Quality Assurance

HANDBOOK

Guide to the Development of Quality Assurance Systems in the scope of Turkish Qualifications Framework

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FOREWORD

Across Turkey, learners study for qualifications in a wide range of contexts. In schools, colleges, universities and other settings, they are developing the knowledge, skills and competence they need for jobs and future careers. Qualifications provide the proof that learners have achieved the required levels of learning for those jobs and careers.

Quality lies at the heart of effective qualifications. Learners, employers and the public need to be assured that the qualifications provided across the country are of a high quality, regardless of where they are delivered and assessed.

The Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) provides a vital mechanism for assuring quality in qualifications. It brings together nationally-approved qualifications from across all education and training settings, ensuring that they all meet a common set of quality standards and showing how they relate to each other in terms of level of learning. In this way, the TQF builds trust in the qualifications system and helps learners and employers to make the most appropriate choices to match their own needs.

The quality assurance requirements for TQF approved qualifications are set out in the *Regulation on the Procedures and Principles Concerning the Implementation of the Turkish Qualifications Framework*, and explained in more detail in the *Regulation on the The Quality Assurance of Qualifications to be Included in the Turkish Qualifications Framework.*

This Handbook is designed to support the institutions and bodies responsible for the quality assurance of TQF qualifications to develop and implement quality assurance systems which comply with the requirements of these regulations.

Vocational Qualifications Authority
Turkish Qualifications Framework Department

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim of the TQF Quality Assurance Handbook

The TQF is Turkey's 8-level national framework to support lifelong learning. It brings together qualifications offered in a wide range of education institutions and awarding bodies and arranges them according to type and level of difficulty.

Figure 1: TQF Qualification Types, Provisional Levels and Responsible Bodies

8	Higher Education Institutions	Doctoral Diploma (PhD, Proficiency in Arts and Specialty in Medicine)			Vocational Qualifications Authority	Level 8 Vocational Qualification Certificate
7		Master Degree (with Thesis) Master Degree (without Thesis)				Level 7 Vocational Qualification Certificate
6		Bachelor's Degree				Level 6 Vocational Qualification Certificate
5		Associate Degree (Academic) Associate Degree (Vocational)				Level 5 Vocational Qualification Certificate
4	Ministry of National Education	High School Diploma	Vocational and Technical High School Diploma	Skilled Worker Certificate		Level 4 Vocational Qualification Certificate
3				Semi-Skilled Worker Certificate[31]		Level 3 Vocational Qualification Certificate
		Lower Secondary Education Certificate				
2		Primary Education Certificate				Level 2 Vocational Qualification Certificate
1		Pre-School Participation Certificate				

The integrity of the TQF depends on effective quality assurance systems. These systems ensure that all qualifications on the TQF provide valid and reliable measures of the knowledge, skills and competences represented by the qualification certificate.

Responsibility for quality assurance in the TQF is devolved to the individual bodies responsible for the different types of qualifications in the framework (the Responsible Bodies). These bodies are required to ensure that their quality assurance processes and procedures align with TQF regulations. Importantly, TQF quality assurance requirements are intended to complement rather than replace existing quality assurance processes and procedure

The TQF Quality Assurance Handbook is designed to support a range of different audiences, in particular Responsible Bodies along with the Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies which assess and certificate their qualifications.

Responsible Bodies can use the Handbook to review their quality assurance processes and procedures against TQF requirements. It provides guidance to enable those responsible for of quality assurance to:
- understand the quality assurance requirements included in TQF regulations
- review existing quality assurance systems to identify where these align with TQF requirements, and where adaptations or additions might be required
- develop or refine the Responsible Body's 'Quality Assurance Paper', which is the key quality assurance document required to underpin all TQF qualifications.

Education Institutions and Awarding Bodies responsible for the assessment/evaluation and certification of learners can use the Handbook to ensure that all those involved in these processes understand the quality assurance requirements of the TQF.

The TQF Quality Assurance Handbook can also be used to help other stakeholder groups understand how quality principles and requirements underpin the TQF and promote consistency and trust in Turkey's qualification system.

1.2 Structure of the TQF Quality Assurance Handbook

The Handbook reflects the quality assurance requirements set out in TQF Regulations. In particular it provides guidance for each of the elements required in a Responsible Body's Quality Assurance Paper. The Handbook comprises two sections:

- **Section A** contains information about the role and structure of quality assurance in the TQF, and an overview of quality assurance requirements. It includes
  - o ***Quality Assurance in the TQF***: An overview of TQF quality assurance requirements.
  - o ***Quality Assurance Criteria***: The measures which all quality assurance systems must address.

- **Section B** provides guidance for each of the elements of quality assurance specified in the TQF regulations. It includes guidance to support the development of the following:
  - o ***The Quality Assurance Paper***
  - o ***Guideline 1: Preparation and approval of qualification form***
  - o ***Guideline 2: Assessment and evaluation***
  - o ***Guideline 3: Certification***
  - o ***Guideline 4: Self-assessment and external evaluation***
  - o ***Guidelines 5: Information technologies and feedback mechanisms***

1.3 Glossary

This list defines how the following terms are used in the discussion of quality assurance in the TQF. Whenever a term is used for the first time in the TQF Quality Assurance Handbook, it is underlined to remind readers that the definition is included here.

- **Certification**: A process of awarding a qualification as diploma, certificate, qualification certificate or title officially approving that the learning outcomes achieved by the individual are assessed and evaluated according to defined criteria,

- **Awarding body:** Bodies authorized by responsible bodies on carrying out operations related to the assessment and evaluation of the learning outcomes of individual and the awarding of qualification in case of success,

- **External evaluation:** Examination, evaluation and reporting of the activities of the education institutions and awarding bodies related the qualifications through information, document and evidence including on-site visit

- **Education institution:** Secondary education institutions and higher education institutions awarding diploma in general, vocational and technical education and formal and non-formal education institutions and organizations at all types and levels in which certificate programs are applied

- **Review:** Periodical examination and evaluation of the external evaluation-related activities of the specialized units or organizations conducting external evaluation in consideration of quality evaluation principles for ensuring the effectiveness, exchange of experience and to provide credibility

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- **Quality assurance:** The activities of planning, implementation, evaluation, reporting and quality improvement that enable the qualifications to meet the pre-defined quality standards and criteria,

- **Quality Indicator:** The specific pre-defined measures for evaluating quality performance.

- **Quality assurance paper:** The Paper prepared by the responsible bodies in order to explain the quality assurance system and compulsory guidelines to be taken as the basis for the operation of the system

- **Quality Assurance Criteria**: The principles or standards which the Responsible Body's quality assurance processes and procedures must address.

- **Approval**: This is the process of evaluating qualification forms and accepting the related qualifications onto the TQF. Responsibility for approval of qualifications sits with the TQF Council.

- **Learning Outcome:** Knowledge, skill and qualifications that an individual holds after the fulfilment of any kind of learning process. Statement regarding what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy

- **Assessment and evaluation:** The process of the evaluation of learning outcomes acquired by the individual according to the pre-defined criteria

- **Self-assessment:** Objectively examination, evaluation and reporting of the activities and processes of the education institutions and awarding bodies within their own organization,

- **Responsible Body:** These are the bodies responsible for developing and providing qualifications in the education and training system in Turkey. They include the Ministry of National Education, the Council of Higher Education, the Vocational Qualifications Authority and other institutions and organizations whose responsibility for qualifications indicated in their related legislation.

- **Turkish Qualifications Framework:** The national qualifications framework, which has been designed in line with the European Qualifications Framework and indicates all qualification principles acquired through general, academic and vocational education and training programs including primary, secondary and higher education as well as other ways of learning,

- **Qualification form:** Document in which the general information related to the qualification as the objective, learning outcomes, level, assessment and evaluation methods, entry and achievement requirements, and progression routes are defined,

- **Qualification Type:** A group of qualifications with similar functions, learning outcomes, credit values and/or tendencies, all sitting at the same level of the TQF.

- **Qualification:** Official documents such as diploma, certificate or vocational qualification certificate obtained when a responsible body, at the end of a process of assessment and validation, recognizes that an individual has accomplished the learning outcomes according to certain criteria,

SECTION A
General Guidance

2   QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE TQF

2.1   What is 'quality assurance' in the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF)?

Quality assurance is essential for building trust in qualifications. It provides the guarantees needed to assure learners, employers and the public in general that qualifications provide valid and reliable measures of the knowledge, skills and competences.

A key aim of the TQF is to support consistency in quality whilst ensuring that the bodies responsible for qualifications can continue to meet the quality assurance requirements which have been set for their own contexts. As a result, the TQF quality assurance requirements are designed to align with and to complement existing quality assurance arrangements. This approach, which reflects an open coordination model, encourages cooperation between all the responsible bodies and draws on their best practice to develop guidelines and benchmarks to support consistency in qualifications. In this way, it is planned that the TQF will support the continuous development of Turkey's qualifications system.

