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EUROPEAN GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND WRITING OF SHORT, LEARNING-OUTCOMES- BASED DESCRIPTIONS OF QUALIFICATIONS

EQF-Europass project group

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The European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group and the Europass Advisory Group agreed to set up the project group in June 2021 to develop and agree on common guiding principles for structuring short descriptions of learning outcomes for the publication of qualifications in databases and registers connected to Europass. The group operated from December 2021 to October 2023.

Members of the project group included experts from 12 countries and stakeholder organisations representing education and training and the labour market. The European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group and the Europass Advisory Group were both consulted on the interim and final drafts of the guidelines.

The European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, in line with the 2017 Recommendation on the European qualifications framework and the 2018 Europass Decision, coordinated the work. Cedefop, represented by Zelda Azzarà and Jens Bjornavold, provided technical and conceptual support and drafted the guidelines in close coordination with project group members, which also included the European Training Foundation.

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Introduction

The importance of short learning-outcomes based descriptions of qualifications

Learning outcomes are statements of what an individual should know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a learning process. The development and use of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) based on learning outcomes and linked to the European qualifications framework (EQF) at EU level, have improved transparency and comparability of qualifications ⁽¹⁾ across Europe.

While EQF and NQF levels offer a simple way to gain a first understanding of qualifications, the development of qualification databases/registers has significant importance in deepening the transparency of qualifications.

The use of the learning outcomes approach has proved useful in identifying similarities and differences between qualifications, providing a better understanding of their scope and orientation ⁽²⁾. However, recent studies and projects reveal that learning outcomes descriptions can vary, for example in terms of length, formulation, granularity, and this poses a challenge to comparability of qualifications ⁽³⁾.

Full descriptions of national qualifications are developed according to national criteria and priorities and may refer to numerous specific learning outcomes. Short and synthetic descriptions, building on but not replacing full national descriptions, have multiple benefits as they can provide an easy access and an entry point for individual learners or employers seeking information on specific qualifications.

(1) Qualifications: formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

(2) Cedefop (2020). *European qualifications framework. Initial vocational education and training: focus on qualifications at levels 3 and 4*.
Cedefop (2020). *National qualifications frameworks developments in Europe 2019. Qualifications frameworks: transparency and added value for end users*.
Cedefop (2022). *Comparing vocational education and training qualifications: towards methodologies for analysing and comparing learning outcomes*.

(3) EQF pilots and project group on Horizontal comparability of qualifications 2016 and 2018; EQF-Europass project group on short description of qualifications 2023;
Cedefop (2022). *Comparing vocational education and training qualifications: towards methodologies for analysing and comparing learning outcomes*.
Cedefop (2022). *Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: a European handbook*. 2nd edition.

They can be translated more easily and can give a quick overview of the content and profile of the qualification.

Structuring short descriptions according to the same principles is important to increase transparency and understanding and facilitate comparison; it can also support in leveraging of digital developments to access, use, connect and compare information on the content and profile of qualifications ⁽⁴⁾.

Improving accessibility, transparency and comparability of qualifications can increase the mobility of workers and learners, support lifelong learning and career management by bridging different qualifications and experience.

Development and aim of the guidelines

These guidelines have been developed by a group of experts ⁽⁵⁾ at EU level coordinated by the European Commission with the technical and conceptual support of Cedefop and in consultation with national experts and stakeholders.

A total of 33 qualifications (short and full descriptions) were submitted within the context of the group. Of these, 22 qualifications were analysed to extract key principles upon which to base the guidelines. An initial draft of the guidelines was presented at the 60th EQF AG meeting in November 2022 (Note EQF AG 60-4) and then tested. This involved gathering feedback from national stakeholders on the text of the guidelines as well as developing short descriptions of qualifications using the guidelines with the aim of adding examples to them. By the end of the process, 20 descriptions were developed, and a peer review process was conducted to identify aspects where the guidelines needed improvement for better clarity and to identify descriptions that could serve as role examples (three examples are finally included in the guidelines).

The aim is to promote common principles and therefore a consistent structure and approach to develop short and synthetic descriptions of learning outcomes of

⁽⁴⁾ Azzara Z., & Garmash A. (2022). [From fragmented paper-based systems to digitally connected qualification systems accessible to citizens](#). In Cedefop, ETF, UNESCO & UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. *Global Inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks 2022. Volume 1: Thematic Chapters*. Publications Office of the European Union.

⁽⁵⁾ The European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group and the Europass Advisory Group agreed to set up a project group with the mandate of developing guidelines on short descriptions of learning outcomes for publication on Europass. The group was composed of experts from 12 countries (Austria, Belgium (NL), Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia), European University Association, SME United, Business Europe and ETF. The group was chaired by the European Commission and technically and conceptually supported by Cedefop

qualifications for publication on qualifications databases/registers connected to [Europass](#).

Users and applications of the guidelines

Administrators, education and training providers, bodies responsible for qualifications and/or experts responsible for the definition and description of qualifications at all levels and in all sectors, public as well as private, benefit from these guidelines when creating short descriptions.

While the guidelines are designed for short learning outcomes descriptions of NQF/EQF qualifications, they can be used for any qualification, certificate and diploma as well as to describe parts or units of qualifications. They can be used for descriptions of qualifications with or without NQF/EQF levels.

Scope of the guidelines

The development of both short and long descriptions of qualifications is a national responsibility.

These guidelines support the development and writing of short – synthetic and concise – learning-outcomes-based descriptions capturing the content, orientation and complexity of all types and levels of qualification. The complete or full descriptions of qualifications (for example in the form of qualification standards or national curricula) are not addressed by these guidelines.

Existing information models ⁽⁶⁾ propose information fields (e.g. name of the qualification, awarding body, field) to improve information sharing on qualifications and databases/registers of qualifications ⁽⁷⁾. However, the existing models provide

⁽⁶⁾ 'Information models' is the term used in the context of the European Learning Model. It refers to the sources analysed and considered to build the European Learning Model. This, for examples, includes definitions and standards extracted from then EQF recommendation, Europass Recommendation, Diploma supplement or Certificate supplement.

⁽⁷⁾ Annex IV of the EQF recommendation indicates mandatory and optional data fields for the digital publication of information on all types and levels of qualifications (e.g. name of qualification, awarding body, field). Building on Annex III, the Qualification Dataset Register (QDR) and the European Learning Model (ELM) support the publishing and sharing of information on qualifications in Europass. Although emphasising the importance of information on learning outcomes, these existing models provide only general guidance on how to present this in a way which supports transparency and comparability. These guidelines can thus be seen as building on, but also extending, existing models for sharing information on qualifications.

only general guidance on how to present information on learning outcomes in a way which supports transparency and comparability. The present guidelines build on, and aim at integrating, such models by zooming into the specific information field ‘learning outcomes’.

Use of short learning outcomes descriptions

At European and international level, for example through Europass and the EQF, the development of short descriptions facilitates transparency and comparability of qualifications from different sectors and countries. They also provide an opportunity to improve the quality and reach of existing tools for sharing information on qualifications.

At national level, short descriptions can be used for information and communication purposes, notably supporting qualifications frameworks and forming part of qualifications databases and registers.

