

# The Flemish Qualifications Structure

A guide to qualifications

Government of Flanders

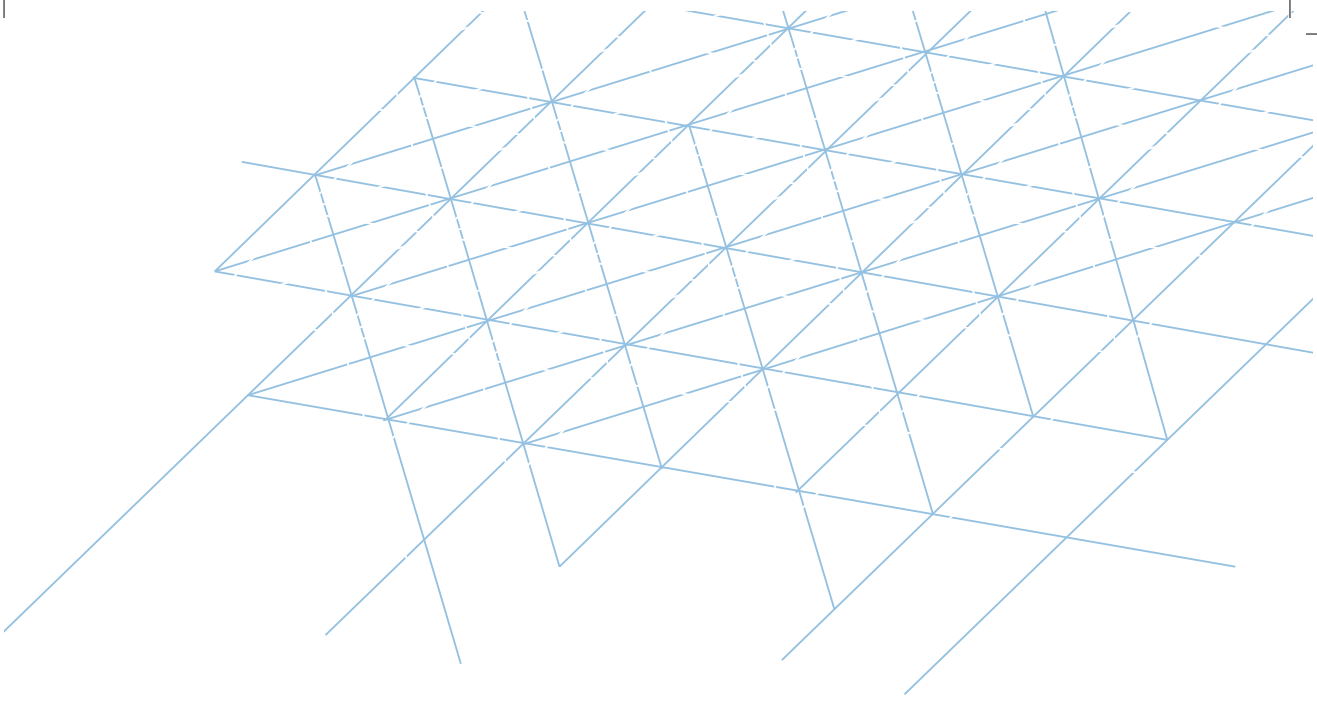


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Agency for  
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## **Introduction**

The fast technological, economic and social changes necessitate lifelong learning. There are various ways for people to acquire, develop and maintain competences in the context of lifelong learning.

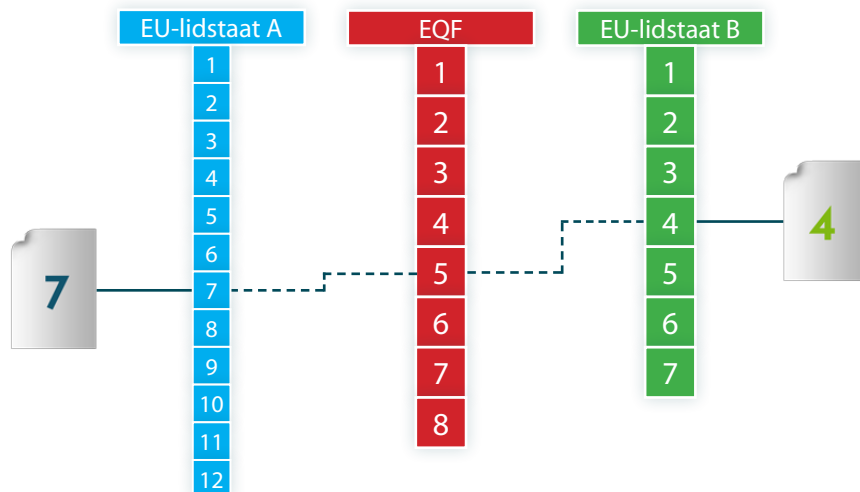
The Flemish Qualifications Structure makes visible which qualifications or sets of competences are sought by the labour market, education and society to secure a job, start further studies or participate in society.

