PAPUA NEW GUINEA NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Third Edition

August 2024

NATIONAL HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION BOARD

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Foreword

The Papua New Guinea National Qualifications Framework (PNGNQF) represents a significant milestone in the unification and modernization of our nation's higher education sector. For too long, this sector has been fragmented, with institutions and programmes operating in isolation, often without a coherent structure that ensures the quality and comparability of qualifications. The PNGNQF addresses this challenge by providing a clear, structured system that brings together all elements of post-secondary education under a unified framework.

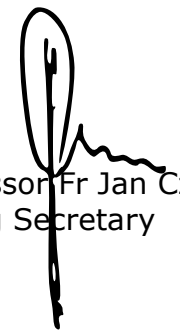
This framework is not merely an administrative tool; it is a pathway to opportunity. By establishing consistent standards for qualifications, the PNGNQF enables students from all walks of life to pursue their educational and career objectives with confidence that their achievements will be recognized and valued, both within Papua New Guinea and internationally. Whether one aspires to earn a certificate, diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctoral degree, the PNGNQF ensures that the learning outcomes and the volume of learning are clearly defined and comparable across all institutions.

The PNGNQF outlines 10 distinct levels of qualifications, each meticulously defined to capture the essential knowledge, skills, and communication abilities expected of graduates at each stage. This approach not only standardizes qualifications but also empowers learners by clearly delineating the pathways available to them as they advance through their education. It ensures that every qualification, regardless of where it is earned, meets the same high standards, thereby fostering a culture of excellence across all institutions.

Furthermore, by integrating vocational education and training (TVET) with traditional academic pathways, the PNGNQF bridges the gap between different forms of education, recognizing that each plays a vital role in our nation's development. This inclusivity extends the reach of higher education, offering more individuals the chance to achieve their personal and professional goals, whether through university degrees, technical training, or other forms of post-secondary education.

The establishment of the PNGNQF marks a new era for higher education in Papua New Guinea—one where fragmentation is replaced by unity, and where every learner is given the opportunity to succeed. It is a framework that not only supports our national aspirations for educational excellence but also aligns our qualifications with global standards, ensuring that our graduates are prepared to contribute meaningfully on the world stage.

As we implement and refine this framework, I am confident that it will serve as a foundation for the continued growth and improvement of our higher education sector, ultimately contributing to the prosperity and development of Papua New Guinea.



Professor Fr Jan Czuba
Acting Secretary

Abbreviations and Terms

AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASEANQRF	ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
BA (Hons)	Bachelor of Arts with Honours
Certification documentation	Certification documentation is the set of official documents that confirms that a qualification has been completed and awarded to an individual.
CP	Credit Point
CPA PNG	Certified Practising Accountants Papua New Guinea
Credit Points System	A credit point system is a way of aligning volume of learning and units within a programme of study.
DHERST	Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IEPNG	Institute of Engineering PNG
Informal learning	Learning that occurs naturally in the course of daily activities. Not a PNGNQF qualification
Institution	In this context, means higher education institutions, technical and vocational education and training institutions, and universities
Learner	A person who plans to or has enrolled in a programme of study, usually one leading to the achievement of a formal educational qualification. Means the same as 'student'. The two terms are used interchangeably throughout the PNGNQF.
Learning outcome	A statement of what a learner will know and be able to do on successful completion of a unit or programme
MQF	Malaysian Qualifications Framework
Micro-credential	Formally assessed short course that results in a certification of learning. Not a PNGNQF qualification
NATTB	National Apprenticeship Trade and Testing Board
NDoE	National Department of Education
NEC	National Executive Council
NHTEB	National Higher and Technical Education Board
Non-formal learning	Learning that does not result in a PNGNQF qualification but is undertaken deliberately by a learner
NQF	National Qualifications Framework

NTC	National Training Council
NZQF/NZQCF	New Zealand Qualifications Framework / New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGIPA	Papua New Guinea Investment Promotion Authority
PNGLS	Papua New Guinea Law Society
PNGMB	Papua New Guinea Medical Board
PNGNC	Papua New Guinea Nursing Council
PNGNQF	Papua New Guinea National Qualifications Framework
PQF	Pacific Qualifications Framework
PRQS	Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards
Qualification	In this context, the title (type) of an official record of achievement awarded on the successful completion of a programme of education or training
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTOs	Registered Training Organisations
student	See 'learner'
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSC	Teaching Services Commission
The Act	Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2014 (as amended)
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VET	Vocational Education and Training
Volume of learning	A measure of the expected duration of all the activities needed to achieve the learning outcomes for a particular qualification type

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

The PNG National Qualifications Framework (PNGNQF) is a system of formal qualifications for post-school (tertiary) education in Papua New Guinea. A qualification is awarded to recognise the successful completion of formal studies in education or training. Typical names for formal qualifications are certificate, diploma, bachelor, or master.

The PNGNQF defines 10 levels of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and the volume of learning. It is designed to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of tertiary education qualifications, nationally and internationally.

The Framework describes in general terms what a graduate with a particular qualification is expected to know, to do and to communicate. It sets out the contexts and conditions in which graduates can be expected to perform.

Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, or post-secondary education, is broadly defined as education that is undertaken the completion of secondary school education. Institutions offering tertiary education include universities, colleges, technical training institutes, nursing schools, research laboratories, centres of excellence, and distance learning centres.

The Upper Secondary School Certificate of Education, issued by the National Department of Education (NDoE) is not within the scope of the PNGNQF.

Higher education includes undergraduate and postgraduate education, including sub-bachelor qualifications. Vocational education and training (VET) beyond secondary education is known variously as technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Papua New Guinea and Australia, further education in the United Kingdom, and continuing education in the United States.

1.2 History

The Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST) progressed work on the Second Edition of the PNG National Qualifications Framework in 2014 as a requirement under the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act* 2014 (HEGPA 14).

In 2017, the National Higher and Technical Education Board (NHTEB) approved the Second Edition of the PNG National Qualifications Framework for implementation.

Subsequently, Parliament passed the *Higher and Technical Education Reform Act* 2020 and the amended Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2014 to drive the current reform in the higher and technical education sector. The reform includes transfer of higher and technical education and training functions and ownership of public higher education institutions (non-universities) from various government agencies to the DHERST.

NHTEB is now responsible for all regulatory approvals for higher and technical education and training institutions and their programmes, including the registration and accreditation of all private training institutions. NHTEB also has the additional task of the appointment of all Councils for non-university public higher education institutions.

One of the key objectives of the reform is to ensure the fragmented higher education sector is regulated by one agency and that the DHERST provides oversight of the higher education sector in Papua New Guinea, avoiding duplication of functions across government agencies.

The reform will facilitate the implementation of an integrated quality assured tertiary education system in PNG.

1.3 Legislative Authority for Revision

The 2014 Act consolidates the meaning of 'higher education' as 'tertiary education', encompassing all post-secondary school education, through its definition of a higher education award (see also section 2).

The HEGPA 2014 establishes a National Higher and Technical Education Board (NHTEB). Section 14 of the Act provides the powers and functions of the Board which include: '**to review, consult on and update the PNGNQF from time to time**'.

1.4 Reasons for the Revision of the PNGNQF

1.4.1 International Comparability

Papua New Guinea is keen to play its part in the promotion of regional and global mobility of graduates and to ensure international recognition of its qualifications. As such it is crucial that DHERST and the NHTEB review the current qualifications framework supported by an effective quality assurance system.

The benchmarking of the PNGNQF against other regional and national qualifications frameworks enables trust in the qualifications offered in the PNG tertiary education sector.

1.4.2 Greater Clarity on Volume of Learning and Credit Points

Institutions have different approaches to addressing Volume of Learning and Credit Points. The PNGNQF provides a common approach or system in planning Volume of Learning and Credit Points in the development of programmes leading to qualifications. A common approach will enable discussions around credit transfer and credit recognition within and across institutions and programmes.

1.4.3 Easier Pathways between TVET and Higher Education Qualifications

The structure of the PNGNQF identifies TVET and higher education as two distinct sectors of tertiary education.

In PNG, there is a desire for recognition of qualifications across sectors, with TVET or higher education studies being recognised towards completion of programmes of study in the other sector. Contemporary thinking about post-school learning aims to remove the possible stigma attached to learners obtaining qualifications through the TVET sector, not least because of a vast national need for skilled graduates with technical certificate and diploma qualifications

Moreover, there is a growing overlap between the TVET sector and the Higher Education sector in Papua New Guinea. The two sectors form a continuum, although TVET programmes are typically shorter, practical in nature and delivered by polytechnics, colleges or Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) at certificate to diploma level.

RTOs may offer degrees and universities may offer certificates and diplomas. A number of private institutions and community education centres cover both sectors in their range of qualifications. A revision of the PNGNQF should assist in promoting easier or more seamless pathways across all levels of learning.

Processes of credit transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can be used to allow a person's knowledge, skills and competencies gained through work and other experience to be assessed and recognised for entry requirement in a particular programme of study. For instance, a Diploma in Agriculture might be recognised as the equivalent of the first year of a Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree.

