

NSQF ALIGNMENT

OF

UPSKILLING

&

BRIDGE COURSES

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Report is an attempt to determine the relationship of upskilling programmes and bridge courses to National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) and is divided in two corresponding sections to further elaborate on the same. A guiding tool in the form of a Screening Matrix has been developed as a part of this Report to facilitate Awarding Bodies and National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) in evaluating the need for NSQF alignment of these programmes keeping in view that there is no clear cut demarcation and definition for such programmes in the existing skill system.

A. UPSKILLING

Creation of jobs is an indicator of socio economic development of any country. Today with globalisation and emergence of new technologies the nature of jobs is changing. While the whole argument that robots will steal human jobs may be too hyped a statement but it is also evident that artificial intelligence and machine learning are having a significant impact on the work in any sector. In this dynamic world of work, for many workers, what they are doing today, they may not be doing tomorrow. To ensure adaptability in this changing setup, where the existing skill sets can be disrupted and rendered obsolete in a matter of a few years, a continuous effort is required in the area of skill up gradation of the workforce. This process of adding to the existing skill sets of a learner is broadly referred to as 'upskilling'. Although the word "upskilling has been mentioned in the Common Norms notification of Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship but is limited to the financing aspects in terms of hours and does not define upskilling as a term. Up-skilling can be defined as:

"Short-term targeted training typically provided following initial education or training, and aimed at supplementing, improving or updating knowledge, skills and/or competences acquired during previous training".(Source: CEDEFOP 2008, Europe)

The definition may help in understanding the overall design of these programmes, however a well defined mechanism needs to be established to ascertain their relationship with National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF).

i. Relationship of Upskilling with Qualification Framework

National Skill Qualifications Framework (NSQF) which was notified vide gazette notification dated 27th Dec, 2013 organizes Qualifications according to a series of Levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude. These 'Levels' are defined in terms of learning outcomes which the learner must possess regardless of whether they were acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning. One of the important objectives of the framework is to accommodate the diversity of the Indian education and training systems. It intends to address the diversity of the Qualifications not only in terms of design but also at the level of implementation.

One of the key elements of NSQF is that it provides opportunities to promote lifelong learning and promotes partnership with industry/employers. Upskilling in this regard is an integral process to ensure that learners undertake skill up gradation and continue lifelong learning which is in line with industry demand. NSQF helps in creating a standardised approach to keep the skill development efforts in the country updated and in line with the industry requirements. NSQF on one hand comprises of the Qualifications for fresh skilling, but on the other hand its relationship with this whole gamut of upskilling is yet to be clearly defined in terms of its implementation.

To address this subject, a Sub-Committee was constituted at National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) on NSQF alignment of upskilling and bridge courses on 13th November, 2017 which had representation from Central Ministries, (MSME, Petrochemicals, Agriculture and others), institutions (KVIC, NiMSME, KVIC, FDDI), DGT, NSDC and selected Sector Skill Councils. Two Sub-Committee meetings were held on 30th November, 2017 and 11th December, 2017 to deliberate on establishing relationship of such modules/ programmes with NSQF.

The key points that have emerged from these deliberations have been presented in this report covering areas like challenges, broad parameters and key recommendations for evaluating the need of NSQF alignment of upskilling and bridge courses.

ii. Challenges in establishing relationship of upskilling programmes with NSQF

Relation of Qualifications with a Qualification framework is established when it is aligned to it by the virtue of assigning a 'Level' and ascertaining its purpose. As the cases of Upskilling may not be fulfilling all the parameters as required like assessment, eligibility criteria, industry validation/ connect , specifying the relationship of these programmes with the framework may be difficult. Following are some of the key challenges that need to address while defining the scope and need of NSQF alignment and upskilling programmes:

a. Assessment

NSQF notification defines Qualification as a formal outcome of an assessment & validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. Short term training programmes in upskilling may not be followed by any separate assessment. In this case, it is important to understand whether these courses have to be considered as a separate Qualification or not.

b. Technological Changes

For a Qualification that is already aligned to NSQF, there may be addition of a new technology which requires upskilling of the existing workforce. In such cases, it needs to be deliberated whether the addition of new technology is to be taken as a separate Qualification as it may not always reflect a change in competencies.

c. Leading to a new job role

Upskilling may at times be just learning the same competency on a new technology which may not lead to a different job role. Ascertaining the need for such training

programmes in terms of their industry requirement or need for a specific job role may be difficult .