Short descriptions of qualifications should allow national and international users and stakeholders (including learners, employers, counsellors, parents, teachers, education and training providers, validation practitioners) to understand quickly the content, complexity and orientation of learning. While the descriptions should convey consistent information on the level of complexity of learning, their primary focus is not to provide a comprehensive justification of the EQF/NQF level.

The use of the short learning outcomes descriptions can depend on national contexts and practices, including their relationships with more detailed descriptions of qualifications or with programmes and curricula. Some countries already differentiate between full and detailed learning outcomes descriptions used for levelling or recognition purposes and use shorter descriptions to summarise the core aspects of the qualification.

How to navigate the guidelines

The guidelines are divided into two main sections, A and B.

Section A focuses on the formal aspects of the description (length and format). Section B focuses on the content aspects of the description, offering guidance on what to consider when developing it, and providing suggestions on the syntax of sentences.

When drafting short descriptions, it is important to approach the key content aspects listed in the guidelines (breadth/scope, depth/complexity, and context)

with flexibility and not in a rigid or mechanistic way. Some distinctions are conceptual abstractions that in practice overlap.

Some suggestions provided may seem self-evident or straightforward to experts and practitioners in the field of learning outcomes. Because the guidelines also aim at supporting those less familiar with this area, generic advice is also included as well as links to extra resources (see Section References and Links).

To support the reader's understanding, the guidelines comprise explanations, images, guiding questions, recommendations and additional tips and considerations. In addition to three examples of short descriptions in Annex I, the guidelines include specific examples associated with recommendations and tips. A list of action verbs and qualifiers is also provided.

The examples in the guidelines are either drawn from existing short descriptions of qualifications or have been adapted or created for illustrative purposes.

Additional considerations

While developing these guidelines and their accompanying examples (Annex I), it became evident that crafting the perfect short description is a challenging task. This is a national responsibility, and different countries may have different criteria to uphold or aspects they want to emphasise. The development of these guidelines should be considered as part of an ongoing collaborative effort among countries, aimed at developing and applying common guidelines for learning outcomes descriptions to improve transparency and comparability of qualifications. With experience, continuous collaboration, and exchanges on guideline application across countries and sectors, the guidelines may evolve further, incorporating additional examples.

When writing short descriptions of learning-outcomes-based qualifications, it is recommended to consider involving experts from outside the organisation and/or country for feedback.

Learning-outcomes-based short descriptions: main building blocks

The following principles should be considered when developing and writing short descriptions:

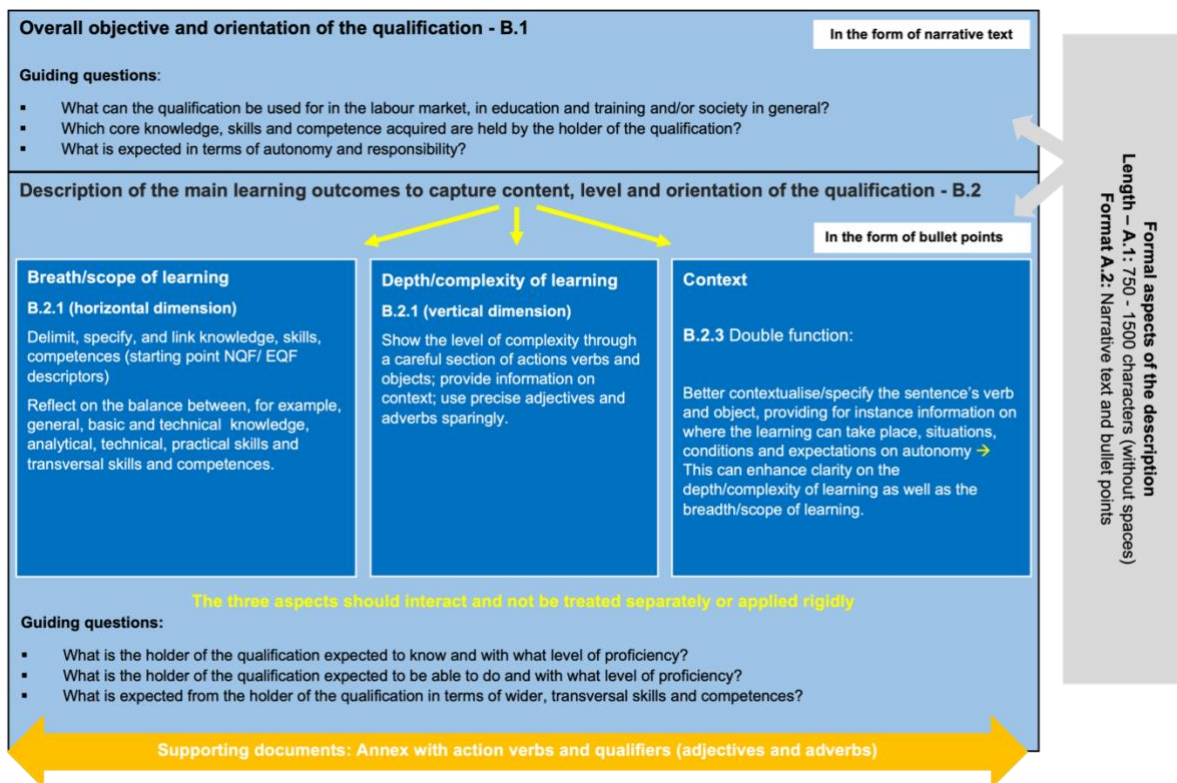
A. Formal aspects

- (a) A.1 Length of the description (750 to 1 500 characters without space);
- (b) A.2 Format of the description (narrative and bullet points).

B. Content aspects

- (a) B.1 Overall objectives and orientation of the qualification (in the form of narrative text);
- (b) B.2 Main learning outcomes (in the form of bullet points) to capture orientation, content and complexity of the qualification by covering the following aspects:
 - (i) B.2.1 Breadth/scope of learning acquired;
 - (ii) B.2.2 Depth/complexity of learning acquired;
 - (iii) B.2.3 Context information.

Figure 1. Learning-outcomes-based short descriptions: main building blocks



Source: EQF and Europass project group on short descriptions of learning outcomes of qualifications.

A – Formal aspects

A1. Length

The description should stay in the range of 750 to 1 500 characters (without space).

This indicative length can provide sufficient space for capturing the essence of the qualification and it allows readers quickly to grasp its essential features. An indicative limit was set to ensure the description can be considered short.

A2. Format of the description

Describe the qualification using a combination of narrative and bullet points.

The narrative should be used to present the overall objective and orientation of the qualification (B.1).

Bullet points should be used to capture the specific learning outcomes (B.2).

Table 1. **Structure and format of the short description (narrative and bullet points)**

Narrative presenting the overall objectives and orientation of the qualification.	The holder of the qualification.....
Bullet points expressing learning outcomes	He/she is able to: 1) 2) 3) ...

Source: EQF and Europass project group on short descriptions of learning outcomes of qualifications.

B – Content aspects

B1. Overall objectives and orientation of the qualification in the form of a narrative

The description should start with a concise introduction in the form of a narrative expressing the overall objective and orientation of the qualification, including information on context ⁽⁸⁾.

This should enable the reader to grasp the essence of the qualification and understand its role and position in relation to the labour market, education and training systems and/or society in general.

