THE UGANDA HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

PART ONE:
THE SCOPE, PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE FRAMEWORK

1.1 Title
This framework shall be known as the **Uganda Higher Education Qualifications Framework (UHEQF).**

1.2 The Framework
The UHEQF is a normative instrument designed to show how different higher education qualifications relate to each other and provides a basis for comparability of qualifications using a common language. It is intended to help learners make informed decisions on the qualifications they wish to pursue. The framework also enables learners to identify progression pathways suitable for their chosen career. The framework, benchmarked on best regional and international practices, encourages lifelong learning and provides for the promotion of an integrated and labour market-driven higher education and training at all learning outlets. It is built on a credit system that enables the quantification of the volume of learning and on learning outcomes that describe what learners are expected to understand or demonstrate at every stage of learning. The framework is structured into levels to depict an increasing complexity of learning achievements, responsibility and autonomy conferred upon the learners. It also provides for a mechanism for naming and interpreting of higher education qualifications.

1.3 Scope
The UHEQF shall apply to all qualifications within the Uganda Higher Education area and provides for the promotion of an integrated and labour market-driven higher education and training at all learning outlets. The framework provides for the recognition of prior learning, a mechanism of credit accumulation and transfer, equating of national and foreign qualifications and a platform for understanding higher education qualifications generally.

1.4 Purpose

To provide a basis for assessment, certification, recognition and interpretation of learning acquired either through conventional or non-conventional modes and to provide a mechanism for equating of foreign qualifications.

1.5 Objectives of the UHEQF

The UHEQF is intended to:

a. Provide a basis for benchmarking qualifications in the Uganda Higher Education area;

b. Provide a harmonized nomenclature for higher education qualifications in Uganda;

c. Provide a basis for the comparability of qualifications obtained in Uganda with those obtained elsewhere and vice-versa;

d. Provide a mechanism for credit accumulation and transfer and the award of intermediate qualifications;

e. Provide a mechanism for multiple entry and multiple exit routes into and out of higher education programmes;

f. Provide a mechanism for assessment and certification of learning acquired through non-conventional modes;

g. Promote lifelong learning by helping people identify clear progression routes from one level to another;

h. Guide and support higher education institutions in curriculum development and review in order to ensure that quality and labour market-driven programmes are offered to the public;

i. Remove duplications and overlaps of qualifications while ensuring that all learning needs are covered;

j. Enable the interpretation and comprehension of the various higher education qualifications;

k. Promote public and professional confidence in the integrity and relevance of awards.

1.6 Justification

For a very long time in Uganda, the higher education sub-sector has not operated as a system with individual higher education providers properly co-coordinated. The framework will make higher education more relevant, transparent, flexible, cost effective and therefore efficient. The UHEQF will also facilitate the operationalization of the East African Common Market Protocol for which Uganda is a signatory. Under the common market, partner states agreed to mutually recognize academic and professional qualifications as well professional experiences acquired.

1.7 Assumptions

The UHEQF is developed on the assumption that:

a. There will be a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) spanning from early childhood to doctoral levels and the UHEQF will be a subset of the National Qualifications Framework.
b. The NQF is expected to have nine levels (1-9) and UHEQF will start from level four.

1.8 Glossary of Terms

a. **Award** means degree, diploma or certificate conferred to a person and issued by a recognized awarding institution or body.
b. *Competence* means the proven ability *to use kn*owledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.
c. **Credit Accumulation** means the totalling of credit units over time towards the completion of a programme of study.
d. **Credit Transfer** means the relocation of credits from one progamme of study to another for purposes of attainment of an award on the same or different level of the qualification framework.
e. **Credit Accumulation and Transfer** means an arrangement where credits acquired over time from one or more programmes of study are relocated to a the same or similar programme of study for purposes of attainment of an award at the same of different levels of the qualification framework.
f. **Expected Learning Outcomes (ELO)** means statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do on successful completion of a learning process. ELO are normally expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences.
g. **Formal Learning** means learning that occurs in an organised and structured education and training environment usually with an intended purpose of attaining an award or earning credits.
h. **Higher education** means a post secondary (Post Advanced-level) course of study or programme leading to the award of qualifications on the Uganda Higher Education Qualifications Framework. In terms of the qualifications framework, higher education covers education and training from Level 4 to Level 9.
i. **Informal learning** means learning that results from various contexts such as paid or unpaid work, involvement in social or community activities or life experience in general.

j. **Knowledg**e means the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that are related to a field of work or study.

k. **Life-Long Learning** means the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, values, skills, competencies and/or experience in all contexts of life.

l. **Non-formal Learning** means planned educational interventions that are not intended for an attainment of a formal or recognised award but often intended for improved workplace practice.

m. *Skill* means the ability to acquire, appreciate and apply kn*owledge* to complete tasks and solve problems.

n. **Qualification** means a formal award from an assessment and validation process, which is obtained when a recognized awarding body determines that an individual has achieved intended learning outcomes to given standards.

o. **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** means a process where through which a person's previous learning experience is assessed and formally recognized for purposes of access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system or workplace.

PART TWO:
UHEQF LEVEL DESRCIPTORS

2.1 Introduction

The framework is structured into qualifications levels that depict an increasing complexity of learning achievements as well as responsibility and autonomy conferred upon the leaners.

Table 2.1 Levels of the Uganda National Qualifications Framework

Levels	Education levels	Typical Qualifications at This Level
Level I	**Primary Education**	Primary Leaving Certificate
Level 2	**Secondary Education**	Uganda Certificate of Education(UCE or simply O-level).
Level 3		Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE or simply A-level)
Level 4	**Higher Education**	Higher Education Certificate, University Foundation Programme
Level 5		Ordinary Diploma
Level 6		Advanced/Higher Diploma
Level 7		Bachelors
Level 8		Masters degrees/ Post Graduate Certificate/Diploma
Level 9		Doctorate

The Higher Education Qualifications Framework covers levels four to nine. It is hoped that other mandated bodies in Uganda shall develop qualification frameworks for other levels and all these shall be integrated into a national qualifications framework.

2.2 Level Descriptors

The UHEQF is designed to start from level four up to level nine and for each level, a general descriptors of what is expected in terms of knowledge, skills, competences and responsibility is given. Level descriptors describe the general nature of learning achievements at each level and provide guidelines for differentiating the varying levels of complexity of qualifications in the framework. Level descriptors are thus broad, generic and cross-field statements of achievement at a particular level of study and often not specific to any field of study. They are qualitative statements against which programme or qualification specific learning outcomes can be developed, compared and located. Any two qualifications at the same level of the

UHEQF simply indicates that the qualifications are broadly comparable in terms of the level of learning achievement but does not indicate that they have the same purpose, content or outcomes. While designing programmes, Higher Education Institutions shall use these generic level descriptors to be able to design the qualifications specific outcomes.

2.2.1 Level 4: Higher Education Certificate

The Higher Education Certificate (HEC) provides learners with the basic introductory knowledge, cognitive and conceptual tools and practical techniques for further higher education studies in their chosen field of study. The knowledge emphasizes general principles and application. Attainment of a HEC signifies that the learner has attained a basic level of higher education knowledge and competence in a particular field or occupation and is capable of applying such knowledge and competence in an occupation or role in the workplace. Generally, holders of HEC are expected to be better prepared for further studies and the world of work.

The individuals who obtain this award are required to:

a. Demonstrate basic knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study;

b. Demonstrate an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of arguments and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their area of study;

c. Evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area of study and/or work;

d. Communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments;

e. Apply their subject-related transferable skills in contexts where individuals may have some limited personal responsibility, but the criteria for decisions and the scope of the task are well defined;

f. Undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment;

g. Work with others to achieve defined objectives. In addition, they should be able to take up leadership roles in group work;

2.2.1.1 Purpose of the HEC

The Higher Education is intended for the following categories:

a. **Foreign Students**: The HEC shall serve as a foundation programme for foreign students whose secondary school qualifications are not considered equivalent to UACE but permit admission into Higher Education in the country where the school certificate was obtained. Holders of Foreign School Certificates shall show proof of proficiency in English and a No Objection Certificate. A No Objection Certificate is an endorsement from a foreign competent authority that the candidate meets the foreign county's minimum admission requirements into higher education;

b. **UACE Holders**: The HEC is also intended for holders of the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education or equivalent qualifications but who may not have attained sufficient grades to enrol for Diplomas or Degree programmes in Uganda;

c. **Bridging between Arts/Science Divide**: Students undertaking the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education are either Science or Arts based. This early specialisation defines the university programmes they are to pursue with almost no flexibility to cross from either Arts based programmes to Science based programmes or vice-versa. A HEC programme can be designed to enrol UACE holders with subject combination in Arts and reorient towards Sciences for purposes of admission into science based undergraduate programmes. The reverse is also true for Science based UACE holders who may be oriented towards Arts programmes. Given the level of academic maturity and the exposure to both Arts and Sciences, such candidates may be better placed for undergraduate university programmes than those who just specialised at the Advanced School Level;

d. **Linkage between the Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework and the Higher Education Qualifications Framework**. One of the challenges facing holders of vocational qualifications is the inability to cross over to Higher Education at the same levels as those with school qualifications. For example, although an Enrolled Nursing Certificate is equivalent to the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education, holders of the former can only join degree programme after two and a half years of an intermediate diploma in addition to years of experience, while holders of UACE can enrol for degree programmes right away. There is a belief that holders of vocational qualifications may be highly skilled but lack adequate theoretical underpinning to join knowledge-based higher education

programmes. A HEC programme can be designed to enrol holders of vocational qualifications and expose them to rigorous theoretical foundations that will enable them pursue desired higher education programmes.