Continuous development of the qualifications system depends on recognising and supporting the various stages involved in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of qualifications. These stages are interdependent and can be represented as a lifecycle.

Figure 2: The Qualifications Lifecycle

Each stage includes clearly defined activities:

1. **Development:** This is the stage where the qualification form is prepared, defining all aspects of the qualification, including how it will be assessed and certificated
2. **Assessment:** At this stage, the individual's level of knowledge, skills and/or competence are appraised to determine if they have met the qualification learning outcomes
3. **Certification:** This involves a validation process to ensure that assessment results are valid and reliable, and a process to ensure that qualification documents (e.g. certificates; diplomas etc.) are issued appropriately.
4. **Evaluation:** This stage provides the necessary review to ensure that all of the processes designed to assure the quality of the qualification are working effectively, and to identify areas where improvements might be made.

5. **Improvement:** This stage plans for and implements the improvements identified in the evaluation stage.

The development of a qualification may also lead to the development of education and training programmes to prepare learners for the qualification. However, quality assurance of the education and training programmes sits outside the scope of the TQF Quality Assurance System.

The regulations which underpin the TQF define the quality assurance requirements that all qualifications must meet to be included within the TQF. These regulations are:

- ***Article 10 of The Regulation on the Procedures and Principles for the Implementation of the Turkish Qualifications Framework*** [1] (also known as 'The Regulation on TQF'); This regulation identifies the different bodies responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring quality assurance systems, and the areas which must be addressed in those systems.
- ***The Procedures and Principles for Maintaining Quality Assurance of Qualifications Included in the Turkish Qualifications Framework*** (also known as 'The Regulation on Quality Assurance') this regulation provides more detail about the responsibilities of different bodies in relation to quality assurance, and defines in more detail the areas which should be covered.

The requirements in both regulations address all aspects of qualifications, from design through to certification, along with requirements for the bodies responsible for the different aspects of the qualifications. These requirements are described in greater detail in Section 2.

Importantly, the TQF is designed to provide a mechanism that ensures the comparability and quality of qualifications at both national and international levels. As a result, both The Regulation on TQF and The Regulation on Quality Assurance align closely with European-level quality assurance requirements for qualifications and guidelines. A list of the relevant European-level quality assurance tools with which the TQF requirements align is included in Annex 1.

2.2 Who is responsible for quality assurance in the TQF?

A range of different bodies are responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of quality. These include

- ***'Responsible Bodies***: These are the bodies responsible for developing and providing qualifications in the education and training system in Turkey. They have overall responsibility for developing and implementing quality systems, for monitoring and evaluation the implementation of those systems, and for planning the continuous improvement of qualifications based on that evaluation.
- ***Education institutions and awarding bodies:*** These are the bodies which are authorised by Responsible Bodies to carry out assessment and certification in accordance with the quality assurance requirements set out by the relevant Responsible Bodies.

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[1] https://www.myk.gov.tr/images/articles/TYC/Tyc_bilgi_merkezi/mevzuat_duzenlemeleri/TYC_Yonetmeligi.pdf

- *   **The TQF Council***: The Council is responsible for all decisions relating to the TQF. This includes responsibility for approving qualifications for inclusion on the TQF, for reviewing quality assurance reports provided by Responsible Bodies, and for deciding any actions or measures to be taken as a result of the reports.
- *   **The TQF Coordination Council:** evaluates and approves the TQF Council decisions; ensures monitoring and assessment of TQF-related practices; ensures cooperation among responsible institutions on issues related to the implementation of the TQF and ensuring quality assurance for qualifications; ensures coordination so as to conduct national and international consultations about the TQF.

The Responsible Bodies include:

- **the Ministry of National Education (MoNE),** responsible for the education and training qualifications offered by the Ministry of National Education. MoNE is responsible for the following groups of qualifications:
- **the Council of Higher Education (CoHE)**, responsible for education and training qualifications offered by higher education institutions (HEIs). CoHE is responsible for 3 levels of degrees (graduate, post graduate and doctorate) as defined by the Bologna process, along with short-cycle qualifications known as "associate" degree. These qualifications can be either (or both) academic or vocational in nature, and are normally gained following formal activities.
- **Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA)**, responsible for qualifications within the scope of Law number 5544. These include National Qualifications which are based on National Occupational Standards (NOS) and which lead to the award of Vocational Qualification Certificates. The assessment and evaluation of National Qualifications can include the validation of <u>non-formal learning</u> and <u>informal learning</u> as well as the assessment of <u>formal learning</u>.
- Other bodies and institutions defined in relevant legislation for other qualifications.

Each Responsible Body is accountable for the quality assurance system which underpins their qualifications. The requirements for all quality assurance systems supporting TQF qualifications are outlined below.

2.3   What is required in the TQF Quality Assurance System?

The Regulation on Quality Assurance defines the quality assurance criteria ('quality criteria') which all TQF quality assurance systems must address. These quality criteria are detailed in Section 3.

Each Responsible Body is required to develop and implement a quality assurance system which addresses the quality criteria in a way which is appropriate for their context. As noted, the aim of TQF quality assurance is to enable Responsible Bodies to integrate and build on their existing quality assurance arrangements, complementing or adapting processes and procedures only where necessary to ensure that they align with the TQF quality criteria.

Each Responsible Body is required to produce a Quality Assurance Paper supported by a number of guidelines demonstrating how the Responsible Body and their authorised Education Institutions/Awarding Bodies will address the quality criteria.

The **5 obligatory guidelines** should detail the Responsible Body's processes and procedures for:
- the preparation and <u>approval</u> of qualification forms
- assessment and evaluation
- certification
- self-assessment and external evaluation
- information technology and feedback mechanisms.

Guidance to support the development of the Quality Assurance Paper and the 5 compulsory guidelines in included in Section B of this Handbook.

Once developed, the Quality Assurance Paper and Guidelines should be used to guide the implementation of all of the processes related to the Responsible Body's qualifications, including those processes which are devolved to Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies, and to monitor and evaluate performance of all of the bodies involved. The quality indicators used in monitoring and evaluation are identified in Section 3.

Figure 3 below summarises how the required elements of the TQF Quality Assurance System relate to one another:

Figure 3: TQF Quality Assurance Model Flowchart
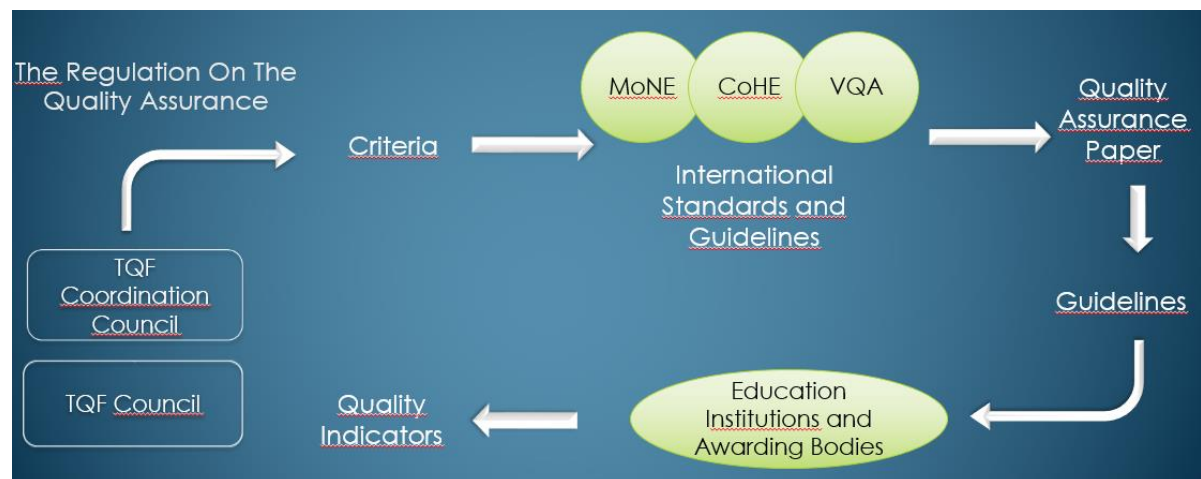
In addition to the obligatory requirements, Responsible Bodies may include guidelines to support quality processes in other areas relevant to their qualifications. For example, the VQA has produced a guideline to support the development of the National Occupational Standards which are required to underpin all National Qualifications.

It is important to note that TQF Quality Assurance focuses on the quality assurance of the qualifications systems. As a result, it does not address the quality of education and training programmes, nor the quality of teaching materials and resources which education institutions might use. Responsible Bodies may monitor and evaluate the quality of education programmes but this is outside the remit of the TQF Quality Assurance System.