iii. Parameters to be evaluated in respect of NSQF alignment

Considering the challenges cited above, it is important to state the key parameters that should be referred to while deciding the cases of upskilling programmes and NSQF alignment. Some of these parameters are taken from definitional aspects of the NSQF gazette notification and are as follows:

a. Importance of assessment

NSQF gazette notification states that a Qualification is a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to a given standard. Most of the upskilling programmes such as one week training programmes are generally not followed by any assessment, so identifying if there is any skill that the candidate has learnt in such cases of upskilling may be difficult to establish. A programme which is not followed by assessment fails to meet the definition of Qualification and thus will not require NSQF alignment.

b. Entry requirement or eligibility criteria

For any upskilling, some basic skill set in the relevant area needs to be there as the entry requirement. For e.g. in the CIPET Qualification, for a person to learn the new skill of stretch injection moulding in one week, the candidate needs to have earlier experience of general injection moulding.

c. Change in job role

If an upskilling programme is just strengthening the existing skill sets without changing the job role of the learner, then it may merely be a capacity building programme which does not require NSQF alignment.

d. **Establishing the distinction between a Course and a Qualification**

In some cases, course gets updated while the Qualification remains the same. As the overall competencies are not changing, it is important to establish the difference between the course and Qualification .A Course is the study of a particular topic within a wider subject. It is an input that is made for a set of competencies to be achieved while the Qualification is a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to a given standard. Making distinction between the two while evaluating programmes for need of NSQF alignment is important.

B. BRIDGE COURSES

Bridge Courses can be defined as:

“A course designed to equip students to take up a new subject or course by covering the gaps between the students' existing knowledge and skills and the subject or course prerequisites and assumed knowledge”. (Source: NCVET 2013, Australia).

The concept of bridge courses is largely applicable in the context of recognition of prior learning. In this case, a candidate is assessed against the competencies/ standards of a particular Qualification and in case she/he lacks in some competencies, is given training on those competencies which is called a bridge course.

Bridge courses are a component /part of an existing Qualification and in case this existing Qualification is already NSQF aligned then separate alignment of bridge courses may not be required.

II. CONCLUSION / WAY FORWARD

A holistic approach while evaluating the parameters as enumerated above can help in determining the need for NSQF alignment of upskilling and /or bridge courses. To facilitate this process for Awarding Bodies and NSDA, a simplified matrix (Annexure I) has been developed. The Awarding Bodies can fill this Screening Matrix along with the summary of the training programme/ Qualification (Annexure II) and submitted to NSDA/NCVET. If it is found that the proposal requires NSQF alignment, NSDA/ NCVET will inform concerned Submitting Body to submit the proposal in Qualification File Template along with supporting documents, as is required for NSQF alignment.

Screening Matrix for determining need for NSQF alignment of upskilling programmes and bridge courses

I. General Information

1. Name of the Awarding Body
2. Contact Details
3. Name of the training programme
4. Duration of the training programme

II. For Upskilling

5. Is there a separate assessment conducted for the training?
6. Is there a base Qualification in the same sector required as entry requirement for the training? If yes, state the name and level of the Qualification.
7. Does this training leads to another job role than that of the base Qualification upon which it is being imparted?
8. Is the programme leading to any change in the NSQF level from the base Qualification?
9. Any specific industry demand for the Qualification/course?
10. Is it involving a new technology ?

III. For Bridge Courses

11. Is this training part of an already approved Qualification on NQR? If yes, kindly state name of the Qualification and its Awarding Body.
12. Is any assessment conducted on this already approved job role before undertaking training in the proposed Qualification/ Programme?

SUMMARY

1. Name of the Qualification
2. NCO code and occupation
3. Nature and purpose of the Qualification
4. Body/bodies which will award the Qualification
5. Body which will accredit providers to offer courses leading to the Qualification
6. Occupation(s) to which the Qualification gives access
7. Job description of the occupation
8. Name of the existing Base Qualification which may be the entry requirement for this Qualification
9. Level of the Base Qualification
10. Proposed NSQF Level of the Qualification
11. Anticipated volume of training/learning required to complete the Qualification
12. Indicative list of training tools required to deliver this Qualification
13. Entry requirements and/or recommendations and minimum age
14. Progression from the Qualification
15. Structure/ broad outline of the programme