BCE Qualifications Development Principles

Qualifications Development Framework

```
         ┌───────────────────────────────┐
         │   Compliance Requirements     │
         └───────────────────────────────┘
                        │
        ┌───────────────┴───────────────┐
        ▼                               ▼
┌──────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Development Guidelines│    │   Intended Learning       │
│                      │    │ Outcomes / Assessment     │
│                      │    │      Criteria             │
└──────────────────────┘    └──────────────────────────┘
        │                               │
        └───────────────┬───────────────┘
                        ▼
         ┌───────────────────────────────────┐
         │ Qualifications Development Review │
         │                                   │
         │ Qualifications "Currency" Evaluation│
         └───────────────────────────────────┘
```
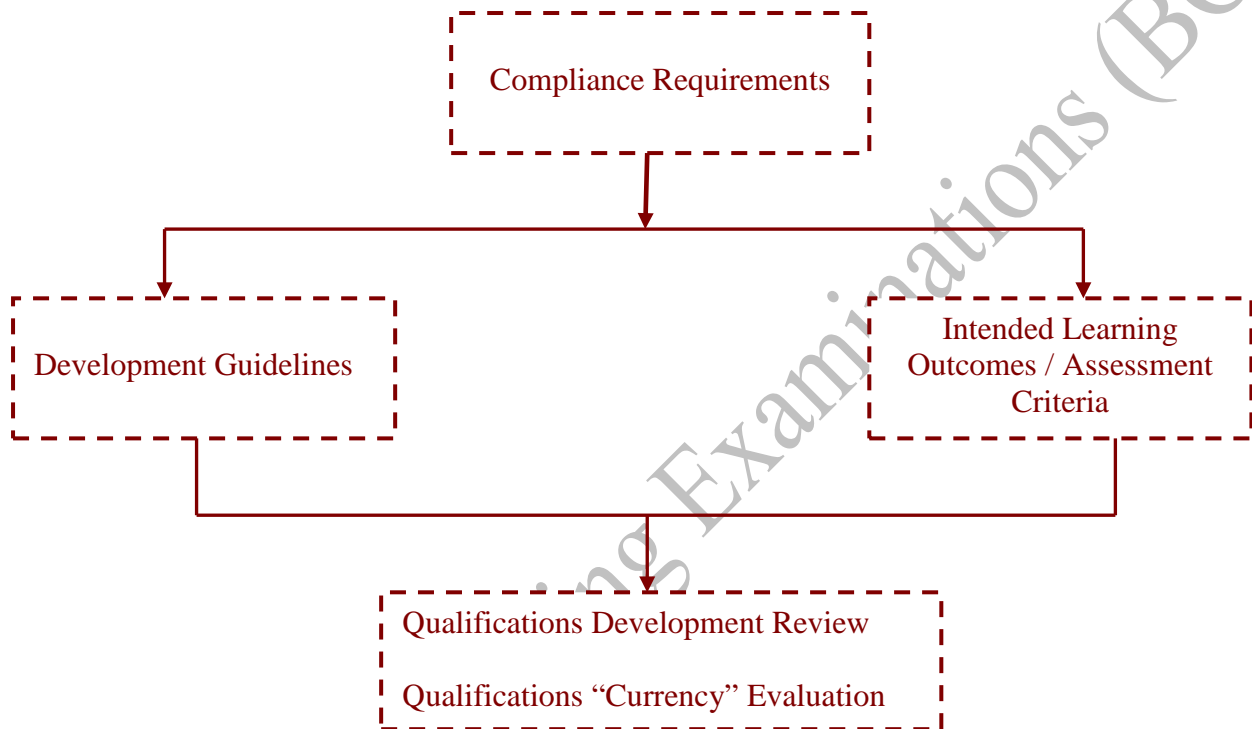
Qualifications specification provide the Centres, Learners, Candidates, Applicants or other enquirers with information about the structure of a qualification, with particular reference to:

- Qualification Units structure and requirement
- Educational aims/qualification outcomes
- Teaching, learning and assessment methods
- Support for learners and candidates' learning
- Admission criteria
- Regulation of assessment and qualification standards
- Indicators of quality and standards
- Methods of evaluating and improving quality and standards
- Guided Learning Hours
- Qualification Credit Framework
- Qualifications and Units Credit
- Content (Intended Learning Outcomes/Assessment Criteria)

BCE needs to ensure that any *new* or *revised* units/qualifications, specifications or learner manuals are rationally appropriate and sound, and that sufficient resources can and will be made available for successful delivery and learner experience. To ensure this, all proposals to

introduce our qualifications, specifications or learner manuals must be undertaken in compliance with the General Conditions of Recognition and Regulatory arrangements for the Credit Framework.

