



COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Qualification standards in higher education: what is their aim and how will they achieve it?

Possible development of a standard
in Library and Information Science

LIASA, 13 October 2016

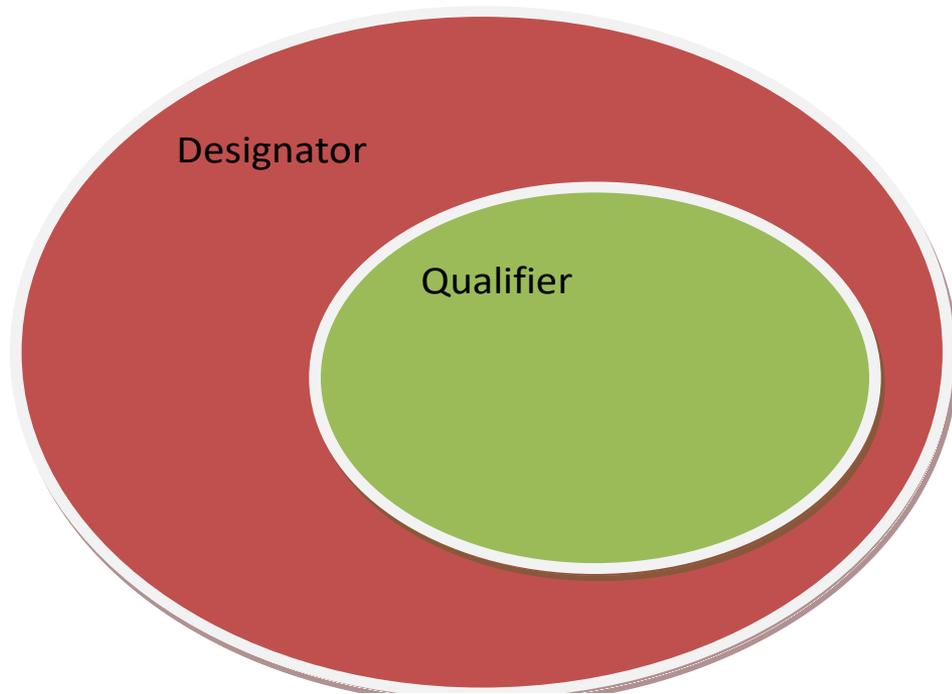
For discussion

- What is the mandate of the CHE?
- What is a national qualification standard?
- Why a national standard?
- What roles does a national standard play?
- Who develops a national standard?
- For what qualification(s) should a standard be developed?

CHE mandate

- Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997, as amended.
- NQF Act, 67 of 2008.
- HE Qualifications Sub-Framework, , CHE, 2013.
- Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education, CHE, 2013.

What's the qualification: designator and qualifier: the relationship?



The relationship?



CESM and field of study (from HEQSF alignment, 2015)

- CESM 20.
- **Designator:** Library and Information Science; Library and Information Studies; Information Science.
- **Qualifier:** e.g., Information Science in Library Science; Social Science in Library and Information Science; Arts in Information Science.

Qualification standard: the focus (the Framework)

- Aligning a qualification type and exit level

with

- the **purpose** (matching the programme content with graduate needs and interests)
- and **graduate attributes** (what the graduate has demonstrated and is capable of carrying into the world of activity)

of a qualification in a particular field of study/discipline (designator/qualifier).

A **threshold** for compliance; a **benchmark** for programme development.

A Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education

Principles

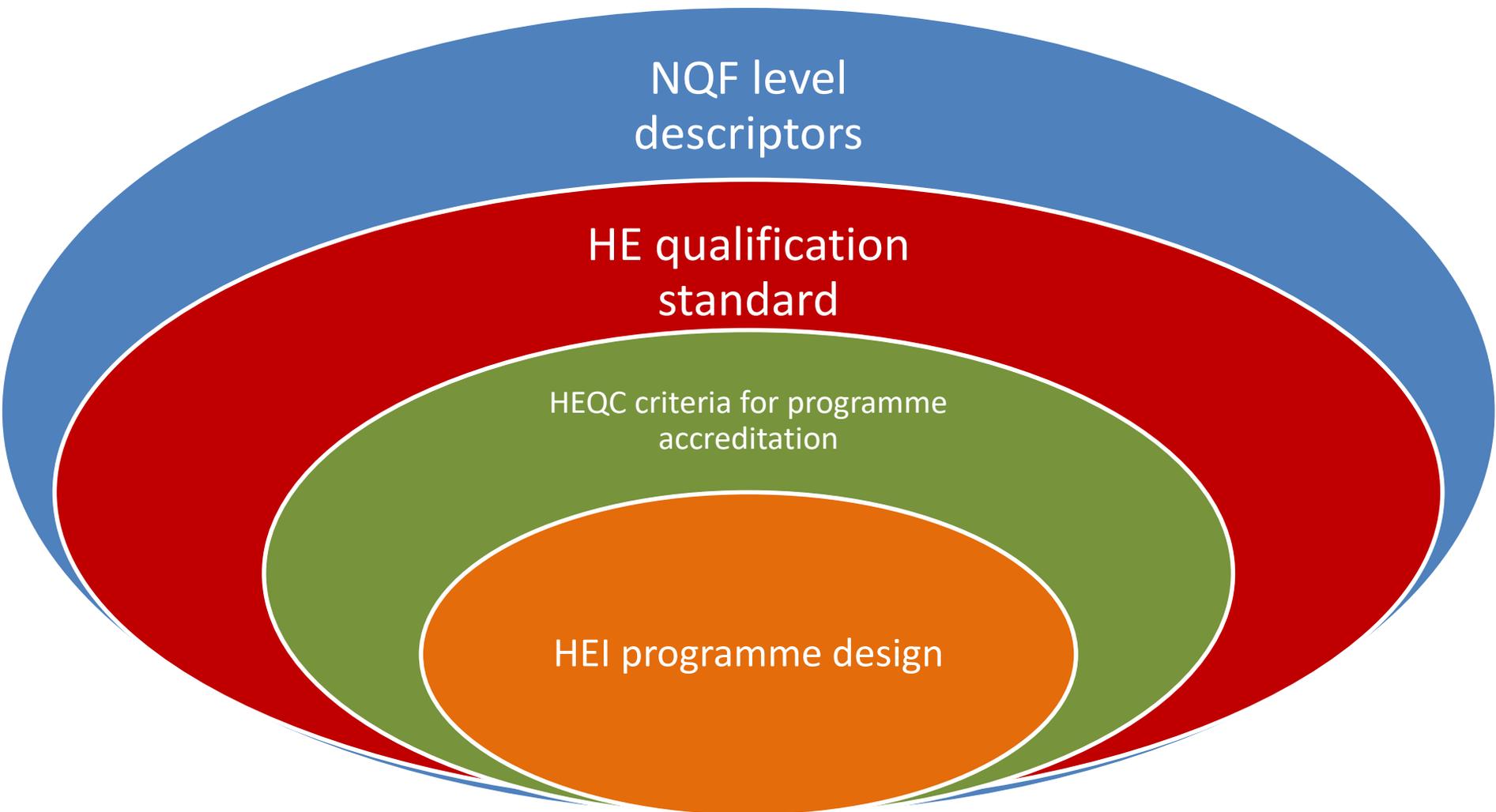
- A central role for expert **communities of practice** (the **academic community**).
- Standards are **generative** rather than prescriptive, allowing for innovation and creativity.
- Establish a **threshold** for each qualification type, variant and field of study.
- Reasonable **durability**.

A Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education

Characteristics

- Acknowledge contextual diversity.
- Respect institutional autonomy.
- Recognise the role of professional bodies.
- Avoid over-regulation.
- Identify graduate attributes, not the curriculum or methods used to achieve them.
- Establish benchmark for accreditation, national review, and other QA processes (external, internal).
- Steer clear of hierarchies and rankings.