2.2.2 Level 5: Technical Diploma Level /Non-Technical Diploma

At this level there are Technical and Non-Technical Diplomas. Technical Diploma programmes are generally designed to prepare candidates for direct entry into a particular occupation or trade. Programmes leading to this qualification tend to have a strong vocational, professional or career focus and as a result they tend to comprise of 70-75% practical and 25 -30% theory instructions. A Non – Technical Diploma normally tends to integrate/emphasize academic disciplines in the curriculum coverage and is awarded to an individual who completes a technical education and training programme comprising of 70-75% theory and 25 -30% practical instructions.

2.2.2.1 Technical Diplomas

A Technical Diploma or an equivalent award qualifies individuals who apply integrated technical and theoretical concepts in a broad range of contexts to undertake advanced skilled or mid- career professional work and as a pathway to further learning. The individuals who obtain this award are required to:

a. Have the ability to acquire varied range of specialized knowledge and skills to interpret technical information;
b. Be able to modify and perform complex technical operations within a broad scope of work and varied structured contexts;
c. Perform activities with moderate degree of autonomy in resource control and exhibit middle level managerial competence;
d. Demonstrate technical skills and competences to complete routine and non-routine tasks and functions;
e. Use cognitive skills to identify, analyse, compare and act on information from a range of sources;
f. Pursue and progress their own career in a confident and entrepreneurial manner;
g. Communicate effectively and be able to transmit information, ideas, problems and resolutions cogently to experts and non-experts;

h. Diagnose and prescribe solutions proportionate to mid-career practice in known or changing contexts;

i. Apply soft, team and interpersonal skills that are appropriate to the world of work;

j. Be responsible and developmental members of the society.

2.2.2.2 Non-Technical Diplomas

A non-technical diploma or an equivalent award qualifies individuals who apply a broad range of specialized knowledge and skills in varied contexts to undertake skilled work and as a pathway for further learning. The individuals who obtain this award are required to:

a. Use knowledge, comprehension and practical skills in the world of work;

b. Use technical skills to complete routine and non-routine tasks and functions;

c. Use cognitive skills to identify, analyse, compare and act on information from a range of sources;

d. Pursue and progress their own career in a confident and entrepreneurial manner;

e. Communicate effectively and be able to transmit information, ideas, problems and resolutions cogently to experts and non-experts.

f. Use soft, team and interpersonal skills that are appropriate to the world of work;

g. Be responsible and developmental member of the society.

2.2.3 Level 6: Advanced/Higher Diploma Level

An Advanced/Higher Diploma or an equivalent award qualifies individuals who apply specialized knowledge in range of contexts to undertake advanced skilled or mid-career professional work and as a pathway for further learning. In addition to the competences of an ordinary diploma holder, the holder of Advanced/Higher Diploma should be able to:

a. Acquire and apply broad and in-depth knowledge in a range of contexts to undertake specialized and integrated technical and theoretical tasks in one or more fields of work and learning;

b. Modify concepts and procedures and perform complex technical operations within unpredictable work contexts;

c. Undertake activities with a substantial degree of autonomy, resource control and exhibit managerial competence;

d. Assess situations and make appropriate decisions, taking into account social, environmental, scientific and ethical issues with substantial degree of autonomy.

2.2.4 Level 7: Bachelor's Degree Level

A bachelor's degree or an equivalent award qualifies individuals for general employment, entry into postgraduate programmes and research as well as highly skilled careers. It enables the individuals to perform responsibilities which require great autonomy in professional decision-making.

In addition to the competences of a higher diploma holder, the Bachelors degree is conferred on individuals, who are able to:

a. Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension on fundamentals of a field of study;

b. Use the knowledge acquired professionally;

c. Apply the acquired knowledge and skills in identifying and analyzing issues and providing evidenced based solutions;

d. Demonstrate basic techniques and capabilities to search and use data to make decisions having considered social, scientific and relevant ethical issues;

e. Communicate effectively and convey information, ideas, problems and solutions to experts and non-experts;

f. Demonstrate team and inter-personal skills, which are suitable for the world of work;

g. Acquire independent study skills to enhance lifelong learning;

h. Be socially responsible, accountable and contribute to the development of the society in general.

2.2.5 Level 8: Postgraduate Certificate/Postgraduate Diploma/Masters Degree Levels

2.2.5.1 Postgraduate Certificate/Postgraduate Diploma

The Postgraduate Certificate (PGC) or Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) is designed to extend and deepen an individual's knowledge and skills beyond a Bachelor's degree level. A holder of a Postgraduate Certificate or a postgraduate diploma should be able to show evidence of advanced knowledge about a specialist field of enquiry or professional practice. A PGC

or PGD is designed to prepare an individual for independent research and scholarship in the area of study;

A Postgraduate Certificate or a Postgraduate Diploma is conferred on individuals who are able to:

a. Show evidence of advanced knowledge about a specialist field of enquiry or professional practice;

b. Engage in rigorous intellectual debate, analysis and criticism;

c. Use the knowledge and comprehension to solve problems related to the field of study in new situations and multi-disciplinary contexts;

d. Integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes from different fields to manage complex matters.

2.2.5.2 Master's Degrees

A Master's degree or an equivalent qualification provides for the advanced knowledge, skills and abilities beyond the Bachelors level. In addition to Level 7 competences, The Master's degree is conferred on individuals who are able to:

a. Apply an advanced body of knowledge in the context of research, professional practice or scholarship;

b. Use the knowledge and comprehension to solve problems related to the field of study in new situations and multi-disciplinary contexts;

c. Integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes from different fields to manage complex matters;

d. Evaluate and make decision in situations with limited information by considering social responsibilities and related ethics;

e. Communicate technical skills to present a coherent and justified argument and to disseminate research results to specialist and non-specialist audiences;

f. Demonstrate mastery of a study discipline with a high degree of autonomy including originality or creativity in the application of knowledge, skills and practice in the study area.

A master's degree can be earned in any of the following ways[1].

A. **Master's Degree by Coursework and Dissertation (Plan A)**: A Master's Degree by coursework and Research (sometimes referred to as Plan A)

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[1] NCHE has developed detailed Minimum Standards for Conducting Postgraduate Studies(PGC, PGD, Masters and PhDs) in Uganda in a separate document.

shall consist of taught courses prescribed by an institution and a dissertation arising out of a candidate's research undertaking. The coursework component is expected to constitute of 50% of the workload and is normally covered in the first two semesters. The last two semesters are devoted to research undertaking, resulting into a dissertation.

B. **Professional Master's Degrees (Master's degree by Coursework and Project Report or Plan B)**: A Master's Degree by coursework and project report shall consist of taught courses prescribed by an institution and a project report. A Master's Degree by coursework and project report offers advanced taught courses constituting at least 75% of the entire workload. At the end of the taught part, the candidate is required to apply the acquired knowledge and skills in a project/industrial training/field attachment.

C. **Master's Degree by Research Only:** A candidate pursuing Master's Degree programmes by research only may not receive any structured instruction apart from the crosscutting courses and selected discipline-related courses that are tailor-made to the candidates research work. Most of the time is devoted to research resulting into a dissertation.

2.2.6   Level 9: Doctoral Degree Level

A doctoral degree provides for a further enhancement of knowledge, skills and abilities. The degree qualifies individuals who apply substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge, in one or more fields of study/investigation, scholarship or professional practice.

