



QUALITY ASSURANCE WORKSHOP

Qualification Standards: Linking to Programme Design

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6 October 2015

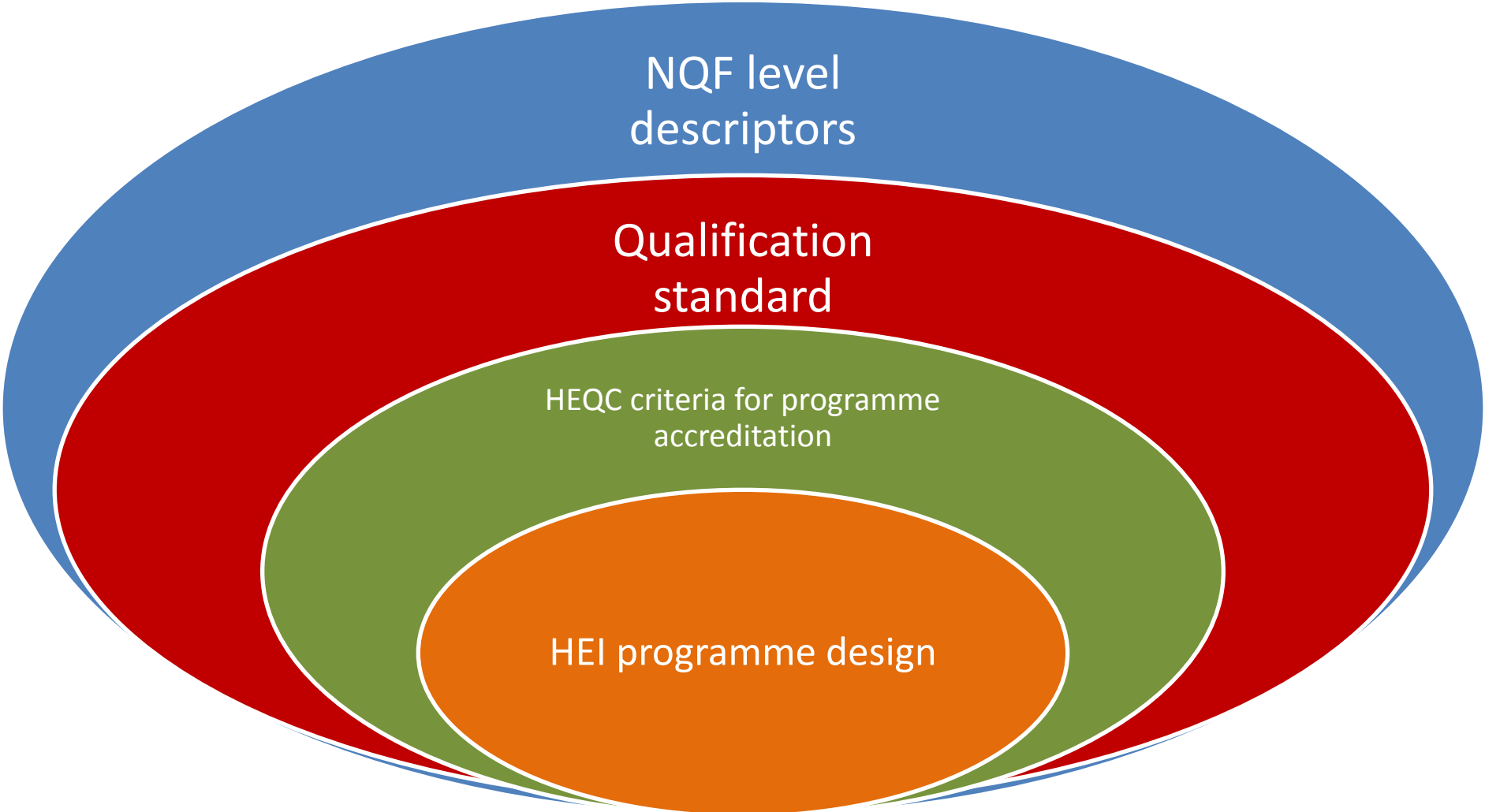
Legislative Framework

The HEQSF assigns to the CHE the responsibility for developing standards for all higher education qualifications.

