



Title: Procedures of Mapping Programs to National Qualifications Framework

Code: GU-PR09MP

Version: 2.2

Date of Issue: 2025

Effective Date: April 2025

Last Review Date: November 2023

Approval Authority: University Council

Document Owner: Vice President for Academic Affairs

Review: The procedures are subject to a periodic review as per amendments of Policy of Mapping Programs to National Qualifications Framework

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the procedures to be followed during the mapping process of all programs offered at Gulf University to the National Qualifications Framework in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

2. Scope

This document applies to all programs offered at Gulf University.

3. Acronyms

BQA	Education and Training Quality Authority
CILOS	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
GDQ	General Directorate of National Qualifications Framework
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PILOS	Program Intended Learning Outcomes
QADC	Quality Assurance and Development Center

4. Definitions

Benchmarking: Benchmarking involves comparing university processes and practices against good practices in other Higher Education Institutions.

Course: A course is composed of teaching and learning activities, which guide and support students towards the attainment of a set of learning outcomes. A course is the smallest unit of teaching and learning activities at Gulf University.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes: Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) describe the knowledge, skills and attributes envisaged to be achievable by students who have been enrolled in a course. CILOs therefore contribute to PILOs.

Confirmation Panel:

A confirmation panel is an independent group of individuals that moderates and judges the proposal made by the Mapping Panel.

Graduate Attributes: Graduate attributes refer to the characteristics a graduate is expected to display upon having completed a program associated with the qualification that has been awarded. Graduate attributes refer to the personal qualities, academic capabilities and more general skills developed as a result of following the program.

Mapping: Mapping refers to the process of placing qualifications on Bahrain National Qualifications Framework. This process requires the credit value of qualifications to be stated and for qualifications to be placed at the appropriate level on the NQF.

Mapping Panel: A mapping panel is a group of unbiased individuals with expert knowledge of the NQF established by the Higher Education Institution. The mapping panel establishes the NQF level of a qualification and the units that comprise it.

Notional Learning Hours: Notional learning hours describe time allocated to study. This study time can comprise formal classroom instruction, time spent in self-study (for example, reading and revising notes) and time spent on assessment. Notional learning hours are calculated by those with experience in the subject area by envisaging the time that the average student would spend on tasks required by a course or program.

NQF Credit: A NQF credit is a measurement of learning at specific levels of a National Qualifications Framework. It is assumed that one credit of learning will result from ten ‘notional’ hours of study. Credits are assigned to courses, programs and qualifications. The credits assigned to qualifications comply with Bahrain National Qualifications Framework.

NQF Level: Bahrain National Qualifications Framework comprises ten levels. Each level signifies a stage of achievement with respect to learning ranging from the less to the more complex and demanding.

NQF Level Descriptors: NQF Level descriptors provide a general, shared understanding of learning and achievement at each of the ten levels of the NQF. Each descriptor relates to generic statements that describe the expected level of achievement with respect to:

- Knowledge (theoretical understanding and practical application)
- Skills (generic, problem solving, analytical skill and communication, ICT, numeracy)

- Competence (autonomy, responsibility and context).

Level descriptors are used to map qualifications on the NQF and were designed to be used across a wide range of learning contexts.

Program: A program is a carefully designed and structured series of teaching and learning activities which support and guide students towards the achievement of the intended learning outcomes set for it.

Program Intended Learning Outcomes: Program Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) describe the knowledge, skills and attributes envisioned to be achievable by students who have followed a program of study. Demonstration of achievement of the PILOs is a necessary requirement for the award of a qualification associated with a program.

Purpose Statement: A purpose statement describes the overall goal or purpose of a program of study by, for example, describing the way graduates of the program will contribute to workplace needs or to society more generally. It can also describe the way the program contributes to the vision and mission of the institution offering the program.

Qualification: A qualification recognizes and certifies the learning achieved as a result of following a program of study. It therefore signifies and certifies the achievement of the PILOs by a student who has followed the program.

5. Procedure Details

The Mapping of programs to the NQF involves the following steps:

5.1 Step One

5.1.1 Deans shall compose Mapping Panels for the programs offered at their Colleges from internal and/or external members with relevant expertise/confirmed experience including:

- mapping of qualifications to the NQF.
- related profession
- teaching one or more core subjects of the program.
- learning assessment.

