

# MODULE 3

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## GOVERNANCE OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

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\* National Committee For Professional Certification, Its mission is among others to list the offer of vocational certifications (national register of vocational certifications), to inform people and companies about the certifications listed in the national register and the certifications recognized in the member states of the European Union and to check the coherence, complementarity and renewal of diplomas and qualification documents, together with their adaptation to evolution in qualifications and work organisation).

# 1. Implementation of National Qualifications Framework and models of governance

All countries implementing an NQF have faced problems. The issue of governance of the NQF is one of the most difficult areas to address because many stakeholders are involved. See for example in Box 4, the list of stakeholders mentioned in the 2013 NSQF Notification.

## Box 4: Stakeholders involved in the NSQF in India as mentioned in the 2013 Notification

- Government
- National Skills Qualification Committee
- National Skills Development Agency
- Central Ministries
- State Skill Development Missions
- Regulatory bodies (e.g., UGC, AICTE, NCVT, Technical and School Boards)
- Sector Skills Councils
- Industry
- Institutions providing education and training
- State governments
- Public sector enterprises
- Industry
- Learners
- Other stakeholders

## Governance concerns several levels.

**Strategic level:** Governance is the process/structure which leads to the establishment of policies for the implementation and development of the NQF, and ensures the continuous monitoring of their proper implementation by the relevant agencies.

### So the NQF Strategic Responsibilities and & High-level Co-ordination functions are to:

- Ensure that the framework meets its stated aims
- Undertake strategic planning
- Carry out monitoring and evaluation
  - ensuring that the framework structure is suitable

- ensuring that the operational principles of the framework are appropriate
- Ensure that the operational principles of the framework are kept to
- Develop and maintain national and international links

**Operational level:** Governance includes maintaining an overview of the mechanisms required to meet the requirements for running the NQF and to keep these in balance with the needs of government, society, the economy and corporate and individual stakeholders.

### The NQF Operational management functions are to

- Support change and build capacity
- encourage the development and use of outcome-based specifications for all qualifications
- support providers to modularise programmes
- support practical and quality assured assessment
- support changes in record-keeping and certification
- support the use of credit
- identify and promote existing and new pathways
- The governance of NQF can be centralised (Ireland), co-ordinated (South Africa) or devolved (Scotland)

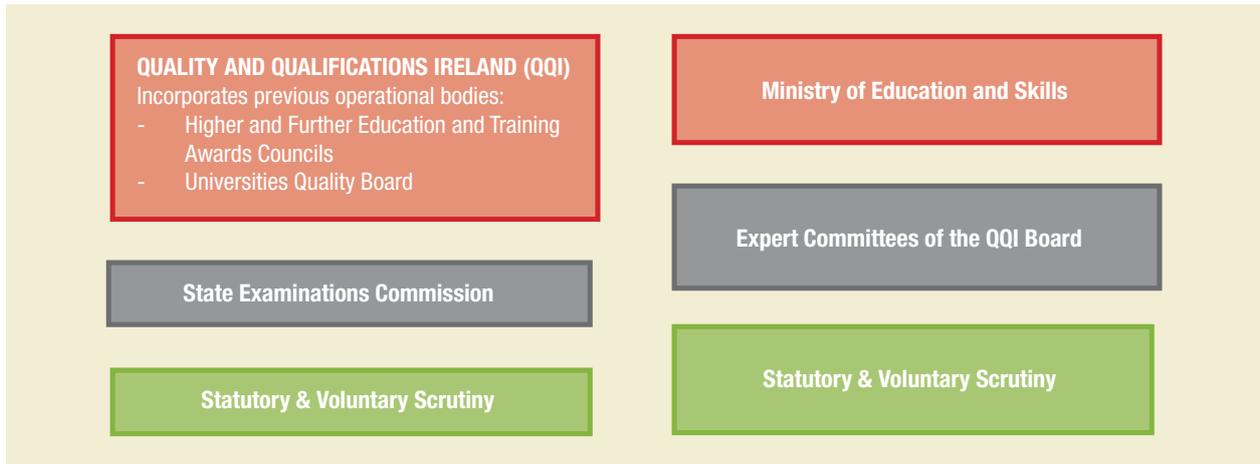
The implementation of NQF often creates a shift in the balance of power. Stakeholders from the provision side have to surrender some control over the content of qualifications and how they can be obtained, while stakeholders from the world of work gain influence. The creation of NQF brings new issues: how to balance strong central controls and fast local responsiveness? How to balance effective risk management and the enduring need for innovation. It also brings the question of the costs of compliance with the value it brings.