The following section contains a table showing the TQF Quality Assurance Criteria and the associated quality indicators. These indicators refer to the documents and sources which may be used to provide evidence for monitoring, self-assessment and external evaluation. A central theme in addressing the criteria is the need for clear documentation. Responsible Bodies may choose to develop templates to ensure the effective recording of required information.

3   QUALITY ASSURANCE CRITERIA AND INDICATORS

Quality assurance in the TQF is underpinned by 11 quality criteria. Each criterion encompasses a series of requirements which quality assurance processes and procedures must address. The quality indicators associated with each criterion outline how compliance with the criteria can be evidenced.

Quality assurance systems shall meet the listed quality assurance criteria:

1. **Qualification form** is prepared and approved.
2. Valid and reliable **assessment and evaluation** process is carried out.
3. **Certification** processes are conducted in a transparent and impartial way.
4. The processes related to the qualifications are subject to **self-assessment** and **external evaluation**.
5. Units, teams or bodies conducting the external evaluation are subject to **regular review**.
6. **Improvement** activities are carried out in the light of the findings of self-assessment and external evaluation.
7. **Involvement of stakeholders** is maintained in the processes related to the qualifications.
8. Processes related to qualifications are implemented based on the explicit and measurable **objectives**, **criteria** and **guidelines**.
9. **Allocation of sufficient and appropriate resources** for all processes are maintained.
10. **Feedback mechanisms** are established and implemented.
11. **Electronic accessibility** to the outcomes of all processes is maintained

Figure 4: TQF Quality Criteria and Quality Indicators

Quality Assurance Criteria	Criteria requirements	Quality Indicators
1. Qualification form is prepared and approved	a) There is evidence of need for the qualification b) Appropriate stakeholders are involved in the qualification development c) The scope of qualification is defined d) The qualification learning outcomes are defined and appropriate to the TQF level e) The assessment strategy is clearly defined and appropriate to the scope and learning outcomes f) Processes for monitoring and reviewing the qualification are defined. g) Processes for approval are defined, including defining the potential outcomes of the approval process and the follow-up actions which can be taken.	✓ Completed qualification forms ✓ Approval process involvement lists ✓ Minutes for the approval decisions

Quality Assurance Criteria	Criteria requirements	Quality Indicators
2. Valid and reliable <u>assessment and evaluation</u> process is carried out.	a) Education institutions and/or awarding bodies appoint appropriately experienced and/or qualified individuals to carry out assessment activities. b) All individuals carrying out assessment activities carry out their role appropriately to ensure valid and reliable assessment. c) Assessment requirements defined in the qualification form support valid and reliable assessment of the learning outcomes. d) All records and results of assessment activities are stored securely and for a specified time.	✓ Experience requirements and role descriptors for those involved in assessment processes. ✓ Written guidance on how reliability of assessment decisions is achieved and maintained. ✓ Assessment and evaluation program ✓ Assessment evidence ✓ Storage requirements for assessment records ✓ Records of assessment processes, including evaluation forms
3. <u>Certification</u> processes are conducted in a transparent and impartial way.	a) The bodies responsible for certification appoint appropriately qualified and/or experienced individuals to carry out certification activities. b) All individuals responsible for certification carry out their role appropriately to ensure validity, reliability and security in certification. c) A system is in place to ensure the security of certificates, covering storage, issue, and reissue. d) A documented appeals and complaints process is available to individuals wishing to contest certification decisions or make complaints about the assessment and certification process. e) The official document issued by the certificating body meets TQF requirements. As a minimum, all official documents must include: • the individual's name • the title and level of the qualification • the name of the Responsible Body • the learning outcomes of the qualification • the learning context	✓ Written documents explaining the form, content and safety factors ✓ Evidence of verification process and decisions ✓ List of people for whom certificate is issued ✓ List of cancelled and/or reissued certificates ✓ Responses given to appeals and complaints

Quality Assurance Criteria	Criteria requirements	Quality Indicators
4. The processes related to the qualifications are subject to <u>self-assessment and external evaluation</u>.	***Education institutions and awarding bodies:*** a) have appropriate guidance to enable them to conduct self-assessment reviews of their qualifications-related activities. b) appoint appropriately qualified and experienced individuals to carry out self-assessment reviews. c) conduct annual self-assessment reviews ***Responsible Bodies:*** a) appoint appropriately experienced external evaluation teams, units or bodies to conduct external evaluations of the qualifications activities of Education Institutions and Awarding Bodies b) conduct external evaluations of the qualifications activities of authorised Education Institutions and Awarding Bodies at least once every 5 years. c) publish the findings of external evaluations so that they are accessible to all stakeholders ***External evaluators:*** a) carry out evaluation activities in a way that conforms to Responsible Body quality requirements and safeguards the security of information b) ensure objectivity and impartiality in their evaluation activities c) alert the Responsible Body to any potential conflict of interest which they identify d) report the findings of evaluation in a timely manner and in accordance with Responsible Body requirements	✓ Records of self-assessment activities, including details of individuals conducting those activities ✓ Self-assessment reports ✓ Terms of reference for external evaluators ✓ List of external evaluators involved in each external evaluation ✓ External evaluation schedules for all authorised Education Institutions and Awarding Bodies ✓ External evaluation reports and decisions ✓ Records of improvement activities following external evaluations

Quality Assurance Criteria	Criteria requirements	Quality Indicators
5. Units, teams or bodies conducting the external evaluation are subject to <u>regular review</u>.	a) The body or unit responsible for the review of external evaluators is clearly identified. b) The scope of the review of external evaluators is clearly defined. c) The timing and frequency of regular review is clearly defined d) The potential outcomes of review are defined, and the potential range of follow up actions identified.	✓ Terms of reference for reviewers ✓ Records related to team carrying out review ✓ Review reports carried out by independent bodies on external evaluation unit/body ✓ Improvement activities carried out
6. Improvement activities are carried out in the light of the findings of <u>self-assessment</u> and <u>external evaluation</u>.	**Education Institutions and Awarding Bodies:** a) use self-assessment reviews and external evaluations to plan and implement improvements in their qualifications process b) submit self-assessment reviews and improvement plans to the Responsible Body.	✓ Improvement plans ✓ Evidence of improvement activities
7. <u>Involvement of stakeholders</u> is maintained in the processes related to the qualifications.	a) The scope of stakeholder involvement is clearly defined. b) Mechanisms for securing stakeholder involvement are identified and implemented	✓ Records of consultations with stakeholders ✓ Records of findings from stakeholder consultations
8. Processes related to qualifications are implemented based on the explicit and measurable <u>objectives</u>, <u>criteria</u> and <u>guidelines</u>.	a) There is a clear statement showing how the quality assurance system is structured, and where accountability lies for the different elements. b) There is clear reference to the guidelines which form the quality assurance system. c) If appropriate, there are clear processes for authorising required external bodies to carry out aspects of the qualifications lifecycle (e.g. Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies for assessment and certification; external evaluators for external evaluations). d) There is clear reference to any additional national and/or international standards and guidelines which apply to the Responsible Body.	✓ Forming and approval guideline of qualification form ✓ Assessment and evaluation guideline ✓ Certification guideline ✓ Self and external evaluation guideline ✓ Information technologies and feedback mechanisms guideline ✓ Quality assurance paper ✓ Compliance with national and international standard and guidelines

Quality Assurance Criteria	Criteria requirements	Quality Indicators
9. Allocation of sufficient and appropriate resources for all processes are maintained.	a) The resources required to carry out the different stages in the qualifications lifecycle are clearly identified. This includes: • financial resources • human resources • physical or material resources (e.g. venues) • time b) Responsibility for resourcing each element in the qualifications lifecycle is clearly attributed	✓ Resource requirements identified in each guideline ✓ Budget plans ✓ Related to resource allocation and usage
10. Feedback mechanisms are established and implemented.	a) Mechanisms and timing for feedback from beneficiaries and stakeholders are clearly defined. b) Beneficiaries and other stakeholders are engaged in feedback activities c) The findings from feedback activities are used to plan and implement improvement in the qualifications process	✓ Feedback methods ✓ Evidence of feedback ✓ Evidence of action taken as a result of feedback
11. Electronic accessibility to the outcomes of all processes is maintained	a) The form and scope of information to be published is clearly defined. b) Information is published in accordance with prevailing legal and ethical requirements, and with data protection legislation. c) Instructions for access to the information is available to all potential stakeholders.	✓ Electronical information systems ✓ Access to information about assessment and evaluation results and certification processes

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SECTION B

Developing the
Quality Assurance Paper
and
Required Guidelines

4 DEVELOPING THE QUALITY ASSURANCE PAPER

4.1 Purpose

The Quality Assurance Paper is the overarching document in a Responsible Body's quality assurance system, providing an overview of the system as a whole. It describes the scope of the Responsible Body's qualification-related activities, and defines the structure of its quality assurance system. Importantly, it identifies how responsibility and accountability for assuring quality qualification processes are distributed in the system, and who is involved at each stage.