5.1.2 The Mapping Panel shall act objectively, shall document their final decisions along with the justification behind these.

- 5.1.3 HOD shall provide the Mapping Panel with all relevant materials, such as course and program specifications for the qualification under mapping.

5.2 Step Two

- 5.2.1 The Mapping Panel shall be allowed to familiarize themselves with all materials, in particular CILOs, PILOs and assessments along with ‘Policy of Mapping Programs to NQF’, ‘NQF Level Descriptors’ and ‘Level and Credit Mapping Scorecards’.
- 5.2.2 The Mapping Panel shall establish the NQF level of each course of the program. The NQF level shall be determined by comparing the CILOs and their assessment to the ‘NQF Level Descriptors’, (NQF Handbook [https://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/SiteAssets/Pages/RelatedDocuments/NQF%20Handbook%202023%20Edition%20\(EN\).pdf](https://www.bqa.gov.bh/En/QaaetUnits/NQFU/SiteAssets/Pages/RelatedDocuments/NQF%20Handbook%202023%20Edition%20(EN).pdf)) The Panel shall seek the best fit across the Descriptors.
- 5.2.3 The Mapping Panel shall also consider the factors which influence the course NQF level such as:
- the complexity of knowledge and understanding,
 - the level of independence and creativity,
 - the intricacy in application and practice,
- 5.2.4 The Mapping Panel shall then establish the ‘Overall NQF Level’ of the qualification, which shall be the exit level of the program, since programs at GU are designed and governed by specifications with minimum number of credits predefined for each level of the program, and students build up their knowledge as they progress through the program.
- 5.2.5 The Mapping Panel shall also establish the NQF credits for each course of the program, which is based on the number of ‘notional learning hours’ required to achieve the defined CILOs.
- 5.2.6 The Mapping Panel shall calculate the number of NQF credits for each course of the program by dividing the notional learning hours by ten and rounding the result to the nearest whole credit.
- 5.2.7 According to NQF Handbook, any placed qualification on the NQF must be of at least 10 notional hours. Therefore, a course of the program can be awarded a minimum of one NQF credit.
- 5.2.8 The Mapping Panel shall determine the number of notional learning hours required by a typical student in a typical course, through considering those activities that are directly related to CILOs. Any

prerequisite knowledge that the student requires prior to starting the course or program shall not be considered in the calculation of notional learning hours.

- 5.2.9 The Mapping Panel shall also consider all activities the student needs to carry out before and after the formal teaching session – such as the need, before delivery, for preparatory reading or for use of library (or Internet), and after delivery the time required for revision and assessment.
- 5.2.10 The following types of activities shall be considered in calculating the notional learning hour:
- formal teaching sessions (lectures, classes, seminars, tutorials),
 - practical work (e.g. in laboratories),
 - ICT activities,
 - library reading and research,
 - personal study time including online and/or text-based materials,
 - informal learning (e.g. community groups, community - based workshops),
 - discussions,
 - assessment.

5.3 Step Three

- 5.3.1 The Mapping Panel shall document its decisions along with their justification in the scorecard, which is provided as part of the Qualification Placement Application Form – (NQF Handbook).
- 5.3.2 The Mapping Panel shall ensure sufficient reason and justification of why the course meets the NQF Level Descriptors to allow for subsequent confirmation of recorded decisions by the Confirmation Panel.

5.4 Step Four

- 5.4.1 Deans shall compose Confirmation Panels for the programs offered at their Colleges from members that are independent from the original Mapping Panel.