### Dialogue and coordination are necessary over the following questions of governance:

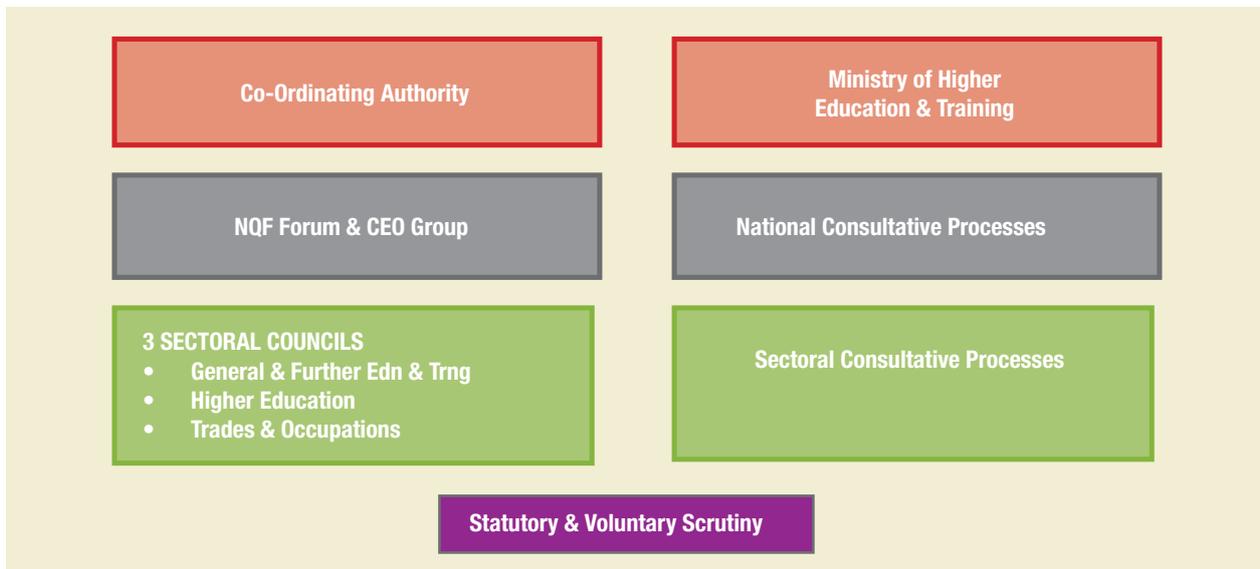
- Ministry or independent agency?
- Coordination and management – together or separate?
- One ministry/agency or multiple ministries/agencies?
- How to maintain transparency and avoid chicanery
- Rights and responsibilities of stakeholders?
- Maintain quality and avoid bureaucracy?