Similarly, a unit of Letter Writing in a Certificate IV might be recognised as a unit towards a Bachelor of Business degree, while experience in aged care might be recognised towards a Certificate in Community Services. The Volume of Learning and credits points of the programme should be taken into consideration for the granting of RPL or credit transfer

1.5 Reference Frameworks

In approaching the revision of the PNGNQF, and keeping in mind the principles described in ***section 3***, several other qualifications frameworks were explored and mapped against the PNGNQF.

Three of these frameworks are regional referencing frameworks:

- Pacific Qualifications Framework
- ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
- European Qualifications Framework.

Three of the qualification frameworks are national:

- Australian Qualifications Framework, second edition
- Malaysian Qualifications Framework
- New Zealand Qualifications Framework (now New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework)

Several of these frameworks have been or are being mapped against each other. A number of the definitions and explanations in this document are adopted or adapted from these reference frameworks and from other reference documents.

1.6 Changes from the Second to the Third Edition of the PNGNQF

The changes from the Second to the Third Edition have been kept to a minimum, to preserve continuity, as tertiary education institutions in PNG are still becoming familiar with the use of a qualifications framework. The PNGNQF has broadly maintained regional continuity. Some changes were necessary to better reflect provisions of the reform of higher and technical education in PNG, including more information on pathways from TVET to higher education.

The 10 Levels and level descriptors remain the same.

Apart from editorial and presentation changes, the main changes in the Third Edition are:

- Throughout: There are additional and amended statements to better reflect requirements in respect of TVET qualifications
- Section 3: The inclusion of a statement of Objectives and a revised statement of Principles
- Section 4: The previous sections 4 and 5 on descriptors and levels of learning have been combined to reduce duplication of content
- Section 6: This section has been revised for clarity and to reflect machinery of government changes for the reform of higher and technical education, including the abolition of the National Training Council's function of .registering and monitoring private training providers
- Section 7: This section has been strengthened to emphasise the need for development of educational pathways, so that students do not have to repeat learning they have already demonstrated they have achieved. Although decisions on the recognition of learning remain with individual institutions, the PNGNQF emphasises a need for development of these pathways. Additional text has been added to reflect that all TVET institutions in PNG must give 100% credit for current achieved units of competency in PNG National Qualifications when students enrol for another TVET qualification that contains the same units of competency.
- Section 8: This section has been significantly expanded to give more detailed information to a large range of institutions that will award their own qualifications as part of the reform of higher and technical education.
- Section 9: This section now includes statements on micro-credentials and traditional knowledge and skills.
- Section 10: A note about the commencement date has been provided for, to allow institutions and other stakeholders a period of time to adjust to the changes.
- Appendices: Previous details of reference documents and mapping of comparator qualifications frameworks have been omitted for brevity. A flowchart of activities related to an RPL process has been included.

2. Scope and Applicability of the PNGNQF

The PNGNQF applies to all formal educational qualifications awarded post-school by providers or institutions with a presence in Papua New Guinea. It does not apply to non-formal education and training.

For purposes of the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2014 (as amended)*, the PNGNQF describes both higher education and technical and vocational education qualifications, using one integrated set of descriptors.

The PNGNQF recognises completion of Grade 12 schooling as a qualification. However, it does not prescribe the school-level educational qualifications that

are awarded throughout the period of school education, as these are the responsibility of the National Department of Education.

While the term 'higher education' often excludes TVET, the term is used broadly in the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act* 2014 (as amended) to encompass all tertiary education including TVET. The following definitions in section 2 of the Act are relevant to understanding the scope and applicability of the PNGNQF and its links to the Act:

- *"higher and technical education" means education leading to a higher education award.*
- *"higher education award" means any award that is-*

  (a) any award described in the PNGNQF as a higher education or a technical and vocational education qualification, which includes formal qualifications with the title of certificate, diploma, advanced diploma, associate degree, bachelor degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma, masters degree or doctoral degree; or

  (b) an award of a similar kind, or represented as being of a similar kind, to any of the above awards, including an award offered by an overseas institution that operates in Papua New Guinea; or

  (c) a preparatory, bridging or foundation programme, whether leading to a formal qualification or not, conducted at post-secondary level that prepares or enables a student to undertake a programme leading to a higher education award.

- *"higher education institution" means an educational institution that provides post-secondary (non-school) education leading to a formal higher education award including, but not restricted to, technical and vocational institutions and training centres, information technology centres, secretariat schools, language schools, hospitality training centres, care-giving training providers, performing arts and sports academies, religious educational institutions and training colleges, technical colleges, teachers' colleges, nursing colleges and universities; and includes the entity that provides this education through the institution.*

The PNGNQF applies to formal qualifications achieved through full-time or through part-time studies. It applies to any or all commonly accepted modes of study for a particular qualification, including: face to face learning mode; flexible or blended mode, including intensive face to face teaching periods; distance education mode; wholly online mode; and combinations of these modes. Whatever the mode of study, for the same programme (or qualification) the same learning outcomes should be achieved.

3. Objectives and Principles for the PNGNQF

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of the PNGNQF are given below. These are consistent with the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act* 2014 (as amended) and the Terms of Reference for this 2023 revision.

The objectives of the PNGNQF are to:

- Provide clear and transparent information to stakeholders about qualifications, their levels, and their associated learning outcomes

- Facilitate smooth progression and articulation between different qualifications and levels of learning, providing clear pathways for individuals to advance their education and training and build on their existing knowledge and skills
- Ensure the quality and consistency of qualifications within higher education, training and development systems
- Recognise and value learning gained through various learning experiences, including formal, non-formal, and informal learning, allowing for the recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- Enhance the mobility of learners and workers by facilitating the recognition of qualifications across different sectors, regions, or countries, thereby increasing employability and facilitating career progression
- Encourage life-long learning by providing opportunities for individuals to engage in continuous education and training that supports the development of communities and civil society in PNG and keeps learning up to date.

It is expected these objectives in the PNGNQF collectively contribute to the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the PNG higher education system, benefiting learners, employers, educational institutions, and society.

3.2 Principles

A set of principles of a qualification framework underpins the design and implementation of the PNGNQF. The following PNGNQF principles support initiatives in the National Higher and Technical Education Plan 2021-2030:

- **Inclusiveness:** Accommodate diverse learners and recognising a range of learning experiences, including formal, non-formal, and informal learning.
- **Quality Assurance:** Provide a baseline for quality assurance of qualifications, by stating broad learning outcomes at each level
- **Learner-Centric:** Focus on the needs and interests of learners, to enable learners to pursue their individual learning pathways by moving between different levels and qualifications, allowing for flexibility and personalised learning experiences
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Involve the active participation of relevant stakeholders, including educators, employers, industry representatives, and learners.
- **Transparency and Portability:** Provide clear and easily understandable information about qualifications, levels and volumes of learning and pathways. The PNGNQF should facilitate the portability and recognition of qualifications, enabling individuals to use their qualifications in different contexts or countries.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Support lifelong learning by recognising and valuing learning at all stages of life, promoting continuous personal and professional development.

4. Qualification Levels and Descriptors

4.1 Qualification Levels and Generic Names

The Qualification Framework Level is a crucial component of a Qualification Framework, as it helps learners, employers, and educational institutions understand the relative level of difficulty, depth of knowledge, and practical skills associated with a particular qualification. The Third Edition of the PNGNQF retains ten (10) levels of qualifications shown in ***Table 1***, as in the 2012 and 2017 editions and the levels in several comparator frameworks.

Table 1 PNGNQF Qualification Levels and Generic Names

PNGNQF Level	PNGNQF Qualification Name
10	Doctorate
9	Master
8	Post Graduate Diploma
	Post Graduate Certificate
	Bachelor Honours
7	Bachelor
6	Associate Degree
	Advanced Diploma
5	Diploma
4	Certificate (Higher Education)
	Certificate IV
3	Certificate III
2	Certificate II
1	Certificate I

4.2 Level descriptors

The PNGNQF also provides level descriptors, or statement of graduate outcomes at each level.

A level descriptor is a statement that describes the characteristics expected of graduates of the level and indicates the learning demand that a student will encounter at each level. Descriptors indicate the broad outcomes of the main qualification at each level and demonstrate changes between levels. They provide clear points of reference at each level, and describe features that cover the great majority of existing qualifications and awards.

The primary purpose of qualification framework level descriptors is to create transparency and facilitate the recognition of qualifications. It helps learners, employers, and educational institutions to understand the knowledge, skills and competencies that a person holding a particular qualification should possess at each level.

Table 2 lists approved generic qualification names and describe the features of graduates at each level of the PNGNQF, under the headings of:

***Knowledge and skills*:** what a graduate know and has the skills to perform and communicate

***Applications*:** the contexts in which a graduate can be expected to demonstrate their knowledge and skills

***Autonomy*:** the extent to which a graduate is equipped to take responsibility for their own actions and decisions and those of others.

Taken together, these form a statement of the graduate outcomes for each qualification level.

4.3 Further Notes on Certificate and Diploma Qualifications

Certificates I – IV prepare learners for both employment and further education and training. They can usually be completed quite quickly. Graduates normally need to demonstrate competency against well-defined requirements.