In addition to the competences of a masters degree holder, a doctorate is conferred on students who are able to:

a. Show a systematic comprehension, independent and an in - depth understanding of a discipline with a mastery of skills and research processes related to the field of study;

b. Contribute to the original research that broadens the boundary of knowledge through an in- depth thesis/dissertation and defense;

c. Use intellectual independence to think critically, evaluate existing knowledge and ideas, undertake systematic investigations and reflect on theory and practice to generate original knowledge;

d. Communicate with peers, scholarly communities and society at large concerning the field of expertise;

e. Demonstrate ability to use technologies and make appropriate innovations;

f. Take leadership in the area of expertise in evaluating and making decisions in situations with limited information while considering social responsibilities and related ethics.

Doctoral degrees can be earned in any of the following ways:

A. **Doctoral degrees by Research only**: Candidate pursuing doctorate degree programmes by research only receive no structured instruction apart from the crosscutting courses. Most of the time is devoted to research resulting into a thesis.

B. **Doctoral Degree by Coursework and Research**: An individual pursuing a doctoral degree by coursework and research is expected to undertake prescribed (advanced, rigorous and intensive) courses in the programme of study. In addition, s/he shall fulfil all thesis and examination requirements.

C. **Doctoral Degree by Publication**s: A doctoral degree by publications is where papers based upon the candidate's research form a substantial part of the thesis content. Each published paper constitutes a chapter of the thesis.

D. **Integrated MPhil/PhD Programme:** The Integrated MPhil/PhD comprises a taught component leading to the award of an MPhil and a research component leading to the award of a PhD. The students undertake the two components of the programme simultaneously and shall complete both if they are to be awarded the doctorate.

2.3 LINKAGES BETWEEN UVQF, BTVET TRAINING AND THE UGANDA HIGHER EDUCATIONL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (UHEQF)

Level	School Pathway	Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET)	Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework (UVQF)	UHEQF Pathway	Level
9				Doctoral Degrees	9
8				Masters Degree Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate	8
7				Bachelors Degree	7
				Under RPL, holders of BTVET diplomas and Higher Diplomas join Level 7 of UHEQF 7 and get exemptions.	
6		**Higher Diploma**		Advanced/Higher Diploma	6
5		**Ordinary Diploma**	**Higher Diploma**	Diploma	5
4		**Craft Part II**	**Ordinary Diploma**	Higher Education Certificate	4
				Holders of BTVET Craft Certificate can join the UHEQF at levels 4, 5 or 7 depending on the performance. UVQF Level II& III holders join UHEQF at level 4.	
3	**Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education**	**Craft Part I Certificate**	**UVQF Level II Certificate & UVQF Level III Certificate**		

Holders of UACE enroll directly into the levels 4-7 of UHEQF depending on performance

	(UACE)			
2	Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE)	Uganda Junior Craft Certificate	UVQF Level I Certificate	
1	Primary Leaving Certificate (PLE)		Modular transcript/ Worker's PAS	

PART THREE
THE CREDIT SYSTEM

3.1 The Credit System in Uganda

A credit is a quantitative measure that represents the volume of learning or academic load required to attain set learning outcomes. The volume of learning or an academic load of a learner is an aggregation of all learning activities such as lectures, tutorials/seminars, assignments, practical training, independent study, research work, and fieldwork, as well as preparing for and sitting for examinations.

The credit system is fundamentally a mechanism for describing learning achieved in terms of its volume and intellectual demand. It can help providers of higher education to design programmes in different disciplines and contexts, which are similar in volume and intellectual demand.

Every course or module within a given study programme will be allocated credits which will represent the estimated number of notional hours a typical learner is expected to spend learning in order to achieve the expected learning outcomes of that course or module. A course or module with more credits will generally require more learning time than any other course or module at the same level with lesser credits. In the case of the UHEQF, one credit is equivalent to 10 notional hours. This definition of credits is opposed to the current practice where credits are defined in terms of contact hours. The concept of notional hours looks at the learning workload from the learner's perspective and therefore aggregates all learning activities that s/he is involved in order to achieve intended learning outcomes. Translating from the current practice of defining credits in terms of contact hours to the new way of defining them in terms of notional hours may require some considerable effort. The rule of thumb for relating notional hours to contact hours is that one contact hour requires on average two extra hours of study for undergraduate programmes and three additional hours for masters, PGDs and PGC programmes.

The credit rating used in the UHEQF does not in anyway indicate that the learner has attained the intended learning outcomes. The attainment of expected learning outcomes is demonstrated when the learner satisfies the assessment criteria. A learner will therefore earn all credits allocated to a given course or module when he or she has satisfied the assessment criteria for that course. In Uganda the assessment criteria for a given course or module will involve the grading of coursework (assignments, practicals

where applicable and continuous assessment tests) and the end of semester examination. A final mark is normally computed as a weighted average of the coursework and the final examination.

A leaner shall be required to pass the coursework with at least 40% mark before they are allowed to progress and sit for final examination in that course unit.

Once the learner satisfies the assessment criteria for coursework, then a final mark shall be computed as a weighted average of the coursework and the final examination.

The pass mark for undergraduate programmes (at levels 4-7) shall be 50% while the pass mark for postgraduate courses (at levels 8&9) shall be 60%.

A learner who satisfies the assessment criteria for a given course unit or module gets the entire credit units allocated for that unit while one who fails the assessment criteria gets no credit units.

The following Example illustrates the assessment criteria.
Suppose four Students A, B, C & D undertake a module with three credit units and they score 32%, 42%, 80% & 52% respectively in the Coursework. Student A has failed the assessment criteria for the Coursework and shall not be allowed to proceed to the final examination. Student B, C & D will proceed to sit for the final examination. Suppose that the final mark for B, C & D is 50%, 38% and 70% respectively. Suppose further that the weight for the coursework is 30% and final examination is 70%, then the aggregated mark for students B is 0.3*42% + 0.7*50%=47.6, the aggregated mark for student C is 0.3*80% + 0.7*38%= 50.6 and the aggregated Mark for student D is 0.3*52%+0.7*70%=64.5.

It is therefore only students C and D who have satisfied the assessment criteria and will get the three credit units.

3.2 Rationale for a Credit System
The justification for developing a credit system is illustrated by the woes of a certain Mr. Otim who had enrolled for a four year engineering degree programme at Makerere University. After failing in the final year engineering examinations, he decided to enroll at a Uganda Technical College (UTC) for a Technical Diploma. The UTC could not recognize the work done at Makerere and therefore required Otim to spend two full years for the technical diploma. After successfully completing the

Technical Diploma, Otim decided to enroll for a Teaching Diploma at the Uganda National Teachers College (NTC) that would allow him to teach in secondary schools. He was required to spend two full years at the NTC because work done at Makerere and at the UTC could not be recognized. Otim got a Teaching Diploma and taught for a year after which he felt that he wanted to have a degree in the art of teaching. He applied at a Ugandan University and enrolled for a three year Bachelor of Education Degree to teach technical subjects. He successfully completed the Bachelor of Education degree specializing in technical education. All the learning he had acquired at Makerere, the UTC and the NTC could not be used to reduce the three years requirement to finish the bachelor of education degree. It took Otim 25 years (13 in primary and secondary, twelve years in the higher education sub-sector) to get a single undergraduate degree.

3.3 Benefits of Credit System

The credit system offers the following benefits:

a. It facilitates multiple entries into higher education programme. As a result, it offers opportunities to holders of certificates and diplomas, to join relevant undergraduate degrees at appropriate intermediate points;
b. It facilitates the mobility of students amongst institutions and programmes of study within higher education institutions;
c. It enables students to interrupt their studies for sound reasons such as lack of money, pregnancy, or sickness and/or transfer more easily between institutions while maintaining an up to date verified record of learning achievement;
d. It facilitates the accreditation of small amounts of measurable learning, which can build confidence and encourage further learning;
e. It promotes transparency in the academic system. For employers, it provides more transparency on the qualifications obtained by employees and thus provides a higher level of confidence in their skills. In addition, employees become more flexible in upgrading their skills and therefore make career shifts;
f. It creates a time and cost-effective way to reach required skills levels of staff in an organization as it reduces the amount of time needed to complete a programme of study and therefore requiring less time away from the workplace;

g. It provides a common language for the design and development of curricula in higher education institutions;

h. The operationalization of the credit accumulation and transfer system is envisaged to promote and facilitate partnership amongst higher education providers. As a result, it is anticipated that there will be several programme twining arrangements amongst universities and other tertiary institutions in Uganda.

3.4 Accumulation and Transfer of Credits

A number of relevant courses or modules constitute an academic programe. Every successfully completed course or module increases the number of credit units in a learner's 'credit bank'. These credits can contribute towards the attainment of the award associated with the programme or another similar programme. A credit earned by a student in any learning institution may be recognized in another institution, depending on the commonality in terms of level and programme context.