# Three models of Organisational Structure

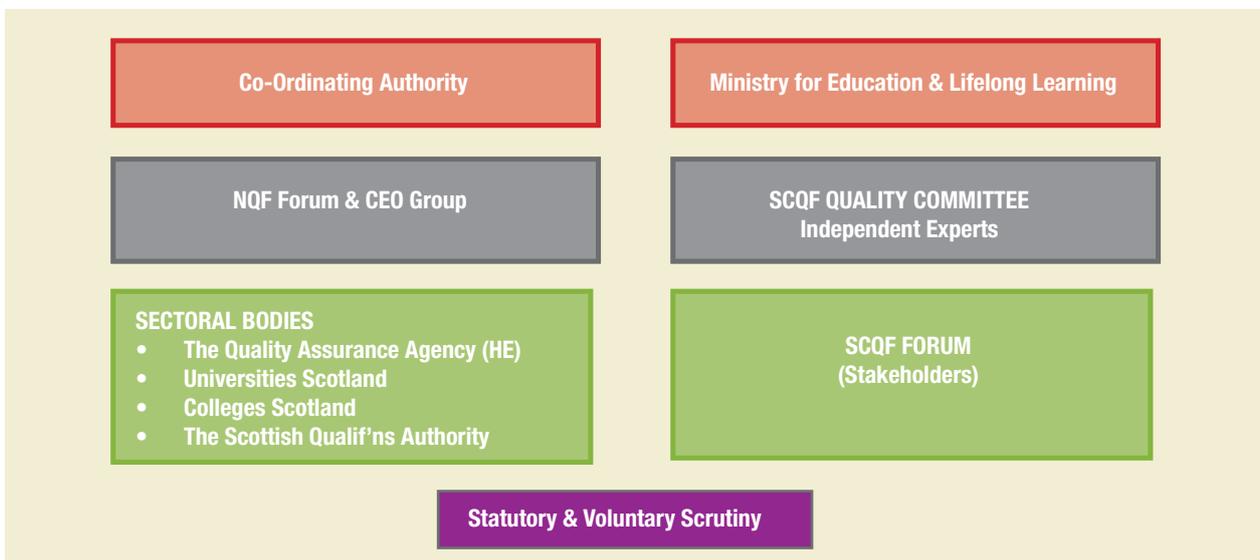
## Centralised Structure - IRELAND



## Co-ordinated Structure – SOUTH AFRICA



## Devolved Structure - SCOTLAND



Many stakeholders need to work together in the building of a framework. With global development and demographic changes, lifelong learning systems are emerging, opening up what had been virtually states monopoly on qualifications. There are more institutions, and a greater range of providers have emerged such as professional bodies, municipalities, private companies, employment services, non-governmental organisations, private schools and international providers, offering different kinds of qualifications. This makes it more important to regulate that are offered by different bodies to different target groups, in order to reduce the proliferation of qualifications, and to protect the interest of citizens and employers by strengthening confidence in the value of qualifications.

## 2. Changing Institutional Arrangements

To be successful, qualification-system reform require that all stakeholders are mobilized and involved and take ownership of the changes. It is unlikely that all changes happen voluntarily and through mutual agreement. Legislation is often needed to create new conditions, stimulate new developments and regulate roles and responsibilities, in particular in market-oriented or state-led systems where governance of such systems is not determined by such dialogue.

Legal traditions certainly influence how qualifications are regulated. In the English speaking world, where common law has been built incrementally around individual cases, governments have been less inclined to legislate (prescribe) what qualifications should look like. In countries that have a civil code, the tradition of state regulation based on logical principles has facilitated the creation of ruling principles for qualification rather than letting qualification systems evolve around individual cases (Merryman, 1985). In Central European countries such as Germany and Austria, where social partners play an important role in setting the conditions for qualifications, and the entitlements that can be obtained from holding a qualifications, qualification standards for the dual vocational education system are compulsory and have the power of law. Civil effect, the legal entitlements qualification can provide once they are recognized as equivalent to existing ones, is an important issue for countries where qualifications are subject to government regulation.

Qualifications are not only important as formalized outcomes of education and training systems. In the Soviet

Union and Yugoslavia, qualifications were an integral part of the labour market regulatory system, determining the jobs people were assigned to, as well as salaries, pensions and opportunities for career development and mobility. These regulated labour market functions of qualifications are again becoming an issue in current qualification system reforms, with the introduction of labour market specific qualifications to certify competent workers. In Estonia, more than 15 per cent of the labor force has already obtained professional qualifications based on occupational standards by the time they leave the education system. In Turkey, certification of unqualified workers in more than 100 occupations is currently becoming compulsory.

### In practice, legal arrangements start from many angles

They are often linked with making a specific body responsible for the implementation. The first relevant piece of legislation in England was the act to establish the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in 1986, although it took until 2000 before the NQF became a reality. The Education Act of 1989 in New Zealand defined the responsibilities of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The NQF in South Africa started with the South African Qualifications Authority Act (No. 58, 1995). In France, the Law on Social Modernization (2002) created the National Commission for Professional Certification under the authority of the ministry responsible for vocational education, which established the NQF through a national register (RNCP). In Montenegro, the Law on National Vocational Qualifications (2008) preceded the Law on the NQF in 2010. In Turkey, a Law on the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) (5544/2006) was the start, although only in the Amendment Law on VQA of 2011 was there reference to developing the NQF. In Ukraine, a government decree on the NQF (2011) started the legislative process, as it did in Armenia (2011), while, in Croatia, a Law on the Croatian Qualifications Framework was adopted (2013). These first acts often set the objectives, indicate the NQF levels and reference special institutions that may have a role in supporting the implementation of the NQF.