Certificates I and II provide basic vocational skills and knowledge, while Certificates III and IV provide more advanced skills and knowledge. These programmes are usually delivered by vocational schools, technical colleges or polytechnics, community education and registered private training providers.

Higher education providers including universities may also award a Certificate as a qualification at Level 4, for example, as an approved exit qualification from a Bachelor Level 7 qualification. An example would be a student who has completed the first year of a Bachelor degree but has not continued their studies. In these cases, the title would be 'Certificate' not 'Certificate IV').

Programmes of study at Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Associate Degree level take between one to three years to complete and may be offered with a TVET or a higher education emphasis. Internationally, the title Advanced Diploma as an award is more often used for practical programmes, while the title Associate Degree award is often given to more academic programmes of study.

The title Diploma is also used for professional higher education qualifications, such as in teaching and nursing. The title Advanced Diploma is less used at present in Papua New Guinea, although it is a useful way to discriminate between two-year and three-year

diplomas in a PNG context. The qualifications provide potential pathways to study for Bachelor degree qualifications. They may be awarded as exit qualifications within a Bachelor degree.

Table 2 PNG NQF Level Descriptors (Graduate Outcomes)

PNGNQF Level	Qualification Name or Names	Purpose	Level Descriptor (Graduate Outcomes)		
			Knowledge and Skills	*Application*	*Autonomy*
1	Certificate I	A Certificate at level 1 provides basic vocational skills and knowledge. It prepares learners for employment and further education and training.	-Initial basic or preparatory knowledge and skills in a defined area of activity. -Communication skills in providing basic information.	Applied in contexts that: -Are highly structured, defined and repetitive. -Are addressed through routine and rehearsed procedures	In conditions where there is: -Limited responsibility for own output -Some analysis of situations and directions -Close consistent supervision -Minimum judgement or discretion required
2	Certificate II	A Certificate at level 2 provides introductory vocational skills and knowledge. and knowledge. It prepares learners for employment and further education and training.	-Basic factual, technical and procedural knowledge and skills in a defined area of activity. -Communication skills to select and use relevant information.	Applied in contexts that: -Are structured and stable -Require some application and integration of information -Are involved in straightforward issues that are addressed by selecting from known solutions	In conditions where there is: -Close support, and direction or guidance. -Accessing information from a range of sources -Some applications of known solutions to a range of predictable problems -Some complex or non-routine activities -Some responsibility for own output

PNGNQF Level	Qualification Name or Names	Purpose	Level Descriptor (Graduate Outcomes)		
			Knowledge and Skills	*Application*	*Autonomy*
3	Certificate III	A Certificate at level 3 provides specific vocational skills and knowledge. It prepares learners for employment and further education and training.	-Factual, technical, theoretical and some procedural knowledge, and developed skills, in a specific area of activity. -A range of communication skills relevant to the area	Applied in contexts that: -Are mostly stable -Require interpretation and integration of diverse information -Involve predictable problems with mostly known solutions	In conditions where there is: -Routine supervision and direction or guidance -Some judgment and discretion required -Some responsibility for the outputs from self and others
4	Certificate IV or Certificate	A Certificate at level 4 provides advanced vocational skills and knowledge or foundational knowledge. It prepares learners for employment and further education and training. It may provide a pathway.	-Broad factual, theoretical and technical knowledge and skills in a specific area of activity or across a broad field of work or learning. -Broad range of communication skills relevant to the area or field, including transmission of learning	Applied in contexts that: -Are stable but sometimes unpredictable -Require analysis, interpretation and integration of diverse information -Involve familiar and unfamiliar issues that are addressed by interpreting or varying processes	In conditions where there is: -Routine direction or guidance -Judgment and some planning required -Responsibility for the quality of outputs from self and others
5	Diploma	A Diploma at level 5 provides specialised technical vocational skills and knowledge. It provides a strong	-Technical and theoretical knowledge and skills in a specific area or across a broad field or work and learning	Applied in contexts that -Are both known and changing -Require critical analysis, interpretation and integration of diverse information	In conditions where there is: -General guidance or direction

PNGNQF Level	Qualification Name or Names	Purpose	Level Descriptor (Graduate Outcomes)		
			Knowledge and Skills	*Application*	*Autonomy*
		entry pathway from TVET to higher education qualifications.	-Broad range n of communication skills relevant to the area or field including sharing of learning, analysis and solutions to problems	-Involve unfamiliar issues that are addressed through selection of options and adaption of processes	-Both judgment and planning required -Responsibility for the achievement of group outputs
6	Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree	An Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree at level 6 provides advanced specialised technical vocational skills and knowledge. It provides a strong entry pathway from TVET to higher education qualifications. Some PNG 'diploma' qualifications are at level 6.	-Broad underpinning theoretical and /or technical knowledge, with in-depth understanding of specific areas, and associated analytical skills. -Broad range of communication skills including sharing of learning, and the solution to problems.	Applied in contexts that -Are subjected to change with some complexity -Require the use of analytical and diagnostic skills. -Involve the formulation or adaptation of processes to resolve issues.	In conditions where there is: -Broad guidance or direction -Well- developed judgment and planning required -Accountability for personal and group outcomes within broad parameters
7	Bachelor degree	A Bachelor degree at level 7 provides systematic and coherent introduction to individuals to	-Broad and coherent theoretical and technical knowledge with depth of knowledge in one or more areas and associated	Applied in contexts that -Are diverse and subject to complex change	In conditions where there is: -Broad guidance and demonstrated self-direction

PNGNQF Level	Qualification Name or Names	Purpose	Level Descriptor (Graduate Outcomes)		
			Knowledge and Skills	*Application*	*Autonomy*
		problem solving and associated basic techniques of self-directed study and learning. It is the basic university-level qualification. In PNG this qualification usually is expected to take 4 years of full-time study.	critical. analytical and innovative thinking skills -Wide range of communication skills including sharing of learning, values, skills and ideas with others	-Require the use of a wide range of analytical and diagnostic skills -Involve the synthesis of ideas and formulation or adaptation of processes to resolve issues	-Significant planning, coordination and organisation required -Accountability for outcomes
8	Bachelor with Honours, Post Graduate Certificate and Post Graduate Diploma	At level 8, a Bachelor with Honours provides extra advanced study. Post Graduate Certificates and Diplomas at level 8 usually require a Bachelor degree qualification for entry. They can be exit qualifications or 'nested' within a coursework Masters degree	-Advanced theoretical knowledge in a specific area and skills to generate solutions to complex problems -Wide range of communication skills including interpretation of ideas and sharing of learning, values, and skills with others	Applied in contexts that: -Are diverse, complex and changing -Require the use of advanced understanding with some specialist elements -Involve the synthesis of ideas and formulation of processes to address complex and often abstract issues	In conditions where there is: -Independent judgment required across a range of functions -Minimal guidance and demonstrated autonomy -Significant planning and coordination required -Accountability for group outcomes

PNGNQF Level	Qualification Name or Names	Purpose	Level Descriptor (Graduate Outcomes)		
			Knowledge and Skills	*Application*	*Autonomy*
9	Masters degree	A Masters degree at Level 9 provides further depth of knowledge and skills in a field already studied, or advanced knowledge in a new field for experienced learners. The pattern of study can vary, from wholly coursework units to mostly research, with a substantial thesis.	-Advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge. -Advanced skills in synthesis and independent application of knowledge or the conduct of research. -Expert communication skills including interpretation of ideas and sharing of learning, values, and skills with others	Applied in contexts that -Are highly complex, and generally involve some new or evolving aspects. -Require an advanced understanding of expertise integration and application of diverse or specialised ideas. -Involve the formulation and testing of theories and processes to address significant complex, abstract and emergent issues	In conditions where there is: -Minimal guidance and substantial autonomy, initiative, adaptability and self-direction. -Expert judgment and considerable planning and management required. -Significant accountability for group outcomes
10	Doctoral degree	A Doctoral degree at level 10 requires extensive original research or creative work, with a thesis or other research outputs assessed externally by experts in the field of study. The	-Systemic and critical understanding of a substantial and complex body of knowledge at the frontier of a discipline. -Skills in research, evaluation, reflection and innovation leading to the creation of original knowledge or practices.	Applied in contexts that: -Are highly complex and specialised, involving new or evolving aspects. -Require the use of advanced research skills. -Involve the formulation and testing of theories and processes to address and resolve significant, highly	In conditions where there is: -Minimal guidance and high-level autonomy, initiative, adaptability, and innovation required. -Authoritative judgment and high-level planning, management and innovation required.

PNGNQF Level	Qualification Name or Names	Purpose	Level Descriptor (Graduate Outcomes)		
			Knowledge and Skills	*Application*	*Autonomy*
		amount of required coursework varies by country but the emphasis is on research or advancing professional practice. Entry into a doctoral programme requires an Honours or Masters degree.	-Expert technical or creative skills. -Expert, specialist communication, interpretation and dissemination skills	complex, abstract and emergent issues. -Require the extension of practices through the use of new, leading or speculative ideas, and their expert application	-Substantial accountability for institutional outcomes

5. Volume of Learning and Credit Points

This section aims to help all parties understand the total amount of student learning required to complete a qualification at a particular PNGNQF level, using student learning activities as the basis. It also sets out the expected way in which a required amount of student learning should be translated into credit points for individual units or subjects within a programme, to help balance student workloads.

