

## 2. Evaluation Criteria and Methodology

When using developed and verified information for the purpose of recognition, it is important to have a coherent set of criteria in order to relate the information to specific qualifications and ultimately, to interpret and to arrive at a justified comparability statement accorded to a given qualification.

Evaluation Criteria also need to reflect the concerns of the receiving national system. These concerns centre on whether internationally trained applicants are:

- sufficiently well-trained to perform a certain occupational or professional role, or
- adequately qualified to enter the further or higher education system in the country in question

The current UK NARIC Evaluation Criteria are based on a NARIC Band Framework, which is designed to ensure accuracy and consistency of comparability statements accorded to international qualifications. They are also designed with the capacity to accommodate and reflect value comparisons of a wide range of international awards and transferable skills.

The term Band is used to reflect the broad grouping of international qualifications that may be categorised.

The detailed Level of Comparisons is a hierarchical structure encompassing academic and vocationally oriented qualifications based on UK NARIC's experience of expressing the value of international qualifications, the outcomes of which are achieved under different education models. The intention is to eradicate inexact or excessively broadly comparison statements, demonstrating as closely as possible the relevance between different qualifications.

# The UK NARIC Band Framework

## NARIC BANDS

In the UK, NARIC predominantly employs an outcomes-based approach to its assessment. Nonetheless, criteria such as duration, entry requirements, method and rigour of assessment, professional or occupational outcomes and quality assurance mechanisms are also taken into consideration. Furthermore, the position of qualifications within national education systems or frameworks and elaborated progression pathways are factors in the decision-making process.

The evaluation result is a comparison of qualifications to one of a series of **NARIC bands**, a largely hierarchical structure of educational outcomes. These have been specifically designed to enable stakeholders to distinguish between the various types of international awards to a reasonably fine level of differentiation and therefore make more informed decisions.

NARIC Bands operate in a subtly different manner to Qualification Frameworks, which seek to harmonise the content and outcome of national qualifications into a relatively small number of hierarchical levels. NARIC Bands seek to provide a mechanism within which it is possible to categorise the wide variety of encountered international qualifications and to differentiate between them in a coherent and accurate fashion. Correspondingly, there are 18 bands in the UK NARIC framework, and the details of which are provided in **Appendix 1**.

The UK NARIC bands enable logical connections to the domestic qualification framework(s) and this broad alignment is provided in **Appendix 2**, which illustrates how the bands, and the descriptors, broadly articulate with QCF Levels.

## SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES ASSESSMENT

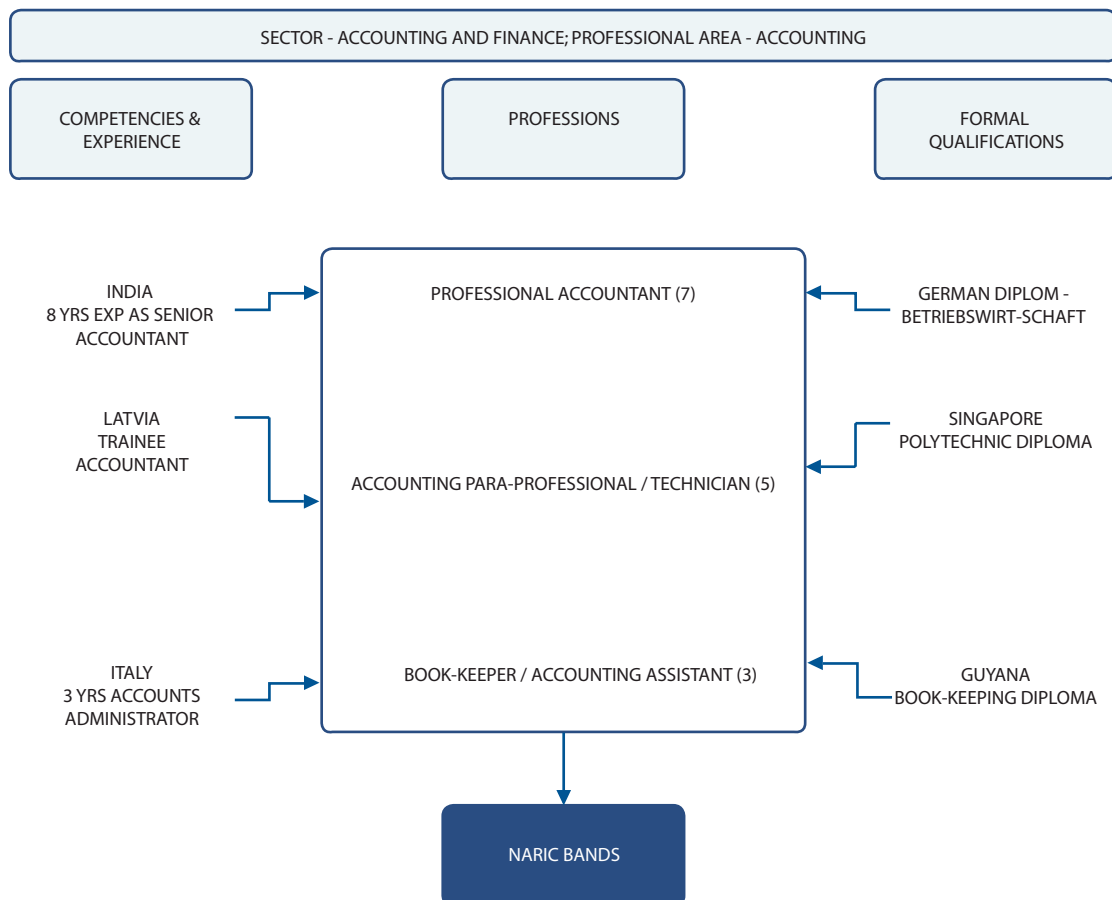
Using the Band Framework, UK NARIC has adapted its recognition criteria to produce a sectoral model for recognition which provides a mechanism to ensure that differing types of learning can be cross-compared.

Through the sectoral model, it is possible to map skills and competencies associated with professional / occupational outcomes, yielding interesting comparisons of formal qualifications on one hand and experiential learning on the other.

In most sectors, professional / occupational outcomes are arranged as a hierarchical structure of job roles, even if not elaborated in the same manner as National Occupational Standards. The existence of structured expectations of employees (often described in terms of competency statements) enables a variety of different skills and competencies to be mapped against this 'standard'.

On the same basis, it is also possible to determine how professional qualifications compare, on one side, to broad academic qualification levels on the other. Equally, comparisons can be drawn with broad classifications such as PBS points scoring categories.

The sectoral model of evaluation can be illustrated in the following manner:



## APPENDIX 1

### UK NARIC Band Descriptors:

#### Band 0:

Qualifications falling below the first nationally assessed level in UK secondary schools and includes basic level adult education that also does not constitute a national award.

#### Band 1:

Awards at this level demonstrate a basic to moderate grasp of the principal elements of the given subject without demonstrating a deeper understanding or an ability to converse with its more technical aspects. In vocational areas, individuals would be directly supervised in the workplace.

#### Band 2:

Qualifications at this level provide holders with a solid grounding in the fundamental areas of the subject or occupation and allow progression to upper secondary / technician level awards.

#### Band 3:

International awards that fall between lower and upper secondary in standard, which provide a level of specialisation beyond that of a basic skilled worker.

#### Band 4:

Qualifications that provide for admission to higher education only in certain circumstances. Normally, the volume of study and degree of specialisation is insufficient for access to degree programmes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, these awards may be considered more appropriate for higher education entry, as degrees are longer in duration.

#### Band 5:

Qualifications that closely match the higher education entrance level in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Equally, those that reflect workers demonstrating competences such as the application of knowledge in a broad range of varied work activities, with some responsibility or autonomy. See Scotland note under Level 4.

#### Band 6:

Qualifications, usually vocational, that go beyond the outcomes associated with first-level responsibilities, usually in a further education setting. These awards generally lack sufficient volume of tertiary level study to be considered higher education.

#### Band 7:

Qualifications that broadly match the outcomes associated with one year of full-time higher education or higher technician staff whose range of tasks are quite limited.

**Band 8:**

Qualifications that broadly match the outcomes associated with two years of full-time higher education or higher technician staff whose range of tasks are relatively broad.