Legislation is important in many countries as the official authorisation to begin implementation of the framework. However, what really counts is not these single acts, but how the NQF is starting to filter through in all relevant legislation. Without reference to the NQF in other legislation, its impact is limited. The NQF decree in Ukraine only sets the general objectives and the ten-level framework.

In 2012, however, this was followed by legislation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, which was developed further in 2013 and 2014. A first step to identifying the qualifications to be part of the NQF was made in 2014 with a Law on Higher Education. Current discussions on a new legislation on education (the Previous law dates back to 1991) and on vocational education should complete this.

## Identification process

When the NQF features in important legal documents such as a new law on education questions as to its status and wider implications are raised. The NQF can affect labour law as well as education legislation. In Kazakhstan, the NQF has gained particular importance since it has been adopted as a tool in the labour code. Another indicator of the wider legal impact of the NQF can be the timeframe within which the legislation is reviewed and improved. In Kazakhstan and Georgia, the original acts to adopt NQFs are already under revision, though only a short time has passed since their introduction.

One area that is particularly important in legislation is the institutional arrangements and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. Existing institutional capacities are often insufficient to put the ambitions of the national qualifications system reform policies into practice. This applies to the coordination processes, to ensuring coherence in approaches, and to quality-assuring assessment of qualifications, but, most of all, it applies to the lack of capacity to develop sufficient new occupational standards, qualifications and training programmes to influence delivery. These deficiencies can mean that NQFs remain empty promises. Dedicated institutions with competent staff can speed up implementation.

Different institutions can steer the development of new qualifications and the review of existing ones. Many countries have decided to develop sector skill councils (SSCs) to support the identification of sectoral skill needs, the development of occupational standards, developing and reviewing qualifications, the assessment of candidates, the identification of companies for work-based learning, funding arrangements and other aspects. A number of countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (the Russian Federation, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) have established sectoral qualifications frameworks under their NQFs, to identify occupational standards and sector-specific qualifications. In Kazakhstan, each of these sectoral frameworks is legally established under the coordination of the line ministry dealing with that sector.

This division of coordinating, quality assurance and developmental functions seems very logical. The coordinating function is about bringing stakeholders together on a common platform to agree how to develop and implement the framework. It is therefore separate from a more technical 'controlling' quality-assurance function, ensuring the different actors follow the rules of the game. The development of qualifications is a responsibility that is best delegated to those actors that have an interest in ensuring that these qualifications meet the identified needs of the future holders. Analysis of the formal functions of eighteen especially established institutions that play a role in implementing qualifications systems reform in a number of European Union member states and neighbouring transition countries shows that these arrangements are complex.

Most of the institutions analyzed were established relatively recently. Eleven of the eighteen institutions were established after 2010, although three of these are building on the experience of similar agencies. Only three institutions were established before 2000 (during the late 1990s). The institutions concerned are either private initiatives (such as NARK, the National Agency for Qualifications Development of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs), established as tripartite institutions (such as MYK, the vocational qualifications authority in Turkey) or governmental agencies (such as ANC, the Romanian qualifications authority). Governmental executive agencies are in the majority.

Table 4 provides a comprehensive list of the functions and task of these agencies.<sup>1</sup>

None of them carries out all the functions listed, but seven agencies clearly deal with supporting the provision of education and training as well as managing the qualifications systems. Specialized bodies performing public duties in the space between central government and the implementing institutions are often more susceptible to change than ministries. This is also true of qualifications agencies or authorities. All the institutions involved in the first qualifications frameworks have undergone significant changes; indeed, with the exception of the SQA in Scotland, all of them have been restructured and, in many cases, replaced by completely new organisations. In England, NCVQ was replaced by QCA in 1997, which in turn was replaced by Ofqual in 2010. In Australia, the AQF Council was created in 2008 and abolished in

1 Albania (AK-AKP), Belgium Flanders (AKOV), Croatia (ASOO), Georgia (NC EQE), Ireland (QQI), Kosovo (AKK-KS), England (OfQUAL), Estonia (Kustekoda), Netherlands (SBB), Portugal (ANQEP), Russian Federation (NARK), Scotland (SCQF, Partnership, SQA), Slovenia (CPI), Turkey (MYK), France (CNCP), Romania (ANC), Ukraine (IPQ)