5.1 Volume of Learning

The volume of learning is a measurement of the time spent by a student or learner on the learning activities needed to achieve a qualification. It identifies the expected duration required for the achievement of the learning outcomes specified for a particular qualification type.

The complexity of a qualification is defined by the volume of learning together with the breadth and depth of the knowledge, skills, applications and autonomy that graduates are expected to acquire.

For the PNGNQF:

- The minimum number of hours for a full year of learning by a student in PNG is not less than **1200**.
- The indicative guideline maximum number of hours for a full year of learning by a student in PNG is **1600**, although higher volumes may apply in particular disciplines.
- However, for any bachelor degree of three rather than four years full-time duration, the expected minimum number of hours for a full year of learning is 1600.

These hours include all types of student learning activities, including private study by students. Student learning activities may include: pre-lecture reading; participation in lectures and tutorials; participation in laboratory sessions; online learning activities; conduct of private research; work on individual and group assignments; writing essays; problem-solving and project work; individual consultation with teachers; practicums, placements and work-integrated learning; preparation for tests and examinations; and taking tests and examinations.

The use of other means of calculating a volume of learning, such as student 'contact hours' spent in lectures or tutorials, is strongly discouraged. A measure such as contact hours does not fit well with flexible or online learning or with a learner-centric approach. It does not help students to understand that they must contribute to the achievement of their own learning.

The minimum figure of 1200 hours is comparable to the volume of learning in other qualifications frameworks, for example, the Pacific and Australian Qualifications Frameworks.

If students were expected to study for, say, 30 weeks a year, the expected average weekly workload would be about 40 hours. The figure of 1200 hours suggests that if a student were taking, say, 8 units per year of study (that is, 4 units per semester), each unit should involve about 150 hours of student learning time. (A higher minimum of 1600 hours a year is suggested for three-year bachelor degrees without any foundation year, to help ensure comparability of qualifications between four-year and three-year bachelor qualifications in PNG.)

The minimum volume of learning for a four-year Bachelor degree in Papua New Guinea therefore is 4800 hours of student learning activity.

Based on the 2012 PNGNQF and international norms, ***Table 3*** shows the 10 qualification levels and the minimum required volume of learning at each level in hours of student learning activities.

Table 3 The PNGNQF 10 Qualification Levels and the expected Volume of Learning at each level as a Stand-Alone Qualification

PNGNQF Level	Qualification Name	Minimum Volume of Learning (Hours)	Indicative Guideline Maximum Volume of Learning (Hours)
10	Doctorate	3600	4800
9	Masters	1200	3200
8	Post Graduate Diploma	1200	1600
	Post Graduate Certificate	1200	1600
	Bachelor Honours	600	800
7	Bachelor	4800*	6400
6	Associate Degree	3600	4800
	Advanced Diploma	3600	4800
5	Diploma	2400	3200
4	Certificate (higher education)	1200	1600
	Certificate IV	400	2400**
3	Certificate III	400	2400**
2	Certificate II	400	1200**
1	Certificate I	400	1200**

Notes:

*For a bachelor degree that is offered over three years full-time instead of four years full-time, the minimum annual volume of learning is 1600 hours.

**For TVET qualifications the minimum volumes of learning are non-negotiable but the maximum hours are an estimate only.

In higher education programmes, the balance between private study and taught/tutored/facilitated/supervised learning activities will vary by discipline and unit and mode of study (face to face, intensive, online, blended). However, there must always be some activities in an undergraduate or postgraduate coursework unit where feedback and guidance are provided by qualified teaching staff or – if a practicum or placement – supervised by trained people.

In ***Table 3***, the volumes shown assume the qualification is taken as a **stand-alone** qualification. Bachelor and Masters Qualifications may include prior or 'nested' qualifications as exit points, to give students flexibility. For example, a student may complete a Post Graduate Diploma as part of a Masters degree. They may then take a break but return a year later to complete their Masters degree at the same institution, with full credit for the units they have already completed for their Graduate Diploma. As another example, a four-year bachelor qualification could be completed after one year if it only required the completion of one additional year of study following a three-year advanced diploma (see ***section 7.5*** on the maximum amount of credit that can be granted).

Some institutions may offer 'double degrees', such as a dual bachelor degree in Arts and Law. The volume of learning for a double degree should of course be greater than for a standard bachelor degree but it should also be less than the sum of the two degrees taken singly.

If the minimum volume of learning is allocated to a qualification, the unit of study or components of the programme of learning must be predominately or entirely at the level of the qualification type.

If the duration of delivery is substantially more than the volume of learning specified by the qualification type specification, providers should be able to provide a pedagogical rationale to support the variation.

It is the responsibility of institutions or agencies that accredit qualifications to ensure that the design of programmes of study enables students to achieve the learning outcomes for both the qualification type and the discipline. Decisions about design of qualifications must ensure that integrity of qualification outcomes is maintained. Those who accredit qualifications should be able to provide a pedagogical rationale to justify a decision about the volume of learning.

The volume of learning allocated in the design of a qualification may vary depending upon:

- The level of the previous qualification required for entry
- Whether the purpose of the qualification is for deepening or broadening of knowledge and skills, or
- Whether the qualification leads to professional outcomes or is generalist in purpose.

5.2 Credit Points

Providers of PNGNQF qualifications are strongly encouraged to use a system of credit points, setting out how many points are required to achieve each specific qualification.

A credit point system is a way of aligning volume of learning and units within a programme of study. The central concepts are volume of learning and student workload, e.g., the expected number of hours of learning activities that can be undertaken.

In PNG, the total annual student learning activity hours, as described in section 5.1 above, should be used as the basis for establishing a credit points system for each programme of study.

A credit points system helps:

- Institutions to allocate student workloads appropriately, by understanding the amount of time to be spent by students on different units.
- Students to understand the workloads expected of them, regardless of whether they are studying full-time or part-time
- Transferability of qualifications and units, within and across institutions
- To instil a more systematic approach to planning programmes and units in relation to student workloads and the relative importance of different units in a programme
- To avoid curriculum overload, where more and more units are added into a programme
- To ensure that curricula are not 'light on' in terms of student learning, by being too brief or at lower levels of learning than expected.

In the PNGNQF, **one credit point equals 10 hours of student learning activity**. That is, the expected minimum credit points in a year of full-time study would be 120 and a four-year bachelor degree would require a minimum total of 480 credit points.

Within these parameters, self-accrediting institutions are free to determine the length of their teaching periods, the number of units in a programme, and the credit points per unit. Institutions delivering approved National Training Package qualifications will follow the credit points allocated to each unit of competency in the qualification.

For higher level qualifications the volume of learning should be consistent with the durations in the PNGNQF, but the base unit stated in programme and unit descriptions should be allocated credit points required to complete the award, using around 1200 hours as the expected minimum full-time study load for one student for one year. A typical model might use 10 or 15 credit points per unit.

Table 4 Credit Points might be allocated across a four-year Bachelor Level Programme

Programme	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**
Unit 1	15 CP	15 CP	15 CP	15 CP
Unit 2	15 CP	15 CP	15 CP	15 CP
Unit 3	15 CP	15 CP	15 CP	15 CP
Unit 4	15 CP	15 CP	15 CP	15 CP
Unit 5	15 CP	15 CP	15 CP	30 CP (double unit)
Unit 6	15 CP	15 CP	15 CP	
Unit 7	15 CP	15 CP	30 CP (double unit)	30 CP (double unit)
Unit 8	15 CP	15 CP		
Total	**120 CP**	**120 CP**	**120 CP**	**120 CP**

A credit points system does not simplify the actual work involved in setting up credit transfer arrangements, as the content of programmes and units need to be examined on a case-by-case basis, as least in the first instance. However, a credit points system may make it easier to understand and translate programmes and units across institutions, especially if there is a common credit points system.

6. Registering, Accrediting and Certifying Authorities

This section explains roles of different institutions in the process of awarding verified, genuine PNGNQF qualifications. Institutions are required to be registered with and accredited by a government agency in order to offer valid PNGNQF qualifications.

6.1 Registering and Accrediting Authorities

Government agencies regulate institutions that award qualifications within the PNGNQF. This is to ensure institutions meet national standards and requirements to be formally registered. In Papua New Guinea, the main Government registering and accrediting agency is DHERST, through the National Higher and Technical Education Board (NHTEB).

There are also various professional accreditation bodies responsible for the regulation of an occupation through licensing or registration of graduates from, or accreditation of, a programme leading to a PNGNQF award, such as the National Apprenticeship Trade and Testing Board (NATTB), Teaching Services Commission (TSC), PNG Medical Board (PNGMB), Certified Practising Accountants PNG (CPA PNG), PNG Nursing Council (PNGNC), PNG Law Society (PNGLS), and Institute of Engineers PNG (IEPNG). These agencies are responsible for the professional licensing of graduates in specific fields, therefore are expected to ensure their requirements are aligned to the requirements of the PNGNQF.