Table 2. **Overall objective and orientation of the qualification**

Narrative presenting the overall objectives and orientation of the qualification.	The holder of the qualification.....
Bullet points expressing learning outcomes	He/she is able to: 1) 2) 3) ...

Source: EQF and Europass project group on short descriptions of learning outcomes of qualifications.

Box 1. **Examples of narratives introducing overall objectives and orientation of qualifications**

Example A

The holder of the qualification 'Office assistant' (EQF/NQF 4) has the knowledge and skills to carry out office, administrative and organisational tasks in companies of all sectors and other institutions (e.g. public administration, organisations, associations, etc.) on the basis of their 3-year dual training in the training company and vocational school. Depending on the focus of the task, they work in the back office, in

⁽⁸⁾ The title of the qualification will often provide important information on the origin and orientation of a qualification, especially if it refers to a well-known qualification type (initial VET, bachelor or master in higher education) and/or refers to a particular task or profession. This is not always the case, and a precise description of context is therefore necessary. Information related to context is important when describing both the overall objective and orientation of the qualification (B1) and when developing the learning outcomes in form of bullet points (B2).

accounting, in the personnel office or in areas such as purchasing, sales, warehousing.

Example B

The holder of the qualification 'Initial vocational training in environmental technologists for wastewater management' (EQF/NQF 4) can work with drainage systems and stormwater management, and the treatment of wastewater and sewage sludge. He/she works at municipal and industrial wastewater treatment plants and in sewerage companies. He/she ensures the sustainable and energy-efficient operation of municipal and industrial wastewater treatment plants. The holder of the qualification is qualified to manage small wastewater treatment plants.

Example C

The holder of the qualification 'Vocational qualification in hairdressing and beauty care' (EQF/NQF 4) can provide customer service in beauty and hair care scenarios and sell the company's products and services based on comprehensive knowledge of products and health and safety procedures. He/she has a common basic competence and can choose a specialisation in hair and beauty care guidance, skin care, hairdressing, or barbering.

Example D

The holder of the qualification 'Accredited accountant' (EQF/NQF 5) can register and verify the financial data of external organisations. He/she can advise clients on how to comply with legal accounting regulations and provide the client with the necessary business information. The holder of this qualification is considered accredited to perform the profession of accountant as self-employed. In Belgium (Flanders), only accredited accountant can perform the profession.

Example E

The holder of the qualification 'Surgery assistant' (EQF/NQF 6) has a crucial role in surgical care with many reserved, surgical and risky operations and complex technological developments in rapid succession. He/she can be part of a multidisciplinary team consisting of cutting medical specialists, anaesthesiologists, anaesthesia assistants and operating assistants. He/she can assist the attending specialist in his/her activities and coordinates and directs the care process surrounding the patient during the perioperative period. In addition, he/she can collaborate with the support services of the surgery department, such as the central sterilisation department, the nursing departments, the radiology department and laboratories. The qualification can be obtained as part of initial training where the learner is employed in accredited healthcare institution during the course.

Source: EQF and Europass project group on short descriptions of learning outcomes of qualifications.

Guiding questions

The purpose of the questions below is to facilitate reflection on aspects that can be brought forward when developing narratives expressing overall objectives and orientation of qualifications (B1). The purpose is not to answer all questions directly or mechanically.

- (a) What can the qualification be used for in the labour market, in education and training and/or society in general? What can the holder of the qualification do with the qualification?
- (i) Is the qualification preparing for specific tasks, functions and/or occupations?
 - (ii) Does the qualification give a specific entitlement, for example by licensing occupational practices? Does it give access to a regulated profession? Does the qualification entitle to initiate specific business or entrepreneurial activities?
 - (iii) If the qualification is not linked directly to specific tasks, occupations, professions, what is the purpose of the qualification in relation to:
 - employment;
 - initial education and training;
 - continuing education and training;
 - personal development;
 - (iv) Does the qualification give access to specific further learning? Is it relevant to mention possible progression routes?
 - (v) Are there specific requirements to access the qualifications that are worth being mentioned to clarify its role and position?
- (b) Which core knowledge, skills and/or competences ⁽⁹⁾ are held by a holder of this qualification?
- (c) What is expected from the holder of the qualification, for example as regards ability to work independently?

⁽⁹⁾ In discussions on European qualifications frameworks the term 'competence' has sparked debate due to its varying interpretations. While consensus was relatively swift in delineating 'skills' and 'knowledge' within the EQF's early development, defining the third domain proved more challenging. The third domain of the EQF was originally named 'competence', but it limited its scope to the concept of 'autonomy and responsibility'. The 2017 EQF revision changed the name of the heading of the third domain only to 'autonomy and responsibility' without substantial changes in the level descriptors. An analysis of NQF level descriptors in relation to the 'third EQF domain' (formerly named competence and now responsibility and autonomy) shows that while all national level descriptors exhibit elements aligned with autonomy and responsibility as per EQF recommendations, some have expanded their descriptors to encompass broader dimensions such as 'critical thinking', 'creativity', 'entrepreneurship', 'learning to learn', 'cooperation', etc. While these guidelines explicitly refer to the EQF level descriptors as a key starting point, in an effort to be as inclusive as possible of national practices and not exclude aspects considered important in countries, the term 'competence' is used in the guidelines, while at the same time stressing the importance of addressing autonomy and responsibility while describing learning outcomes. For more information on EQF and NQFs level descriptors consult: Cedefop (2018). [Analysis and overview of NQF level descriptors in European countries](#). Publications Office of the European Union.

- (d) What is expected from the holder of the qualification – for example as regards taking responsibility for processes and managing others?

Recommendations

- (a) Keep the narrative short and concise, aiming for a length that is approximately 1/4 of the full description.
- (b) Avoid the use of one specific gender form.
- (c) Use the term ‘The holder of the qualification ...’; ‘The qualification’s holder’ or the title acquired when holding the qualification and when necessary, use he/she.
- (d) Mention the EQF/NQF level (when applicable), using brackets.
Example: ‘The holder of the qualification ‘Office assistant’ (EQF/NQF 4) can...’.
- (e) Ensure the narrative accurately introduces the learning outcomes presented in bullet points, ensuring coherence between narrative and bullet points:
Avoid: discrepancies between the narrative and the bullet points. For example, the narrative emphasises high levels of autonomy, but the list of learning outcomes only refers to collaboration with others.
- (f) Depending on the orientation of the qualification include information about the qualification’s position and role in relation to labour market, education and training systems and/or society in general:
Examples of context information included in the narrative to show the role of the qualification within the labour market:
- (i) ‘The holder of the qualification ‘Business administration’ (EQF/NQF 5) can work in branches of business and administration and are qualified to become independent entrepreneurs’;
 - (ii) ‘The holder of the qualification ‘Promotion and reception services operator’ (EQF/NQF 3) can work in accommodation structures, travel agencies and tourism assistance services’;
 - (iii) ‘The holder of the qualification ‘Carpentry’ (EQF/NQF 4) can build, install, maintain and rehabilitate wooden constructions for different types of building. He/she can plan and carry out manual and mechanical work on wooden construction for indoor and outdoor walls, ceilings, roofs and floors’;
 - (iv) ‘The holder of this qualification is accredited to perform the profession of accountant as self-employed’;
 - (v) ‘The qualification is a prerequisite to perform the profession of clinical psychologist in the country’;

- (vi) 'The qualification offers the possibility of acquiring school qualifications and or professional competences, with a view to (re-) insertion or progression in the labour market.'