**Table 4: Functions and tasks of qualifications agencies and authorities (Source ETF)**

Functions	Tasks
Further NQF Development	Maintain NQF Structures Prepare Policy Decisions Link NQF to Occupations in the Labour Market
Facilitate Cooperation & Coordination	Formulate Agreed Positions Facilitate Debate Address Transversal Competencies Work with Regional and Sectoral Bodies
Identify Needs & Prioritise	Identify New Occupations Organise Development/ Review of Occupational Standards Identify Qualifications on Offer that could Enter the Qualifications Framework Address Proliferation/ Overlaps of Qualifications Invite Stakeholders to Develop Specific Standards /Qualifications
Communicate, Inform & Advocate	NQF Info Dissemination at Home and Abroad & Website Use of Common Language Navigation Tools
International Positioning	Align with Qualifications Framework of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Act as Contact Point (EQF, EHEA, EUROPASS, National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC)) Compare International Qualifications
Manage Registers/ Databases	Manage NQF Register of Qualifications, Units, Occupational Standards, Awarding Bodies, Assessment Centres, Experts, Graduates, Educational Programmes, Training Providers, Training Companies, Teachers and Trainers, Students, Issued Certificates in order to Authenticate
Assistance, Capacity Building & Guidance	Support Sector Skills Councils/ Professional Bodies /Awarding Bodies with Standards & Qualifications Development Guidance for Qualification Types, for Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning & for Training Programmes
Assure & Enhance Quality	Accredit Awarding Bodies, Standards, Qualifications, Learners Enhance Coherence and Relevance of Qualifications Widen Access and Alternative Pathways Enhance the Quality of Assessment/ Assessors/ Verifiers Enhance the Quality of Providers Monitor and Evaluate Different Actors
Research the Functioning System	What is the Impact and Effectiveness Gather Systematic Feedback
Support Training Providers	Support Internal Quality Assurance Processes Development of Curricula Support Education and Training Provision Training of Teachers and Trainers

2014; in South Africa, after a review of the NQF, three sub-frameworks were established under three quality councils; while in Ireland the national qualifications authority, NQAI, and the awarding bodies, FETEC and HETEC, merged into one organisation, QQI.

## Conclusions

Legislation is often required to start NQF implementation, but legislation is an unpredictable process, and is bound to change during implementation.

In reality, the functions and tasks of these institutions vary and are difficult to predict. The functions and structures of these supporting bodies alter over time, depending on the changing priorities for the implementation of the frameworks. Apart from enabling legislation and specialized institutions to support the implementation of the qualifications frameworks, dialogue between stakeholders remains one of the most important factors in the implementation of frameworks. Where an active dialogue exists involving representatives from the world of work and from providers, co-ownership of proposed reforms and a shared vision can empower stakeholders to act without overly prescriptive guidance from the central level, reducing bureaucracy and strengthening impact on learners and in the labour market.

### 3. Skype Session On the French Register of Qualifications (Brigitte Bouquet)

Are registered in the French Register (RNCP):

- Qualifications and not training courses
- Qualifications and not personal awards
- No partial qualifications

**So the Register is not a quality assurance tool for the courses.** There are other ways to check the QA of training courses, such as International labels (bachelors, MBAs...) also exist. Some training courses are developed after international norms (ISO...). What is registered is the result of some training courses expressed in terms of learning outcomes and based on standards which can allow the recognition of prior learning. That means Vocational certification after initial learning, also continuing learning or after professional and personal experience through the VAE (validation of formal and informal learning-compulsory. It is the same certification, with

the same value). Certifications recognised are registered in the **Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles (RNCP)** and classified:

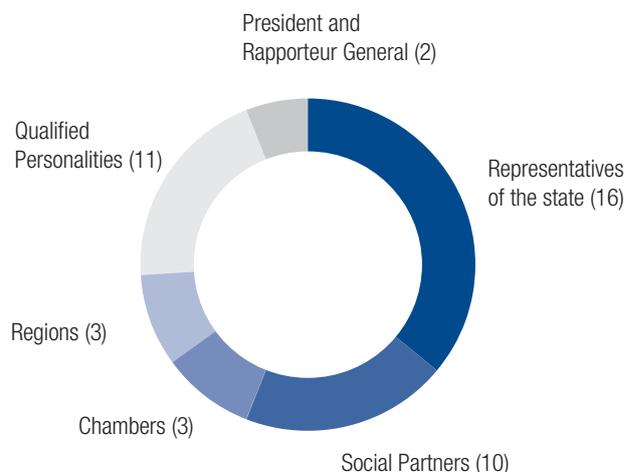
- by a 5 levels grid (Levels I, II, III, IV, V)
- by learning domains (national nomenclature, linked with ISCO)