Registration and accreditation help to ensure:

1. quality assurance for institutions, qualifications and programmes
2. protection of students from fraudulent providers
3. credit transferability within and across institutions,
4. government recognition and funding, and
5. international recognition of qualifications.

6.2 Certifying Institutions

While the PNGNQF specifies the requirements for qualifications, registered institutions certify and issue awards legally under the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2014 (as amended)*.

All public and private education and training institutions need to meet the National Standards for Higher Education Institutional Registration, the National Standards for Higher Education Programme Accreditation, other National Standards and be registered by DHERST (after a decision by NHTEB) before issuing PNGNQF qualifications.

Registered post-secondary education and training organisations are authorised by DHERST to certify and issue PNGNQF qualifications if the programmes leading to the qualifications have been accredited by the NHTEB.

Universities are authorised by their enabling legislation to issue qualifications, under self-accrediting authority granted through the Act. However, DHERST may specify additional requirements for new university programmes to be accredited by NHTEB in order to confirm their eligibility for PNG Government funding support.

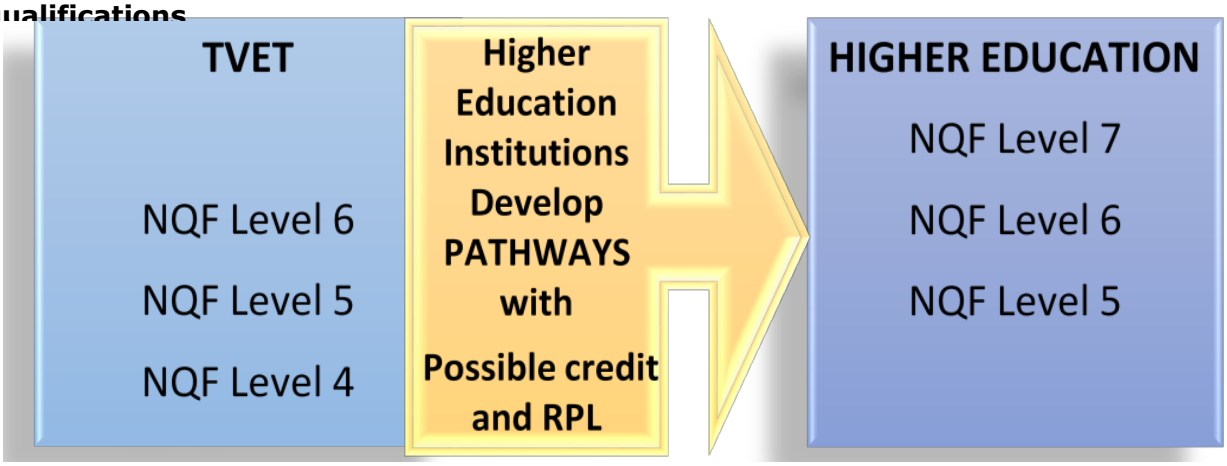
Unless an institution has been registered by DHERST, and if required its programmes have been accredited, the institution is not legally able to provide post-secondary education and training and its qualifications are unlikely to be recognised in Papua New Guinea or other countries.

7. Pathways, Credit Transfer and RPL

This section provides guidance on: learning pathways, especially between TVET and higher education qualifications; the recognition of prior learning (RPL); and credit transfer. A key aim is to help avoid duplication of learning, so that students do not need to study topics they can show they already have learnt, saving them both time and money.

7.1 Pathways from TVET to Higher Level Qualifications

Figure 1 Pathways to qualifications at level 5 and above from TVET qualifications



The PNGNQF takes a holistic approach to post-secondary education. By recognising learning at all levels and different forms of learning, it aims to remove artificial barriers between TVET and higher education qualifications.

Pathways help learners to move from TVET to higher education qualifications through specifically considering admission requirements to higher education for students with TVET qualifications or prior TVET studies. To the maximum extent possible, pathways to and from a PNGNQF qualification should be provided.

Institutions must include details of pathways on programme approval documentation. In particular, documented pathways from TVET to higher education qualifications should be developed by higher education institutions. A typical example would be to allow entry to a Level 7 Bachelor qualification (starting at Level 5) on the basis of a Level 4 TVET Certificate.

A 'challenge' test may be used to assess a student's readiness to perform in higher level studies, although the aim of assisting students to take further studies – rather than seeking to prevent them from doing so – should be clear.

Institutions may require additional or 'bridging' studies to be taken to support students after a credit transfer has been agreed. These additional studies aim to ensure that entering students meet the entry requirements and have adequate background knowledge and skills. These additional studies are designed to ensure

that students admitted to higher education qualifications based on TVET qualifications can reasonably be expected to succeed in their studies.

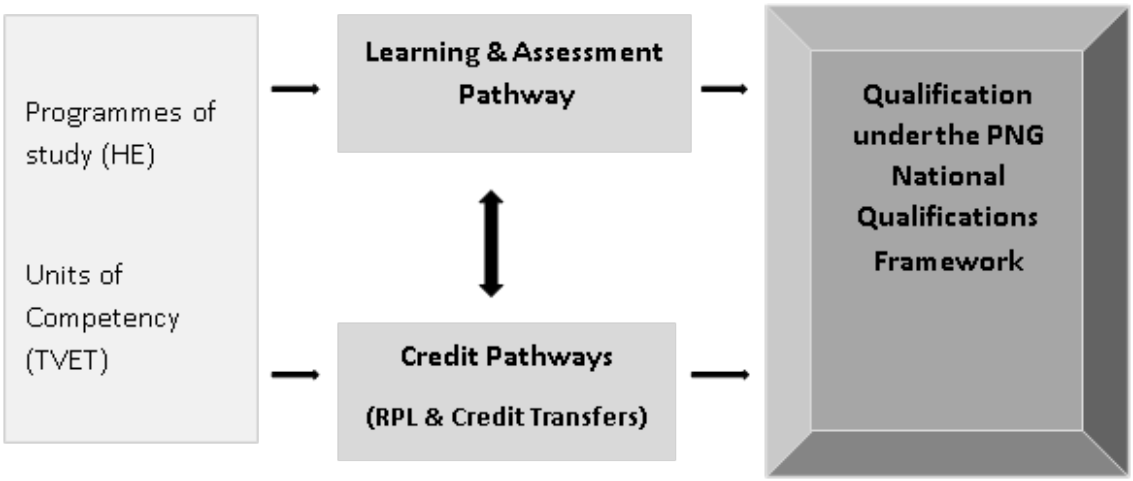
For example, applicants may be required to take additional studies in academic language and skills, or in numeracy, or in a subject relevant to the qualification. Such additional studies could comprise a full unit of study or they could be a shorter programme offered during lahara periods or semester breaks. There may also be a 'hurdle' requirement, such as a 70% pass mark, for these studies to confirm that students are able to succeed in higher level study.

Higher education institutions are urged to create pathways by agreeing with another institution, such as a technical college or registered training organisation, the block credit (see 7.4 below) that can be given automatically for specific studies completed at the other institution.

7.2 Use of RPL and credit to achieve a PNGNQF Qualification

A PNGNQF qualification can be achieved through studies at an institution (learning and assessment pathway) but also through RPL and credit transfer from other institutions (credit pathway), or a mix of both. ***Figure 2*** shows these options.

Figure 2 Combination of Studies and RPL/Credit Leading to a PNGNQF Qualification



The term 'credit' means a student has already 'banked' their prior learning and this can be used to reduce the time taken to achieve a related qualification. The critical issue is that the person has learnt and is competent, not how the learning happened or how the competency was acquired.

There is no limit to the number of additional qualifications for which credit or RPL can be sought based on a person's prior learning, as long as the learning is current.

Assessment of learning or competence, by any pathway, must comply with the assessment requirements of the qualification and DHERST National Standards for Programme Accreditation.

DHERST encourages all higher education institutions to offer RPL or credit transfer as an assessment option for prospective students who believe they have already acquired some of the skills and knowledge of a qualification aligned to the PNGNQF. This will ensure that the knowledge and skills of all workers are duly recognised and

rewarded and the building of a skilled and productive PNG workforce across all sectors will be increased.

Credit transfer or advanced standing is a specific form of RPL, where students' prior formal learning or qualifications are recognised, so students are exempted from having to undertake certain subjects or units of competency for their new qualification.

The granting or otherwise of RPL or credit for previous studies is a matter for each institution to determine, consistent with the guidance set out below. However, DHERST requires institutions to have and use specific policies on RPL, credit transfer and pathways.

DHERST also requires that institutions fully inform learners of the availability of RPL or credit transfer, in advance of their applying for entry.

Individual institutions should codify and publish information on the extent of credit which they will grant in recognition of work done in other institutions. A database of precedents will be useful to prospective students.

7.3 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

RPL starts with the recognition that learning occurs in many ways, including:

- formal or informal education and training
- experiences in the workplace
- general life experience, or
- any combination of the above.