The credit accumulation and transfer system is therefore a mechanism where credits earned from an education and training provider or authorized assessment body can be used towards attainment of an award from another education and training provider or body. This system of credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) can enable a learner earn credits from different related study programmes and still be in position to qualify for a desired academic award.

3.5 Principles Governing Credit Transfer

a. Transfer may be applied to all modes of learning namely, open and distance learning or conventional delivery systems, and can be applied to part-time as well as full-time study programmes;

b. Every student is at liberty to transfer from one party (programme or institution) to another but admission is at the discretion of the receiving party. The sending party has an obligation to provide relevant up to date academic records for the intending transfer student;

c. Credit transfer shall only be permitted for programmes and institutions that are accredited by NCHE or any other mandated competent authority;

d. Every institution that intends to engage in a credit accumulation and transfer arrangement shall put in place a CAT policy that is in line with NCHE's CAT policy and must have been approved by the governing council of the institution.

e. leaners shall be allowed to transfer credits if they meet the NCHE minimum admission requirement and those of the programme at the receiving institution;

f. Transfer of credits shall be permitted within a period of five years from when the credits were earned;

g. Credit transfer may take place when the receiving institution is satisfied that courses or modules that have been completed at the sending institution are relevant to the programme that the student is intending to transfer to;

h. A student shall be required to earn at least 60% of the total credit units from the institution that will eventually confer the award;

i. The courses that are transferred and allowed by the receiving institution will be included in calculating the student's Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). Other successfully completed courses that do not necessarily contribute to the CGPA shall be included on the student's transcript as **supplementary courses**.

3.6 Role of Receiving institution

The receiving institution shall:

a. Satisfy itself that the student seeking transfer has met the conditions for transfer as set by NCHE and the institutions approved CAT policy and guidelines.

b. Provide an annual report using a prescribed form on all students that have transferred to her programmes.

c. Counsel the student on compliance requirements for any mismatch between the programmes.

d. For purposes of awarding a qualification reflect the transferred credits in the final CGPA and also reflect non-transferable courses as supplementary.

e. Reserve the right of admission and may exempt transfer student from some prerequisite courses upon being satisfied that courses taken by a student at the sending institution meet the prerequisite conditions.

3.7 Role of the Sending Institution

The releasing institution shall:

a. Facilitate the student's transfer and provide the necessary information on the student's academic achievements and the programme.
b. Provide a copy of the programme document to the receiving institution if requested for.
c. On request, provide information on the behavior and general conduct of the student.

3.8 Role of Transfer Student

The students wishing to transfer shall:
a. Use the approved forms to apply for transfer of credits;
b. Provide all necessary academic and other information to the receiving institution;
c. Confirm their acceptance of the terms and conditions set by receiving institution;
d. Notify his/her sponsor about the transfer to the receiving institution.

3.9 The Role of NCHE
a. Set and review policies and operational guidelines on credit accumulation and transfer;
b. Disseminate information on credit accumulation and transfer to relevant stake holders;
c. Monitor the implementation of credit accumulation and transfer
d. Receive and evaluate Institutional approved Credit Accumulation and Transfer policies;
e. Receive annual reports on transferred students from higher education institutions and take appropriate actions;
f. Put in place guidelines for Calculation of Cumulative Grade Point Averages and classification of qualifications at different levels of the UHEQF.

PART FOUR:
STUDY PROGRAMMES AND PROGRESSION PATHWAYS

4.1 Programme Requirements

A programme is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification.

The programme design and description set out the expected standards of the qualification in terms of the knowledge, skill, abilities and attributes of the graduates. The programme document informs leaners and other stakeholders about the full programme content which includes the goal, full curriculum content and quality assurance processes. National Council requires that a curriculum should be able to facilitate a balanced learning process and ensure that learners are able to acquire such cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills that are consistent with the educational goals and aspirations of Uganda. Programme designers are therefore required to ensure that the proposed programme:

a. is broad-based or integrated
b. is practical oriented;
c. is diversified;
d. does not compromise the standards of excellence set by the National Council; and
e. contributes to the overall national human resource development and requirements.

The didactic approaches chosen shall be commensurate with the expected standards. It is also necessary that every programme embeds mechanisms to ensure continuous quality standards.

Programme Requirements

a. *The institution shall consult with all relevant internal and external stakeholders* when designing and reviewing programmes;
b. The programme objectives shall reflect the key elements of the outcomes of higher education that are in line with national and international practices;
c. The programme goals, objectives and learning outcomes shall be consistent with the vision and mission of the institution;
d. The programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes shall encompass provision for training or support to enable candidates to acquire skills in problem identification, analytical problem solving and publication of research outcomes;
e. The programme goals, objectives and learning outcomes shall encompass creativity in the application of knowledge, skills and practice in the subject area;

f. The programme shall be benchmarked against professional standards and NCHE's Minimum Standards for Courses of Study;

g. The programme document shall indicate modes of programme delivery including Full-Time, Part-time, On-line, Distance Learning, etc);

h. The programme shall be periodically reviewed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The periodic review time frame shall be spelt out in the programme document;

i. Every programme shall be submitted to NCHE for accreditation before the institution launches it.

j. Every institution shall undertake   self-assessment and peer assessment of the programme at least once before expiry of accreditation period. The peer review team shall be nominated by NCHE at the cost of the institution;

k. Every programme document shall clearly indicate the following elements:
    i.   Programme name and corresponding award;
    ii. Programme rationale;
    iii. Programme description;
    iv. Programme goals, objectives and learning outcomes;
    v.   Admissions requirements;
    vi. Programme regulations;
    vii. Available and proposed human resources including their qualifications names of awarding institutions and year of award;
    viii. Infrastructure facilities including Library and information resources..
    ix. Didactic approaches;
    x.   Minimum credits required for the award;
    xi. Level of the programme within the Uganda Higher Education qualifications framework;
    xii. Targeted employment opportunities.

l. Each course in the programme shall:
    i.   Indicate course name, course code and credit units;
    ii. Indicate brief course description and expected learning outcomes;
    iii. Indicate detailed course content, mode of delivery and mode of assessment, which shall be commensurate with international standards;
    iv. Indicate study/information resources (equipment, tools, and consumables) and available or intended academic staff;
    v.   Carry no less than two (2) credits. Credits shall not be fractional for example, we cannot have a course with 1.5 credits.

4.2 Minimum Credits for the awards of a Qualification

The design of programmes makes assumptions about academic work load required to complete all learning activities. Within the higher education system in Uganda, the academic workload has been expressed in terms of the

academic years and credits. Within this framework, a better measure of a credit based on the student workload is adopted. The workload is an estimation of the time that learners require to complete all learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, internships, assignments, individual study that is required to achieve the defined learning outcomes in formal learning environment. Since credit units are earned as evidence of learning achievement, it follows therefore that the volume of learning be defined in terms of the credit units. To qualify for a qualification at a given level of the qualifications framework, a leaner must achieve a minimum number of credits.

The minimum credits required for the award of a higher education qualifications are based on a 30-week full-time academic year (15 weeks per semester). An average full-time equivalent student is expected to study for a 40-hour week, thus requiring a minimum 1200 hours. This is equivalent to 120 credit units per academic year. This therefore means that a three-year programme will require a minimum credit-load of 360 credits, while a four-year programme will require a minimum of 480 credits.

The workload for research students is estimated based on the average annual working time of a full time employment which is about 45 weeks in year (**considering 52 weeks in a year and take away four weeks of annual leave and about three weeks of al aggregated holidays**) which is equal to 1800 hours and is equivalent to 180 credits. A master's degree that combines teaching and research will therefore require 300 credits (120 credits accounting for the taught component and 180 accounting for the research component).

The table below shows the minimum graduation load for major qualifications at each level of the qualifications framework.