The certification have common features: standards which are known and elaborated after the consultation of stakeholders, including the social partners. It is important that experts take part in the drafting of certifications. It is compulsory that three types of stakeholders are involved: the public Authorities, the Social Partners (employers) and the trade unions.

**What do we mean by qualifications?** An individual is considered as “qualified” when he or she has to show (demonstrate) a set of knowledge, know-how and abilities giving the insurance that he or she is able to achieve tasks and activities (expected in the “standard of activities”) by combining the three dimension of competences (K,KH,A) in a large professional context with a level of responsibility and autonomy previously defined. Certification implies (i) a procedure to check and validate that learning outcomes are in accordance with the standards, (ii) An authority attesting that the procedure is conform to what was expected, and awarding quality assurance is othe certification to the applicant and (iii) A standard describing the assessed learning outcomes.

The CNCP in plenary commission is composed as follows:

**Figure 8: Composition of CNCP**



## Members :

- Representatives of the state (16) the ministry in charge of HE belongs to the committee)
- Social partners (5 employees, 5 employers)
- Economic Chambers (3)
- Regions (3)
- Experts (11) (do not vote)
- Chairman
- General reporter and his or her assistant (do not vote)
- (A vice chairman chosen by the representatives of the employers, another by the employees); can replace the chairman )

There are 3 kinds of certifications

- 1) Vocational diplomas (degrees) and titles delivered by public authorities “in behalf of the State”, under the responsibility of the ministry – including all the Higher education degrees from Universities
- 2) Vocational Qualification Certificates elaborated by economic sectors under the responsibility of social partners: no level
- 3) Titles or certificates delivered by economic chambers, public or private institutions in their own names (ministry as well for example: Defense Ministry, ministry of the Interior)

And two ways to allocate a certification to the Register

- the registration “by law”, where there is no protocols, only law and official texts . It concerns Diplomas (or degrees) delivered by public authorities “in behalf of the State” through different ministries in charge of Education, Agriculture, Social affairs, Employment, Youth and Sports, Health and Culture at secondary and higher education levels, and elaborated by a ministry through a process that involves social partners as well. The registration is done without an instruction by the CNCP but the diploma was checked and accredited by other officials authorities, such as Commissions including social partners were consulted.

## Registration on demand

For non-public certification, if social partners were not consulted, the CNCP plays this role and becomes an accrediting body. The certification is analysed by a rapporteur whose report is presented to an hoc commission (half social partners-half state - before the advice of the plenary commission). The report is about the following:

### What is the link between the certifications and the labour market

#### Why is it created?

Is it really fitted with the needs of the sector?

Does it take into account the evolution of the certification

Have possible former recommendations by the CNCP been taken into account?)