RPL is an assessment process that involves comparison of an individual's relevant prior learning – including formal, informal and non-formal learning – to determine whether a student can be given credit for already meeting the learning outcomes of a subject or unit of competency.

For example, RPL is appropriate to use to recognise extensive workplace experience. RPL can be applied in respect of admission requirements to a qualification or when considering requests for exemption from subjects or units.

RPL is also appropriate to use to assess learning through micro credentials if there is no approved credit already for the micro credential.

The assessment of RPL requires submission of a portfolio of evidence by the applicant. **Appendix C** provides a flowchart and overview of RPL processes, drawn from the DHERST Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

A formal RPL assessment process must be documented by each institution registered by DHERST, using a trained assessor. DHERST is able to offer support.

While it is correct to maximise RPL, institutions should be wary of excessive generosity in their recognition of prior learning, as this may be perceived as undermining the credibility of the qualification into which students are admitted.

7.4 Credit Transfer and Advanced Standing

Credit transfer is a process that involves the assessment of previous or concurrent formal studies successfully completed by a student or an intending student wholly or partly towards gaining a qualification, at a post-secondary education level, to decide:

- whether those studies are equivalent to, or correspond with, the learning outcomes or standards required for award of a qualification from the new institution; and
- whether those studies may be counted (credited) towards completion of the programme that leads to the award of that qualification.

The term 'advanced standing' has the same meaning.

Some qualifications or completed units of competency allow for 100% credit to be given for prior learning that is current. For example, all TVET institutions in PNG must give 100% credit for current achieved units of competency in PNG National Qualifications when students enrol for another TVET qualification that contains the same units of competency.

If there is not already an agreement for credit between the respective institutions, the credit transfer process involves:

- mapping, comparing and evaluating the extent to which the learning outcomes, discipline content and assessment requirements of the individual components of one qualification – or the units of competency – are equivalent to the learning outcomes, discipline content and assessment requirements of the individual components or units of another qualification
- making an educational judgment about the credit to be assigned between the matched components of the two qualifications
- setting out the agreed credit outcomes in a documented arrangement or agreement, and
- publicising the arrangement/agreement and credit available.

The currency of a student's learning must be considered in assessing applications for credit transfer. It is suggested that the maximum amounts of credit listed above only be applied to qualifications received within 5 years of an application for credit transfer. If qualifications have been gained more than 5 years before an application and the applicant cannot substantiate significant relevant work experience, lesser credit or an RPL process should be applied instead.

A student applying for credit may be given block credit or specified credit.

Block credit is given to successfully completed periods of equivalent study. Such credit is applicable to programmes which are highly structured and have few or no electives, as in professional and vocational programmes across PNG. Where there is need to ensure that prerequisite knowledge has been covered, students would be admitted to a particular entry point with block credit but might be required to complete integral parts of the programme included in earlier years in the receiving institution.

Specific credit for a particular programme component is appropriate when the student has completed a part of the programme in which the curriculum is substantially the same, which constitutes at least the same portion of full-time study, and the standard attained is substantially the standard required for a pass in the specific programme component offered in the receiving institution.

The transfer of credit between institutions should be automatic when awarding work successfully completed at one institution is assessed as comparable with the components of the programme in the institution in which credit is sought (provided other admission requirements are met).

Where elements of the basic core curriculum have not been covered, the receiving institution must consider the possibility of providing bridging courses or prescribe additional specific studies to be undertaken.

7.5 Maximum Amounts of Credit that may be Granted

To ensure that credit given for previous studies is not excessive, there need to be some limits on the maximum amounts of credit that may be recognised for the award of a PNGNQF qualification by an institution.

The following maximum amounts apply:

A. For TVET qualifications, the maximum amount of credit that may be given for prior competencies towards a new TVET qualification is 100%. As different qualifications will normally have different units of competency, a lesser maximum would apply for qualifications at the same level.

B. For a Level 7 Bachelor qualification, the maximum amount of credit that may be given for a prior PNGNQF qualification (or similar overseas qualification) is:

- 75% of the total credit point value of a 4800 hours Bachelor degree programme for credit transfer from a higher education or TVET Level 6 Advanced Diploma (which may be called a Diploma) in the same or a related field of study, for example, upgrading of a three-year Diploma of Nursing to a four-year Bachelor of Nursing
- 50% of the total credit point value of a 4800 hours Bachelor degree programme for credit transfer from a or TVET Level 5 Diploma (two-year) in the same or a related field of study
- 25% of the total credit point value of a 4800 hours Bachelor degree programme for credit transfer from a Level 4 Certificate in the same or a related field of study.

Lower maximum amounts should be applied to a prior qualification in an unrelated field of study.

C. The maximum amount of credit that may be transferred, outside of nested articulation arrangements, to a postgraduate coursework programme for prior postgraduate qualifications or partially completed qualifications is:

- 50% of the total credit point value of the programme for credit transfer in a related field of study.

D. The maximum amount of credit that may be transferred in nested articulation arrangements for postgraduate programmes approved by the certifying institution is 100% of the total credit point value. For example, 100% of a nested Postgraduate Diploma at Level 8 would be recognised for credit if the student continues to the study towards the next level up, namely, the Master's qualification at Level 9.

8. Issuing of Certificates and Records of Results

Issuing of certificates and records of results refers to the process of providing official documentation to individuals graduates to confirm their achievements, qualifications, or performance in a field of study. These certificates and records serve as tangible evidence of an individual's educational attainment or examination results, completion of a training program, or academic program.

8.1 Certificates of Qualifications Earned

All graduates who have completed a programme of learning that leads to the award of a PNGNQF qualification must receive the following documentation on award of the qualification:

- **A Testamur:** A testamur is a formal certificate confirming that a person has successfully completed a programme of study leading to the award of the qualification, signed by the certifying institution. The testamur must contain sufficient information to identify the graduate correctly. Typically, a testamur includes the following information:
  - **Name of the educational institution**: The name of the institution issuing the certificate is mentioned prominently (certifying organisation)
  - **Recipient's name:** The full name of the individual who has successfully completed the course or program is included. (The graduate who is entitled to receive the PNGNQF qualification)
  - **Title of the course or program of study**: The name of the course or program completed by the recipient is mentioned, along with any relevant specialisation or major. (The name of the PNGNQF qualification with its full title and any abbreviation approved by the accrediting authority, e.g. BA (Sociology), B Nurs., Dip Ed.)
  - **Date of completion:** The date when the course or program was successfully finished is indicated. (The date of issue/award/conferral)
  - **Signatures:** The testamur is usually signed by authorised representatives of the certifying educational institution, such as the principal, chancellor, president, or registrar. The signatures provide authentication and credibility to the certificate. (The persons in the institution authorised to sign and issue the documentation)
  - **Official seal:** An official seal or emblem of the certifying educational institution must be included if required to further validate the document. Additional unique identifiers should be used. (Verification of the authenticity of the document, in a form to reduce fraud, such as the issuing organisation’s seal, corporate identifier or unique hologram or watermark.)

A testamur serves as a formal acknowledgment of an individual's achievement and can be used as evidence of qualification when applying for employment, further education, or professional licensing. It is an important document that holds value and recognition within the academic and professional community.

- **Record of Results or Academic Transcript**: A record of results or 'academic transcript' refers to a document that provides a comprehensive summary of an individual's performance, grades, or scores in a particular set of assessments while an enrolled student at a particular institution. It typically includes detailed information about each subject, course, units or module undertaken, along with the corresponding outcomes achieved by the individual. A record of results may contain the following information:

  - **Individual's identification:** The record will include the individual's full name, student or identification number, and any other relevant identifying details.

  - **Course or program of study details:** The record will outline the specific courses, subjects, or modules taken by the individual, including the corresponding codes or names. The transcript may indicate if the qualification and the award has been achieved through research or coursework.

  - **Grades or scores:** The record will indicate the grades, marks, or scores obtained by the individual for each course or module. This could be in the form of letter grades, numerical scores, or other grading systems specific to the educational institution.

  - **Credit hours or units:** If applicable, the record may include information about the credit hours or units associated with each course or module.

  - **Cumulative information:** The record may provide a cumulative summary of the individual's overall performance, especially where graded assessment is used, Examples are the grade point average (GPA) or weighted average, which reflects their performance across multiple courses or modules. If grade point averages (GPAs) are provided, the transcript must also include a statement explaining the GPA scale used by the institutions.

  - **Dates and academic periods:** The record may include information about the dates of enrolment, examination periods, or academic terms associated with each course or module.

  - **Institutional information:** The record may include the name of the educational institution, the department or faculty responsible for the courses, and any other relevant institutional details.

  - **Signatures or Official stamp**: This includes signatures of persons in the institution authorised to issue the documentation, and other evidence of the authenticity of the document, in a form to reduce fraud, such as the issuing organisation's seal, corporate identifier or unique hologram or watermark.

A 'diploma supplement' or graduation statement containing further information on the units completed or co-curricular activities, may also be issued but is not required under the PNGNQF. A sample of a graduation statement is shown at **Appendix B**.

