

The Enphe: European Qualification Framework for Life Long Learning in Physiotherapy Final Report



Towards a qualification framework
culture

October 2012

This document is published by the European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education (ENPHE).

This document is also available on the Internet:

<http://www.ENPHE.org/>

Text completed in November 2012.

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Foreword

This report has been prepared for the 2012 ENPHE Conference held in Vienna and concludes the work carried out for the past three years (2009 – 2012) by the European Qualification Framework (EQF) Focus Group. Throughout these three years, we have met as educators of physiotherapy, between us and also with the participation of the students, at a number of conferences and working meetings to discuss and investigate the significance of the European Qualification Framework descriptors as they apply for physiotherapy education at bachelor, master and Ph.D. level. This conference is taking place at a time when the European Region of the WCPT is organising the 3rd European Congress on Physiotherapy Education and it is thus a timely moment to reflect upon the output that we are providing as physiotherapy educators.

The European Qualification Framework is a new tool that needs to be understood properly by all participants in the learning process: the students, the teachers and the administrators. And especially since the European Qualification Framework is embedded in the Bologna Process, it is important that we converge towards a similar understanding on the meaning of European Qualification Framework in physiotherapy.

This report recommends European Qualification Framework descriptors in physiotherapy education at bachelor-, master and Ph.D. level for the members of the European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education.

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Preamble

The European Qualification Framework Focus Group (EQF FG) of the European Network of Physiotherapy in Higher Education (ENPHE) was commissioned together with another five focus groups following the ENPHE seminar in Malta in 2009. Ingrid Narum, from Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (Norway), was nominated by the Executive Board to lead this group. By March 2010, the focus group was identified and included Dagmar Pavlu from Charles University, Prague, (Czech Republic) and Roland van Peppen from University of Applied Sciences, Utrecht, (The Netherlands). At the Enhpe seminar in Sigtuna in september 2010 Janke Oosterhaven (University of Applied Sciences, Utrecht, The Netherlands) and Hilde Van Waelvelde (Ghent University, Belgium) joined the group as a sounding board. SMART plans for the EQF FG were presented to the ENPHE members during the Riga conference in March 2010.

The EQF FG and the Sounding Board Group (SBG) met during the ENPHE seminar in Sigtuna in September 2010 and discussed the work of the EQF FG. The seminar resulted in the descriptors at master level in physiotherapy education.

During the Estoril conference, in September 2011, the EQF FG presented the descriptors at master level at all ENPHE members. During the workshops, participants were invited to map out the position of their institution relative to EQF and also to discuss the advantages/disadvantages of the implementation.

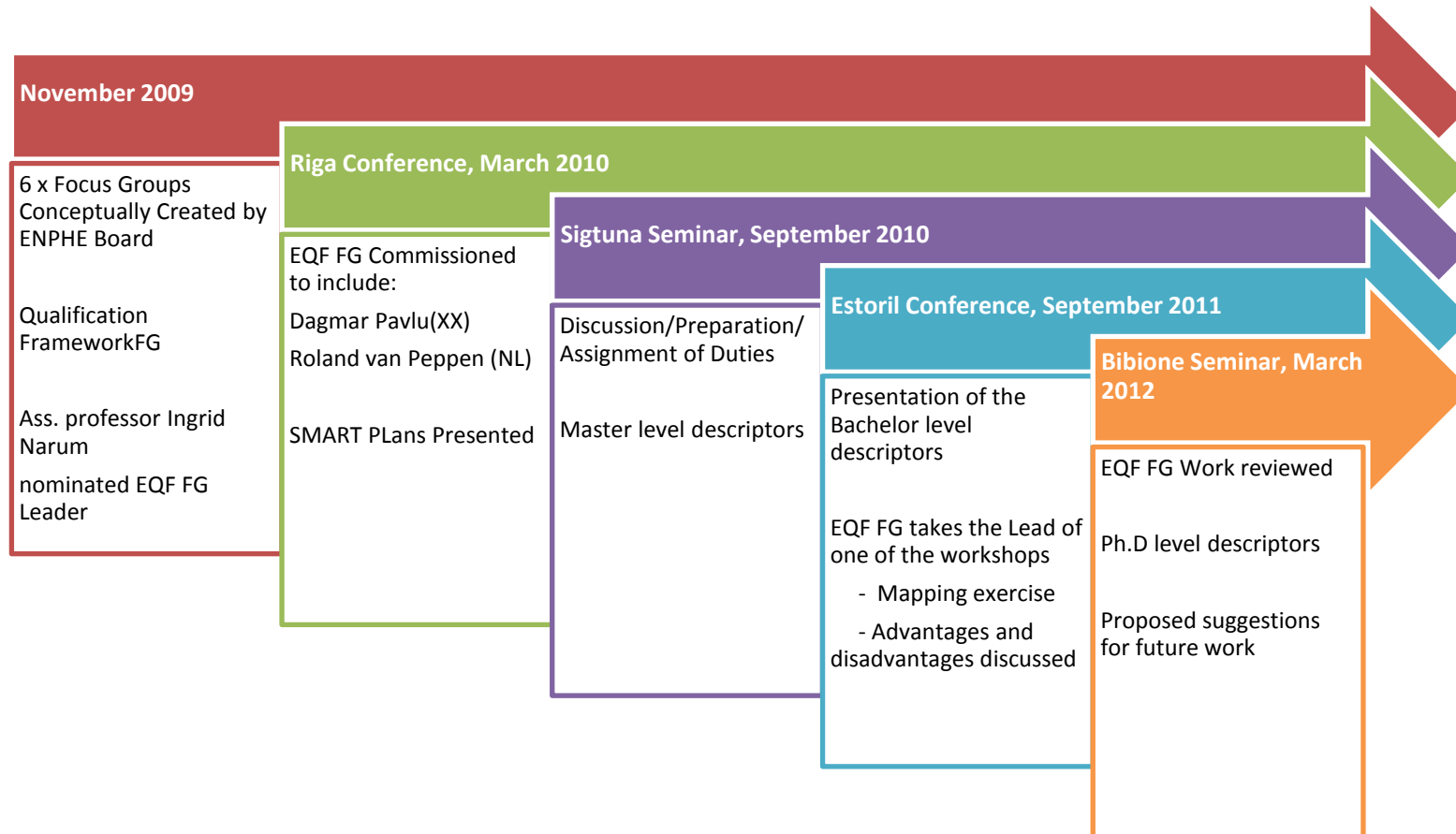
The EQF FG met again at the Bibione seminar in March 2012 to review the work and work out descriptors at Ph.D. level in physiotherapy.