The Quality Assurance Paper supports the development of a whole-system approach to quality in qualifications. It can be used in a number of ways:

- It defines how the different parts of the quality assurance system relate to one another. This can help everyone - stakeholders, the TQF Council and the Responsible Body itself - understand how the system as a whole supports quality in qualifications.
- It can enable the Responsible Body to consider and identify where the tasks and activities involved in qualification delivery should be allocated within the organisation.
- It defines the standards and processes that apply when authorising external bodies (e.g. Education Institutions and Awarding Bodies; external bodies carrying out external evaluation) to carry out aspects of the qualification lifecycle. It therefore supports the selection of external partners.
- It can support budget planning by highlighting resource requirements across the whole of the qualifications lifecycle.

4.2 Criteria

The Quality Assurance Paper should demonstrate how the Responsible Body addresses the requirements of the following TQF Quality Criteria:

> **8. Qualification processes are implemented based on explicit and measurable objectives, criteria and guidelines**
> a) There is a clear statement showing how the quality assurance system is structured, and where accountability lies for the different elements.
> b) There is clear reference to the guidelines which form the quality assurance system.
> c) If appropriate, there are clear processes for authorising required external bodies to carry out aspects of the qualifications lifecycle (e.g. Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies for assessment and certification; external evaluators for external evaluations).
> d) There is clear reference to any additional national and/or international standards and guidelines which apply to the Responsible Body.
>
> **9. Sufficient and appropriate resources for all processes are allocated and maintained.**
> a) The resources required to carry out the different stages in the qualifications lifecycle are clearly identified. This includes:
> - financial resources
> - human resources
> - physical or material resources (e.g. venues)
> - time
> b) Responsibility for resourcing each element in the qualifications lifecycle is clearly attributed

4.3 Content

The Quality Assurance Paper provides the overarching plan or map of the quality assurance system. As such it should contain the following information:

- Information about the Responsible Body, including the types of qualifications it provides. If the qualifications activity sits within a larger body, the Quality Assurance Paper should identify where overall responsibility and accountability for qualifications sit within the organisation.
- An explanation of how the different elements in the quality assurance system (represented in the Quality Assurance Guidelines) interact with relate to each other.
- A clear explanation and/or illustration of who (i.e. which body, team or role) is responsible for the different stages in the qualifications lifecycle, and who they are accountable to.
- Information about the requirements and processes for authorising Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies to carry out assessment and/or certification activities.
- If the Responsible Body complies with other national or international quality assurance standards or requirements, these should be identified.
- If the Responsible Body has reviewed its existing quality assurance systems and structures against the TQF Quality Criteria to identify where these align, the results of this activity should be included in the Quality Assurance Paper.

It should be noted that the TQF Quality Criteria and associated requirements are not intended to replace existing quality assurance arrangements. They are intended to support and complement the existing arrangements. Comparing TQF requirements with existing arrangements can help the Responsible Body identify where existing arrangements meet requirements, and where additions or amendments might be needed to address the TQF Quality Criteria effectively.

4.4 Checklist

The following checklist is for individuals involved in developing the Quality Assurance Paper. The questions are designed to prompt discussion and decision making.

Key questions:
- What range/level/type of qualifications is the body responsible for? Who are the main beneficiaries and stakeholders for these qualifications? What quality assurance needs do they have (e.g. are there any concerns about equivalence/ relevance to the workplace etc.)?
- What are the current quality assurance arrangements? How do these compare with the TQF quality criteria? Are there any overlaps/gaps? How can gaps be addressed?
- How is the quality assurance system currently structured? Who is currently responsible for the different stages in the qualification lifecycle? Who are they accountable to? What form does that accountability take? Is this appropriate?
- How do the different stages in the qualifications lifecycle interact? For example, what is the relationship between the qualification design stage and the assessment stage? How are decisions at one stage communicated at the next?
- How are people/bodies appointed or authorised to carry out qualifications activities? What are the criteria for their appointment/authorisation? What skills & experience do they need?
- How will the different stages of the qualifications lifecycle be resourced? Who is responsible for ensuring the appropriate allocation and maintenance of resources?
- Who do the guidelines for the TQF Quality Assurance System apply to? Who needs to know about them? How will they use them? How will their use be monitored/reported?

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5 GUIDELINE 1: PREPARATION AND APPROVAL OF THE QUALIFICATION FORM

5.1 Purpose

The Qualification Form defines all aspects of a qualification. It provides the essential overview of the qualification and is the control document governing the assessment, certification and qualification evaluation processes.

The completed Qualification Form is essential to the qualifications system and is required for a number of reasons:

- It essential for the approval process, allowing the qualification to be included on the TQF.
- It defines the learning outcomes for the qualification, enabling education and training programmes to be developed.
- It defines the assessment and certification requirements which Education Institutions and Awarding Bodies base their activities on.

As a result, a well-devised qualification form is an important tool in promoting quality and trust in the TQF.

This *Guideline* should provide the guidance needed to enable that individuals responsible for the preparation of Qualification Forms, and those responsible for approval processes, to carry out their work effectively and to consistent standards.

Where a Responsible Body is responsible for a range of different types of qualifications, it is important that the information in *Guideline* is applicable to all relevant types of qualifications.

5.2 Criteria

The Guideline for Preparation and Approval of the Qualification Form should identify how the Responsible Body will address the following TQF Quality Assurance Criterion:

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1. A Qualification Form defining the qualification or qualification type is prepared and approved
  a) There is evidence of need for the qualification
  b) Appropriate stakeholders are involved in the qualification development
  c) The scope of qualification is defined
  d) The qualification learning outcomes are defined and appropriate to the TQF level
  e) The assessment strategy is clearly defined and appropriate to the scope and learning outcomes
  f) Processes for approval are defined, including defining the potential outcomes of the approval process and the follow-up actions which can be taken.
  g) Processes for monitoring and reviewing the qualification are defined.

7. Involvement of stakeholders is maintained in the processes related to the qualifications
  a) The scope of stakeholder involvement is clearly defined.
  b) Mechanisms for securing stakeholder involvement are identified and implemented.

5.3 Content

The processes included in this Guideline should cover the processes for developing the qualification and the approval process.

The content required in the Qualification Form is defined by its format. A copy of this format is included in Annex 2. It highlights a range of fields which must be completed before the qualification can be submitted for approval. However, it is important to consider how decisions are made to develop a qualification prior to completing the Qualification Form and submitting the qualification for approval.

The processes governing the design of the qualification should address both the preparation work and the information needed in the Qualification Form itself. The *Guideline* should:

- **identify where responsibility lies for the preparation work and for completing and submitting the Qualification Form:** This may be a department in the organisation or people in a specific role. It is important to identify who has overall responsibility for this development process.
- **describe how decisions to develop a qualification are made:** Preparatory work is needed to enable the Responsible Body to decide if a qualification is needed. Evidence of need can come in many forms - from labour market intelligence, feedback from stakeholders, requests from employers. However, it is also important to establish if other similar qualifications exist and, if so, how a new qualification will add value. The *Guideline* should identify how developers can judge evidence of need, and how this evidence informs decisions about development.
- **identify how stakeholders should be involved in qualification development:** Depending on the type of qualification, different groups of stakeholders may be involved. For example, vocational qualifications are likely to need input from the relevant employment sector to ensure that the content and design of the qualification are fit for purpose. The *Guideline* should identify the groups of stakeholders who should be engaged in qualification design, how they should be involved, and how that involvement should be recorded.
- **provide guidance for defining the scope, learning outcomes and level of the qualification:** Guidance on defining the objectives, target audience, learning outcomes and level of the qualification is central to ensuring that the Qualification Form is completed appropriately. In particular, Responsible Bodies need to ensure that the people involved in developing the qualification can write learning outcomes which are fit for purpose. This includes ensuring that they are expressed in terms of outcomes for the learner, that there is a process for mapping them to the appropriate TQF level and that they can be assessed.
- **provide guidance for defining the assessment strategy:** The assessment strategy covers all aspects of how achievement against learning outcomes will be assessed and evaluated. This includes defining the methods and assessment tools to be used and the people responsible for their development. It also includes defining the minimum requirements which an individual must meet in order to achieve the qualification. Finally, it defines how the delivery of assessment will be managed: the role and responsibilities of authorised Education Institutions/Awarding Bodies (if appropriate); the frequency of assessment; and the processes required for recording and reporting assessment decisions. This section of the *Guideline* should high-level guidance on assessment processes and relate closely to *Guideline 2: Assessment & Evaluation.*