A 'nested' approach



NQF level
descriptors

HE qualification
standard

HEQC criteria for programme
accreditation

HEI programme design

Pathways and learning domains

Pathways			
Contextual	↔		Conceptual
Occupational	Professional	General	
e.g., paramedical practice	e.g., MBChB	B Sc (Microbiology)	

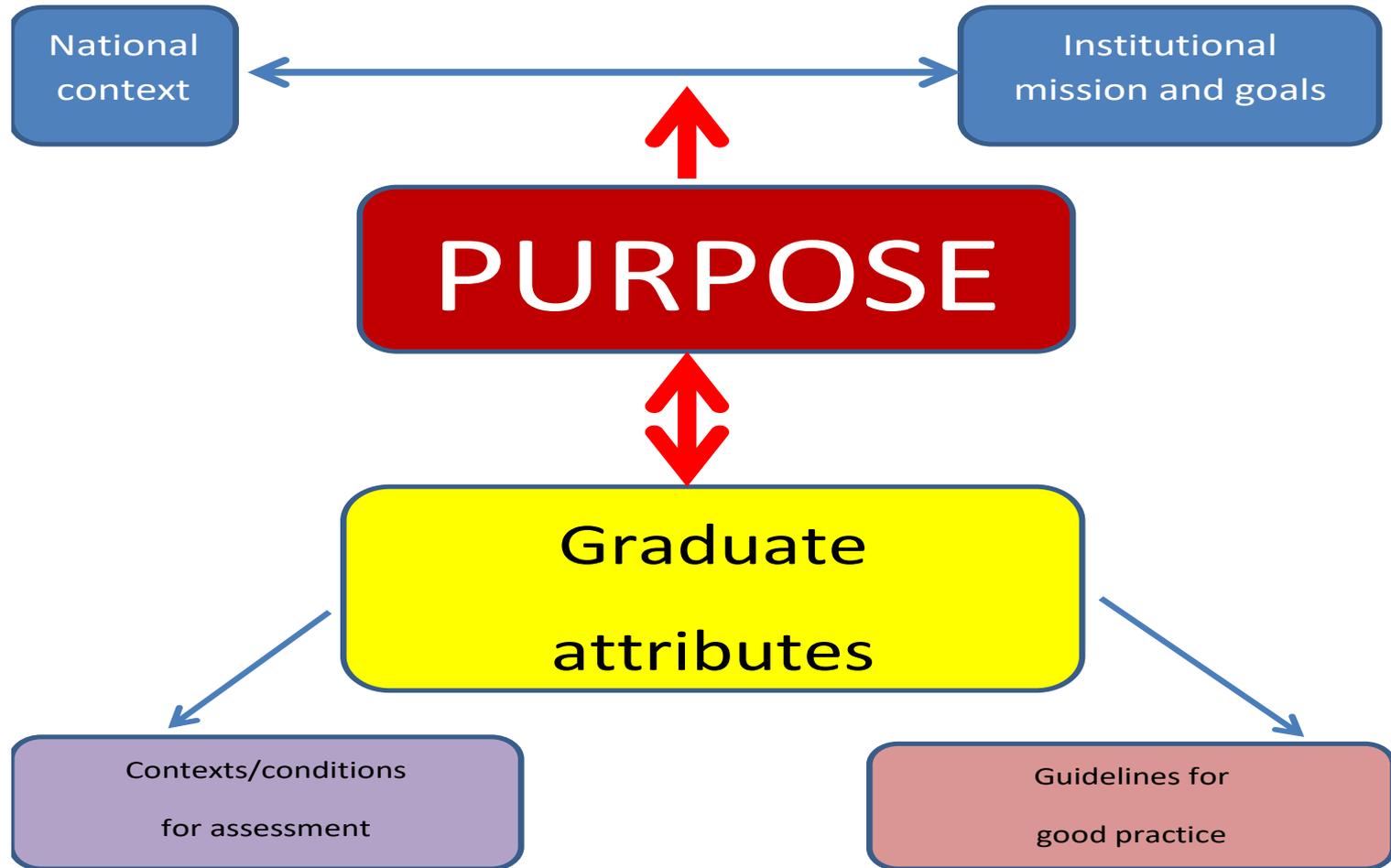
Learning domains

Skills

Knowledge

Applied competence

Format of a standards statement



Pathways, learning domains and the qualification type

- Relationship between knowledge (conceptual and theoretical), skills (application of knowledge), and applied competence (capacity to apply knowledge and skills in both familiar and unfamiliar environments) in different types:
- Certificate (Higher, Advanced);
- Diploma (including PG Diploma);
- Bachelor Degree (followed by Hons, M and D).