The purpose of the qualification specification is to describe and define clearly what the learners are expected to learn, how they will learn it, how their learning will be assessed, and how the criteria used to judge achievement are aligned to the Intended Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria. It should be clear from the qualification specification how learning activities will enable learners to develop knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, and subject specific skills. It should also be clear how each of the intended learning outcomes will be assessed.

Guidance

1. **Qualification Title**

Purpose: To indicate in broad terms qualification scope and content. This will be used in official publications including the timetable, the prospectus, and awards and examination result transcripts.

2. **Description of the Qualification**

Purpose: To provide an outline of the qualification, that describes the distinctive features of the qualification and identifies any unique activities or opportunities.

3. **Educational Aims of the Qualification**

Purpose: To clarify what the qualification will offer to learners in terms of academic scope, learning and teaching methods, and learning environment. Aims express the broad educational intentions behind providing the qualification, as an answer to the question '*why is this qualification being provided and how does it meet the needs of learners, professional bodies, industries, potential employers and other interested parties?*' The aims section also articulates what is distinctive about the qualification.

4. **Qualification Structure**

Purpose: To provide a description of the structure, timescale, composition, final award, and distinctive structural features of the qualification with details that may be helpful to current or prospective learners and to qualification(s) reviewers.

Format: The following key points are addressed:
- Proficiency Levels (Fail, Pass, Merit or Distinction)
- Qualification Credits
- Qualification Units
- Qualification Title and Code Number
- Award Credit Framework Level
- Rules of Combination
- Progression Routes
- Qualification entry requirements (co-requisite)

5. **Qualification Units**

Purpose: To provide a clear description of the units that a learner is required to take and pass in order to complete the qualification successfully. The specification clearly outlines how a learner can expect to achieve the required number of credits at each stage of the qualification by identifying mandatory units and qualification unit structure. All qualifications are listed by

name and code number. The BCE qualification code number is for internal purpose only; to help minimise errors on selected qualification(s) by learners/centres.

Format: The following key points will be addressed:
- Unit description
- Detailed composition of Units which make up a qualification
- Identification that all Units are mandatory
- Unit pre-requisites
- Project/coursework
- Unit Credits
- Unit Guided Learning Hours (GLH)
- Unit Examination Paper Number
- Methods of Evaluation
- Required materials and supplements
- Recommended Learning Resources

6.   Learning Activities, Teaching and Assessment Methods

Purpose: To outline the learning, teaching, study and assessment methods used to promote learning.

Format: Learning activities, teaching and assessment methods are written in free text. These methods are constructively aligned with the Qualification Unit Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO). Both in-class learning, teaching, independent study methods and assessment are outlined. Due consideration is given to the weighting of contact versus non-contact time and the associated learning requirements linked to ILOs.

Recommended Learning Resources include:
- Textbooks
- BCE produced study packs
- Recommended software
- Power-point slides

7.   Qualification Units Intended Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

Purpose: To make explicit the learning that should be achieved by a typical learner, whatever combination of units is studied for the award, and to indicate to learners the link between their learning and the mode of assessment. To promote consistency in meeting the BCE's academic standards by providing a means for demonstrating that qualification learning outcomes articulate with the Credit Framework Levels and Awards Framework.

Format: These are written in the form of statements of what a successful, typical learner will have achieved by the end of the qualification, i.e. in the form of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and Assessments Criteria for the qualification units. ILOs and assessment criteria will be identified numerically to enable them to be conveniently cross-referenced to teaching and assessment methods. ILOs are written to follow on from the precursor on what learners would be able to achieve on completion of the unit. The verbs used on Assessments Criteria are measurable; assessment provides the evidence that the learners have achieved the specified learning outcomes and assessments criteria. It is therefore appropriate to use such verbs as '*define*', '*analyse*', '*assess*', '*demonstrate*', '*evaluate*', '*classify*', '*explain*', '*describe*'.

ILOs and Assessment Criteria are categorised as follows:

(a) **Specialised unit skills and knowledge**: - the knowledge and skills that learners will have gained by the end of the unit that make the unit distinct and are specialised within a subject area or discipline.

(b) **Academic discipline core skills and knowledge**: - the skills and knowledge that learners will have gained by the end of a qualification that are shared by all learners in a discipline (as defined by the qualification framework benchmarks).

(c) **Personal, transferable/employability skills and knowledge**:- skills and knowledge that learners will have gained from across all units in the qualification and that are readily transferable to employment and other contexts outside of academic activity; for example communication, teamwork and professional standards. These are the most broad-based and generic skills, which will benefit the learner.