**Band 9:**

The course of study leading to this qualification is based on a strongly multi-disciplinary curriculum. This may not in itself readily offer the extent of specialist knowledge or academic preparation normally demanded of students seeking to progress directly into a UK academic programme at postgraduate level.

**Band 10:**

The course of study leading to this qualification indicates that students have followed a specialist curriculum. The course also generally requires submission of a final thesis or dissertation, which is examined as part of the requirements for the award. Graduates are likely to be securely prepared for progression directly into a UK academic programme at postgraduate level.

**Band 11:**

Qualifications that provide further training, usually occupationally-specific in nature, for graduates and higher technicians. The programme is generally orientated towards classroom-based study, involve the minimum amount of academic study for a postgraduate award and often combine this with professional content.

**Band 12:**

Academically-based, postgraduate qualifications that are based predominantly upon classroom-based study and are usually designed for the purposes of further specialisation.

**Band 13:**

Second cycle higher education programmes that combine classroom-based study and a research element.

**Band 14:**

Second cycle higher education programmes with a strong orientation towards research work.

**Band 15:**

Postgraduate research awards with significant dissertations that may form the basis of doctoral programmes.

**Band 16:**

Awards that require the completion of a lengthy thesis based upon original research.

**Band 17:**

Post-Doctoral awards to reflect higher academic achievements, usually confined to university staff.

## APPENDIX 2

**THE UK NARIC BAND FRAMEWORK MAY ALSO BE REPRESENTED IN TABULAR FORMAT, WHICH ILLUSTRATES HOW THE BANDS, AND THE DESCRIPTORS, BROADLY ARTICULATE WITH NQF LEVELS, AS FOLLOWS:**

NARIC BAND	BAND DESCRIPTOR	COMPARISON STATEMENTS	NQF (TO BECOME QCF)	FHEQ	SCQF
17	Post-Doctoral awards to reflect higher academic achievements, usually confined to university staff	Comparable to British Post Doctoral standard	-	-	-
16	Awards that require the completion of a lengthy thesis based upon original research	Comparable to British Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD) standard	8	Doctoral	12
15	Postgraduate research awards with significant dissertations that may form the basis of doctoral programmes	Comparable to British Master of Philosophy degree (MPhil) standard	7	Masters	11
14	Second cycle higher education programmes with a strong orientation towards research work	Comparable to British Master's degree standard			
13	Second cycle higher education programmes that combine classroom-based study and a research element	Comparable to British taught Master's degree standard			
12	Academically-based, postgraduate qualifications that are based predominantly upon classroom-based study and are usually designed for the purposes of further specialisation	Comparable to British Postgraduate Diploma standard Comparable to N/SVQ level 5 standard			
11	Qualifications that provide further training, usually occupationally-specific in nature, for graduates and higher technicians. The programme is generally orientated towards classroom-based study, involve the minimum amount of academic study for a postgraduate award and often combine this with professional content	Comparable to British Postgraduate Certificate standard	6	Honours	10
10	The course of study leading to this qualification indicates that students have followed a specialist curriculum. The course also generally requires submission of a final thesis or dissertation, which is examined as part of the requirements for the award. Graduates are likely to be securely prepared for progression directly into a UK academic programme at postgraduate level	Comparable to British Bachelor (Honours) degree standard			
9	The course of study leading to this qualification is based on a strongly multi-disciplinary curriculum. This may not in itself readily offer the extent of specialist knowledge or academic preparation normally demanded of students seeking to progress directly into a UK academic programme at postgraduate level	Comparable to British Bachelor (Ordinary) degree standard			
8	Qualifications that broadly match the outcomes associated with two years of full-time higher education or higher technician staff whose range of tasks are relatively broad	Comparable to Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) Comparable to BTEC / SQA Higher National Diploma (HND) standard. Comparable to N/SVQ level 4 / SQA level 4 / City & Guilds level 4 standard	5	Intermediate	8