The *Guideline* should also define the Responsible Body's processes for approving Qualification Forms. This section of the *Guideline* should:

- **identify who is responsible for the approval process:** This may be a team or unit in the organisation, or a group of people specifically convened for the approval process.
- **define a set of procedures to underpin the approval process:** The Guideline should define the series of steps involved in approval from submission to decision. This process should include administrative guidance on areas such as the frequency of approvals meetings, the time taken from submission to decision, and the recording and reporting requirements to ensure an appropriate audit trail.
- **define the range of possible decisions and their related outcomes:** Those responsible for approvals may be able to make a range of decisions (e.g. immediate approval; approval pending additional information; non-approval). The *Guideline* should identify the range of options open to those making the approval decisions, along with guidance on how to select the most appropriate. These decisions should align with any guidance emerging from the TQF Council on the approval of TQF qualifications. Importantly, guidance may need to be provided relating to how to ensure reliability in approval decisions to ensure consistency in decision making over time and across qualifications.
- **define processes for monitoring and review:** Following approval, the monitoring of the performance of a qualification is necessary to ensure that it is, and remains, fit for purpose. Areas such as candidate numbers, success rates, and complaints provide important data for making decisions about the ongoing value and relevance of a qualification. Similarly, the lifespan of a qualification can be limited: new technologies, skills and knowledge can make qualifications redundant. This *Guideline* should define clear processes for the monitoring of the performance of the approved qualification, and for setting timescales for review.

5.4 Checklist

The following checklist is for individuals involved in developing processes for the preparation and approval of Qualifications Forms. The questions are designed to prompt discussion and decision making.

Key Questions

Preparation

- Who is responsible for developing qualifications? What skills, knowledge and experience do they need?
- How can the need for a qualification be evidenced? Who is responsible for gathering that evidence? How should it be documented?
- Who is responsible for deciding if a qualification should be developed? What information do they need in order to make that decision? How should it be documented?
- How are stakeholders in a qualification identified? How and where are they involved in the decision making process?

Development

- How are learning outcomes defined for the qualification? How is the validity of the learning outcomes tested?
- What is the process for deciding the TQF level of the qualification? How are learning outcomes checked to ensure they sit at the identified TQF level?
- How will learners' achievement against the learning outcomes be assessed? What should guide qualification developers' choice of assessment methods, tools and tasks? How will decisions be made about what is manageable and affordable in terms of assessment?

- Who is responsible for assessment processes?

Approval:

- Who is responsible for approval processes? Who else is involved? What is their role?
- What are the administrative requirements for approval, including frequency of approval processes and timeframes for approval?
- How does Qualification Form move from the development phase into the approval process?
- What are the potential outcomes of the approval process? How is that decision arrived at? What happens after the decision is made (e.g. can Qualifications Forms be resubmitted if they have not been successful the first time?)?
- Who is responsible for proposing the qualification to be included in the TQF? What is the process for this?
- What are the monitoring requirements? What information should be monitored? How should the monitoring data be reported and used?
- What are the processes for qualification review?

6 GUIDELINE 2: ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

6.1 Purpose

> ***Qualification:*** *Official documents such as diploma, certificate or vocational qualification certificate obtained when a Responsible Body, at the end of a process of assessment and validation, recognizes that an individual has accomplished the learning outcomes according to certain criteria*

The TQF definition (above) demonstrates the importance of assessment to a qualification. As the definition highlights, a qualification can only be awarded once an individual's achievement measured against the learning outcomes has been assessed and validated.

A number of different people and/or bodies may be involved in developing and delivering assessment activities for a qualification. The processes may involve people working within Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies, and people working within the Responsible Body. This Guideline needs to support all of those involved to ensure that assessment is both valid and reliable.

Validity and reliability in assessment

Validity and reliability are two central concepts in the assessment of learning. They are essential for building trust in qualifications.

- **Validity:** This reflects the fitness for purpose of an assessment. It means that the assessment allows candidates to demonstrate that they have the knowledge, skills and/or competences represented by the qualification.
- **Reliability:** An assessment is reliable if it provides consistent results from across candidates, across assessors and across occasions on which it is used. An example of a reliable assessment is one which, if conducted with two different groups of similar candidates, would produce the same pattern of results regardless of where they took the assessment or who assessed them.

Responsible Bodies need to ensure that processes and procedures are in place to support both validity and reliability in assessment.

The Guideline on Assessment and Evaluation needs to provide guidance needed by those responsible for designing and carrying out assessment to ensure that assessment in qualifications is both reliable and valid.

6.2 Criteria

The Guideline for Assessment and Evaluation should define how the Responsible Body will address the following TQF Quality Assurance Criterion

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2. Processes are in place to ensure valid and reliable assessment and evaluation
a) Education institutions and/or awarding bodies appoint appropriately experienced and/or qualified individuals to carry out assessment activities.
b) All individuals carrying out assessment activities carry out their role appropriately to ensure valid and reliable assessment.
c) Assessment requirements defined in the qualification form support valid and reliable assessment of the learning outcomes.
d) All records and results of assessment activities are stored securely and for a specified time.

9. Sufficient and appropriate resources for all processes are allocated and maintained
a) The resources required to carry out the different stages in the qualifications lifecycle are clearly identified.
    This includes:

> - financial resources
> - human resources
> - physical or material resources (e.g. venues)
> - time
>
> b) Responsibility for resourcing each element in the qualifications lifecycle is clearly attributed

6.3 Content

A central feature of this Guideline is that it should define the assessment processes used for the qualification type (and, where appropriate, for individual qualifications) and how responsibility for those processes is distributed. Some Responsible Bodies may devolve all responsibility for assessment to authorised Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies. Others may maintain control over some aspects of assessment, such as the design and development of assessment tools (e.g. examination papers; assessed assignments) and the setting of assessment dates, and devolve other aspects (e.g. the assessment of written papers against criteria; the assessment of performance against criteria) to other bodies.

As a result, the identification of the range of assessment activities needed for a qualification type, and responsibility for those different activities, need to be clearly defined in the *Guideline*.

There is a core set of activities required to support the assessment of any qualification. These include:

- **The design of the assessment:** This is the plan of how learning outcomes will be assessed and should be included in the Qualification Form.

- **The development of assessment too**ls: Different tools may be needed each time an assessment is carried out. For example, examination papers in academic qualifications are likely to differ from one assessment round to the next. Similarly, competence-based assessment tasks in vocational qualifications may vary according to when and where the individual is being assessed. Skilled developers are needed to ensure that assessment tools provide valid measures of knowledge, skills and/or competences. This *Guideline* therefore should identify:
  - who is responsible for the development of assessment tools, and the skills and experience they need for this role;
  - how assessment tools are developed, tested and approved for use to ensure validity in assessment. This includes guidance for assessors on how to judge performance using the assessment tools;
  - what the resource restrictions might be on assessment tools;
  - how the security of the assessment tools is maintained during and after the development phase

- **The delivery of assessment**: These are the tasks which the assessor would normally carry out. They may involve making judgements about an individual's performance as they are completing a task (e.g. observing a learner making an artefact as part of assessment of skills) or after they have completed the task (e.g. marking the output of an exam or written test). In all cases, the assessor must be able to make objective, informed judgements about performance in accordance with the criteria specified in the development phase.

Clear definition is required for:

- o the processes for the appointment, briefing and training of assessors so that they can apply assessment criteria consistently, and make reliable judgements. Consistency in judgements across assessors and over time is essential to ensure the reliability of assessment;
- o the procedures for carrying out assessment, including how the security of assessment tasks and judgements is maintained
- o how resources for assessment are allocated within the assessment process.

- **The administration of assessment:** A range of administrative activities are needed to support effective assessment, from the scheduling of assessment calendars, the allocation of assessors, and how individuals will be registered for assessment, through to ensuring the safe transfer of information following the completion of assessment. All of these tasks are essential to ensure that assessment is carried out in a way that is both valid and reliable, and that does not unfairly advantage or disadvantage learners in the process. The *Guideline* should identify the administrative tasks required before, during and after the assessment of candidates and specify how these are carried out.

- **Ensuring valid and reliable assessment and evaluation:** The skills and experience required for these activities depend on the methods of assessment being used. In some cases, such as in the use of tests containing only multiple choice (i.e. objective) tests, this these activities may be an administrative task involving a check of the scoring of answers. In other cases, may require experts to evaluate and compare judgements in relation to the assessment criteria. In all cases, ensuring valid and reliable assessment and evaluation need to have the appropriate levels of knowledge, skills and briefing or training to enable them to carry out this role effectively.