The development of standards is an important element in contributing to the successful implementation of the HEQF, as standards provide benchmarks to guide the development, implementation and quality assurance of programmes leading to qualifications. Standards registered for higher education qualifications must have legitimacy, credibility and a common, well-understood meaning.

(HEQSF, as revised, January 2013)

A 'nested' approach



NQF level
descriptors

Qualification
standard

HEQC criteria for programme
accreditation

HEI programme design

Update on Progress since 2013

- Framework for qualification standards in higher education – approved by the CHE council in 2013
- Process – Development of qualification standards
- Pilot phase (5 qualifications) – BSW, LLB, MBA and 2 Engineering qualifications developed and ready for use
- Roll-out of development of qualification standards – Sports Coaching and 2 other Engineering, Nursing education and BCom degrees
- Integration of qualification standards and programme accreditation criteria in national reviews – Integrated approach to national reviews

Qualification Standard (CHE Framework)

- A qualification standard is a generic statement of the learning domains, the level of achievement and the graduate attributes that characterise, and are required for the award of the qualification.
- They set out expectations about standards of qualifications in a range of fields of study, describing what gives a discipline its distinctiveness.
- National qualification standards provide both compliance benchmarks and developmental indicators for qualification types as awarded in particular fields of study or disciplines.

Nature of Qualification Standards

- Qualification standards articulate a “**threshold "or minimum standards**”
- Make explicit the nature and characteristics of awards – Reflect **consensus**, Explain the **conceptual framework** that gives the discipline its **coherence and identity**
- Acknowledge the **differences** and **diversity of programmes** in the qualification within agreed limits set by the discipline community
- Allow for **diversity and flexibility** in the **design of programmes** and allow for innovation within an agreed conceptual framework (Mission, niche areas..)
- Set out attributes capabilities expected of graduates in the discipline, in order to give general expectations of standards in awards for **Employers and students**

What a qualification standard does NOT aim to do

- Does not determine **access** criteria.
- Does not prescribe **duration**. (A standard does set minimum credits and NQF exit level.)
- Does not prescribe **curriculum design**. (But sets threshold requirements in respect of core knowledge, skills and application in appropriate contexts.)
- Does not determine **teaching and learning methods**.