Unit ILOs need to reflect the level at which they are aimed, in other words differentiate between Credit Framework levels in content, relative demand, complexity, depth of study and learner autonomy involved in a Qualification. The level descriptors represent a generic understanding of what would be expected as a normal level of achievement at that particular level. They address the following five areas:

- knowledge and understanding (mainly subject based)
- practice (applied knowledge and understanding)
- generic cognitive skills (e.g. evaluation, critical analysis)
- communication and numeracy skills
- autonomy, accountability and working with others

When reviewing qualifications, designers/writers evaluate the outcome vocabulary for the different BCE Credit Framework levels using Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Learning

Class	Description of class	Cue words
Knowledge	- Terminology, facts, conventions, trends and sequences. - Classifications, criteria and methodology. - Theories and principles.	Write State Recall Recognise Select Reproduce List
Comprehension	The ability to translate, interpret and extrapolate knowledge.	Identify Illustrate Represent Formulate Explain Contrast Paraphrase Summarize
Application	The use of theories, principles and ideas in particular and concrete situations.	Predict Select Assess Find Show Use

		Construct Compute Solve
Analysis	• The ability to identify relationships, omissions, parts, organisational structure, unstated assumptions. • To distinguish fact from opinion, conclusions from evidence. • Recognise relevancy for the validation of a judgement • Detect errors in logic. • Distinguish cause and effect.	Select Compare Separate Differentiate Contrast Break down Classify
Synthesis	• Put material together to form a new whole. • Production of unique communication, plan or hypothesis.	Summarise Argue Relate Prècis Organise Generalise Conclude Design
Evaluation	• Quantitative and qualitative judgements about the extent to which material and methods satisfy criteria. • Comparison of major theories. • Evaluation of accuracy of communication using evidence such as consistency or logic.	Judge Evaluate Support Conclude Avoid Select Recognise Criticise.

Identifying Aims and ILOs
When identifying aims and ILOs, writers consider what knowledge, understanding
and skills they intend learners to learn through the qualification. The following questions may
help with this:

- What do you want learners to know and be able to do by the end of the qualification?
- How will learners be able to use this learning? Doing what? In what contexts?
- What level are you aiming for?
- What will learners need to do in order to demonstrate if and how well they have achieved these outcomes?
- If someone were to ask the learners what they have learnt in this unit, how would you like them to answer?

[Also refer Chapter 5; **The Designing of BCE Qualifications** sections in Accreditation Handbook]

Qualifications Development Review

BCE Qualifications designers/writers should focus and pay more attention to the following Credit Framework (CF) Regulatory Arrangements when designing qualifications:
(i) Developing units with defined learning outcomes using the CF methodology of credit (ii) Benchmarking qualifications against CF Descriptors (iii) Using the recommended "*Regulatory Arrangements for Credit Framework*" documentation as the main source of reference to review work and revisions.

Main Principles / Design Points	Response	Corrective Action
1. **Educational Progression - Educational progression involves the learner building on and increasing the knowledge and skills they already have.** a. Do the separate units form a complete whole and achieve progression? b. Does progression in the acquisition of new knowledge also entails the systematic and further development of critical thinking and analytical skills?		
2. **Learners need to be constantly challenged to develop an independent approach to study, take responsibility for their own work, and develop their communication skills, so that they can progress in the acquisition of transferable skills and competencies.** What study and professional skills are identified in different BCE qualifications levels?		
3. **Clear learning outcomes in the form of intended results of study make it possible for instructors/tutors to build on previous units and they are therefore a prerequisite of reliable progression.** Do the unit Intended Learning Outcomes clearly explain the central core of the qualification; the key elements the learners must learn?		
4. **Learning material/content** Do learning outcomes describe course content in detail?		
5. **Testing** Is it possible for tutor/instructor to test the attainment of all learning outcomes?		
6. **Assessment** Can appropriate forms of assessment be selected so that it is possible to determine whether the learning outcomes have been achieved?		
7. **Qualification Requirements** Do the qualification requirements represent the conditions that must be fulfilled for the learner to receive a pass grade for the unit?		
8. **The learner's own learning goals** a. Is it possible to allow learners to write their own goals in addition to the formal learning outcomes? b. Is there any received feedback from Centres regarding the learning outcomes?		
9. **Unplanned learning** Do learning outcomes prevent or support unplanned learning that occurs through the interaction between learners, tutors and the subject/topic?		