Table 4.1: Minimum Credit Units Required for the Awards of Qualifications in the UHEQF

Qualification	Level	Minimum Duration of study (semesters)	Minimum No of Credits required	Remarks
Higher Education Certificate	4	2	120	
Diploma	5	4	240	
Advanced	6	4	240	

Diploma				
Bachelors Degrees	7	6	360	The credit-rating for a bachelor's degree is based on a three-year programmme. Professional programmes such as medicine require more years and the credit rating for such programmes is expected to be higher.
Postgraduate Certificate	8	1	60	
Postgraduate Diploma		2	120	
Master's Degree(Course work and Project Report)		4	240	
Master's Degree (Course Work and Dissertation)		4	300	The annual workload of research degrees is based on full time employment estimated at about 45 weeks in year.
Master's Degree (Research Only)		NA	180	
Doctorate	9	NA	540	

4.3 Admission and Progression Pathways: Multiple Entry and Multiple Exits

4.3.1 Level 4: Higher Education Certificate

4.3.1.1 Minimum Admission requirements

The minimum entry requirements for admission to a Level 4 Higher Education Certificate Programme/Foundation Programme are:

a. Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education with at least two subsidiary passes or its equivalent;
b. Vocational Qualifications at level 2 or level 3 of the Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework;
c. Qualifications equivalent to Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) as shall be determined by the National Council in consultation with the Uganda National Examinations Board;
d. Foreign students without UACE or its equivalent qualifications; who have successfully completed secondary school education and are admissible to university degree or diploma programmes in their respective home countries. Such students shall have passed at least five subjects with a minimum overall grade of C (Plain). In addition, foreign students whose studies were not conducted in English shall show proof of proficiency in the English Language.

4.3.1.2 Progression

Depending on the final grade, a holder of a HEC or equivalent qualification qualifies for admission to a relevant Level 7 Bachelors degree or Level 5 diploma programme. Progression to a degree programme shall require at least a second-class (credit) division while progression to a diploma programme shall require at least a third class(pass)

4.3.1.3 Intermediate Qualification

A qualification shall not be awarded for early exit from a HEC programme but earned credit units are transferable to similar programmes at the same level.

4.3.2 Level 5: Diploma

4.3.2.1 Minimum Admission Requirements

The minimum entry requirements for admission to a Level 5 (Diploma) programme are:

a) Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) with at least one principal pass and one subsidiary pass or its equivalent;
b) A Higher Education Certificate with at least a second-class lower division;
c) Mature Age Entrance Examinations Certificate awarded to a person aged at least 22 years and has passed with at least 50% marks. For purposes of admission the Mature Age Entrance Certificate shall be valid for no more than two years. The mature age entry examinations centre must have been authorized by NCHE;
d) Qualifications equivalent to Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) as shall be determined by the National Council in consultation with the Uganda

National Examinations Board. Higher Education Institutions should seek guidance from NCHE on whether such a certificate is of comparable standards to UACE with one principal pass and one subsidiary pass.

4.3.2.2 Progression

A holder of a level 5 Diploma or equivalent qualification qualifies for admission to a relevant Level 7 (Bachelor's degree). Depending on the final grade and specific programme requirements, holders of level 5 diplomas or equivalent qualifications may be exempted from the first year of a relevant bachelors' degree programme. Holders of level 5 (diplomas or equivalent qualifications) may also progress to advanced diplomas in those fields where such advanced diplomas exist.

4.3.2.3 Intermediate Qualification

A qualification shall not be awarded for early exit from a Level 5 programme but earned credits transferable to similar programmes at the same level or to a relevant degree programmes.

4.3.3 Level 6: Advanced Diploma

4.3.3.1 Minimum Admission requirements

The minimum entry requirement for admission to a level 6 (Advanced/Higher Diploma) programme is a relevant Ordinary Diploma or its equivalent recognized as such by NCHE.

4.3.3.2 Progression

A holder of a Level 6 (Advanced Diploma or equivalent) qualification qualifies for admission to a relevant Level 7 (Bachelors degree) programme. Depending on the final grade and specific programme requirements, holders of Level 6 (diplomas or equivalent) qualifications may be exempted from the first two years of a relevant Bachelor's degree programme.

4.3.3.3 Intermediate Qualification

A qualification shall not be awarded for early exit from a Level 6 programme but earned credits are transferable to similar programmes at the same level or degree programmes.

4.3.4 Level 7: Bachelor's Degrees

4.3.4.1 Minimum Admission Requirements

The minimum entry requirements for admission to a Level 7 (Bachelor's degree) programme are:

a) Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) with at least two principal passes or its equivalent;

b) A Higher Education Certificate of at least second class (Upper Division);

c) A relevant Diploma (Level 5) or its equivalent recognized as such by NCHE. Holders of Level 5 Qualifications **may be** enrolled at the beginning of second year of a relevant degree programme provided that this option is provided for in the accredited programme;

d) A relevant advanced diploma (Level 6) or its equivalent recognized as such by NCHE. Holders of Level 6 qualifications **may be** enrolled at the beginning of third year of a relevant degree programme provided that this option is provided for in the accredited programme;

e) Mature Age Entrance Examinations Certificate awarded to a person aged at least 22 years and who has passed with at least 50% marks. The Certificate shall be varied for no more than two years. The mature age entry examinations centre must have been authorized by NCHE;

f) Qualifications equivalent to Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) as shall be determined by the National Council in consultation with the Uganda National Examinations Board. Higher Education Institutions should seek guidance from NCHE on whether such a certificate is of comparable standards to UACE with two principal passes.

4.3.4.2 Progression

A holder of a level 7 qualifications qualifies for admission to a relevant PGC, PGD or Master's Degree programme *by coursework and dissertation or coursework and project report*.

4.3.4.3 Intermediate Qualification

A qualification shall not be awarded for early exit from a Bachelor's Degree programme or any other programme at Level 7 but earned credits are transferable to similar programmes at the same level.

4.3.5 Level 8: Postgraduate Certificates, Postgraduate Diplomas and Master's Degrees

4.3.5.1 Minimum Admission requirements

a. The minimum entry requirements for admission to a Postgraduate Certificate Programme is a relevant Bachelor's Degree or its equivalent recognized as such by NCHE;

b. The minimum entry requirements for admission to a Postgraduate Diploma Programme is a relevant Bachelor's Degree or its equivalent

recognized as such by NCHE;

c. Minimum admission requirements   to a Masters Degree Programme by coursework and dissertation is a relevant Bachelor's Degree or its equivalent from a higher education institution or professional body recognized by NCHE;

d. Minimum admission requirements   to a Professional Masters Degree Programme (Masters Degree Programme by Coursework and Project) is a relevant Bachelor's Degree or its equivalent from a higher education institution or professional body recognized by NCHE;

e. The minimum admission requirements to a Masters Degree by Research only, is a relevant Bachelors Degree of at least a 2nd class division and a relevant Postgraduate Diploma or equivalent qualifications from higher education institutions or professional bodies recognized by the National Council for Higher Education. In addition, at the point of application the candidate shall have identified a research area and shall be required to present a concept paper on the intended research.

4.3.5.2 Progression

a. A holder of a level 8 PGC can progress horizontally to either relevant level 8 PGD or relevant Master's Degree Programme *by coursework and dissertation or coursework and project report*.

b. A holder of a level 8 PGD can progress horizontally to a relevant level 8 Master's Degree programme.

c. A holder of a level 8 Masters Degree or equivalent qualifications qualifies for admission to a relevant PhD programme. Admission to a PhD by publications requires evidence of research undertaking on top of a Master's Degree.

4.3.5.3 Intermediate Qualification

a. A qualification shall not be awarded for early exit from a PGC programme but earned credits are transferable to similar PGCs, PGDs or Masters degree programmes.

b. An intermediate PGC may be awarded after earning at least 60 credits of a PGD programme. Earned credits are transferable to similar PGDs or Master's Degree programmes.

c. An intermediate PGC or PGD may be awarded after earning at least 60 credits or 120 credits respectively of a Masters degree programme. Earned credits are transferable to similar PGDs or Master's Degree programmes.

4.3.6 Level 9: Doctoral Degrees

4.3.6.1 Minimum Admission requirements

a. Minimum admission requirements to a Doctoral Degree Programme by research only, shall be a relevant Master's Degree or its equivalent from a higher education institution recognized by NCHE and a research concept paper that will be reviewed by experts appointed by the institution to establish its clarity, relevancy and suitability.

b. Minimum admission requirements to a Doctoral Degree Programme by coursework and research shall be a relevant Master's Degree or its equivalent from an institution recognized by NCHE.

c. Minimum admission requirements to a joint MPhil/PhD Programme shall be a relevant Bachelors Degree of at least second class(Upper Division) or an equivalent qualification from an institution recognized by NCHE.

d. Minimum admission requirements to a doctoral degree programme by publications are as follows: The applicant shall

   i. Have a Master's Degree or equivalent qualification in a relevant field of study but shall not have a PhD or equivalent qualification.

   ii. Be actively involved in research.

   iii. Apply for admission with at least four peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters or ranked peer-reviewed conference papers. The papers shall follow a particular thematic area of study and will form a basis for the award of a PhD. Each of the four papers shall have been published within a period of five years.

4.3.6.2 Intermediate Qualification

An intermediate Master of Philosophy Degree (MPhil) may be awarded for early exit after successful completion of all requirements as set under the benchmarks for postgraduate studies.