A record of results serves as an official document that reflects an individual's academic achievements and performance. It is often used for various purposes, such as applying for further education, seeking employment, or demonstrating eligibility for scholarships, awards, or honours. Educational institutions, employers, and other

relevant parties may request a record of results to assess an individual's qualifications, skills, and competencies.

Students who complete any part of the requirements of a PNGNQF qualification in which they are enrolled are entitled to receive a full record of results.

Graduates are entitled to retain testamurs and records of results once they have been issued, unless:

- the PNGNQF qualification builds on a lower-level qualification in the same discipline at the same certifying institution and the institution has a policy regarding the surrender of certification documentation; or
- the qualification is revoked under the terms of the certifying institution's policy.

If any part of the qualification has been delivered and/or assessed in a language other than English, a statement that this has occurred will be included on the testamur and the record of results.

Accrediting authorities may require certifying organisations to include additional information on the certification documentation.

PNGNQF qualifications will only be issued by certifying institutions registered to do so. The protection of PNGNQF qualifications requires that any certifying institution delivering, assessing and issuing PNGNQF qualifications adheres to any government regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for each qualification type and compliance is monitored by the relevant registering or accrediting authority.

Sufficient information must be provided on a testamur and record of results to ensure that the documentation is able to be authenticated and to reduce fraudulent use. Credential fraud is a significant issue internationally. The certifying institution is responsible for ensuring that it has in place mechanisms to reduce fraudulent reproduction and use of the PNGNQF awards it issues. The certifying institution is responsible for authentication and verification of a graduate's certification documentation.

The certifying institution must have a policy that permits the replacement of certification documentation and be responsible for authentication and verification of any replacement certification documentation. Certifying institutions must maintain a register of all PNGNQF awards they are authorised to issue, and maintain a register of all PNGNQF awards they issue to graduates.

8.2 Qualification Specific Names and Abbreviations

Graduates of various qualifications can pursue a wide range of career paths based on their areas of specialisation. Many institutions offer similar qualifications and thus there are common conventions about the specific names of the qualifications. The generic part of the name is the PNGNQF name, e.g. Certificate III, Bachelor. The specific part provides the area of learning.

Examples are:

- Certificate III in Business Administration
- Certificate II in Information Technology

- Diploma in Commerce
- Advanced Diploma in Electrical Engineering
- Bachelor of Science
- Bachelor of Information Technology
- Master of Business Administration

It is common for some qualifications to use abbreviations as well as the full qualification name. Abbreviations for qualifications should follow international conventions for degrees taught in English, noting that there are differences in the titles and descriptions of some qualifications across countries.

Graduates who have obtained a PNGNQF awards are entitled to use the approved abbreviation for the qualification as a post nominal (after their name) if this is an accepted convention. Post nominal abbreviations are not common for Certificates I to IV.

An example of a post nominal is 'Jane Bloggs, BA', to signify Bachelor of Arts. The following are abbreviations for qualifications with examples of typical graduate employment outcomes.

Diploma and Advanced Diploma:

Diploma in Commerce (DipCom): Graduates typically explore careers in finance or business management

Advanced Diploma in Computer Science (DipCS): Graduates explore careers in information technology or systems

Bachelor Degree:

Bachelor of Arts (BA): Graduates explore careers in fields such as journalism, advertising, public relations, social work, teaching, or administration.

Bachelor of Science (BSc): Graduates pursue careers in scientific fields like biology, chemistry, physics, computer science, or mathematics.

Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS): Graduates pursue careers in medical fields.

Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA): Graduates enter business-related fields like finance, marketing, human resources, or entrepreneurship.

Bachelor of Engineering (BEng): Graduates enter the field of engineering, which has several branches, e.g. mechanical, electrical, civil.

Postgraduate Degrees:

Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Development (PGCert SD): Graduates explore careers in a wide range of fields including environmental agencies, public service, community development

Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Development (PGDip SD): as above

Master of Arts (MA): Graduates explore employment in areas such as psychology, sociology, history, literature, or education.

Master of Science (MSc): Graduates explore careers in scientific research, engineering, technology, data analysis, or healthcare.

Master of Business Administration (MBA): Graduates explore careers in business, finance, marketing, consulting, or entrepreneurship.

A Bachelor Honours degree is denoted by 'Hons' in brackets following the degree abbreviation, for example BA (Hons) meaning a Bachelor of Arts with Honours.

Doctoral Degree:

For Doctoral degrees, graduates often pursue careers in higher education or in research.

The most common abbreviation is 'PhD' which stands for Doctor of Philosophy'. However, there are also doctoral qualifications that have more specific names. Examples are Doctor of Education (EdD) and Doctor of Business Administration (DBA).

Persons with such 'earned' (not Honorary) doctorates may use the title 'Dr' instead of a post-nominal, e.g. 'Dr Ellie Bloggs' or 'Ellie Bloggs, PhD'.

This use of 'Doctor' is different to the title 'Doctor' that medical graduates use.

It should be noted that the title 'Doctor' is used also in several health-related fields, such as medicine and dentistry as a professional title, although the holder may have completed only a bachelor level qualification.

In some institutions and countries, Doctor of Medicine (MD) and Doctor of Jurisprudence (JD) qualifications are awarded as graduate qualifications at Master or doctorate level.

The PNGNQF does not apply to Honorary Doctorates, which are not PNGNQF qualifications. Honorary doctorates are awarded by an issuing organisation, typically a university, to recognise a person's extensive achievements in academic endeavour, public service, business enterprise or government. The title 'Doctor' may not be used by those who hold an honorary award.

9. Non-formal, Informal and Traditional Learning

Learning occurs throughout our lives, in a variety of settings ranging from our normal living arrangements to formal educational activity.

Formal educational activity is needed to complete a PNGNQF qualification. Less formal types of learning are not recognised under the PNGNQF, although they can lead to RPL or credit for PNGNQF qualifications.

However, one of the Principles of the Third Edition of the PNGNQF is to 'Support lifelong learning by recognising and valuing learning at all stages of life, promoting continuous personal and professional development'.

In keeping with this spirit, the PNGNQF Third Edition encourages all people to keep a record of their learning capabilities, in formal, non-formal and information environments. All learning may be able to be used for RPL. Increasingly too, shorter forms of learning, such as short courses, workshops or micro-credentials are recognised by employers as evidence of specialised learning.

The sections below provide further information.

9.1 Non-formal Learning and Micro-credentials

Non-formal learning refers to an individual's conscious decision to learn something, that is, it is 'intentional'. It usually takes place outside formal learning environments but within some kind of organisational framework.

For example, if an employee receives a 'certificate of completion' because they have attended a series of workshops, they have undertaken non-formal learning**.** Another example would be a person who attended a short course to acquire a specific skill or to learn about developments such as the use of Artificial Intelligence in their field of specialisation.

There are many opportunities for non-formal learning. Attending workshops and seminars conducted by industry experts or professional organisations can enhance skills and knowledge in highly specific domains. Participating in online courses and webinars offered by various platforms, such as Coursera, Udemy, or LinkedIn Learning, can also provide specialised knowledge and skills. Participating in professional development programs can enhance skills relevant to one's industry or job role, such as negotiation, time management, customer service, or data analysis.

Short courses and workshops not leading to a formal post-secondary educational qualification do not come under the PNGNQF. That is, the PNGNQF does not apply to the awarding of non-formal recognition through a certificate of participation, attendance or completion.

As noted in section 8.1, students who start but do not finish a complete PNGNQF qualification, for whatever reason, must be given a record of results for units or modules they have completed. Some people choose only to study one or two units of a qualification, because these are all they need.

In non-formal learning, people who have completed a short course are entitled to receive a certificate of participation, attendance or completion. If the participant's work for the course or unit is assessed, a record of results may also be issued. It is desirable for institutions that have self-accrediting authority to internally accredit the short courses they offer, to ensure that the quality of their offerings is maintained.

Institutions are able to offer short courses that will be granted credit towards a unit in a formal award programme, provided the entry requirements of the programme are satisfied and the learning outcomes of the short course are formally assessed. For example, four short courses each involving around 40 hours of student learning activities, including assessment of the learning outcomes, could equate to one unit in a formal programme of study.

An increasingly popular type of non-formal learning is the 'micro-credential'. As the name suggests, this is a 'credential', not a PNGNQF qualification.

A micro-credential is essentially a short course that contains a formal assessment, such as a test, to check whether the learning outcomes of the short course have been achieved. Micro-credentials usually require fewer hours of student learning activity to be achieved than for a PNGNQF qualification – they can be awarded for quite small hours of learning.

As micro-credentials are not formal PNGNQF qualifications, they can be offered by many types of organisations, not only educational institutions. Private sector companies may award micro-credentials to their employees or as industry certifications, such as CCNA by Cisco Systems. The organisation that awards the micro-credential may issue a 'digital badge' to show achievement.

Many educational institutions are now offering micro-credentials alongside their formal PNGNQF qualifications. These micro-credentials are usually pegged to an NQF level and, as an assessed short course, may be 'stacked' to give credit towards a formal qualification.

