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Towards a Central Asian Higher Education Area



QF FOR THE CAHEA A Qualifications Framework for Central Asian Higher Education

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A Qualifications Framework for the Central Asian Higher Education Area

What is a Qualifications Framework?

All national university systems foresee several different academic and professional higher education degrees. The degrees may require different numbers of years of study or training, or have different names: sometimes the same name refers to different levels of learning; sometimes different names refer to the same level of learning. In order to ensure clarity, transparency and visibility, most countries and several world regions have now produced and published a very general table, a “Framework”, to define and communicate the basic features of their Higher Education Systems. Such Qualifications Frameworks specify, in a very general way, the level of proficiency that all students, of whatever discipline or combination of disciplines, must reach in order to be awarded a degree. They also specify the volume of learning (in terms of years, and often of workload based on credits) that the learner must complete in order to be awarded the degree.

What area can a Qualifications Framework cover?

Qualifications Frameworks can be National (NQF) and describe the higher education system of one country. They can be Sectoral (SQF), and give more precise indications on the levels (in terms of competences, outcomes and volume of learning) of a large disciplinary sector or domain: i.e. the Humanities, Engineering, the Health sector. They can be macro-regional, and give very general indications about the degrees offered in all the countries of a macro-region. This is the case of the QF for the EHEA (Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area; it would be the case of a QF for the CAHEA (Central Asian Higher Education Area).

Why is a Qualifications Framework useful?

A Framework for comparing degree programme levels and their outcomes in broad terms makes it possible for universities to adjust their programmes to meet national and international requirements, communicate with each other using an agreed language and agreed parameters, promote mobility, and ensure transparency and fair recognition of students’ work. Thus, students, academics, parents, and employers know what to expect from a degree programme, whether in their own city or country, or abroad.

What has TuCAHEA done to facilitate a Qualifications Framework?

TUCAHEA has approached this issue from several directions. It has gathered information about the current situation and the changes foreseen in the academic degree structures in each of its five countries. It has provided a forum for informed academics to discuss similarities, communalities, and differences in the current programmes, both in general and with regard to specific subject areas and domains. Eight important Subject Areas (Business and Management, Economics, Education, Engineering, Environmental Protection, History, Language, Law) have created level descriptors in terms of programme learning outcomes for Bachelor, Master and Doctoral (PhD) degrees. Together these provide both a practical and a theoretical base for a regional Qualifications Framework.

Is it possible to create a Qualifications Framework for the CAHEA?

The Central Asian countries look with interest at the EHEA (European Higher Education Area, which today includes 48 countries. One of them, Kazakhstan, is a member of the EHEA; Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are adapting their systems completely, in part, or on an experimental basis to the parameters of the EHEA, instituting Bachelor, Master and PhD degrees. They are all well acquainted with the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF for LLL (European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning) which help to define the levels of learning that these degrees require. TuCAHEA has explored how to create a similar Framework, compatible and comparable to the European Frameworks, but based on the specific needs of the Central Asian societies, economies and cultures. Thus, the premises have been created for a QF for the CAHEA.

Does a QF for the CAHEA have the support of Ministries?

The Ministries responsible for Higher Education in the five Central Asian countries are full partners in the TuCAHEA Consortium. They have worked closely with the other partners over the past four years, and contributed to designing the tools to support innovation and cooperation in the Higher Education Area. The Ministerial Representatives have issued 2 communiqués or statements in support of these activities. Most recently (in Rome, 2016) they declared: “The Delegates of the Ministries assert their interest in using and disseminating the achieved results [of TuCAHEA]. The Ministry representatives agree, furthermore on coordinating their Higher Education systems so as to ensure greater compatibility and better visibility in the Higher Education world.”

Where can I find out more?

Full information is available from the TuCAHEA website, from the Project Team, from TuCAHEA members, and particularly, from the Country Coordinators listed on the back of this leaflet.