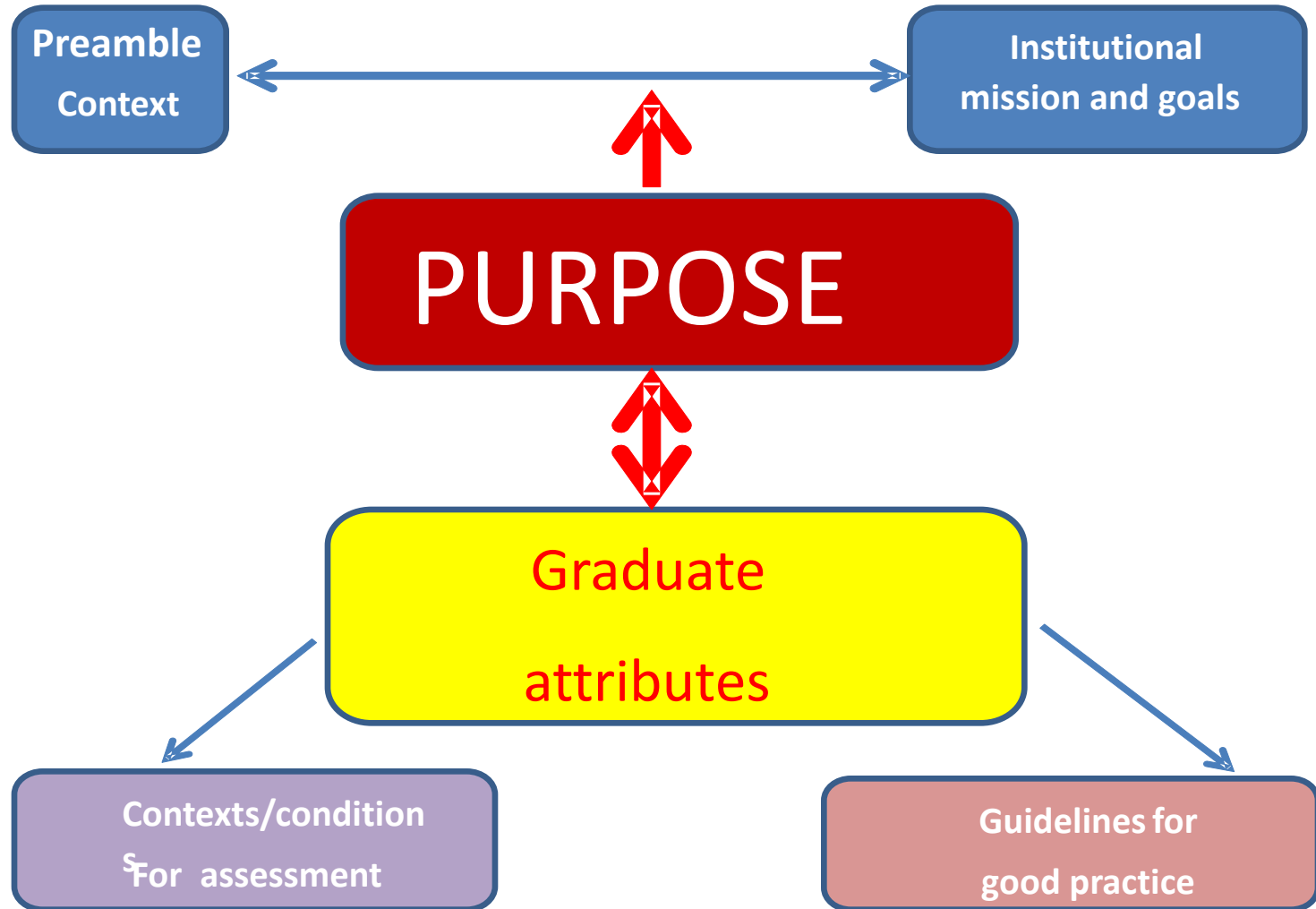
What a qualification standard does NOT aim to do

- ❑ Sets context and conditions for assessment, but does not prescribe **assessment methods**.

(These are matters relating to individual **programmes**, and are the responsibility of the awarding institution.)

- ❑ Does not determine above-threshold practice, but includes **guidelines** for the interpretation of concepts and terms included in the standard.

Format of a standards statement



Exemplar: Standard for the LLB

PURPOSE

Integrated

480cr

LLB

First degree

(BA, BCom)

Specialised

240cr

LLB

Graduate attributes

Preamble

- This provides a brief statement outlining the discipline-based context in which the standard has been developed.
 - Legislation and Policy Environment (National and International)
 - Socio/Economic/Political Environment
 - Discipline (Identity and Imperatives)
 - Professional requirements (Professional qualifications)

Purpose statement

Extracted from the HEQSF - How do standards for a qualification relate to the outcomes set out in **NQF level descriptors**?

What is the **purpose** of the qualification? **What blend of conceptual and contextual knowledge, skill and applied competence is appropriate to the purpose of the qualification**, at the specified level on the NQF?

What is the appropriate ratio of focus on conceptual knowledge?