Examples of context information included in the narrative to show the position of the qualification in relation to education and training systems or society in general:

- (i) 'The qualification provides strong foundation in biotechnology research and the holder can pursue further studies in specialised fields like genetic engineering and pharmaceutical research';
- (ii) 'The qualification is designed to pursue more complex and specialised learning in the domain of electrical installation or electrical networks';
- (iii) 'This is a school-based initial vocational training. Optionally, the higher education entrance qualification can be acquired';
- (iv) 'The qualification grants access to pursue academic studies';
- (v) 'The qualification provides general knowledge and competences for employment in various business-related roles. It offers opportunities for personal development and opens doors for continuing education and training in specialised areas of business management or entrepreneurship';
- (vi) 'The qualification 'First aid certification' equips individuals with knowledge and skills to provide immediate assistance in medical emergencies, promoting the safety of both them and those around them in society'.

Note that same description may emphasise the position of the qualification for one or all aspects (labour market, education and training system, society in general, etc.).

- (g) Select and summarise core knowledge, skills and competences acquired with the qualification. It can be useful to reflect on whether the focus is more on theoretical or factual knowledge or practical, analytical or transversal skills ⁽¹⁰⁾:

⁽¹⁰⁾ The concepts of knowledge and skills can be disentangled differently across countries. At EU level the main elements of the EQF level descriptors are 1) knowledge described as factual and/or theoretical; 2) Skills described as cognitive and practical; and 3) autonomy and responsibility. Before the revision of the third element was named 'competence' but it was described in terms of autonomy and responsibility. With the revision of the EQF recommendation the headline of the third learning domain was changed from competence to autonomy and responsibility. Source: 2017 EQF recommendation.

- (i) avoid general statements: ‘He/she has key professional skills and competences and *good general knowledge* in his/her field’;
- (ii) avoid using general adjectives: ‘He/she provides *good* customer service’. See Annex III;
- (iii) examples of sentences in the introductory narrative that can illustrate the acquisition of specific and technical skills for a specific sector or occupation, as well as more general skills and knowledge applicable across various sectors of the labour market and society in general or preparing for further learning:
 - ‘The holder of the qualification can install, repair and commission tasks safely at real estate properties and in industry. He/she ensures that the final result is safe and meets the requirements set for the work’;
 - ‘He/she possesses a range of basic general knowledge, including numeracy and literacy and is equipped with civic competences to engage actively in the community’;
 - ‘The holder of the qualification can ensure the smooth running of IT systems. He/she can develop, adapt, and/or maintain these and look after users’;
 - ‘He/she can build, install, rebuild, maintain and rehabilitate wooden constructions for different types of buildings’;
 - ‘The holder of the qualification can conduct in-depth analysis of existing research and formulate research enquiries to advance in biodiversity research’;
- (h) Indicate the overall level of autonomy and responsibility. This can also be done by using qualifiers (adjectives and adverbs) and/or carefully choosing verbs and objects. Examples:
 - (i) ‘The holder of the qualification ‘Promotion and reception services operator’ (EQF/NQF 3) can work in accommodation structures, travel agencies and tourism assistance services. He/she operates at an executive level with limited autonomy and responsibility in providing reception services and following the prescribed procedures of his/her specific operations’;
 - (ii) ‘The holder of the qualification, in the context of construction works with a limited complexity can coordinate, direct and adjust the activities of the executive staff on the construction site’;
 - (iii) ‘The holder of the qualification is qualified to manage small wastewater treatment plants’;

- (iv) 'He/she is expected to work in multidisciplinary teams and to take responsibility for processes generally in predictable and stable contexts, but subject to changes that may require adaptability'.
- (i) Remember that the reader of the description is not necessarily familiar with the national context. Pay attention to the use of national terminology that might not be universally understood or complement with an explanation:
 - (i) avoid: 'After completing a vocational *matura* exam students may enter a *Matura*/vocational course and pass one of the general *matura* exams to enlist for study programmes in both higher and high specialist education';
 - (ii) do: 'The qualification gives access to higher vocational and professional study programmes and general *matura* exams necessary for enrolment in university study programmes';
 - (iii) avoid: 'The structure of the vocational qualification in electrical engineering and automation technology has been planned so that the education of electricians is suitable for Electrical qualification 2 referred to in electrical safety legislation and the education of automation assemblers is suitable for Electrical qualification 3.' Do: inform that the qualification provides access to the next level of learning (Electrical qualification 2 and 3) and/or emphasise compliance with regulations for electricians.

Additional considerations and tips

- (a) If it helps in better understanding the objective and orientation of the qualification, provide information on entry conditions and additional requirements, entitlements (e.g. access to regulated qualifications) and/or how the qualification can be obtained. Examples:
 - (i) 'The holder of the qualification 'Electrotechnician' (EQF/NQF 4) can install, wire, connect and put into operation residential [...]. For the performance of certain tasks and/or within certain contexts additional certificates are a necessary or desirable condition';
 - (ii) 'The qualification can be obtained as part of initial training where the learner is employed in an accredited healthcare institution during the course';
 - (iii) 'The qualification can be obtained on the basis of three-year dual training in the training company and the vocational school'.
- (b) If applicable and relevant, clarify whether the holder may have acquired specialised learning because of existing specialisations or optional units/modules. Example:

- (i) ‘The qualification holder can have more specialised skills in hair and beauty care guidance, skin care, hairdressing and barbering, depending on the chosen competence area. Competence can be further expanded with optional units in all areas’.

B2 – Learning outcomes in bullet points

Following the introductory statement on the overall objectives and orientation of the qualifications, the description should proceed with a bullet point list of the main learning outcomes.

Table 3. **Learning outcomes in bullet points**

Narrative presenting the overall objectives and orientation of the qualification.	The holder of the qualification.....
Bullet points expressing learning outcomes	He/she is able to: 1) 2) 3) ...

Source: EQF and Europass project group on short descriptions of learning outcomes of qualifications

The main learning outcomes listed as bullet points should address and make emerge three key aspects.

B.2.1. Breadth/scope of the learning acquired.

B.2.2. Depth/complexity of the learning acquired.

B.2.3. Context.

The breadth/scope, the depth/complexity and context are addressed separately in the guidelines to stress their relevance, but they should not be treated separately or applied rigidly when developing the short descriptions. They may overlap and, in the descriptions, they should interact and support each other.

In addition to outlining the content aspects to be addressed in the bullet points, the guidelines also indicate a syntactic structure to articulate the bullet points expressing the learning outcomes (see Table 3).

Box 2. **Definitions of main concepts**

Breadth/scope of learning means to clarify the *scope* of the learning acquired with the qualification, and therefore delimit and point to the borderlines and boundaries of the achieved learning outcomes. This means to convey information on the types of

knowledge acquired as well as to describe the skills and competences mastered by the holder of the qualification. The learning domains (also called horizontal dimension of qualifications frameworks) outlined in EQF/NQF level descriptors are a starting point to reflect on the breadth of learning ⁽¹¹⁾. See also Annex IV.

Example: The holder of the qualifications can compare and evaluate educational policy initiatives of EU countries to inform evidence-based decision-making.