In some other countries, micro-credentials may be listed alongside NQF qualifications, such as on the New Zealand Register of Qualifications and Credentials. For this Third Edition of the PNGNQF, a decision has been made not to register micro-credentials, due to the risk of confusion among learners and employers and the challenge of quality assuring such credentials.

9.2 Informal Learning

Informal learning refers to learning and skills that are not undertaken with a specific learning purpose in mind and structured study but rather occur naturally in the course of daily activities, work or living. This learning is valuable and can contribute to an individual's growing knowledge and expertise. Some examples of informal learning are:

- Engaging in volunteer work or community projects, which can provide practical experience and develop skills in areas such as project management, teamwork, problem-solving, and social responsibility
- Pursuing independent study and research in a particular subject area, utilising books, online resources, and academic journals, which can lead to in-depth knowledge or expertise.

Informal learning can be documented and can be used for RPL, through providing evidence of the learning acquired.

9.3 Traditional Knowledge and Skills

Some qualifications frameworks provide, or plan to provide, opportunities for the formal recognition of traditional knowledge and skills, to respect and maintain a nation's cultural heritage and a diversity of practices that constitute 'knowledge'. Traditional knowledge and skills are often well-developed in areas such as history and spirituality, food acquisition and agriculture, fishing, medicine, and crafts. Expertise in traditional knowledge and skills may be taken into account in RPL assessments in PNG.

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10. Commencement

As we move forward with the implementation of this critical framework, I am pleased to announce that the Third Edition of the Papua New Guinea National Qualifications Framework (PNGNQF) will officially come into effect on January 2, 2025. This decision, determined and approved by the National Higher and Technical Education Board (NHTEB) on August 9, 2024, represents a significant step in our ongoing efforts to elevate the standards of higher education in Papua New Guinea.

The adoption of this Third Edition is not just a procedural update; it is a reaffirmation of our commitment to creating an education system that is both rigorous and inclusive. This revised framework reflects the latest advancements in educational practices and aligns our qualifications with international benchmarks, ensuring that our graduates are competitive on the global stage.

The implementation of the PNGNQF will require the active participation and collaboration of all stakeholders, including educational institutions, industry partners, and government agencies. Together, we must work to ensure that the transition to this new framework is smooth and that the benefits it promises—enhanced quality, greater transparency, and increased opportunities—are fully realized.

As we prepare for the January 2025 implementation, I urge all involved to familiarize themselves with the new standards and to approach this transition with the diligence and commitment it deserves. The PNGNQF is more than just a policy document; it is a blueprint for the future of higher education in Papua New Guinea, and its successful implementation is essential to the success of our students and the prosperity of our nation.

This Third Edition of the PNGNQF embodies our shared vision for a unified, high-quality education system that provides every individual with the opportunity to achieve their full potential. I am confident that with our collective efforts, we will build a stronger, more cohesive higher education sector that meets the needs of our people and contributes to the development of our great nation.

Appendices

Appendix A: Terms of Reference for Revision of the PNGNQF (Third Edition)

Terms of Reference for the Review Panel of the PNGNQF

Purpose

The objective of this ToR is to guide the discussions of the Review Panel in revising the PNG National Qualifications Framework (PNGNQF) Second Edition.

Background

The PNGNQF was approved by the National Higher and Technical Education Board (NHTEB) in 2017 and has since then been used by higher education institutions in the country.

The PNGNQF is a key document used by the Department in implementing its quality assurance and regulatory functions of registration and accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes.

The framework is required to be reviewed due to changes in policy as well as the reform of the higher and technical education sector in PNG since the amendment of the Act in 2020.

Terms of Reference

1. Review and update the PNG National Qualifications Framework

    - Review the credit point system in the PNGNQF
    - Review the descriptors set for each level of qualification
    - Review the Credit Profile attached to Cert I-IV Recognition of Prior Learning
    - Consider the place of micro-credentials and non-formal learning

2. Review the PNGNQF for consistency with revised Qualifications Frameworks in the region and internationally.

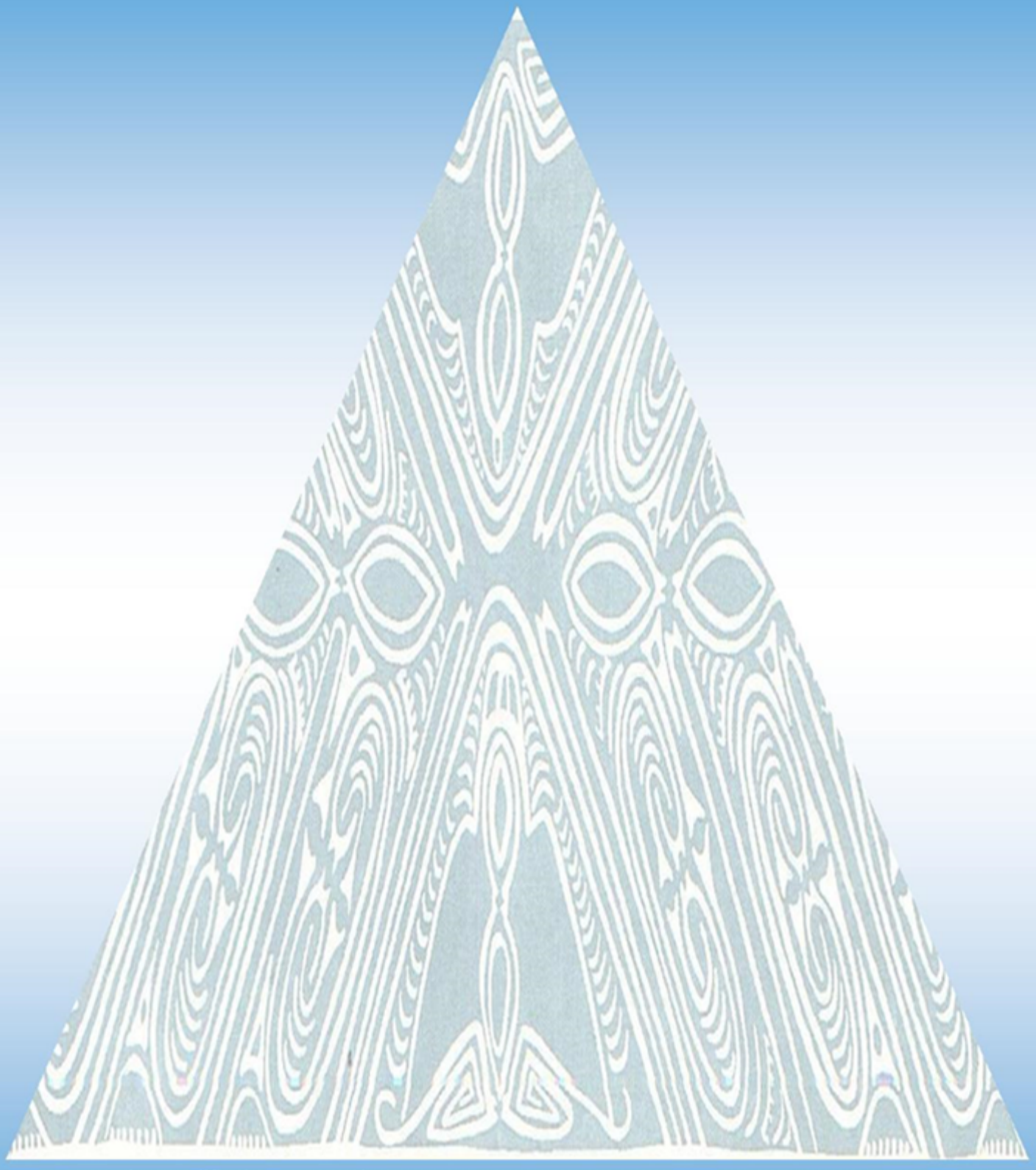
3. Review Panel to consider feedback from stakeholders.

Appendix B: Graduation Statement (Sample)

Institutional Logo		**Name and Contact Details of the Institution**
Section 1: Information on the Graduate/Qualification Holder		
1.1	Surname Name:	
1.2	Given Name:	
1.3	Student ID #:	
Section 2: Information on Qualification		
2.1	Qualification Name:	
2.2	Main Fields of Study:	
2.3	Government Registration Status of Awarding Institution:	
2.4	Language of Instruction and Examination:	
Section 3: Information on the Qualification Level		
3.1	PNGNQF Level of Qualification:	
3.2	Duration of Programme and Volume of Learning:	
3.3	Programme Entry Requirements:	
Section 4: Information on Programme Contents/Requirements and Results		
4.1	Mode of Study:	
4.2	Programme Aims:	
4.3	Programme Learning Outcomes:	
4.4	Institutional Graduate Attributes Grading Scheme	
4.5	Credit Points	
Section 5: Pathways from Qualification		
5.1	Entry to further Study:	
Section 6: Additional Information		
6.1	Extra-Curricular Activities:	
Section 7: Certification		
7.1	Date:	
7.2	Signature:	
7.3	Position:	
7.4	Common Seal:	

Appendix C: Overview of Recognition of Prior Learning

A typical flow of activities related to an RPL process would follow this path



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