute to workforce development and continued education accessibility.

History of National Qualifications Frameworks

A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) provides a commonly accepted structure for describing the relationship of educational qualifications to one another within a country, in terms of level, length and learning outcomes. Over 100 countries and regions have developed an NQF and many others are actively in the process of doing so. The NQF is a basic instrument to understand each qualification in the context of the full educational system. The NQF ensures proper recognition of earned qualifications for further educational attainment, employment, and professional recognition. It provides portability of credentials within the country where it was earned and across borders if the learner is mobile, either physically or remotely.

This flexible and expandable model is vital to the landscape of education, as new types of qualifications (such as microcredentials) are introduced and modes of learning (such as hybrid and remote) evolve. A NQF provides the structure and regulation needed to ensure consistency and definition for new educational developments.

Get involved!

The United States needs to join the family of nations in establishing an NQF so its citizens and residents can benefit from fully recognized credentials and learners coming to the US from elsewhere can more effectively apply their education to the benefit of society, their communities, and families.

For more information on how to become involved in this voluntary project or to sign up for regular updates, email USQFProject@ece.org. We welcome a range of stakeholders to join this collaborative initiative.