Example: The holder of the qualification can select and apply the most innovative restoration technique to preserve and protect historical structures.

Example: The holder of the qualification can install and repair wooden constructions for different residential and industrial building.

Comment: by carefully choosing the verbs ('compare and assess' 'select and apply' 'install and repair'), the object ('educational policy initiatives of EU countries' 'innovative restoration technique' 'wooden constructions') and by adding information on context ('to inform evidence-based decision-making'; 'to preserve and protect historical structures'; 'for different residential and industrial building'); the knowledge, skills and competence acquired by the holder of the qualification – the breadth/scope of the learning – can emerge (knowledge on educational policy initiatives, techniques to conduct cross-country comparison and policy evaluation or restoration of historical structures; practical skills related to installing and repairing, etc.).

Depth/complexity of learning is about clarifying the complexity and sophistication of learning acquired. Within the same learning domain (e.g. theoretical knowledge or practical skills) varying degrees of expertise and proficiency can be achieved. The EQF/NQF level descriptors for each level (also called vertical dimension of qualifications frameworks) are a starting point to define the depth and complexity of learning ⁽¹²⁾.

Example: the holder of the qualification can autonomously select and apply the most suitable research tools for collecting empirical evidence in the field of marine biology.

Example: the holder of the qualification can collect empirical evidence under supervision contributing to ongoing studies in the field of marine biology.

Comment: by carefully choosing the verbs ('select and apply' 'collect'), the object ('research tool' 'empirical evidence') and making use of qualifier 'autonomously' and by adding information on context ('for collecting evidence' or 'supporting studies in the field of marine biology') it can bring out the level of complexity of the learning acquired.

Information on context: when writing the specific learning outcomes sentences (in the form of bullet points) information on context serves to specify further the learning

⁽¹¹⁾ In the European qualifications framework the 3 learning domains are 1) Knowledge: described as theoretical and/or factual); 2) Skills: described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments); 3) responsibility and autonomy: described as the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility. This is also referred as the vertical dimension of the EQF.

⁽¹²⁾ The European qualifications framework has 8 levels described in terms of learning outcomes. The level increases according to the level of proficiency with level 1 being the lowest and level 8 the highest level of proficiency. This is also referred as the vertical dimension of the EQF.

outcomes acquired. In addition to verbs and objects composing a basic sentence, additional information on context serves to provide further details, for example on situations, methods and conditions: verbs or objects alone are not sufficient to capture the breadth and depth of learning outcomes. To support this process these guidelines also provide recommendations on the syntactical structure of sentences expressing learning outcomes (see table 3). At the same time, information on context can help clarify the role and the position of the qualification in relation to the labour market, education and training and society in general. This last aspect should already emerge in the narrative presenting the overall objectives and orientation of the qualification (B1).

Previous examples in this illustrative box, section B1 and the rest of this section provide examples on how to address context in the learning outcomes sentences expressed as bullet points.

Guiding questions

The purpose of the questions below is to facilitate reflection on aspects that can be brought forward when developing bullet points expressing learning outcomes (B.2). The purpose is not to answer all questions directly or mechanically.

- (a) What is the holder of the qualification expected to know and with what level of proficiency?
 - (i) Basic general knowledge?
 - (ii) Technical and specialised knowledge?
- (b) What is the holder of the qualification expected to be able to do and with what level of proficiency?
 - (i) Practical skills?
 - (ii) Analytical skills?
 - (iii) Basic or advanced?
- (c) What is expected from the holder of the qualification in terms of wider but relevant, transversal skills and competences?
 - (i) Self-management skills and competences (e.g. time management, learning to learn)?
 - (ii) Communication skills and competences (oral and written presentations, etc.)?
 - (iii) Social skills and competences (teamwork, management of other etc.)?
 - (iv) Potential other types of skills and competences with a direct relevance to the qualification and its field of application?
- (d) What is expected from the holder of the qualification, for example as regards ability to work autonomously and taking responsibility?

Recommendations

- (a) Focus and prioritise essential learning outcomes that capture the overall orientation, content and complexity of the qualification.

- (b) The holder of the qualification should always be at the centre.
- (c) The careful selection of action verbs and objects as well as information on context (B.2.3) are important aspects to address breadth (B.2.1) and depth (B.2.2).
- (d) The syntax of the sentence in terms of how the content is organised can also support understanding and it is recommended to use the following structure: subject – action verb – object – context ⁽¹³⁾.

Table 4. **Syntax of sentences (bullet points) expressing learning outcomes**

Subject	Action verb	Object of the verb	Context
Adverbs and adjectives can be added when considered relevant, but need to be used with caution			
The holder of the qualification... He/she...	can present	in writing the results of the risk analysis	allowing others to follow the process and replicate the results.
The holder of the qualification... He/she...	can distinguish between	the environmental effects	of cooling gases used in refrigeration systems.
The holder of the qualification... He/she...	can coordinate	activities of the executive staff	on construction sites with limited complexity.
The holder of the qualification... He/she...	can conduct	advanced financial projections	by using business planning tools and to support financial and business planning.

Source: EQF and Europass project group on short descriptions of learning outcomes of qualifications and adaptation from Cedefop (2022). Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: a European handbook – second edition. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

- (e) Carefully select verbs and objects for each sentence, ensuring they can support comprehension of breadth/scope (B.2.1) as well as depth/complexity (B.2.2) of learning and context (B.2.3). See Annex II.

Examples of verbs providing hints on the breadth/scope (B.2.1) of acquired learning:

- (i) the verb ‘install’ can imply acquisition of practical skills, while the verb ‘research’ can imply analytical skills;
- (ii) note that practical or analytical skills can be at the same level of complexity, and in this case the meaning of the verbs serves to give indications on the breadth/scope of learning. The two verbs could also be part of the same qualification.

⁽¹³⁾ While the category ‘context’ in Table 4 is not a ‘grammatical category’ (like verbs or nouns), the guidelines, along with the Cedefop Handbook on learning outcomes, recommend considering context as part of the syntax of the sentence as a way to ensure information on this aspect is covered.

Examples of different objects providing hints on the breadth/scope (B.2.1) of acquired learning:

- (i) ‘He/she can compare policy initiatives...’ is different from ‘He/she can compare budget revenues...’ or ‘He/she can compare construction technologies...’;
- (ii) note that these learning outcomes can be at the same level of complexity.

Examples of verbs providing hints on the depth/complexity (B.2.2) of acquired learning:

- (i) verbs such as ‘evaluate and improve’, ‘direct’ ‘analyse and optimize’ can demonstrate higher complexity compared to the verb such as ‘assist’ ‘repeat’ ‘execute’ ‘check’.

Examples of different objects with same verbs, affecting understanding of depth/complexity (B.2.2) of acquired learning; this shows the importance of carefully selecting the object of the sentence and of the learning.

- (i) ‘He/she can analyse customer feedback collected with structured and predefined online surveys’ is different from ‘he/she can analyse genetic sequences to tailor medical treatments’; ‘He/she can draft simple summaries’ is different from ‘he/she can draft a comprehensive research proposal’.