NARIC BAND	BAND DESCRIPTOR	COMPARISON STATEMENTS	NQF (TO BECOME QCF)	FHEQ	SCQF
7	Qualifications that broadly match the outcomes associated with one year of full-time higher education or higher technician staff whose range of tasks are quite limited	Comparable to Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) standard Comparable to BTEC / SQA Higher National Certificate (HNC) standard	4	Certificate	7
6	Qualifications, usually vocational, that go beyond the outcomes associated with first-level responsibilities, usually in a further education setting. These awards generally lack sufficient volume of tertiary level study to be considered higher education	Comparable to a standard between BTEC National Diploma and BTEC Higher National Diploma / SQA Professional Development Award (level 7) Comparable to a standard between N/SVQ level 3 / City & Guilds level 3 and N/SVQ level 4 / City & Guilds level 4 standard	3		
5	Qualifications that closely match the higher education entrance level in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Equally, those that reflect workers demonstrating competences such as the application of knowledge in a broad range of varied work activities, with some responsibility or autonomy. See Scotland note under Level 4	Comparable to the overall GCE Advanced / Scottish Advanced Higher standard Comparable to Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) / BTEC National Diploma standard / SQA Professional Development Award (level 7) Comparable to N/SVQ level 3 / City & Guilds level 3 standard Comparable to English Advanced Apprenticeship / Scottish Modern Apprenticeship / Welsh Advanced Modern Apprenticeship standard			
4	Qualifications that provide for admission to higher education only in certain circumstances. Normally, the volume of study and degree of specialisation is insufficient for access to degree programmes in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, these awards may be considered more appropriate for higher education entry, as degrees are longer in duration	Comparable to GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level / Scottish Higher standard Comparable to VCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level / BTEC National Certificate / SQA National Certificate (level 6)			
3	International awards that fall between lower and upper secondary in standard, which provide a level of specialisation beyond that of a basic skilled worker	Comparable to a standard between GCSE and GCE AS level Comparable to a standard between BTEC First Diploma and BTEC National Diploma / SQA National Certificate (level 6) Comparable to a standard between N/SVQ level 2 / City & Guilds level 2 and N/SVQ level 3 / City & Guilds level 3 Comparable to the English Apprenticeship / Welsh Modern Apprenticeship and the English Advanced Apprenticeship / Welsh Advanced Modern Apprenticeship. Below the standard of Scottish Modern Apprenticeship	-		6
2	Qualifications at this level provide holders with a solid grounding in the fundamental areas of the subject or occupation and allow progression to upper secondary / technician level awards	Comparable to GCSE (grades A*-C) / Credit Standard Grade standard Comparable to VGCSE (grades A*-C) / BTEC First Diploma / SQA Intermediate 2 standard Comparable to N/SVQ level 2 / City & Guilds level 2 standard Comparable to English Apprenticeship / Welsh Modern Apprenticeship standard	2		5
1	Awards at this level demonstrate a basic to moderate grasp of the principal elements of the given subject without demonstrating a deeper understanding or an ability to converse with its more technical aspects. In vocational areas, individuals would be directly supervised in the workplace	Comparable to GCSE (grades D-G) / General Standard Grade standard Comparable to VGCSE (grades D-G) / SQA Intermediate 1 standard Comparable to N/SVQ level 1 / City & Guilds level 1 standard	1		4
0	Qualifications falling below the first nationally assessed level in UK secondary schools and includes basic level adult education that also does not constitute a national award	Below GCSE / Standard Grade standard Below VGCSE standard Below N/SVQ level 1 standard	Entry		1, 2 and 3

## EVALUATION OF BACHELOR DEGREES

The Bachelor (Ordinary) and (Honours) designations are proving increasingly inconsistent with both international provision and the situation in the UK in recent years. A system using “British Bachelor degree standard” statement is therefore favoured, perhaps with the exception of those education systems also employing Ordinary and Honours degrees.

The following statements would follow a Bachelor degree statement to better describe the type of programme covered:

1. The course of study leading to this qualification is based on a strongly multi-disciplinary curriculum. This may not in itself readily offer the extent of specialist knowledge or academic preparation normally demanded of students seeking to progress directly into a UK academic programme at postgraduate level
2. The course of study leading to this qualification indicates that students have followed a specialist curriculum. The course also generally requires submission of a final thesis or dissertation, which is examined as part of the requirements for the award. Graduates are likely to be securely prepared for progression directly into a UK academic programme at postgraduate level
3. The course of study leading to this qualification is under review and, while reforms continue in the national tertiary sector and its institutions, the outcome of these changes has yet to be fully documented in practice.