- 5.4.2 The Confirmation Panel comprises internal and/or external members with relevant expertise and confirmed experience in the discipline.
- 5.4.3 The Confirmation Panel shall review the decisions made by the Mapping Panel regarding credit value and NQF level of each course and the overall program for confirmation.
- 5.4.4 Program leader shall complete the form titled as ‘Program Structure with NQF credit and level (GU-PR09MP-F01) which includes course title, course code, mandatory/elective, NQF level and credit value. After reviewing all the course specifications and scorecards, Mapping panel members shall write their comments propose the overall level and credit of the program with name, designation and signature of the members. Subsequently, Confirmation panel members shall write their notes and confirm the level of the program and credit including the name, designation and signature of each member..
- 5.4.4 In case of any disagreement on the proposed credit values and NQF level, the Confirmation Panel shall seek clarification from the Mapping Panel and shall reach agreement through internal discussion and debate.
- 5.4.5 The Confirmation Panel shall document the confirmed credit value and NQF level of each course and the overall program in the Scorecard and send to College Council.
- 5.4.6 The College Council shall review the confirmed outcomes of the Confirmation Panel and recommend for submission.

5.5 Step Five

- 5.5.1 The QADC shall coordinate with VP Academic through the followings:
 - completing and signing the ‘Placement Application Form’,
 - attaching the ‘Scorecard’ recording confirmed NQF levels and credit values to the Placement Application Form,
 - preparing supporting material,
 - preparing and signing the cover letter.
- 5.5.2 Director of QADC shall perform as the contact person with GDQ responsible for the placement application process.
- 5.5.3 QADC shall ensure that the signed application form and cover letter be submitted to GDQ in both printed and electronic format, whereas submission of all other evidence and documentation shall be in electronic format.

5.6 Step Six

5.6.1 Director of QADC shall ensure provision of required information or evidence of any key document found missing or incomplete and asked for by GDQ after submission of the Placement Application Form, within the agreed deadline.

5.6.2 Director of QADC shall ensure provision of any clarification or evidence or documentation asked for by GDQ during their verification process.

5.6.3 Director of QADC shall coordinate the validation event at Gulf University in collaboration with programs representatives and with the Validation Panel appointed by GDQ (BQA), shall conduct the factual accuracy check for the draft Validation Report in collaboration with both Mapping and Confirmation Panels.

5.6.3.1 Possible Outcomes of Validation, as per GDQ Standards:

Application for the placement of a qualification on the NQF shall result in three possible judgments against Validation Standards established by GDQ. These possible outcomes are:

- (i) The application meets all five Validation Standards. In this case the application moves to the next stage of the listing process by GDQ.
- (ii) One or more of the five Validation Standards is only partially met. In this case the application shall be given the status of *Deferred for Condition Fulfilment* and the report shall include conditions which need to be met by the University. A period of time is allowed by GDQ for the University to provide additional evidence to meet these conditions.
- (iii) One or more of the five Validation Standards is not met. In this case, the application is considered to be *Not Valid* and the University shall submit a new application for qualification placement.

5.6.3.2 Gulf University shall aim to achieve Outcome (i) with its original application.

5.6.3.3 Where overall judgment is either Deferred for Condition fulfilment or Not Valid, the University shall submit condition-fulfilment documentation or re-submit a new application, respectively.

In case of ‘Deferred for Condition Fulfilment’ judgment of the Validation Panel, the Mapping and Confirmation Panels shall convene to address the conditions stated in the Validation Report provided by GDQ. The Panels shall ensure that their work is completed such that the evidence proving the conditions have been met shall be submitted within the timeframe indicated in the report.

- 5.6.4 In case of ‘Not Valid’ judgment of the Validation Panel, the application shall be referred back to the Mapping Panel and the mapping process shall begin again. Resubmission of new Placement Application shall not be in less than three months of receiving the final judgment, in accordance with NQF Handbook.
- 5.6.5 The new Placement Application shall then be processed as per the GDQ plans and schedule of evaluations.

6. Responsibilities

HODs and Deans are responsible for:

- Appropriate implementation of this document.

The Mapping and Confirmation Panels are responsible for:

- Appropriate implementation of this document.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for:

- Systematic review of the effectiveness of this document as custodian.

7. Related Policies

- Assessment Policy
- Policy of Mapping Programs to NQF
- Program Design, Development and Approval Policy
- Program Review and Development Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy

8. Related Procedures

- Assessment Procedures
- Program Design Development and Approval Procedures
- Program Review and Development Procedures
- Teaching and Learning Procedures

9. Related References and Standards

BQA	Programs-within-College Reviews Handbook
HEC	Academic Regulations and Resolutions