

# **ASEAN QUALIFICATIONS REFERENCE FRAMEWORK: GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE**

*Endorsed by the ASEAN Economic Ministers, the ASEAN Education Ministers, and the  
ASEAN Labour Ministers*



## **ACRONYMS**

AANZFTA – ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area

FJC –FTA Joint Committee

AECSP – AANZFTA Economic Cooperation Support Programme

AEM – ASEAN Economic Ministers

ALMM – ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting

AMS – ASEAN Member States

AQRF – ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

ASED – ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting

NQF – National Qualifications Framework

TF-AQRF – Task Force on ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework



# **ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework: Governance and Structure**

## **Background and development of the document**

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) was developed in 2014 by a task force (TF-AQRF) comprising officials from ASEAN ministries of trade, labour and manpower development, education, as well as other relevant qualification agencies.

The AQRF was endorsed by the ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) in August 2014; the ASEAN Education Ministers (ASEM) in September 2014; and the ASEAN Labour Ministers (ALMM) through ad-referendum in May 2015. Following the endorsement, the TF-AQRF continued to develop the implementation mechanism of AQRF which the Task Force had begun to discuss in the 4<sup>th</sup> TF-AQRF meeting in March 2014 in Yangon, Myanmar. The discussion and development of the implementation mechanisms of AQRF continued until the official final meeting of the TF-AQRF (7<sup>th</sup> meeting held in October 2015, in Bangkok, Thailand).

This document is the result of deliberations in four TF-AQRF Meetings and subsequent inter-sessional discussions between members of TF-AQRF. It is a follow-up document on the Qualifications Reference Framework endorsed by the respective ASEAN Ministers.

## **Chronological development of the AQRF**

The concept proposal for a region-wide qualifications framework was developed through the *Project on Education and Training Governance: Capacity Building for National Qualifications Frameworks*, and was supported by the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) Economic Cooperation Support Programme (AECSP). Under the programme's services component, the concept proposal was considered at the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the AANZFTA FTA Joint Committee (FJC) in May 2010 in Manila, the Philippines and approved inter-sessionally in July 2010.

Subsequently at the AANZFTA Forum entitled "ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework" held 29-30 April 2011 in Bangkok, Thailand, a draft concept paper (see Bateman et.al. 2011) on a mutually comparable National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) based on a common reference framework was presented to ASEAN participants. In the Forum Communiqué, the participants noted the need for an ASEAN common reference framework. The feasibility of a regional common reference

framework was discussed in a broad sense, but no consensus was reached regarding its preferred construction, features or purposes. The concept paper was subsequently enhanced and refined to incorporate the outcomes of the deliberations at the AANZFTA Forum, as well as the findings from a series of in-country workshops and consultations with relevant stakeholders.

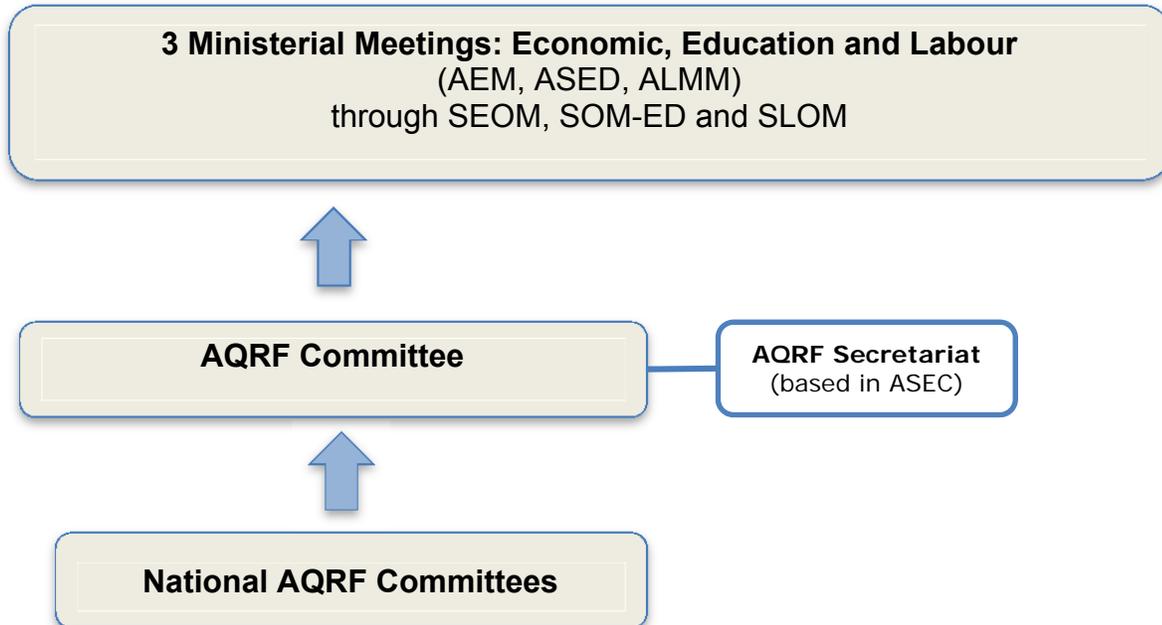
In 2012, the FJC agreed to establish and provide technical support to a multi-sectoral Task Force on ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (TF-AQRF), comprising officials from ASEAN ministries of trade in services, labour and manpower development, and education, as well as other relevant ministries and qualifications agencies, to develop the AQRF. Representatives from Australia and New Zealand were invited to be part of the TF-AQRF as non-voting members.