Following the Bibione Seminar the Executive Board put forward a number of recommendations:

1. The work of the EQF FG should be brought to completion by November 2012
2. A presentation on the final outcomes be presented at the Vienna conference in November 2012

3. A poster prepared for exhibition during the 3rd European Congress on Physiotherapy Education, immediately following the ENPHE conference, also in Vienna at the same time in November 2012.

Timeline



Background

The development of the European Qualifications Framework started in 2004 in response to requests from the Member States, the social partners and other stakeholders for a common reference to increase the transparency of qualifications. The Commission, with the support of an EQF Expert Group, produced a blueprint proposing an 8-level framework based on learning outcomes aiming to facilitate the transparency and portability of qualifications and to support lifelong learning. The Commission published this for consultation across Europe during the second half of 2005 (1).

The responses to the consultation demonstrated widespread support among European stakeholders for the Commission proposal but also requested a number of clarifications and simplification. In response, the Commission amended the proposal, drawing on the input of experts from all the 32 countries involved as well as the European social partners. The revised text was then adopted by the Commission as a proposal on 6 September 2006. The European Parliament and Council successfully negotiated the proposal during 2007, leading to the EQF's formal adoption in February 2008(2).

The Recommendation will establish a common European reference which will link the various national qualifications systems together and so facilitate greater communication between them. A network of independent but related and mutually understandable qualifications systems will thereby be created. Using learning outcomes as a common reference point, the Framework will facilitate comparison and transfer of qualifications between countries, systems and institutions and will therefore be relevant to a wide range of users at European as well as at national level.

This closer relationship between countries' qualifications systems will have many beneficiaries:

- The EQF will support greater mobility of learners and workers. It will make it easier for learners to describe their broad level of competence to recruiters in other countries.

This will help employers interpret the qualifications of applicants and so support labour market mobility in Europe. At a very practical level, from 2012 all new qualifications should bear a reference to the appropriate EQF level. The EQF will thus complement and reinforce existing European mobility instruments such as Europass, Erasmus, and ECTS.

- The EQF should benefit individuals by increasing access to, and participation in, lifelong learning. By establishing a common reference point, the EQF will indicate how learning outcomes may be combined from different settings, for example formal study or work, and from different countries, and can thus contribute to reducing barriers between education and training providers e.g. between higher education and vocational education and training, which may operate in isolation from each other. This will promote progression so that learners do not have to repeat learning for example.
- The EQF can support individuals with extensive experience from work or other fields of activity by facilitating validation of non-formal and informal learning. The focus on learning outcomes will make it easier to assess whether learning outcomes acquired in these settings are equivalent in content and relevance to formal qualifications.
- The EQF will support individual users as well as providers of education and training by increasing transparency of qualifications awarded outside the national systems, for example by sectors and multinational companies. The adoption of a common reference framework based on learning outcomes will facilitate the comparison and (potential) linking together of traditional qualifications awarded by national authorities and qualifications awarded by other stakeholders. The EQF will thus help sectors and individuals take advantage of this growing internationalisation of qualifications. The EQF is an ambitious and far-reaching instrument which has implications for education and training systems, the labour market, industry and commerce and citizens (1).

More information is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_cultureindex_en.html

The Bergen Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education 19-20 May 2005 adopted the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. Ministers committed themselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010, and to having started work on this by 2007(3).

First cycle qualification (Typically include 180- 240 ECTS credits)

Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle are awarded to students who:

- 1) have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;
- 2) can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;
- 3) have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;
- 4) can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- 5) have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy(1).

Second cycle qualification (Typically include 90- 120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle)

Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who:

- 1) have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;
- 2) can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;
- 3) have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments;
- 4) can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and nonspecialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;
- 5) have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous(1).