Examples of verbs providing hints on the context (B.2.3) regarding learning application and/or what the holders can do with the qualifications obtained:

- (i) the use of verbs like ‘assemble’, ‘construct’, ‘build’ may indicate that the qualification mainly prepares for jobs relying on practical skills;
- (ii) the use of verbs like ‘analyse’, ‘describe’, ‘draft’ may indicate that the qualification mainly (or also) prepares for jobs relating on analytical skills or for further learning.

Examples of objects providing hints on context regarding learning application and what the holder can do with the qualification:

- (i) the holder can ‘analyse legal cases....’ can suggest the relevance of learning outcomes to a legal environment;
 - (ii) the holder can ‘conduct lab experiment....’ can suggest the relevance of learning outcomes to a laboratory setting.
- (f) Incorporate information on context (e.g. on conditions, situations, methods, aim) to enhance understanding of the scope/breadth (B.2.1) and the depth/complexity (B.2.2) of learning and where the acquired learning outcomes can be applied. Examples:
- (i) ‘He/she can analyse legal cases to assess legal implications and provide informed recommendations to clients’;

- (ii) 'He/she can analyse legal cases and examine legal theories to contribute to publishing scholarly articles';
 - (iii) 'He/she can conduct lab experiments to demonstrate basic chemical reactions and principles to young pupils';
 - (iv) 'He/she can conduct lab experiments to assess the effectiveness of pharmaceutical drugs';
 - (v) 'He/she can interact in English, as an independent user, in tourist information and hotel accommodation';
 - (vi) 'He/she can use computerised systems and software for simple graphic two/three-dimensional presentations';
 - (vii) 'He/she can reinforce building structure and parts according to national guidelines for covering, anchoring and splicing'.
- (g) If you include qualifiers (adverbs and adjectives), ensure they contribute to greater precision and therefore avoid vague/general adjectives. See Annex IV. Examples of adjectives that can clarify the depth/complexity of learning:
- (i) the holder can 'develop simple computer programmes for data processing and visualisation';
 - (ii) the holder can 'autonomously identify materials and tools for creating waterproofing roofs';
 - (iii) the holder can 'perform routine operations under instruction, including surgical operation'.
- (h) Present knowledge and skills, including transversal skills when relevant, in an interconnected and integrated manner:
- (i) avoid: splitting knowledge and skills into separate lists or list elements for breadth or depth separately;
 - (ii) reflect on whether knowledge and skills can be presented together or whether their connection can be assumed/implied. Examples:
 - he/she can 'complete an electrical installation according to current regulations for health and safety';
 - he/she can 'design and implement algorithms to analyse financial market trend';
 - he/she can 'perform beauty treatments and guide customers in self-care of the skin and use of the products'.
- (i) Reflect on the objectives and orientation of the qualification to strike a balance, for instance between basic knowledge (e.g. basic mathematics, science, languages); advanced knowledge; advanced specialised and technical skills (e.g. related to a task or function); or transversal skills and competences (e.g. problem-solving, learning to learn, and communication). The way descriptions are formulated provides insights into whether the acquired knowledge, skills

- and competence are, for instance, relevant only for a specific occupation or sector, for cross-professional sectors, society at large or primarily serve as stepping stones for further learning. Examples:
- (i) he/she can 'name geometric shapes and figures...'
 - (ii) he/she can 'measure and analyse physical parameters of electrical plants and equipment to identify errors and initiate measures';
 - (iii) he/she can 'communicate professionally with colleagues, clients and visitors in person, on the phone or via written correspondence...';
 - (iv) he/she can 'integrate the basics of engineering economics and environmental protection considerations for planning construction structures';
 - (v) he/she can 'identify independently the key parameter values for processing and using the injection moulding procedure';
 - (vi) he/she can 'select, prepare and use different cut flowers, greenery and pot plants for making floral arrangements and decorations';
 - (vii) he/she can 'develop, write and evaluate territorial projects for local democracy and governance';
 - (viii) he/she can 'organise engaging artistic activities tailored to children's needs, including in hospital environment'.
- (j) Indicate the level of autonomy and responsibility expected in his/her own work or when overseeing others. Examples:
- (i) he/she can 'independently design, coordinate and lead educational processes and projects alone or in cooperation with colleagues and teams';
 - (ii) he/she can 'give technical instructions to workers and subcontractors, checking the execution of the construction works for quality and conformity with the regulations';
 - (iii) he/she can 'plan and monitor the work and business process...';
 - (iv) he/she can 'assist the project leader in the operations...';
 - (v) he/she can 'independently develop implementation plans for building structures and, if necessary, adjust them during the realisation of the building project';
 - (vi) he/she can 'autonomously determine the dimensions of construction elements, but not connect them into wholes (buildings), and is therefore not yet able to plan complete buildings';
 - (vii) he/she can 'autonomously and creatively perform specific simple tasks in the field of civil engineering and perform more complex tasks within a group'.
- (k) Select action verbs carefully, avoiding vague ones. See Annex II.

- (l) Use the active form rather than the passive form and build the sentences around the verb. Examples:
- (i) avoid: 'The health of patient's muscles can be assessed...';
 - (ii) do: 'The qualification holder can assess the health of patient's muscles to provide personalised treatments to alleviate pain and improve mobility'.
- (m) Avoid using verbs as nouns.
- (i) avoid: 'Collaborating in the design and creation of the model...';
 - (ii) do: 'He/she collaborates in the design...';
 - (iii) avoid: 'He/she has shown competence in building, installing, maintaining and rehabilitating wooden constructions for different types of buildings';
 - (iv) do: 'he/she can build, install, maintain and rehabilitate wooden constructions ...'.
- (n) Avoid repetitions and complex sentence structures.
- (o) Express the depth and complexity of learning aligning with EQF/NQF descriptors but be sure to define specific and detailed learning outcomes that are a fit to the specific qualification ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Additional considerations and tips

- (a) Each sentence can combine more than one verb, but they should preferably refer to the same object/noun and depict a logic sequence that shows increasing complexity (otherwise it will increase ambiguity and complexity). See Annex II.
- (i) Example of combination of verbs that can show increasing complexity:
 - he/she can 'plan, coordinate and monitor logistics concepts and construction site facilities including working and protective scaffolding'.
 - (ii) Avoid: he/she can 'plan formwork, reinforcement and casting of new constructions and maintenance of building materials and assess costs, time consumption and environmental impact of the work'.
 - (iii) Do: the holder of the qualifications is able to plan formwork, reinforce and cast new constructions and maintain building materials.
 - (iv) Assess costs, time consumption and environmental impact of the work.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Descriptors of NQFs typically remain at a general level because they cover a broad range of qualifications. Learning outcomes for describing individual qualifications must be more detailed and specific, while maintaining coherence with NQF/EQF level descriptors.

- (b) While the EQF/NQF level of a qualification provides an ‘overall or average level’ of the qualification (its ‘centre of gravity’) considering the totality of elements, the level of complexity associated with specific single learning outcomes in bullet points can be lower/higher than this average. While some differentiations are expected, these should not be too wide as this would raise questions about the overall consistency of the qualification.
- (c) It is essential to be aware of the difference between what can be directly and unambiguously observed (a bricklayer’s ability to put bricks on bricks) and those which are more complex to observe (a bricklayer’s ability to plan and to cooperate with other trades at the construction site). Skills difficult to observe are also essential and need to be systematically addressed and identified.
- (d) Verbs pointing to observable and measurable actions help to reduce the vagueness of descriptions.
- (e) Learning outcomes that cannot be directly and easily observed or measured will need to be described through careful indication of object and context.
- (f) Considering limitations in the length of the description as suggested in these guidelines, stakeholders can decide whether and how to distinguish between mandatory and complementary (elective) outcomes.