- Concepts, principles, theories, perspectives
- Facts, formulae, axioms
- What is the appropriate ratio of focus on contextual knowledge?
- On-the-job or on-site
- Service learning
- By formal instruction (work-directed theoretical, problem-based, project-based learning, etc.)
- **What therefore is the appropriate pathway of the qualification?**
- How does the exit-level blend of learning domains (knowledge, skill, applied competence), shown by the **graduate attributes** expected for the award, represent the purpose of the qualification?

Graduate Attributes (GAs)

- The Framework proposes to incorporate the concept ‘graduate attributes’ in preference to the more restricted (and limiting) term ‘outcomes’.
- Outcomes often refer to knowledge, skills and competences that have been demonstrated through formal assessment.
- Graduate attributes speak to such outcomes, but also **encompass values, attitudes, critical thinking, ethical and professional behaviour**, and the **capacity of a graduate to take what has been learnt beyond the site of learning.**

*‘Graduate attributes are the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution. **These attributes include, but go beyond, the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents for social good in an unknown future.**’*

(Bowden, 2000)

Graduate Attributes cont.'

- Graduates attributes are not the sum total of the exit-level outcomes, rather can be described
- *"GAs as tapestry - not a single thread or a single colour"*
- *The outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences: GAs suggests the weaving together of all these and more ..*
- *GAs represent an image that the discipline community attempts to portray when it sets out expectations about standards of qualifications/ awards, describing what gives a discipline its **distinctiveness**.*
- *The Programme develops and weaves together all of the threads of knowledge, skills and understanding and more....*



Graduate Attributes in Programme Design

- Starting with the **End** in mind – Picture/ Tapestry (Graduate Attributes)
- Then the **End**/Picture ought to be:
 - Clear and unambiguous – elicit common understanding and interpretation within the community of practice
 - Capture essential features of the discipline (**Identity and distinctiveness**)
- Provides a reference point in the design and development of programmes and framework for specifying learning outcomes
- Deconstruct GAs to get to the Programme specifications – Curriculum
 - Mapping of Programme Specifications on the Graduate attributes – Alignment
 - Aids curriculum alignment and coherence (**BUT does not prescribe**) Curriculum Mapping

Mimi Tappin & Hazel Linnell presents

Weaving is Easy!



Photographer: Iku Kawachi

Model: Jennifer Evans-Hill/Stock.com

Graduate Attributes in Programme Design Cont'

- Provides a benchmark for comparability of programmes leading to a qualification
- Provides **discussion** and **reflection** points within and between institutions, even with reviewers and evaluators of programmes (Common understanding)
- Compatibility between national Frameworks (Mutual recognition agreements)- Identify points of convergence between HE systems
 - Aims to make recognition easier by identifying common points of reference (Graduate attributes of often used for

Linking a programme to a Qualification Standard

- How does Programme relate to the requirements set out in **in the qualification standard**?
 - **The programme give effect to the Qualification Standard**

What is the **purpose** of the **PROGRAMME**? What blend of conceptual and contextual knowledge, skill and applied competence is appropriate to the purpose of the Programme, at the specified level on the NQF?

- What is the appropriate ratio of focus on conceptual knowledge?
 - Concepts, principles, theories, perspectives
 - Facts, formulae, axioms
- What is the appropriate ratio of focus on contextual knowledge?
 - On-the-job or on-site
 - Service learning
- **By formal instruction (work-directed theoretical, problem-based, project-based learning, etc.) Teaching/ Learning Strategies)**

Linking a programme to a Qualification Standard cont'

- What therefore is the appropriate pathway of the qualification?
Vocational/Professional/Academic/General
- Is the programme design appropriate to achieve the desired outcomes?
- How does the exit-level blend of learning domains (knowledge, skill, applied competence), shown by the **graduate attributes** expected for the award, **reflected in the purpose of the programme?**
- In what contexts and under what conditions are the exit-level learning domains demonstrated through assessment? (**What are the appropriate assessment strategies ?**)
- **What is the requisite/appropriate assumed knowledge for admission into the programme? – implications on admission requirements?**



Thank You!