PART FIVE:
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

5.1. Definition of Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning(RPL) is defined as the process where a person's skills, knowledge and competencies acquired in various contexts such as previous training or work, involvement in social and community activities or life experience in general are assessed and formally recognized. The basic principle underlying RPL is the acknowledgement that people continuously learn, whether such learning takes place formally at an educational institution, or informally at the place of work or through life experience. RPL is therefore a form of assessment and certification of the acquired knowledge, skills and competencies and should take into consideration the social and learning contexts of the learners.

5.2. The Status of RPL in Uganda

The education system in Uganda has for some time implements RPL through different schemes including:

a. Mature Age Entrance Examination scheme;

b. Grant of exemptions;

c. Accelerated education and training Programmes

d. Equating of military qualifications to academic qualifications;

e. Competence based assessment;

5.2. 1. The Mature Age Entrance Examination Scheme

The Mature Age Entrance Examination scheme into higher education is one of the most common RPL schemes in the history of higher education in Uganda. It is a way of recognizing skills acquired through informal learning means. The scheme was designed to enable adults who did not have any evidence of formal and non-formal training to join Bachelor's Degree programmes. This form of RPL does not lead to a higher education qualification but enables a person to enroll for higher education programmes. Interested applicants for this kind of route are assessed through an aptitude and subject specif examination set by an authorized university and on passing the sexamination are eligible for admission to degree programmes in Uganda. The scheme has

been revised to permit admission to diploma programme as well and the qualifying age of entry has been revised to at least 22 years of age. The mature age entrance examination certificate is valid for two years.

5.2.2. Grant of Exemptions

Exemptions happen when an institution recognizes that a candidate acquired prior essential learning as evidenced from previous awards and is excused from taking some courses within the study programme while others who never had such prior learning are required to undertake all courses. A candidate who is exempted from some courses may graduate with a lower graduation load than the normal and may spend less time at the awarding institution. This form of RPL provides a linkage between levels of the UHEQF and enables learners to progress vertically and acquire higher-level qualifications within a reduced study period and hence reducing on the cost of attaining higher qualifications. This from of RPL also enables holders of vocational qualifications to join higher education.

The UHEQF recognizes skills, knowledge and competencies acquired through formal means by way of exemptions. The framework provides for this form of RPL through multiple entries into study programmes. Diploma holders can enroll in the second year while holders of advanced diplomas can enroll in the third year of the relevant degree programmes. In fact, a number of universities exempt holders of ordinary diplomas from the first year of a relevant degree programme. However, exemptions need not be exploited only at the entry points of the study programme.

5.2.3. Accelerated Education and Training Programmes

Accelerated training programme is another way to recognize skills, knowledge and competencies acquired through formal and non-formal contexts. This form of training is tailor-designed for a special category of people who are identified and exposed to further and sometimes intensive training, taking into consideration their previous qualifications and work experience. As a result, such training takes a relatively shorter time than it would otherwise take and reduces on the cost of acquiring higher educations. Examples of such training include the Bachelor of Education degree programme for teachers holding diplomas, Completion programmes in Nursing and Allied Health, etc.

The qualifications framework promotes this form of RPL as it is tailor-made towards a highly skilled group of persons whose training needs may not be met by available regular programmes of study that enroll high school leavers. This category includes clinical officers who may be upgraded to doctors

within less than the normal five-year period required for Bachelor's Degree programmes in medicine. Others are the holders of certificates and diplomas in nursing, engineering etc.

5.2.4. Equating of military qualifications

National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) after considering a report of a task force comprising of Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Public service, and the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) and NCHE agreed on the equating of military qualifications (Uganda Peoples Defense Forces). The equating was based on the principles that:

a. The equating of military qualifications should not compromise standards sets by NCHE;

b. Military personnel should not be dis-advantaged when they want to join civilian life or work in international peace keeping operations because nobody has worked on equivalences of their qualifications;

c. There is a great deal of professional and specialized training in the military;

d. To go for further training is not automatic in the military. A soldier must practice the skills acquired in the previous training before s/he can proceed to another level of training. The period of deployment between courses was regarded as equivalent to internship and is awarded credits.

The equation of military qualification is a form of recognition of prior learning acquired through non-formal means.

5.2.5. Competence Based Assessment

This form of RPL is where a person's acquired knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through formal, non-formal and informal means are assessed against established occupational/industrial standards. Competence Based Assessment is most pronounced under the Business Technical Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) subsector in Uganda and is implemented along competence based education and training programmes. As a result, a number of individuals have been assessed and have acquired qualifications under the Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework (UVQF) ranging from modular to UVQF Level V. Others who demonstrate satisfactory competencies acquired through on-job training, accumulated work experience in the informal sector, hereditary skills in the traditional crafts practice, apprenticeship schemes in industry and business entrepreneurship are assessed against the industry or enterprise competency

standards and issued with the worker'sPAS (Worker's Practically Acquired Skills) qualification. Among the listed categories of competent individuals included are persons with special needs, the marginalized groups and the road works technical personnel. These have a desire to access higher education through the established pathways of multi-entry and multi-exit dovetailing process between schooling and the world of work.

This form of RPL involves the following key steps:

a. Identifying and profiling occupations practised in the labour market;

b. Development of Assessment and Training Packages (ATP);

c. Implementation of Competence Based Education and Training Programmes (CBET);

d. Development of appropriate assessment tools;

e. Identifying what the learner knows and can do;

f. Validation of skills acquired in the world of work;

g. Assessing the skills, knowledge and experience of the learner against set occupational standards;

h. Acknowledgment of the skills, knowledge and competencies of the learner by issuing a relevant qualification;

i. Recognition of competencies previously attained irrespective of how, when or where they were achieved;

j. Development of capacity of a professional pool of assessors/examiners to conduct RPL assessments;

5.3. Justification

At present, there are a number of people who have acquired knowledge, skills and competencies through formal, non-formal and informal means but do not hold recognized qualifications. A number of such individuals are at the centre of production outlets that sustain the economy. Given the above situation, there is therefore need to have a structured mechanism for assessment and recognition of such forms of learning.

5.4. Objectives

a. To facilitate access and progression within the UHEQF through the recognition of

prior learning;

b. To provide a linkage between the Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework and the Higher Education Qualifications Framework;

c. To build confidence within the skills holders;

d. To promote lifelong learning at every point of engagement including production outlets;

e. To promote labour competitiveness that result in quality production of goods and services;

f. To minimise tendency by employers to exploit skilled labour;

g. To build synergy with civil society to eliminate child labour;

h. To boost and sustain the indigenous skills.

5.5. Benefits of RPL

The benefits of RPL include:

a. Giving a person an opportunity to have their skills or knowledge formally recognized no matter where, when or how they were acquired;

b. Enabling people who have not had prior access to higher education to join appropriate learning pathways;

c. Enabling individuals without formal qualifications to be assessed and certified to compete for job opportunities;

d. Reduction in cost by eliminating unnecessary repetition and duplication of material already familiar to the learner;

e. Reducing the amount of time needed to complete a programme of study and therefore requiring less time away from the workplace;

f. Promoting lifelong learning through the recognition of learning at every point of engagement;

g. Enabling a person to identify possible gaps in their knowledge and skills and select appropriate areas of training to remedy it;

h. Enhancing self-esteem for what one may have accomplished in his/her lifetime;

i. Promoting the support of training through the use of available expertise in specialized fields gained through non-formal and informal contexts;

j. Increasing skilled and certified workforce for a given economic sector;

k. Promoting partnerships between the academia and the world of work;

l. Increase participation of girl child in the skills training programmes;

m. Recognize skills peculiar to Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) and provide alternatives for horizontal and vertical progression;

5.6 Principles Governing RPL

a. Participation in recognition of prior learning is a voluntary matter for the individual.

b. Assessment criteria shall be accredited and based on learning outcomes of awards set out in the Qualifications Framework;

c. Assessment and awarding Institutions/centers shall be accredited by NCHE and/or in consultation with other mandated regulatory bodies;

d. Processes for the recognition of prior learning shall be credible, transparent, rigorous, quality assured and must also include appropriate appeals mechanism;

e. The candidate is obliged to provide sufficient evidence to satisfy the assessor panel or examiners that he/she holds the relevant competences;

f. Guidance and support should be available for applicants and all those involved in the processes of recognition of prior learning;

g. Recognition of prior learning shall not compromise the standards of the UHEQF;

h. An institution shall exempt a candidate from a given course unit if there is evidence of a recognized qualification where such a course unit or similar courses were offered;

i. Exemptions shall not exceed 40% of the entire programme;

j. Courses that are exempted shall clearly be indicated on the transcripts but shall not contribute towards a final Cumulative Grade Point Average.