  As a result, the Guideline should define how those activities are selected and trained. Effective valid and reliable assessment and evaluation systems requires that sufficient evidence is gathered to assure the Responsible Body of the accuracy and reliability of assessment. In many cases, this will involve sampling the work of individual assessors to ensure that their judgements are accurate. The *Guideline* should define how work will be sampled and, if assessment is considered to be inaccurate, what action should be taken.

6.4 Checklist

The following checklist is for individuals involved in developing processes to support valid and reliable assessment. The questions are designed to prompt discussion and decision making.

Key Questions

- Is responsibility for assessment distributed between the Responsible Body and authorised Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies? If so, how is the responsibility shared? Who is responsible for which aspects? Who is responsible for developing the processes and procedures for these different aspects?
- If the development of processes and procedures is devolved to authorised Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies, what measures are in place to ensure that they comply with TQF quality criteria and other relevant quality standards?
- Who is responsible for the development of assessment tools? What knowledge, skills and experience do developers need?
- What is the process for developing assessment tools? How are they tested to ensure they provide valid and reliable results?

- Who is responsible for delivering assessment ('assessors')? What do they have to do? What knowledge, skills and experience do they need for their role?
- What is the process for ensuring that assessors arrive at valid, reliable and fair judgements?
- How do assessors record their judgements?
- How is the security of assessment safeguarded at each stage in the process, including the transfer of information about assessment judgements?
- What administrative tasks are needed before, during and after the delivery of assessment to ensure that assessment processes produce valid, reliable and fair results?
- What resources are needed at each stage of the assessment process?
- (In cases where qualifications are offered in different venues/ areas of the country) How will fair access to assessment be assured for all potential qualification candidates, regardless of where they are taking the assessment?
- Which body is responsible for the ensuring valid and reliable assessment and evaluation of assessment judgements? Who in that body is responsible?
- What does the ensuring valid and reliable assessment and evaluation team need to do to ensure judgements are valid, reliable and fair? How much evidence is needed to confirm the validity of results?
- What skills and experience are needed to carry out activities effectively? How will team members be trained for their role? How will their work be monitored?
- Who is responsible for confirming the final results? How are those decisions confirmed and documented? When and how is the individual informed about the result?

7 GUIDELINE 3: CERTIFICATION

7.1 Purpose

Certification of results involves two distinct processes: the validation of the judgements made by assessors, and the issuing of the formal documents to individuals who have successfully completed the qualification.

Quality assurance processes are also required to ensure the security of certificates. In particular, procedures are needed to safeguard the process against fraud. It should be recognised that qualification documents have a value: they provide the evidence that individuals may need to enter or progress through education or employment. As a result, safeguards are needed to ensure that only individuals who have achieved the qualification receive the official document.

The *Guideline on Certification* is needed support all those involved in certification processes.

7.2 Criteria

The *Guideline for Certification* should define how the Responsible Body will address the following TQF Quality Assurance Criterion

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3. Processes are in place to ensure that certification is conducted in a transparent and impartial way.

a) The bodies responsible for certification appoint appropriately qualified and/or experienced individuals to carry out certification activities.

b) All individuals responsible for certification carry out their role appropriately to ensure validity, reliability and security in certification.

c) A system is in place to ensure the security of certificates, covering storage, issue, and reissue.

d) A documented appeals and complaints process is available to individuals wishing to contest certification decisions or make complaints about the assessment and certification process.

f) The official document issued by the certificating body meets TQF requirements. As a minimum, all official documents must include:
  - the individual's name
  - the title and level of the qualification
  - the name of the Responsible Body
  - the learning outcomes of the qualification
  - the learning context

9. Sufficient and appropriate resources for all processes are allocated and maintained.

a) The resources required to carry out the different stages in the qualifications lifecycle are clearly identified. This includes:
  - financial resources
  - human resources
  - physical or material resources (e.g. venues)
  - time

b) Responsibility for resourcing each element in the qualifications lifecycle is clearly attributed

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7.3 Content

The quality assurance processes in this *Guideline* should the issuing of certificates.

The *Guideline* should define which bodies have responsibility for issuing certificates. In cases where authorised Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies have responsibility for developing procedures for these activities, the *Guideline* should define the areas the procedures should cover.

Issuing Certificates

The security of the official document should be addressed clearly in the *Guideline.* There need to be clear procedures to ensure security before, during and after the issuing of the documents. Examples of security procedures might include the numbering and secure storage of blank certificates, the processes for checking the accuracy of candidate details on certificates prior to issue, and arrangements for secure delivery to the individual who has been awarded the certificate.

The design of the official document should be defined in the *Guideline.* As a minimum, it should reflect the requirements laid out in TQF Quality Assurance Criterion 3 (above).

Individuals may contact the issuing body to request duplicate or replacement official documents if originals have been lost or mislaid. The Responsible Body should develop processes to ensure the security of certificates and to guard against unnecessary duplication or reissue. The *Guideline* should therefore define if duplicate or replacement documents can be issued and, if so, under what circumstances. Procedures should also be established to cancel originals in cases where duplicates or replacements have been issued.

Complaints and appeals

Some individuals may wish to appeal against the results of assessment, or to make a complaint related to assessment and/or certification. The *Guideline* should contain procedures for receiving and handling complaints and appeals, including:

- information about how and when individuals can submit a complaint/appeal, and the grounds needed for the complaint/appeal to be considered
- the process for considering an appeal or complaint: who should be involved; how decisions are made; how individuals are informed of the decisions.

Guidance is also required on how to close complaints and appeals, particularly if the individual is dissatisfied with the outcome. The Responsible Body may, for example, consider ways to escalate the complaint or appeal to a different department or authority.

7.4 Checklist

The following checklist is for individuals involved in developing processes to support validation and certification. The questions are designed to prompt discussion and decision making.

Key questions:

- Who is responsible for the design and production of official documents?
- Who is responsible for issuing the official documents?
- How is the security of official documents maintained
    - prior to issue?
    - during the production process?
- How can the Responsible Body be sure that the individual has received their official document?
- Can duplicates or replacements be issued? If so, under what circumstances? How are originals cancelled?
- Can individuals submit complaints or appeals against the results of assessment? If so, under what circumstances? What is the procedure for submitting an appeal or complaint? Where can the individual access information about the appeals and complaints procedure?
- What happens when a complaint or appeal is received? Who is involved in considering the appeal/complaint? What are the potential outcomes of appeals/complaints? How are individuals informed of the outcome?
- What happens if an individual is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint/appeal?
- Who is responsible for documenting the receipt, processing and outcomes of appeals/complaints? Where is this information held?

8 GUIDELINE 4: SELF-ASSESSMENT AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION

8.1 Purpose

Ensuring quality in qualifications involves a process of continuous improvement. It is vital to ensure that qualifications provide valid and reliable evidence of knowledge, skills and competence, and that they continue to meet the needs of stakeholders. As a result, processes which identify what works well and areas where changes are needed are essential in supporting improvement.

Evaluation is an integral part of qualifications and provides the opportunity to reflect on performance at the preceding stages in the qualifications lifecycle and to plan how improve that performance.

The TQF Quality Assurance System includes two forms of evaluation:

- **self-assessment**, where the bodies involved in the design, development, assessment and certification of qualifications review and evaluate their activities against the quality assurance requirements for the different stages in the lifecycle;
- **external evaluation**, which involves an appraisal of the bodies' qualification activities by an external team appointed by the Responsible Body.

The *Guideline for Self-Assessment and External Evaluation* should support everyone working in qualification design, development, assessment and certification to understand what is required in evaluation, and to plan improvements on the basis of findings.

8.2 Criteria

The *Guideline for Self-Assessment and External Evaluation* should demonstrate how the Responsible Body will address the following TQF Quality Assurance Criteria

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4. Qualification processes are subject to self-assessment and external evaluation
Education institutions and awarding bodies:
   a) have appropriate guidance to enable them to conduct self-assessment reviews of their qualifications-related activities.
   b) appoint appropriately qualified and experienced individuals to carry out self-assessment reviews.
   c) conduct annual self-assessment reviews

Responsible Bodies:
   a) appoint appropriately experienced external evaluation teams, units or bodies to conduct external evaluations of the qualifications activities of Education Institutions and Awarding Bodies
   b) conduct external evaluations of the qualifications activities of authorised Education Institutions and Awarding Bodies at least once every 5 years.
   c) publish the findings of external evaluations so that they are accessible to all stakeholders

External evaluators:
   a) carry out evaluation activities in a way that conforms to Responsible Body quality requirements and safeguards the security of information
   b) ensure objectivity and impartiality in their evaluation activities
   c) alert the Responsible Body to any potential conflict of interest which they identify
   d) report the findings of evaluation in a timely manner and in accordance with Responsible Body requirements

5. Units, teams or bodies conducting external evaluation are subject to regular reviews
   a) The body or unit responsible for the review of external evaluators is clearly identified.