Third cycle qualification (Credits not specified)

Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:

- 1) have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;
- 2) have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;
- 3) have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication; are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;
- 4) can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;

5) can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society (1).

Results

	Bachelor degree physiotherapy 240 ECTS	Masters degree physiotherapy	Ph.D level physiotherapy
Knowledge	<i>"advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles"</i>	<i>"highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research; critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields"</i>	<i>"knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields"</i>
The candidate shall	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) document advanced knowledge about theories, assessments and interventions for people with problems in movement and functioning 2) document knowledge about research ethics, different research designs, and qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis in physiotherapy 3) document critical understanding of theories and principles within the field of exercise and movement 4) document critical understanding of theories and principles within the field of manual therapies 5) document critical understanding of theories and principles within the field of physical modalities 6) document critical understanding of theories and principles within the field of cognitive behavioral therapies 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) document specialized knowledge about theories, assessments and interventions for people with problems in movement and functioning that are relevant for physiotherapy 2) document deeper methodological knowledge in their main field of study 3) outline issues and research questions related to the history, tradition, character and societal position of physiotherapy for peoples with problems in movement and functioning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Has knowledge at the most advanced frontier of physiotherapy 2) Can cope with scientific questions and research methodology 3) Can contribute to knowledge development within his or hers specialized area in physiotherapy and related fields 4) Can critically evaluate/review concepts and theories that are relevant for the understanding of the relation between the individual, health and physical functioning 5) Can evaluate the feasibility of theories and methodology related to the dissertation work

Skills	<i>“advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and predictable problems in a specialised field of work or study”</i>	<i>“specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields”.</i>	<i>“the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice”</i>
The candidate shall	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) demonstrate advanced skills in reviewing documentation and communication of research in physiotherapy 2) demonstrate integrated knowledge from all main topics in the performance of clinical physiotherapy 3) demonstrate advanced communication skills in undertaking anamnestic information, in journal documentation and in team collaboration 4) demonstrate advanced skills in the selection and application of relevant examination instruments/techniques 5) demonstrate advanced skills in analyses of psychosocial-, cognitive-, emotional and physical issues related to the patients/clients dysfunction and situation 6) demonstrate advanced skills in implementing research- and clinical based interventions within the fields of promotion, prevention, treatment/intervention, habilitation and rehabilitation in physiotherapy 7) demonstrate advanced skills in the evaluation of the physiotherapy intervention in cooperation with patient/user/relatives 8) demonstrate advanced skills in formulating research questions, in developing research design, in selecting appropriate research methods, in analyzing collected and in communicating research results 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) demonstrate an ability to analyze and relate critically to various information sources for scientific reasoning and apply these in structuring and formulation of reasoning in physiotherapy 2) plan and carry out a supervised, delimited research and developmental project in line with current research methodology and ethical standards 3) initiate, design and implement research or innovation projects communicate professional issues, analyses, research outcome and conclusions to specialist and non-specialist audiences, orally and in writing, in national and international contexts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Plan and conduct independently a research project within physiotherapy with the relevant problem formulation and the application of recognized scientific methods 2) Contextualize theoretically her/his research project within the physiotherapy tradition 3) Conduct high level research synthesis and manage complex questions related to ethics, theories and methods within his/her scientific research field and in interaction with relevant national and international research environments 4) Critically reflect and evaluate complex scientific and/or innovation issues related to physiotherapy as research area and clinical field. 5) Challenge and redefine established knowledge and practice within physiotherapy

	<p>9) demonstrate advanced skills in evaluating research-based knowledge together with practice knowledge, values and preferences</p> <p>10) demonstrate advanced skills in ethical and professional behavior as a physiotherapist</p>		
General competence	<p><i>“manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in predictable work or study contexts; and take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups”.</i></p>	<p><i>“manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams”.</i></p>	<p><i>“demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research”</i></p>
The candidate shall	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) discuss the terms ‘evidence based’ and ‘clinically based’ knowledge 2) argue about validity and reliability issues in qualitative and quantitative research 3) reflect on their need of further knowledge 4) take responsibility for developing their knowledge 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) reflect on the relationship between scientific knowledge and relevant discipline-, professional- and research-ethical issues in knowledge development within physiotherapy 2) reflect on ethical dilemmas regarding assessment, intervention and evaluation in physiotherapy 3) contribute to re-thinking and innovation processes in research, clinical and interprofessional work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify ethical issues in general and research issues in particular facing the physiotherapy research field 2) Conduct his/her research with integrity 3) Manage complex issues and projects independently within his/her research field 4) Disseminate research results through peer reviewed high-level international channels 5) Participate in scientific debate with researchers from different national and international research settings 6) Contribute to the promotion of research based practice in physiotherapy and related fields 7) Evaluate the need for, take initiative to-,and perform innovation in physiotherapy

Conclusion

In this final report the Qualification Framework Focus Group have presented the work performed over the past three years that may be summarised as a general application of the EQF recommendation of the European Parliament and of the council, to Physiotherapy Education.

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