10. *Purpose of Learning Outcomes:* **Learner learning becomes central when the focus is on what the learner should be able to achieve by the end of a qualification.** a. Do learning outcomes lead to a focus on learner learning? b. Is it the instructors and their teaching or *learner* learning that is of primary interest or both?		
11. **Clarity** a. Is it clear to learners what is expected of them? b. Can instructors more easily see what their responsibilities are? c. Can higher levels of consensus among the teaching staff be achieved? d. Can instructors teaching subsequent units know what learners are capable of and can adapt the level of their teaching accordingly? e. Is the knowledge, skills and competencies demanded by employers given more emphasis?		
12. **Overall vision and progression** a. Does clarity facilitates the effective linking of unit to the entire qualification? b. Are the objectives describing the skills and abilities that the learner is expected to achieve written and integrated into the unit, for learners to acquire and develop them?		
13. **Realism** a. Do the goals describe what the unit should give (learning intentions) and do they lead to overload or unrealistic goals? b. Are there clear descriptions of the results that learners are expected to attain.		
14. **Clear connections between goals, teaching and assessment** a. Do the assessment determine what, how and when the learner studies and are they aligned with qualification goals. b. Are the goals observable? c. Is it easier to plan teaching to facilitate learning? (Are goals concrete and learner-focused?)		
15. **The process of academic educational development** a. Does the formulation of goals in the form of intended learning outcomes lead to the development of teaching and learning? b. Is there cooperation with colleagues, both within and outside a writer's discipline? c. Does the reflection on learning outcomes leads to discussions about the nature of subject-related knowledge? (which results in a deeper understanding of teaching and its impact on learners.)		
16. **Better quality assurance** a. Is it easier to examine the fulfilment of goals? b. Are the goals centred on the essential aim of teaching, which is learner learning?		

BCE Qualifications Currency Evaluation

To ensure BCE Qualifications are *valid*, *reliable*, *comparable*, *manageable* and *minimise bias*, the Programme Design and Review Panel functional unit meet once a year to assess the "**currency**" of all BCE qualifications. During the process, the Qualifications Evaluation review process carried out is divided into 4 phases; *planning*, *clarifying*, *confirming* and *improving* for the panel to analyse and evaluate all important factors.

Main Principles	Comment	Rating	Corrective Action
Planning Stage			
Qualifications Development principles/opportunities devised to enable learners to demonstrate their learning against performance standard levels.			
1. What is the life space of the qualification?			
2. What are the resources required for the qualification development?			
3. What are the skills the qualification(s) will focus on?			
4. What are the learning hours and specification content type?			
5. What is the qualification structure and pass levels?			
6. Are qualifications designed in accordance with the Regulatory arrangements for Credit Framework?			
7. Are there any changes or additions required in: a. Developers' Terms of Reference (Roles and Responsibilities) b. BCE Qualifications Development and Assessment Management documents			
8. What are the major reference documents and sections (BCE's own or Regulatory agency)			
Clarifying Stage			
Implementation of performance standards levels / objectives			
1. What are the opportunities/job prospects for learners?			
2. What are relevant units in the qualification?			
3. What is the emphasis of each unit (aim and learning outcomes)?			
4. What are the achievements expected from each unit?			
5. What are the learning requirements?			
6. What are current national developments/priorities?			
7. What are required design requirements?			
8. Outline the process of benchmarking qualifications			

	against CF descriptors			
Confirming Stage Applying qualifications performance standards consistently.				
1.	What are BCE policies / regulations related to qualifications development?			
2.	What are the procedures to maintain and promote qualifications?			
3.	What are entry qualification levels and progression routes?			
4.	Can you analyse/describe relevance of subject matter?			
5.	Are current practices best for qualification promotions?			
6.	Do the Intended Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria describe what the learners should be able to do or demonstrate, in terms of particular knowledge, skills and attitudes, by the end of the qualification?			
7.	Have all questions in the qualifications development review document been answered?			
Improving Stage Qualifications quality assurance and validation process.				
1.	What can be done to improve consistency of Teaching and Learning Strategies between centres?			
2.	What are weaknesses in the qualifications development process?			
3.	Design questionnaires for Centres regarding actual content they cover and if GLH gives ample time.			
4.	Design action plans to improve quality			
5.	Which other industries/businesses can be engaged in consultations?			
6.	Can you analyse existing Centre feedback regarding qualifications?			
7.	What are your views regarding quality, accuracy and fairness of BCE published materials (including BCE website)			
8.	What is the current status regarding recognition of qualifications in industry?			

9.	What can be added on the current review process?			
10.	What are the current BCE qualification piloting schemes? Are they efficient?			
11.	How are piloting evaluation reports implemented into the final curriculum?			