> b) The scope of the review of external evaluators is clearly defined.
> c) The timing and frequency of regular review is clearly defined
> d) The potential outcomes of review are defined, and the potential range of follow up actions identified.
>
> **6. Improvement activities are carried out in the light of the findings of self-assessment and external evaluation**
>
> Education Institutions and Awarding Bodies:
> a) use self-assessment reviews and external evaluations to plan and implement improvements in their qualifications process
> b) submit self-assessment reviews and improvement plans to the Responsible Body.

8.3 Content

As the list of criteria above highlights, this *Guideline* directs the activities of a range of bodies: the Responsible Body, the authorised Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies and those responsible for external evaluation. It is vital, therefore, that the *Guideline* establishes how these different bodies interact with each other to support effective self-assessment and evaluation. In particular, clear stages should be established for both types of activity, showing the responsibilities of all those involved at the different stages.

Self-assessment

Self-assessment involves only the Responsible Body and the authorised Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies. For self-assessment to be effective, it is important that the Education Institution/Awarding Body understands what should be included in self-assessment, and the standards against which that assessment will be measured. As a result, the Guideline should identify:

- **The format and required content of a self-assessment report**: The Responsible Body may wish to include a standard template for reporting, along with guidance on the information which should be included.

- **The criteria which the self-assessment should address**: The self-assessment should provide an opportunity for the Education Institution/Awarding Body to reflect on all of their qualifications, and the criteria should be drawn from the Responsible Body's guidelines. In this way, the Education Institution/Awarding Body can demonstrate the extent to which they meet the requirements set by the Responsible Body.

Effective self-assessment depends on gathering evidence from different sources. These will normally include the monitoring reports for different activities undertaken by the Education Institution/Awarding Body, and may also include evidence gathered in discussions with the people responsible for those activities. The Guideline should provide some guidance on the type and possible sources of evidence required to support the self-assessment.

Self-assessment should also be used as an opportunity to identify and plan improvements to qualifications activities. The TQF Quality Assurance System requires Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies to develop and implement improvement plans based on the outcomes of self-assessment. The Guideline should define the Responsible Body's expectations of improvement planning and implementation.

Effective self-assessment requires individuals to gather, analyse and synthesise information and to identify possible areas for improvement. This means that those responsible for the self-assessment task need skills, experience and the authority to investigate the organisation's performance. The Guideline should support the Education Institution/Awarding

Body to identify and appoint the most appropriate staff members to lead the self-assessment process.

The TQF Quality Assurance System requires self-assessment to be undertaken annually, with at least one self-assessment report being submitted each year. The Guideline should define the processes for scheduling the submission of self-assessment reports.

Self-assessment reports give Responsible Bodies the opportunity to engage with their authorised Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies to identify and share best practice and to learn where improvements might be made. It is important to identify how the Responsible Body will use the findings in the self-assessment report to support improvement in the qualifications system. The Guideline should therefore identify what will happen once the report has been submitted. This may include defining:

- who will read the report, and if feedback will be provided
- the decisions which can be made on the basis of submitted reports. This may include, for example, approval of the report, recommendations for improvements, or requirements for additional evaluation if criteria have not been met.

External Evaluation

The TQF Quality Assurance Criteria require Responsible Bodies to arrange for the external evaluation of qualification activities at least once every 5 years. The body is responsible for appointing appropriately qualified, skilled and experienced evaluators and for ensuring that they have the briefing they need to conduct evaluation activities in an objective, fair and transparent way. The *Guideline* should therefore define the processes for appointing and briefing evaluators, and the standards they are expected adhere to when conducting evaluation activities. Particular attention should be given to the requirements for defining and dealing with potential conflicts of interest and for ensuring the security of information gathered in the course of the evaluation.

As with self-assessment activities, Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies, and the external evaluation team themselves, need to understand:

- the criteria against which activities are being evaluated
- the type of information needed to address those criteria
- how the evaluation will be scheduled and conducted
- what happens once the evaluator completes the evaluation report, i.e. the processes for submission
- what happens once the report has been submitted. In particular, there needs to be clarity around the possible outcomes following submission, and how these will be communicated to the authorised bodies.

The *Guideline* should provide clear guidance on all of these areas, in particular to highlight areas where self-assessment processes/outcomes and external evaluation processes/outcomes might differ.

External evaluations play an important role in promoting trust in the qualifications system, and a key requirement is that the outcomes of evaluation should be accessible to stakeholders. However, it is important to recognise that reports may contain sensitive information or information covered by data protection legislation. The *Guideline* therefore needs to identify what information will be shared, how it will be shared and who will be able

to access it. It also needs to highlights how the security of information which should not be shared will be maintained.

External evaluators have a central role to play in supporting continuous improvement in the qualifications system. Their role is to assess the performance of the authorised Education Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies against the Responsible Body's quality criteria in a way which is objective, fair and transparent. It is vital that everyone in the system trusts the judgements of the external evaluators. In order to support this trust, the work of the external evaluators themselves should be reviewed on a regular basis. The *Guideline* should therefore also define the arrangements for this type of review, including identifying who is responsible for the review process and the possible outcomes of that process.

8.4   Checklist

The following checklist is for individuals involved in developing processes to support effective self-assessment and external evaluation. The questions are designed to prompt discussion and decision making.

Key questions

Self-assessment

- What areas of activity should be covered by self-assessment?
- What are the quality criteria related to those areas? Are they clearly defined in the Responsible Body's quality assurance system?
- What type of evidence does the authorised Education Institution and/or Awarding Body need to provide to show that they have successfully addressed those criteria?
- What format should the report take? What type of information should it contain?
- Who should be responsible for self-assessment processes?
- What are the administrative requirements surrounding the submission of the report?
- Who reads the report once it has been submitted? What should happen after it has been read? What are the possible outcomes and potential follow up actions?
- How should outcomes be reported to the authorised body who submitted the self-assessment?
- How should the self-assessment report be stored?

External evaluation

- What are the similarities and differences between self-assessment and external evaluation in terms of:
  - o   the activities covered and the evidence requirements related to those activities
  - o   the quality criteria which provide the measures for the evaluation
  - o   the format of the report
  - o   the submission of the report
- Who reads the submitted report? What are the processes for feedback? What are the possible outcomes and follow-up actions after the report has been read?
- How are outcomes and follow up actions decided? Who are these outcomes and follow up actions communicated to? What happens next?
- Who has the right to see the results of the external evaluation? What information can be shared and what cannot be shared? How will the results be made accessible to those who have the right to see them? What safeguards are needed to protect sensitive or private information?

The external evaluation team

- Who are the 'evaluators'? What knowledge, skills and experience do external evaluators need?
- Who is responsible for appointing external evaluators and monitoring their work? What is the process for appointing them?

- What are the standards the external evaluators need to comply with to carry out their role effectively? How will their compliance with those standards be monitored? What happens if they do not meet those standards?
- How is the work of the external evaluators reviewed? How often do reviews take place? Who undertakes the review? What are the possible outcomes of the review?

9 GUIDELINE 5: INFORMATION TECHCNOLOGY AND FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

9.1 Purpose

The *Guideline on Information Technology and Feedback Mechanisms* provides the guidance and processes needed to ensure the appropriate management of information. There are two distinct aims for the *Guideline:*

- It provides the guidance needed to ensure that all qualifications information is made available electronically so that those who have the right to see if can access it easily.
- It provides the guidance needed to ensure that stakeholder feedback is gathered, analysed, stored and used in a way that supports the quality of the qualifications and which is in line with data protection regulations.

9.2 Criteria

The *Guideline for Information Technology and Feedback Mechanisms* should demonstrate how the Responsible Body will address the following TQF Quality Assurance Criteria.

> **10. Feedback mechanisms are established and implemented.**
> a) Mechanisms and timing for feedback from beneficiaries and stakeholders are clearly defined.
> b) Beneficiaries and other stakeholders are engaged in feedback activities
> c) The findings from feedback activities are used to plan and implement improvement in the qualifications process
>
> **11. The outcomes of all processes are accessible electronically**
> a) The form and scope of information to be published is clearly defined.
> b) Information is published in accordance with prevailing legal and ethical requirements, and with data protection legislation.
> c) Instructions for access to the information are available to all potential stakeholders

9.3 Content

Feedback mechanisms

Feedback from stakeholders is essential for ensuring that a qualification is fit for purpose. However, feedback is only useful if:

- the need for information has been clearly defined. It is important to consider why information is being gathered and what will be done as a result.
- the appropriate people have been asked to provide information. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the feedback is representative of the range of opinion related to the qualification. It is therefore important to consider how to ensure that feedback is both valid and reliable.
- action can be taken as a result of feedback. Stakeholders may be keen to engage with the Responsible Body to inform changes in qualifications, but that interest may fade if no changes are made as a result of their engagement. It is therefore important to identify what changes might be possible, and which are not possible, and to ensure that stakeholders understand this.