Thus, the qualifications structure supports individuals in the development of their competences and careers.

## The European Qualifications Framework

Due to the growing mobility of the learning and working population there is a need to give greater visibility to acquired competences and to increase their usability. Moreover, the internationalisation of the labour market calls for describing competences in internationally valid qualifications. That is why the European Commission launched the European Qualifications Framework or EQF.

In 2008, the European Parliament and the European Council adopted the Recommendation on the EQF. The EQF is a common European reference framework consisting of eight levels. Its aim is to relate the qualifications frameworks of the European countries to each other in order to make the different qualifications of the Member States comparable at European level. It is a meta-framework which does not aim at merging the national frameworks.



## The Flemish Qualifications Structure

Following European developments, the Flemish Parliament adopted the Flemish Parliament Act on the Flemish Qualifications Structure in 2009. The Act lays down, among other things, the qualifications framework with the level descriptors and the types of qualifications.

The Flemish Qualifications Structure consists of eight levels and offers a classification of qualifications, recognised by the Government of Flanders. A qualification is a comprehensive and classified set of competences for which individuals can obtain a certificate recognised by the Government of Flanders.

- **Two types of qualifications**

- o Professional qualifications

A professional qualification is a comprehensive and classified set of competences allowing individuals to exercise a profession. Individuals can acquire qualifications via education and other education providers or through a procedure of recognition of prior learning (RPL).

A professional qualification is developed on the basis of a professional qualification dossier. The Competent database of the Flanders Social and Economic Council (SERV or Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen) is the primary reference framework. The Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training coordinates the development of professional qualification dossiers and organises their validation and classification.

- o Educational qualifications

Educational qualifications are sets of competences allowing individuals to participate in society, start further studies and/or exercise professional activities. Educational qualifications can only be acquired through education.

Educational qualifications of levels 1 to 5 consist of final objectives, specific final objectives and/or recognised professional qualifications. The Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training develops proposals for educational qualifications at its own initiative or at any interested party's request. For educational qualifications from level 6 through to 8, the higher education institutions describe subject-specific learning outcomes for each training programme. The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) submits the recognised qualifications and the associated subject-specific learning outcomes to the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training.

## Professional qualifications and educational qualifications: an overview

VKS Level	Professional Qualifications	VKS Level
8	X	a) Doctor
7	X	a) Master
6	X	a) Bachelor
5	X	a) one or more recognised professional qualifications at level 5
4	X	<p>a) final objectives stage 3 of aso (general secondary education) and specific final objectives for stage 3 of aso which are linked to one or more areas of science</p> <p>b) final objectives stage 3 of tso (technical secondary education) and specific final objectives for stage 3 of tso which are linked to one or more areas of science</p> <p>c) final objectives stage 3 of kso (secondary education in the arts) and specific final objectives for stage 3 of kso which are linked to one or more areas of science</p> <p>d) final objectives for stage 3 of tso or kso and one or more recognised professional qualifications</p> <p>e) final objectives for the third year of stage 3 of bso and one or more recognised professional qualifications</p> <p>f) final objectives for additional general education in adult education and one or more recognised professional qualifications</p> <p>g) one or more recognised professional qualifications at level 4</p> <p>h) final objectives and the specific attainment targets as determined in a), b) or c) and one or more recognised professional qualifications</p>
3	X	a) final objectives for the second year of stage 3 of bso and one or more recognised professional qualifications
2	X	<p>a) final objectives for adult basic education</p> <p>b) final objectives for stage 2 of bso and one or more recognised professional qualifications</p>
1	X	a) final objectives for primary education

- **Qualifications framework with level descriptors**

Both professional and educational qualifications are ranked in one of the eight levels of the Flemish Qualifications Structure. Qualifications of the different levels are distinguished on the basis of level descriptors. The level descriptors describe in general terms the required knowledge and skills as well as the context, the level of autonomy and responsibility which a certain level requires/entails.

The level descriptors of the degrees of bachelor, master and doctor as specified in the Flemish Parliament Act on higher education reform in Flanders, are equivalent to the level descriptors of levels six, seven and eight respectively of the Flemish Qualifications Framework.

Qualifications can be compared with one another in an objective and transparent way because they describe competences in detail and obtain a qualification level. Through this common reference framework providers of education and training as well as the labour market will be able to communicate more easily about qualifications, and this in both Flanders and Europe.