Following the decision of FJC, a workshop and the 1<sup>st</sup> TF-AQRF meeting were convened on 30 October - 1 November 2012 in Bangkok, Thailand. By the 4<sup>th</sup> TF-AQRF meeting held on 20-21 March 2014 in Yangon, Myanmar, the AQRF document had been finalised for endorsement by the AEM, ASED and ALMM. Further, by the 7<sup>th</sup> TF-AQRF meeting held on 7-8 October 2015, in Bangkok, Thailand, the development of this document on AQRF Governance and Structure had reached its final stages. The TF-AQRF resolved in that meeting to have it finalised inter-sessionally and recommends the final document for endorsement by the AEM, ASED and ALMM.

To ensure continuity and sustainability of the AQRF initiative, the AMS agreed at the 7<sup>th</sup> TF-AQRF meeting to establish an Interim Committee to continue the inter-sessional work of TF-AQRF leading up to the formal establishment of the AQRF Committee to oversee the implementation of AQRF. The activities and establishment of the AQRF would be supported externally by Australia and New Zealand from June 2016 to June 2018 as endorsed by the AANZFTA FJC at their 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 13-18 March 2016, Melbourne, Australia. During this transition period, the fourth phase of the AQRF project would support the establishment of the AQRF Committee and the referencing to the AQRF of at least two AMS, and Australia and New Zealand would be invited as non-voting members and/or experts.

## ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework: Governance and Structure

### I. Structure



### II. Terms of Reference

#### **AQRF Committee**

The AQRF Committee is a high level executive committee that engages with the complex policy and technical issues arising from implementation and evolution of a regional qualifications framework. The Committee is able to draw on its membership for up-to-date information from each AMS and is regarded as an authority in its decision-making.

The Committee is responsible for building the zone of trust by providing transparency to the public.

#### Functions:

1. To consider whether or not a referencing report submitted by each National AQRF Committee meets the AQRF referencing criteria and advises the National AQRF Committee on how all the criteria could be met.
2. To promote the use of the AQRF among AMS to enable support for lifelong learning.
3. To promote the quality assurance processes that underpin the AQRF and to foster the use of quality assurance frameworks as a benchmark.

4. To facilitate the AQRF process in addressing emerging regional and international qualifications framework issues in regional and international arena, including linkages to qualifications recognition.
5. To enhance the effectiveness of the AQRF by monitoring and evaluating its implementation, including review of the AQRF Committee's membership, operations and its TOR.
6. To periodically report to the three ASEAN Ministerial bodies on progress and activities and on further strategic steps to improve regional and national consistency and relevance.
7. To provide information and advice on the AQRF to interested parties.
8. To share approaches for further capacity building related to AQRF among AMS.

#### Membership:

Membership of the AQRF Committee shall comprise 1 representative<sup>1</sup> from each AMS. Each AMS can nominate an alternative.

Each AMS can determine the size and form of the country's delegation of observers to support the country representative.

The AQRF Committee may invite observers/technical experts to the AQRF Committee Meetings.

#### Chairpersonship:

The Chairpersonship of the AQRF Committee will be rotated every two years in alphabetical order. In case the next country in line is not ready to assume the Chairpersonship, the country can forego its turn.

The AQRF Committee through its Chair will report to the three ASEAN Ministerial Bodies.

The Vice Chair shall assist the Chair and assume the Chairpersonship in his or her absence. The Vice Chair will come from the AMS that is scheduled to chair the AQRF after an incumbent Chair.

### **AQRF Secretariat (based in the ASEAN Secretariat)**

#### Functions:

1. To serve as the regional coordinating point on AQRF.
2. To provide administrative support to the AQRF Committee including servicing meetings and maintaining repository of information and decisions of the AQRF Committee, as well as information sharing with relevant stakeholders e.g. *SEAMEO*.

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<sup>1</sup> Guidelines for the selection of the AQRF Committee Members will be developed by the Interim Committee in close consultation with the TF-AQRF Members and ASEAN Secretariat.

3. To assist the AQRF Committee in promoting AQRF including drafting communication strategies and maintaining the AQRF website.
4. To inform the AQRF Committee of funding/development partners interested in supporting AQRF and support in the design and/or implementation of regional projects as required.

### **National AQRF Committee**

The National AQRF Committee is the body that is the interface between the national policymaking bodies and national qualifications agencies and the AQRF Committee. The Committee considers information and issues from the AQRF Committee and is the single source of national information and AQRF implementation progress coming to the AQRF Committee. The Committee represents the main stakeholders in qualifications in the country (within the constraints of keeping membership to a manageable level). The discussions in the Committee can be considered to be well informed, expert and cognisant of policy positions in the country. The Committee will be responsible for the Referencing report but it may not be directly engaged in writing the report or conducting the referencing process.

Function: to act as the focal point for the AQRF in each AMS.

### **Resourcing and Sustainability:**

In the transition phase (2016-2018), the AQRF activities and establishment of the AQRF Committee would be supported externally.

Once the AQRF Committee has been established, the Chair of the AQRF Committee will host the meeting and cover the required meeting expenses under the host country's national budget.

Each AMS shall cover the cost of their respective participation in the AQRF meetings.

Each AMS shall contribute to the establishment and maintenance of the AQRF Secretariat.