Having a clear understanding of why feedback is needed, who should be engaged, and how the results will be used is essential to the development of this Guideline. This understanding will help to ensure that the processes used to gather feedback are appropriate to the stakeholders and to the aims of the information gathering.

The Guideline therefore needs to identify which stakeholder groups need to be engaged in providing feedback, and why their feedback is important. Feedback from each group may be more important at some stages in the qualifications lifecycle than at others. For example, the views of employers and individual candidates for qualifications are likely to be important when the learning outcomes of a vocational qualification are being established or reviewed. However, the views of the individuals are likely to be more important if the administrative processes for assessment are being reviewed. It is important to identify, therefore, where and when in the qualifications lifecycle feedback should be gathered from the different groups.

Clear channels for feedback are essential to enable stakeholders to share their views with the Educational Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies and with the Responsible Body itself. The Guideline should identify the guidelines which the authorised bodies should comply with in the gathering of information from stakeholders.

It is important that stakeholders trust Educational Institutions/Awarding Bodies and Responsible Bodies to respect ethical standards and legal requirements when using the information they provide. The Guideline should therefore describe how data might be used and, importantly, give assurances on how it will not be used within the qualifications system.

Feedback is an important source of information for Educational Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies when carrying out their annual self-assessment. The Guideline should therefore identify how feedback mechanisms might be integrated into self-assessment activities and used to inform improvement planning.

Information Technology

Information technology is essential for the gathering, storing, processing and sharing of information within the qualifications system. It is an essential tool which supports each stage of the qualifications lifecycle. However, it is vital that all of those involved in the qualifications lifecycle understand the parameters which govern the gathering, storing, processing and sharing of information.

The Guideline should identify the information requirements at each stage of the qualifications lifecycle. It should also define:

- **who has the right to see the information**: For example, all stakeholders may have an interest in seeing the high-level information relating to pass rates in an assessment, but the Responsible Body may decide that the results for an individual can only be shared with that individual.
- **how the information can be used:** For example, the Responsible Body may decide that assessment tools can only be used during the assessment, and may not be kept for later use (for example, in training programmes).
- **how the information should be stored:** Some types of information may need to be stored securely (e.g. certification records) and/or for a set period of time.
- **what restrictions exist on the storage, use and sharing of the information:** These areas may be subject to data protection or other information sharing legislation. The *Guideline* should ensure that information storage/use/sharing requirements support

Educational Institutions and/or Awarding Bodies to operate within relevant legislative frameworks.

The TQF Quality Assurance Criteria requires Responsible Bodies to make information about qualifications processes available and accessible electronically. In addition to identifying the information which should be shared (and with whom), the *Guideline* should also establish how availability and accessibility can be assured. This may include requirements relating to:

- **how and where the information should be made available** (e.g. is it to be made freely available, for example via an open-access website, or should it be password protected?)
- **the minimum technology requirements for accessing the information.** This is particularly important to ensure that the use of technology does not exclude people who may only have access to basic technology tools.
- **how the currency of the information will be assured,** for example through updates or version control.

9.4   Checklist

The following checklist is for individuals involved in developing guidelines to support the appropriate management of information, both in terms of feedback and the use of information technology. The questions are designed to prompt discussion and decision making

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Key questions:

Feedback mechanisms
- Who are the main groups of stakeholders for this type of qualification? Where are they involved in the qualifications lifecycle? Why is their feedback important? What can it help the Responsible Body, Education Institution and/or Awarding Body to do?
- What is the most appropriate way to encourage feedback from the different groups at the different stages?
- What should be done with the information gathered as a result of the feedback mechanisms?
- What are the restrictions on the use of this information? How can stakeholders be assured that their information is being used responsibly?
- Who is responsible for gathering feedback and for ensuring that the information is used responsibly?

Information technologies
- What different types of information are generated at each stage in the qualification lifecycle? For each type of information: who generates it? who has the right to see it?
- What types of information cannot be shared? How can it be stored securely? Are there any restrictions on how long it can be held?
- For information which is not restricted: Should it be made available to stakeholders? If yes, where should it be made available? What format should it be made available in? How can it be accessed? Are there any restrictions on its further use?
- What are the potential barriers to stakeholders accessing this information? What should be done to address those barriers?

- For information which is restricted: What processes are needed to ensure that only those who have the right to see it can see it? How can security of information be assured?

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10 CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS & GUIDANCE

The aim of quality assurance within the TQF is to support transparency, consistency and quality across the qualifications system in Turkey. It provides the mechanisms needed to ensure that each TQF qualification provides a consistent measure of the skills, knowledge and competences gained by the learner, regardless of where and how they have studied and where they have undertaken assessment. In this way, quality assurance promotes ensures that all stakeholders - learners, their families and society as a whole - can trust the qualifications system.

Importantly, the quality assurance of TQF qualifications is designed to align with, rather than replace, each Responsible Body's existing quality assurance arrangements. The guidance provided in this manual is designed to help Responsible Bodies to examine and reflect on their existing arrangements in order to identify:

- how far existing arrangements align with the requirements of the TQF
- any gaps in current arrangements, and how these might be addressed
- areas of particularly effective quality assurance practice which can help develop a national approach to best practice in quality assurance.

The TQF Council is responsible for safeguarding the integrity of the TQF. This includes ensuring that all TQF qualifications meet the required standards in terms of quality assurance. As part of this role, the TQF is responsible for reviewing and providing feedback on the quality assurance arrangements which each Responsible Body has put in place. This process is designed to ensure that REsponsible Bodies have the support required to meet the TQF standards.

The guidance provided in this manual has been developed on behalf of the TQF Council. It is designed to support Responsible Bodies to undertake this examination and reflection of current practice, and to engage in a process of continuous improvement. It highlights the standards which all process and procedures must meet in order to support the integrity of the TQF. Importantly, however, Responsible Bodies are also encouraged to identify where their existing quality assurance arrangements may exceed required standards and to share knowledge about particularly effective quality assurance practice. In this way, all stakeholders in the TQF may benefit from the good practice developed by Responsible Bodies.

ANNEX 1: LINKS BETWEEN THE TQF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEMS

It is important to have alignment between the basic principles defined within the TQF and the quality assurance requirements defined by European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in order to support the aim of mobility of individuals. Therefore, the Regulation on the Procedures and Principles Concerning the Implementation of the Turkish Qualifications Framework has been defined in alignment with the various guidelines, framework and principles. Responsible Bodies must establish and operate quality assurance systems which also align with the following Framework where appropriate:

- Quality Assurance Principles for Qualifications in National Qualifications Framework or Systems Referenced to European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
- For higher education qualifications: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)
- For vocational qualifications: European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)
- European Guidelines for Validating Non-formal and Informal Learning

Compliance with the criteria included in these guidelines is intended to support the recognition of Turkish qualifications by foreign countries. TQF has been referenced to the EQF in 2017. Referencing the TQF to the EQF has a historical significance in terms of showing that our country's education, training and qualification system has reached European norms as a result of the studies carried out in the last 15 years. As a matter of the fact that, concrete studies carried out by the responsible bodies in ensuring the quality assurance of qualifications contributed to the transparent and reliable execution of the referencing process. In Turkey, responsible bodies have designed their processes to comply with the principles and objectives accepted across Europe in the relevant qualification type, and with the enactment of the TQF Quality Assurance Regulation, it is aimed to coordinate practices regarding quality assurance.

It is anticipated that institutions requesting to include the qualifications in the TQF will establish a system appropriate to its qualifications which complies with the TQF Quality Assurance Criteria and also aligns with international guidelines where appropriate.

ANNEX 2: QUALIFICATION FORM

QUALIFICATION FORM DATA FIELDS					Required/ Optional
Qualification Title					**Required**
Responsible Body					**Required**
Objective					**Required**
Orientation	General	Academic		Vocational	**Required**
Level	TQF:	EQF:	ISCO:	**ISCED (2013):**	**Required**
Category	**Principle**	**Supplemental**	**Unit**	**Special/ Purpose**	**Required**
Learning Outcomes					**Required**
Assessment and Evaluation Methods					**Required**
Entry Requirements					**Required**
Achievement Requirements					**Required**
Progression Routes					**Required**
Legal Basis					**Required**
Credit Value					**Optional**
Learning Context					**Optional**
Quality Assurance					**Optional**
Expiry Date (If available)					**Optional**
Other Information					**Optional**
Web Address for Access to Qualification					**Optional**