**In short, the Flemish Qualifications Structure:**

- is an overarching classification of recognised qualifications;
- clarifies the content of qualifications and their mutual relations;
- ensures better alignment of learning and working;
- offers the opportunity to exchange competences of formal, informal and non-formal learning.

## The Flemish Qualifications Structure: an overview

VKS level	Level descriptor elements	Context Autonomy Responsibility
<b>VKS 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognise materials, concise, unambiguous information and simple, concrete basic concepts</li> <li>• and rules of a part of a specific area</li> <li>• apply one or more of the following skills:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <b>cognitive skills:</b> retrieve information from one's memory, remember and apply it</li> <li>» <b>motorical skills:</b> use automatisms and imitate practical actions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• perform repetitive and recognisable actions in routine tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• act in a stable, familiar, simple and well-structured context, in which time pressure is of little importance</li> <li>• act with non-delicate objects</li> <li>• functioning under direct supervision</li> <li>• show personal effectiveness</li> </ul>
<b>VKS 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand information, concrete concepts and standard procedures within a specific area</li> <li>• apply one or more of the following skills:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>cognitive skills:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» analyse information by distinguishing and relating elements</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>motorical skills:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» transform sensory perceptions into motorical actions</li> <li>» perform acquired practical-technical actions</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• apply a selected number of standard procedures when performing tasks; apply prescribed strategies to solve a limited number of recognisable, concrete problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• act in a limited number of comparable, simple, familiar contexts</li> <li>• act with delicate, passive objects</li> <li>• functioning under supervision with limited autonomy</li> <li>• take limited executive responsibility for one's work</li> </ul>
<b>VKS 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand a number of abstract concepts, laws, formulas and methods within a specific area; distinguishing between major and minor issues in information</li> <li>• apply one or more of the following skills               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <b>Cognitive skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- analyse information using deduction and induction</li> <li>- synthesize information</li> </ul> </li> <li>» <b>Motorical skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- make constructions based on a plan</li> <li>- perform actions which require tactical and strategic insight</li> <li>- apply artistic-creative skills</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• choose, combine and apply standard procedures and methods to perform tasks and solve a variety of well-defined, concrete problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• act in comparable contexts in which a number of factors change</li> <li>• act with delicate, active objects</li> <li>• function with a certain autonomy within a well-defined set of tasks</li> <li>• take limited organisational responsibility for one's work</li> </ul>



<b>VKS 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interpret concrete and abstract data (information and concepts) within a specific area</li> <li>• apply reflective cognitive and productive motorical skills</li> <li>• evaluate and integrate data and develop strategies to perform diverse tasks and solve diverse, concrete, non-familiar (but subject-specific) problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• act in a combination of changing contexts functioning autonomously with some initiative</li> <li>• take full responsibility for one's work; evaluate and adjust one's actions with a view to obtaining collective results</li> </ul>
<b>VKS 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extend the information from a specific subject with concrete and abstract data, or complete it with missing data; use frameworks of concepts; be aware of the scope of subject-specific knowledge</li> <li>• apply integrated cognitive and motor skills</li> <li>• transfer knowledge and apply procedures flexibly and inventively when performing tasks and for finding strategic solutions to concrete and abstract problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• act in a range of new, complex contexts</li> <li>• operate autonomously with initiative</li> <li>• take responsibility for the achievement of personal outcomes and for the stimulation of collective results</li> </ul>
<b>VKS 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• critically evaluate and combine knowledge and understanding in a specific area</li> <li>• apply complex specialised skills, linked to research outcomes</li> <li>• gather and interpret relevant data and make innovative use of selected methods and resources to solve non-familiar complex problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• act in complex and specialised contexts</li> <li>• operate with complete autonomy and considerable initiative</li> <li>• take shared responsibility for the definition of collective results</li> </ul>
<b>VKS 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• integrate and reformulate knowledge and understanding of a specific subject or at the interface between different areas</li> <li>• apply complex new skills, linked to autonomous, standardised research</li> <li>• critically evaluate and apply complex, advanced and/or innovative problem-solving techniques and methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• act in unpredictable, complex and specialised contexts</li> <li>• operate with complete autonomy and a right of decision</li> <li>• take final responsibility for the definition of collective results</li> </ul>
<b>VKS 8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extend and/or redefine existing knowledge of a substantial part of a specific subject or at the interface between different areas</li> <li>• interpret and create new knowledge through original research or advanced scientific study</li> <li>• design and execute projects which extend and redefine existing procedural knowledge, aimed at the development of new skills, techniques, applications, practices and/or materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• act in particularly complex contexts with broad, innovative implications</li> <li>• take responsibility for the development of professional practice or scientific research whilst adopting a highly critical stance and showing managerial capacity</li> </ul>