PART SIX:
NOMENCLATURE OF AWARDS

6.1 Introduction

The term nomenclature refers to a way of choosing names. The goal of this part is to put in place a systematic procedure by which institutions of higher education derive names of programmes and the resultant awards.

A qualification is the formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by an accredited institution. Qualifications communicate a lot about the competencies of the award holders. The names given to higher education qualifications should therefore be consistent with the programme name. It is important that programme names, award titles and the way they are abbreviated be unambiguous and should easily be understood by all stakeholders, including potential students, employers and the general community. Award titles should be consistent with national as well as international practices and must meet the expectations of the job market. In addition, they should be indicative of the learning achievement of the award holder.

6.2 Objectives.
a. To provide for a systematic procedure for naming of programmes and awards;
b. To provide for a clear and transparent mechanism for interpreting of awards;
c. To ensure that award names depict the programme content appropriately.
d. To minimize duplication of awards;
e. To enable stakeholders (students, parents and employers) make informed decisions about higher education qualifications;
f. To ensure that the awards are appropriately positioned within the UHEQF.

6.3 Qualification Attributes
6.3.1 The Qualification Title

The qualification title is the first attribute given to any qualification. Each qualification title has a descriptor stating its purposes and how it relates to other qualifications in the qualifications framework. Qualification descriptors are broad, generic and cross-field statements of achievement at a particular level of study and often not specific to any field of study. Each descriptor is a point of reference, which enables comparisons with other qualifications and provides a basis for designing, approving and

reviewing programmes. The UHEQF indicates several qualification titles: Higher Education Certificate, Diploma, Higher/Advanced Diploma, Bachelor, Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma, Masters and Doctorate.

6.3.2 Field of Study or Designator

Field name or sometimes known as the **designator** is the second attribute given to any qualification, to indicate its broad discipline or profession. Designators shall not be used for Higher Education Certificate, Diploma, Higher/Advanced Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diplomas.

6.3.3 Qualifiers

The third attribute given to a qualification is the qualifier. Qualifiers may be used in any type of qualification in order to indicate a field of specialization or a "**Major**" The word "**in**" shall be used to link a qualification title (or its designator) to the qualifier.

6.4 Principles Governing Nomenclature of Higher Education Qualifications

a. The nomenclature of qualifications shall be consistent with national, international and professional standards and shall conform to set accreditation standards;

b. The nomenclature shall be unambiguous in terms of level and professional orientation and should easily be recognizable by all stakeholders including prospective students and potential employers;

c. The name of the awards should reflect the extent of professional or employment demands **for the specific title and or descriptors;**

d. The names of qualifications should be concise and meaningful and shall not exceed 50 Characters;

e. The mode of programme delivery shall not be included in the name of the award but shall be indicated on the transcript;

f. All qualifications titles shall be consistent with the descriptors for that level of qualification as defined in the UHEQF;

g. No designator or qualifiers may be used in a qualification unless it is consistent with the criteria as determined in the qualification framework;

h. Programme orientation: The naming of an award shall be informed largely by programme orientations that are science based or Arts based in nature or by a professional orientation. For Science based programmes, the majority of subjects should be natural science disciplines e.g Physics,

Chemistry, Biology or the programme content is largely built on theoretical foundations from the natural sciences. For such awards the naming of the award will take the form Bachelor of Science in (**xxxx**). For Arts and Humanities, the majority of the subjects should be from Arts or Humanities [2] or the programme content should largely be built on theoretical foundations from Arts or Humanities. Such awards will take the form Bachelor of Arts in (**xxxx**);

i. A qualification should be named according to a broad discipline area or profession or academic unit to which the programme belongs. The field name should be as broad as possible indicating a generic range of related subjects rather than a single, narrow specialization. E.g. **Bachelor Commerce** but not **Bachelor of Accounting since** accounting is a specialization within Commerce, **Bachelor of Medicine** and not **Bachelor of Internal Medicine**;

j. The name of a qualification shall accurately represent the programme content. A given award name shall reflect at least 75% of content in that discipline. For example, for Bachelor of Arts, at least 75% of the courses should be in the liberal arts, For a Diploma in Business Administration, 75% of the courses shall be Business Administration courses.

k. Where a specialization is indicated in a qualification, the award shall contain at least **25%** of that specialization. E.g. A Bachelor of Commerce with accounting specialization is required to have at least 75% of the content in commerce and at the same time at least 25% of the content in the Accounting specialization;

l. When an award combines two disciplines, each of the disciplines is expected to contribute about 50% of the courses in that qualification.

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[2] According to Collins Dictionary, the **Arts** refer to imaginative, creative and non-scientific branches of knowledge. According to **Wikipedia**, Arts largely represent disciplines which represent human expression largely influenced by culture and driven by human creativity. Major Arts disciplines include Visual Arts (Drawing, Painting, Photography, Scalping, Architecture etc), - Literary Arts (Poetry, Novels, epics etc), Performing Arts (Music, Dance, Theater/ Drama etc), Culinary Arts (Baking, Wine making etc), Media Arts (Photography, Film/Video, Comics, etc), Gastronomy (Relationship between culture and Food) among others. Humanities on the other hand refer to disciplines that study human culture using methods that are **primarily critical or speculative.** Disciplines of Humanities include Classics (Ancient Greek, Latin and Roman cultures), History, Languages, Law, Literature, Performing Arts, Philosophy, Religion, Anthropology, Visual Arts, Communication Studies and Cultural Studies among others. There is evidence of an increasing overlap between the Arts and Humanities. It should be noted that Geography and Mathematics on their own are non-science unless combined with science subjects.

m. In the naming of awards, consideration should always be given to the overall existing names within the institution to avoid duplication. As a matter of principle an institution shall NOT offer any two different awards[3] whose contents do not differ by at least 50%.

n. An Institution shall not offer any two different programmes that target the same or similar group of students and which address the same or similar job opportunities.

6.5 Guidelines on Naming of Qualifications

6.5.1 Level 4: Higher Education Certificate

6.5.1.1 Designators
Designators shall not be used for Higher Education Certificate

6.5.1.2 Qualifiers
Specific, maximum two.

6.5.1.3 Abbreviations
HEC

6.5.1.4 Guidelines
a. For all Higher Education Certificates, the separator "**in**" shall be used between the title and the area of study;

b. Where it is necessary to indicate the major and minor fields of specialization, the word "**with**" will be used between major and minor specializations; with or without brackets;

c. For awards that depict combined disciplines, the word "**and**" shall be used between the two disciplines.;

d. Specialisation within a broad discipline area E.g. Higher Education Certification in Business Administration (Finance) is not permitted at this level;

6.5.1.5 Examples:
a. Higher Education Certificate in Botany (showing Botany as a field of study) abbreviated as HEC (Botany).

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[3] Awards are said to be different if they have different designators.

b. Higher Education Certificate in Economics and Mathematics (Showing combined disciplines) abbreviated as HEC (**xxxx** & **xxxx**);

c. Higher Education Certificate in Mathematics with Psychology (showing a major in Math and a minor in Psychology) abbreviated as HEC (**xxxx** with **xxxx**).

6.5.2 Level 5: Diplomas

6.5.2.1 Designators
Designators shall not be used for Diplomas.

6.5.2.2 Qualifiers
Specific, maximum two.

6.5.2.3 Abbreviations
Dip.

6.5.2.4 Guidelines

a. For all Diplomas, the separator "**in**" shall be used between the title and the area of study.

b. For diploma programmes, specialisations within a broad discipline area are less preferred. Instead the name is expected to be specific in nature; For example, it is preferred to have a Diploma in Marketing as opposed to a Diploma in Business Administration with Marketing as a specialisation.

c. For awards that depict combined disciplines, the word "**and**" shall be used between the two disciplines;

d. Where it is necessary to indicate the major and minor fields, the word "**with**" will be used between major and minor fields; with or without brackets;

e. Specialisation within a broad discipline area E.g. Diploma in Business Administration with a marketing specialisation shall not be permitted at this level.