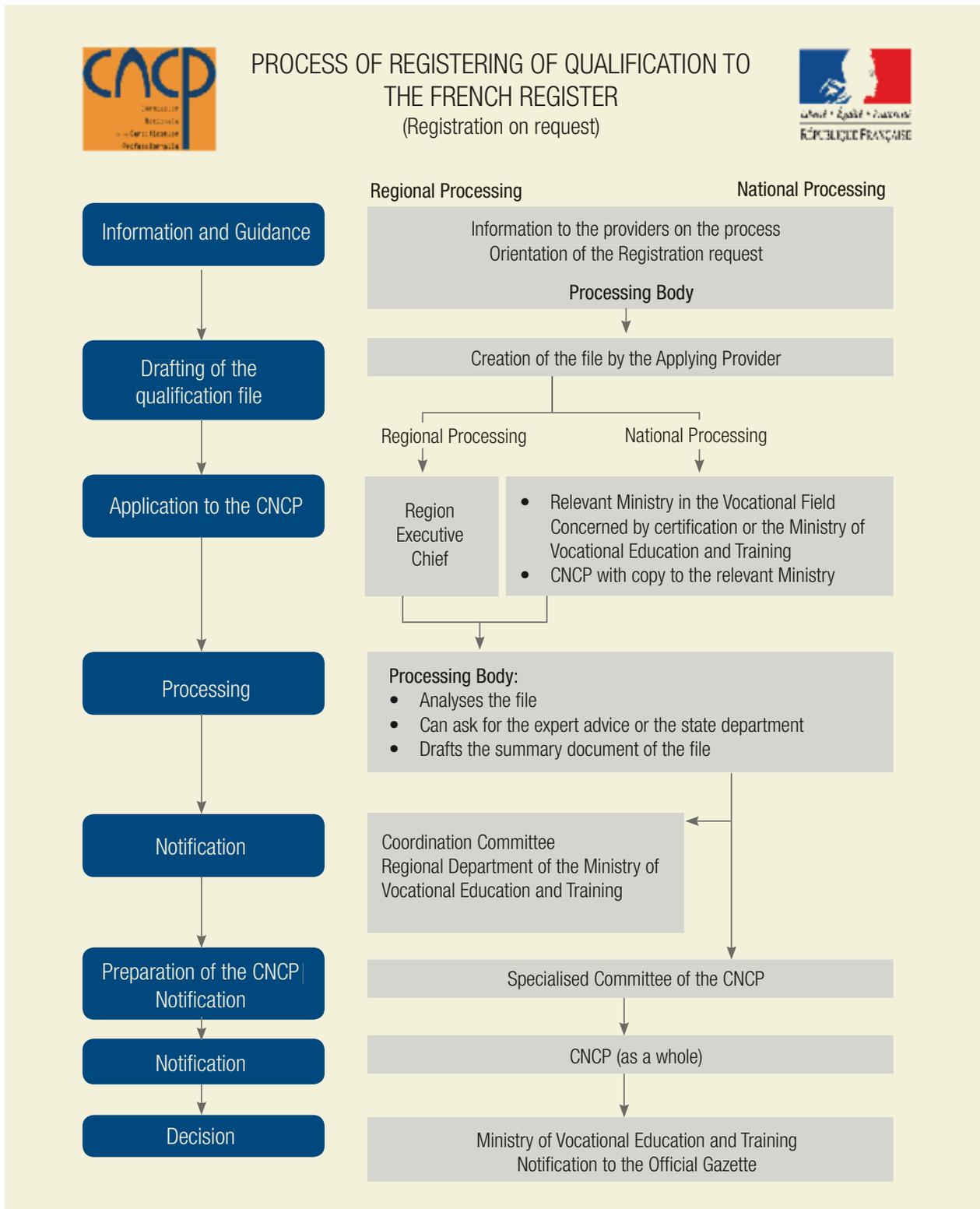
How is the certification quality-assured to keep the qualification in line with the needs of the labour market?

The certification is then presented to the “conseil de perfectionnement” (a commission of practitioners and trainers) for advice.

The certification standards which **all certifications** must meet concern:

- **Standards of activities**
- Description of tasks and competencies associated to the activities
- Competences and tasks which will be evaluated
- **Standard and criteria of evaluation**
- What will be checked: grids for the evaluation, sheets with the signature of applicants, report of
- Examination sessions...

**Figure 9: The Registration of qualifications**



## Construction of qualifications

Quality of the standards, and especially of the assessment of competences is especially important to the CNCP. If it is only a training course, without coherence between all the elements, it is refused by the commission. So the CNCP look at the analysis of statistics cohorts to check if they fit with the levels, with the kind of jobs held, the salaries, whether the level of the job role corresponds to the level of the qualification.

All certification in the Register must include validation of prior learning. The CNCP looks closely at the description of the qualification and at the composition of the board of examiners.

### FURTHER READINGS

- ETF 2012, Qualifications Frameworks from concepts to implementation, <http://www.etf.europa/webatt.nsf/o/>
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- Raffe, D. Towards a dynamic model of national qualification framework. S Allais, D. Raffe and Michael Young (eds), *Researching NQFs: some conceptual issues*, Employment Sector, Skills and Employability Department, International Labour Office, pp 23-42.
- CEDEFOP, ETF, UNESCO and UIL, 2013, *Global National Qualifications Framework Inventory*, prepared for ASEM education ministers conference, Kuala Lumpur, 13-14 May 2013 (ASEMME 4)