Acronyms

Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
ELM	European Learning Model
EQF	European qualifications framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
NQF	national qualifications framework
QDR	Qualification Dataset Register
VET	vocational education and training

Annexes

Annex I. Examples of short learning-outcomes-based descriptions of qualifications

The following 'role examples' of short description aim to provide a practical application of guidelines and to make it clear how the guidelines can be implemented. They are built on real national descriptions developed using the guidelines within the project group's context and have undergone collective adjustments and revisions by members of the project group to align them better with the guideline recommendations.

Qualification: Clinical psychologist

The clinical psychologist (EQF/NQF 7) develops and applies the theories, methods and techniques of scientific clinical psychology in the health promotion, screening, psychological diagnostics and evaluation of health problems, as well as in the prevention, guidance and treatment of persons with care or support needs. By doing so, health care users are supported from the start both by working on their development as well as optimising their functional independence and wellbeing. Holding the visa of clinical psychologist as determined in the Law on Mental Health Professions is a prerequisite to performing the profession.

The clinical psychologist is able to:

- (a) draw up a psychological evaluation;
- (b) apply interventions to relieve suffering and to promote health and wellbeing of individuals, groups and organisations;
- (c) generate research and findings that contribute to the professional knowledge and/or evaluate the efficiency of diverse professional activities;
- (d) integrate research and clinical expertise in coordination with care users and their context;
- (e) apply scientific insights and methods;
- (f) act according to the code of ethics;
- (g) develop and maintain a professional working relationship with the care user;
- (h) practice the profession in a professional and societally responsible way;
- (i) develop and maintain own expertise;
- (j) reflect, carry out self-evaluation and self-care;
- (k) interact with professionals from multiple disciplines.

Qualification: information technology assistant

The qualification holder (EQF/NQF 4) is able to ensure the smooth running of IT systems. They can develop, adapt and/or maintain these and look after users. He/she has practical knowledge from computer science, electrical engineering and production engineering.

He/she works independently and/or as part of a team in companies that develop and offer information and communication technology products and services or in public authorities and institutions.

This is school based initial vocational training. Optionally, the higher education entrance qualification can be acquired.

The qualification holder can:

- (a) analyse, assess and optimise operational processes, workflows and framework conditions with regard to the use of IT systems;
 - (b) design work processes using technical and organisational aids;
 - (c) develop and adapt application software for operational processes;
 - (d) analyse, plan, build, commission and network IT systems;
 - (e) analyse, build, connect to IT systems, programme and commission automation systems;
 - (f) plan, create and maintain databases using appropriate programming languages and software development tools;
 - (g) secure the energy supply for IT systems and optimise energy consumption;
 - (h) observe industry and legislative standards and regulations and use of technical rules and regulations;
 - (i) observe data security, data protection and copyrights;
 - (j) responsibly shape and reflect on his/her working environment and processes;
 - (k) apply standards and guidelines to ensure process and product quality;
 - (l) cooperate and communicate in teams;
 - (m) analyse customer requirements and advise customers also in English;
 - (n) obtain, prepare and present information and documents in English in relation to the activity.
-

Qualification: concrete work

The concrete profession (EQF/NQF 4) can plan formwork, reinforce and cast new building and construction structures, as well as maintaining existing buildings. The holder of the qualification is able to build homes, commercial buildings, hospitals, schools and dams. The qualification can be obtained following four-year dual training in the training company and vocational school. Competence can be further expanded with tertiary vocational education at EQF 5.

The qualification holder is able to:

- (a) work independently according to building information models, drawings, descriptions and prefabricated solutions;
- (b) assess the costs, time consumption and environmental impact of the work;
- (c) formwork constructions and building parts using traditional and system formwork;
- (d) reinforce constructions and building parts according to descriptions for covering, anchoring and splice;
- (e) give account for work processes using prefabricated and traditional methods;
- (f) cast different structural parts and floors and assess the consequences of different casting pressures;
- (g) sort and handle waste according to current regulations, reuse materials and reflect on the consequences of incorrect handling;
- (h) account for and use quality assurance systems, carry out work in line with current requirements for health, environment and safety and reflect on the consequences of not following the requirements;
- (i) assess risks in accordance with current regulations and carry out safe job analysis;
- (j) work according to regulations and agreements that regulate working conditions in the profession, and explain the duties and rights of the employer and the employee;
- (k) reflect on the demands and expectations placed on an equal and inclusive professional community.

Annex II. Action verbs

Ambiguous and precise verbs: Cedefop handbook on learning outcomes ⁽¹⁵⁾

Ambiguous		Precise	
Know	Grasp the significance of	Distinguish between	Write
Understand	Become familiar with	Differentiate	Recite
Enjoy	Believe	Assemble	Construct
Determine	Be aware of	Adjust	Contrast
Appreciate	Comprehend	Identify	Compare
		Solve	List

Action verbs extracted from national qualifications and other material provided and analysed in the context of the EQF-Europass project group on short learning outcomes descriptions ⁽¹⁶⁾

Broad/general action verbs					
use	perform	finish	define	take	satisfy
work	set	consider	allow	act	take on
carry out	keep	note	bring	do	deal with
make	proceed	put	determine	take into account	
give	fill	act	possess	show	

Precise action verbs					
apply	accept	construct	initiate	shape	correct
check	lead	resolve	organise	enforce	estimate
identify	configure	eliminate	acquire	serve	learn
prepare	adjust	consult	self-evaluate	calculate	pack
demonstrate	optimise	conclude	reproduce	replace	deliver
develop	collect	find	guide	summarize	observe
analyse	rebuild	initiate	dismount	establish	handle
produce	comply with	count	accompany	support	test
communicate	supervise	divide	realise	intervene	repair
participate	manufacture	direct	react	disassemble	report
process	meet	repeat	remedy	cooperate	sell
plan	receive	guide	anticipate	return	look up
implement	recognise	expose	mount	assure	conduct
Install	formulate	program	employ	transfer	standardise

⁽¹⁵⁾ Cedefop (2022). *Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: a European handbook – second edition*. Publications Office of the European Union.