Standard statement: format

- Preamble: establishing the context for a current national qualification.
- Purpose statement.
- Alignment with the HEQSF and NQF level descriptors.
- Graduate attributes (knowledge; skills; applied competence).
- Contexts and conditions for assessment.
- Progression.
- Guidelines for above-threshold practice (?).
- Glossary (if required).

Graduate attributes (1)

- The term 'graduate attributes' refers to the extent to which the **blend of learning domains** (knowledge, skill and applied competence) **reflect the purpose** of the qualification type, and the extent to which the blend is **reflected in the competence of the graduate**. It is used in preference to the terms 'outcomes' and 'assessment criteria' because those are normally provider-based and can vary from one to another qualification of the same qualification type; moreover, they comprise a set of subject and skill procedures, but do not always directly address the purpose of the qualification.
- The term 'graduate attributes' includes not only what the student has learnt upon graduation, but also the capacity to apply, transfer, extend and innovate with in relevant practice.

Graduate attributes (2)

- Graduate attributes have a number of points of reference. Some are shared by the **higher education sector as a whole** (such as attributes relating to academic authenticity); some will emanate from the specific mission and ethos of **the awarding institution** (such as reflectiveness on local needs); others are shaped by **the disciplinary context and knowledge**
- in which they are conceptualized and taught. It is the last-mentioned type of attribute that qualification standards ought to identify, taking into account the fact that they will often find common ground with attributes of a more generic kind.

Some Conference topics: what attributes are essential for a well-rounded graduate?

- Libraries and innovative C21 thinking; dynamic opportunities
- ICT development in libraries; cloud and mobile technologies; bridging the digital divide; e-resources
- Transformation in the sector: Library and community; library and democratic culture
- Library: role in teaching, learning and research
- Global networked library infrastructure
- E-learning and ODL
- The social media landscape; role of social media
- Work-integrated learning?

What a qualification standard does **NOT** aim to do (1)

- Does not determine **access** criteria.
- Does not prescribe **duration**. (A standard does set minimum credits and NQF exit level.)
- Does not prescribe **curriculum design**. (But core knowledge, skills and applied competence are set.)
- Does not determine **teaching and learning methods**.

What a qualification standard does **NOT** aim to do (2)

- ❑ Sets context and conditions for assessment, but does not prescribe **assessment methods**.
(These are matters relating to individual **programmes**, and are the responsibility of the awarding institution.)
- ❑ Does not **directly** influence transformation in the provision of library studies, but seeks to establish a context (social, cultural, technological, temporal) in which they occur.

Standard(s) for what qualification(s)?

- Proposal: **Bachelor of Library and Information Science.**
- Single designator; no qualifier.
- Exit level NQF 7; minimum 360 credits; ready for Honours level study
- (alternative: exit level NQF 8; minimum 480 credits; ready for M-level study).
- Agreement on occupational/ professional/ general qualification identity and purpose.

Who develops the standard?

- CHE invites HEIs offering the qualification (or intending to) to submit nomination for membership of a standard development reference group.
- Nominee's CV demonstrates expertise and experience in the field.
- Members of the reference group participate in individual academic capacity, not as representative of institution or other interested party.
- CHE selects members of a reference group.
- Reference group meets under the auspices of (and funded by) the CHE.

Developing a qualification standard

- Standard development Reference Group, comprising individual non-aligned experts.
- The reference group achieves consensus on a standards statement.
- The standard statement is disseminated broadly for public comment.
- Comments are considered by the working group; standard revised accordingly.
- Standard statement is endorsed by the HEQC.
- Standard statement is approved by the Council.
- SAQA is informed of the approved standard statement.