6.5.2.5 Examples:

a. Diploma in Civil Engineering (showing specific discipline area of civil engineering) abbreviated as Dip. (Civil Engineering); Diploma in Marketing, showing a specific field of study. Abbreviated as Dip.(Marketing);

b. Diploma in Mathematics with Psychology (showing a major in Math and a minor in Psychology) abbreviated as Dip. (xxxx with xxxx).

c. Diploma in Accounting and Finance (showing combined disciplines) abbreviated as Dip.(**xxxx & xxxx**)

6.5.3 Level 6: Advanced/Higher Diplomas

6.5.3.1 Designators
As for Diplomas

6.5.3.2 Qualifiers
As for Diplomas

6.5.3.3 Abbreviations
Adv. Dip or High. Dip.

6.5.3.4 Guidelines
As for Diplomas.

6.5.3.5 Examples:
a. Advanced Diploma in Civil Engineering (showing a specified discipline area of Civil Engineering) abbreviated as Adv. Dip. (Civil Engineering);

b. Higher Diploma in Mathematics with Psychology (showing a major in Math and a minor in Psychology) abbreviated as H. Dip. (**xxxx** with **xxxx**).

c. Higher Diploma in Accounting and Finance (showing combined disciplines) abbreviated as High. Dip.(**xxxx & xxxx**);

d. Specialisation within a broad discipline area of study E.g. Advanced Diploma Business Administration (Finance) shall not be permitted at this level.

6.5.4 Level 7 & Level 8: Bachelor's and Master's Degrees

6.5.4.1 Designators
Bachelors and Masters Degree designators are specific and limited to broad and generic areas of study, disciplines or professions.

6.5.4.2 Qualifiers
Specific; maximum two

6.5.4.2 Guidelines

a. The word "**of**" shall be used to link a qualification title and the designator **(e.g. Bachelor of Social Sciences, Master of Science, Master of Arts),** and when abbreviated the '**of**' is omitted **(e.g. BSc, MSc);**

b. For Bachelors and Masters degrees, a specialization will be indicated using brackets or by connecting the broad knowledge area to the specialized area of study using the word "**in**."   E.g. Bachelor of Commerce **in** Accounting or Bachelor of Commerce (**Accounting**), etc;

c. Where it is necessary to indicate the major and minor fields of specialization, the word "**with**" will be used between major and minor specializations; with or without brackets. The major field shall precede the minor one.   E.g. Bachelor of Science **in** Mathematics **with** Economics or Bachelor of Science (Mathematics **with** Economics);

d. For awards that depict combined disciplines (or specialisations) the word "**and**" shall be used between the two disciplines (or specializations). E.g. Bachelor of Science in Computer Science **and** Mathematics or Bachelor of Science (Computer Science **and** Mathematics);

e. Where two broad programmes areas are combined to form a single programme as is the case for Science and Arts programmes with Education, then the word "**with**" will be used between the two study programmes areas and the "Science" or "Arts" fields shall precede the professional field[4]. E.g. Bachelor of Arts with Education (**Not Bachelor of Arts in Education**), Bachelor of Science with Education (**Not Bachelor of Science in Education**).   The award shall be abbreviated as BA.Ed or BSc.Ed. The subjects of specializations within the arts or science will be indicated in brackets if desired. E.g. BA.Ed(Music) for a major in Music, BSc.Ed(Math with Econ) for a major in Math with a minor in Economics, BA.Ed(Political Science and Economics) for a combined specialization in both Political Science and Economics;

f. For awards that have an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary focus, the word "**studies**" should be used. For example, Bachelor/Master of Development Studies or Bachelor of Arts/Master of Arts in Legal Studies;

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[4] The linking word "**with**" is used instead of "**and**" because as a stand alone, the total number of credits for the professional component may not satisfy the minimum graduation load requirement where as the BA or BSc can be a stand alone.

g. The naming of Bachelor's/Master's degrees in Arts and Humanities shall take the form Bachelors/Master of Arts in (**xxxx**). E.g. Bachelor of Arts in History and Abbreviated as BA (History).

h. The naming of Bachelor's/Master's degrees in Social Sciences[5] will take the form Bachelors/Master of Arts in (**xxxx**) or Bachelor/Master of Social Sciences in (**xxxx**) E.g. Bachelor/Master of Arts in Sociology abbreviated as BA/MA (Sociology) or Bachelor/Master of Social Sciences in International Relations abbreviated BSS/MSS (International Relations).

i. For awards that depict a given professions such as law, nursing, education or a well-developed and broad knowledge area such as business administration, tourism the naming shall take the form Bachelor/Master of (**xxxx**). E.g. Bachelor of Laws, Master of Education, Bachelor of Tourism, Bachelor of Education, etc. The area of specialization can be indicated using brackets or using the word "**in**." E.g. Bachelor of Business Administration (Human Resource), Master of Education in Curriculum Design, etc.

j. Where a given professional award is named as Bachelor of Science in (**xxxx**), there must be evidence that the programme content is hinged largely on theoretical underpinnings from the natural sciences.

k. In the naming of Engineering awards, either Bachelor of Science/Master of Science in **xxxx** Engineering or Bachelor/Master of Engineering (**xxxx Engineering)** can be used. E.g. Bachelor/Master of Science in Civil Engineering, Bachelor/Master of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering, Bachelor/Master of Engineering (**Civil Engineering**). The abbreviations shall take the form BSc/MSc (**xxxx Engineering**) or BEng/MEng (**xxxx Engineering**). The naming may take the form Bachelor/Master of **xxxx** Engineering if the programme content contains at least 75% content in that specific engineering field.

l. For Masters Degrees involving coursework and research, the field of specialization is the one where the candidate undertakes his/her research.

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[5] Wikipedia defines Social Sciences as a group of academic disciplines that focus on understanding the workings of human society. Unlike the Arts or Humanities, Social Sciences relay **heavily on empirical and measurable evidence (Scientific method).** Social Science disciplines include, Sociology, Public Administration, Social Work, Psychology, Political Science, International Relations, Industrial Relations, Anthropology, Business Studies Criminology, Communication Studies, Cultural Studies, Demography, Development Studies, Economics, Education, Environment, History, Human geography, Library and Information Science, Law, Linguistics and Media Studies. It is clearly evident that there is an overwhelming **overlap between the social sciences, the** Arts and the Humanities.

The award title should however reflect the general knowledge area and the area of specialization will be indicated in brackets or linked to the general knowledge area with a word "**in**." For example, Master of Medicine (Internal Medicine) or Master of Medicine in Internal Medicine and not Master of Internal Medicine.

6.5.5 Level 8: Postgraduate Certificates

6.5.5.1 Designators
As for Higher Education Certificates

6.5.5.2 Qualifiers
Specific; maximum two.

6.5.5.3 Abbreviations
PGC

6.5.5.4 Guidelines
As for Higher Education Certificates.

Examples:
a. Postgraduate Certificate in Botany (showing Botany as a field of study) abbreviated as PGC (Botany).
b. Postgraduate Certificate in Economics and Mathematics (Showing combined disciplines) abbreviated as PGC (**xxxx & xxxx**).
c. Postgraduate Certificate in Mathematics with Psychology (showing a major in Math and a minor in Psychology) abbreviated as PGC (**xxxx** with **xxxx**).
d. Note that a specialisation within a broad discipline area e.g. Postgraduate Certificate in Business Administration (Finance) is not permitted at this level.

6.5.6 Level 8: Postgraduate Diplomas

6.5.6.1 Designators
As for Diplomas

6.5.6.2 Qualifiers
Specific, maximum two.

Abbreviations

PGD

6.5.6.3 Guidelines
As for Diplomas.
   Examples:
a. Postgraduate Diploma in Civil Engineering (showing a broad discipline area of civil engineering) abbreviated as PGD (Civil Engineering);
b. Postgraduate Diploma in Mathematics with Psychology (showing a major in Math and a minor in Psychology) abbreviated as PGD (**xxxx** with **xxxx**);
c. Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting and Finance (showing combined disciplines) abbreviated as PGD (**xxxx & xxxx**);
d. Note that a specialisation within a broad discipline area e.g. E.g. Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration (Finance) is not permitted at this level.

6.5.7 Level 9: Doctoral Degrees

6.5.7.1 Designator
The designator of Philosophy is typically used for doctoral degrees. However, other designators may be used to denote the areas of study or the name of the discipline.

6.5.7.2 Qualifiers
Specific, maximum one if required

6.5.7.3 Abbreviations
PhD or Dxxxx.

6.5.7.4 Guidelines
a. The naming of doctorates will take the format Doctor of Philosophy, in short PhD. It should be noted that a PhD is a terminal degree, which embodies the philosophy of knowledge and learning and has nothing to do with Philosophy as a subject.
b. For professional doctorates and taught doctorates where there is interest to pronounce a given knowledge area, then the naming shall be Doctor of (**xxxx**), e.g. Doctor of Education.

6.5.7.5 Examples:
a. Doctor of Philosophy abbreviated as PhD or PhD (**area of specialisation**) eg. PhD (Mathematics).

b. Doctor of Business Administration abbreviated as DBA.