⁽¹⁶⁾ The lists include examples of verbs used in NQF level descriptors as well as the list of action verbs provided as part of [guidelines for designing national curricula in Norway](#), approved by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Sami parliament on 26th June 2018, and revised on 10th October 2018 Oslo:

Precise action verbs					
respect	complete	explain	limit	elaborate	structure
integrate	update	draft	stake out	justify	insert
maintain	document	promote	assist	negotiate	fulfil
describe	disseminate	reflect	refine	visualise	assess
monitor	measure	assess	design	compare	set up
manage	read	propose	compile	decide	connect
select	assemble	collaborate	calibrate	delegate	sketch
present	advise	respond	extract	follow up	improve
follow	build	adapt	write	examine	share
present	store	master	rehabilitate	detect	combine
ensure	coordinate	inform	look after	sell	specify
prevent	commission	solve	obtain	dismantle	exchange
create	evaluate	explore	administer	synthesise	indicate
process	organise	draw	synthesise	modify	verify
place	choose	adopt	take part	renovate	consolidate
provide	include	undertake	interpret	allocate	supply
take stock	validate	approve	relate	transform	execute
involve	mobilise	reorganise	protect	judge	conceptualise
lead	search	instruct	introduce	accomplish	critique
oversee	revise	run	research	diagnose	restore
experiment	validate				

Examples of combination of actions verbs with same object that can show increasing complexity	
Design and implement	Store and maintain
Implement and document	Manage and process
Assure and document	Identify and initiate
Install and configure	Identify and prevent
Install and check	Identify and monitor
Assemble and install	Identify and propose
Organise and check	Pack and deliver
Construct and check	Assemble and insert
Check and comply with	Prepare, identify and explain
Plan and organise	Plan, prepare and implement
Plan and sketch	Coordinate, prepare and look after
Plan and implement	Monitor, plan and report
Measure and analyse	Develop, create and support
Analyse and manage	Develop, write and evaluate
Analyse and compare	Implement, integrate and check
Interpret and apply	Analyse, remedy and maintain
Inform and advise'	Look up, analyse and assess
Advise and guide	Demonstrate, integrate and apply
Cooperate and communicate	Identify, select, analyse

Examples of combination of actions verbs with same object that can show increasing complexity	
Communicate and negotiate	Analyse, evaluate and improve
Prepare and conclude	Lead, supervise and respond
Prepare and compile	Coordinate, direct and adjust
Undertake and organise	Build, install, rebuild, maintain and rehabilitate
Produce and present	Mount, assemble, disassemble and dismount
Develop and adjust	

Annex III. Qualifiers (adjective and adverbs)

Examples of qualifiers extracted from level descriptors of national qualifications frameworks of countries referenced to the EQF ⁽¹⁷⁾

Examples of broad/general qualifiers		
Certain	Key	Appropriate/appropriately
Relevant	Particular/particularly	Suitable/suitably
Very	Broad/Broadly	Successful/successfully
Various	Proper/properly	Usual/usually
Good	Effective/effectively	Important/importantly
Required	Wide/widely	

Example of qualifiers (adverbs or adjectives) that can support in conveying levels of complexity		
Basic	Advanced	Complete/completed/completely
Familiar	Intermediate	Complex/complicated
Simple	Autonomous/autonomously	Innovative/innovation/innovatively
Repetitive	Creative/creatively	Management/managerial
Structured	Independent/independently	Original/originality
Defined	Specialised/specialist	Substantial
Routine	New/novel	Responsible/responsibly
Elementary	Critical/critically	Strategic/strategically
Assigned	Comprehensive	Unforeseeable/unforeseen
Integrated	Non-routine	Conceptual/conceptually
Non-specialised	Unpredictable	Predictable/predicably
Limited	In-depth	Partially/partial/partly
Everyday/daily/day-to-day	Predefined/predetermined	Sophisticated

⁽¹⁷⁾ The NQF level descriptors, published in English, can be found in Cedefop (2018). *Analysis and overview of NQF level descriptors in European countries*. Publications Office of the European Union. For countries that have provided updated referencing reports after 2016, the updated referencing report was used.

Annex IV. European qualifications framework: level descriptors ⁽¹⁸⁾

	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy	
	In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.	In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)	In the context of the EQF, responsibility and autonomy is described as the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility.	
Level 1	Basic general knowledge	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context	Level 1
Level 2	Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy	Level 2
Level 3	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study; adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems	Level 3
Level 4	Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities	Level 4

⁽¹⁸⁾ Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications. Learning outcomes means statements regarding what a learner knows, understands and can do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy. Source: 2017 EQF Recommendation

	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and autonomy	
Level 5	Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; review and develop performance of self and others	Level 5
Level 6	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups	Level 6
Level 7	Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields	Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams	Level 7
Level 8	Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields	The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice	Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research	Level 8
<p>The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area provides descriptors for three cycles agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna process. Each cycle descriptor offers a generic statement of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with qualifications that represent the end of that cycle.</p> <p>The descriptor for the short cycle developed by the Joint Quality Initiative as part of the Bologna process, (that can be within or linked to the first cycle), corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 5. The descriptor for the first cycle corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 6. The descriptor for the second cycle corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 7. The descriptor for the third cycle corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 8.</p>				

Source: [EQF Recommendation 2017 – Level descriptors](#).

Annex V. Additional sources and links

[URLs accessed 10.4.2024]

- The guidelines should be used for developing short descriptions of [qualifications published in Europass portal](#).
- Publication of qualifications and learning opportunities in Europass takes place via the [Qualification Dataset Register \(QDR\)](#).
- Data published on the QDR must be published using the [European Learning Model](#).
- Cedefop European handbook on defining, writing and applying learning outcomes first, 2017 ⁽¹⁹⁾ and [second, 2022 editions](#) ⁽²⁰⁾ include ‘rules of thumb’ on the use of learning outcomes; the 2022 version includes an extensive list of international and national resources (guidance and research material) supporting the definition, writing and use of learning outcomes in different contexts (assessment, curricula, qualifications, etc.).
- [2017 European qualifications framework \(EQF\) Recommendation](#). Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and repealing the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning.
- Cedefop publication (2018) on the [Analysis and overview of NQF level descriptors in European countries](#) includes NQF level descriptors.
- European Commission. (2017). [ESCO European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations](#).
- United States. Department of Labor. [O’Net Occupational Information Network](#).

Competence frameworks

- [Key competence framework](#). Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning. Council of the European Union. (2018).

⁽¹⁹⁾ Cedefop (2017). [Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: a European handbook](#). Publications Office of the European Union.

⁽²⁰⁾ Cedefop (2022). [Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: a European handbook – second edition](#). Publications Office of the European Union.

- [The entrepreneurship competence framework \(EntreComp\)](#). European Commission, & Joint Research Centre. (2016).
- [The digital competence framework for citizens \(DigComp 2.2\)](#). European Commission, & Joint Research Centre (2022).
- [Reference framework of competences for democratic culture \(RFCDC\)](#). Council of Europe (2013).
- [European inventory of National qualifications framework \(NQFs\)](#). Cedefop (2022).
- Further information at national level on NQFs is available on NQF website and databases. [Links to websites and databases as well as contact details of NQF coordination points are available per country.](#)

EUROPEAN GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND WRITING OF SHORT, LEARNING-OUTCOMES-BASED DESCRIPTIONS OF QUALIFICATIONS

The guidelines present common principles for developing short, learning-outcomes-based descriptions for all qualifications. These are crucial for qualifications databases and registers.

This initiative is part of a broader European attempt to increase transparency of qualifications across countries, facilitating mobility and supporting lifelong learning.

Significant progress in National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and the use of learning outcomes in Europe has increased qualification understanding and portability. Structuring short descriptions of qualifications and their learning outcomes consistently improves transparency and, comparability, and facilitates their availability and use in digital environments.

Short descriptions provide learners, employers, education and training providers, and others with quick access to learning outcomes information, complementing full national descriptions.

The publication offers recommendations on the formal aspects (length, format) and content (scope, complexity, context) of these descriptions. It also includes practical resources, such as lists of action verbs and qualifiers, to help describe clearly the learning outcomes of qualifications.

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