## Applications of the Flemish Qualifications Structure

### Training programmes

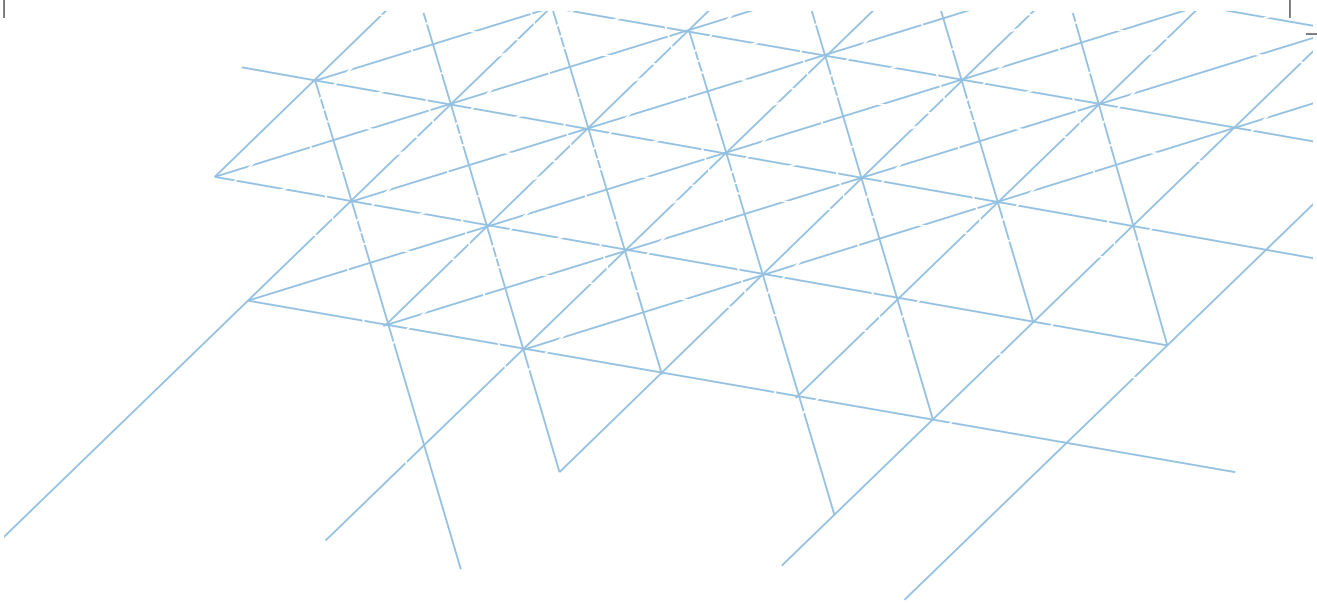
Providers of education and training will calibrate their training programmes to recognised qualifications. Thus, training programmes are aligned with the competences demanded by the labour market and/or society, with the competences needed for personal development or for further training.

The Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training ensures, in close cooperation with the education inspectorate, the monitoring of the quality of education and training pathways leading to recognised qualifications, with the exception of higher education for which the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders is responsible. The VLHORA (Flemish Council for Non-University Higher Education) and the VLIR (Flemish Interuniversity Council) ensure the organisation and coordination of external quality assurance by reviewing training programmes.

### RPL procedures

Education and training providers and assessment centres will align their RPL procedures (recognition of prior learning) with recognised qualifications. The Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training is responsible for organizing the quality monitoring of the RPL pathways leading to recognised qualifications.

This can increase confidence in RPL procedures and promote interchangeability of competences acquired in formal, informal and non-formal learning.



## **(Educational) careers**

Lifelong guidance practitioners may use the qualifications structure to support individuals in their choice of education and/or profession. It offers a reference framework through which they can help pupils, students, the unemployed people and working individuals in their choice for pathways towards a fitting qualification.

## **Qualification Certificates**

A qualification certificate is a certificate recognised by the Flemish Community acknowledging that an individual has obtained a recognised qualification. As a result of this recognition, the labour market and providers of education and training have confidence in the awarded certificates. The referencing of the Flemish Qualifications Framework to the European Framework enables individuals to compare their “Flemish” qualifications with those of other European countries. This will give a boost to learning and job mobility inside and outside Flanders.



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Responsible publisher: Ann Verhaegen

D/2013/3241/022