**Fiji**

**Overview of Higher Education System**

Fiji has a centralised education system that is administered by the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of educational legislations, policies and programmes. The Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) is mandated to regulate the operation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their programmes in Fiji. In total, there are 77 HEIs including three universities. The Fiji National University was formed in 2010 through the merger of seven previously separate state-owned institutions. The other two universities are the University of the South Pacific (a regional university) and the University of Fiji (a private university).

**National Qualifications Framework**

The Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF) was officially launched in February 2012. The FQF is based on strong partnerships between Government, providers of education and training, and businesses. The Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) and the Fiji Qualifications Council (FQC) have been charged with managing the partnerships and developing the policies and operating protocols that will assure that the quality of the platform has international standing. Links to other qualifications frameworks in other countries are envisaged through the FQF to facilitate skills transfer, labour mobility and the recognition of studies and qualifications.

**Quality Assurance**

The FHEC was formed in 2010 and is responsible for developing, promoting and regulating the higher education sector to enhance governance, quality and productivity. The FHEC administers Fiji’s accreditation and quality assurance system, and provides a list of recognised higher education providers in Fiji. According to the recently developed and implemented Policy on QA for HEI including universities, all HEIs are required to set up their own internal QA system and to undertake systematic and comprehensive self-evaluation. The Policy stipulates that the FHEC must conduct an external evaluation and review of HEIs every five years.

**Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications**

The FHEC is working towards establishing a system for the recognition of foreign qualifications. Following a revision of the organisational structure, a new position of a Senior Qualifications Assessment and Evaluation Officer has been developed. The Officer’s task is to evaluate both foreign qualifications and local providers’ qualifications that have a different credit point system to that on the FQF.

Whilst the recognition of foreign qualifications is yet to become a formal part of the processes of the FHEC and the FQC, the process of recognising foreign qualifications has already begun with the FHEC’s Qualifications and Research Unit. The Unit handles assessments to the extent that the accreditation status of the qualifications and the institution awarding them can be verified through contacts with relevant authorities. Fiji’s memberships of the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) and the International Network for Quality Agency in Higher Education (INCAAHE) have greatly facilitated this task.

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**Quick Facts and Links**

**The Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC)**
Develops, promotes and regulates the higher education sector to enhance governance, quality and productivity.

**Fiji Qualifications Council**
Primary role is to administer the FQF. Governed by the Higher Education (Qualifications) Regulations 2009.

**Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF)**
A ten-level qualifications framework that illustrates varying levels of learning and complexity.

The four key processes that support and underpin the FQF are:
- Recognition of Training Providers;
- Registration of Training Providers;
- Accreditation of Qualifications and Programmes; and Quality Management Systems.

**FHEC’s Qualifications and Research Unit**
Currently responsible for assessing foreign higher education qualifications.
When the FQF is in full operation, a unit will be set up to assess and recognise foreign qualifications. Recognition based on the knowledge and skills achieved will be the fundamental features of the assessment of qualifications. The responsibilities of the providers issuing qualifications will be communicated to all providers for the purpose of recognition. Moreover, relevant policies have been drafted, such as a Policy on Translating a Qualification on the FQF; Guidelines and Procedures in the Registration and Accreditation of National Qualifications on the FQF; and the Policy on Credit Point System and Credit Transfer, which are pending approval by the council.

**Issues and Challenges Concerning Foreign Qualifications Recognition**

A number of challenges exist in relation to comparing and assessing degrees in relation to the FQF, including:

- Some qualifications still have to adopt the credit point system and, hence, it is difficult to find the correct match to the FQF, particularly for the lower levels of 1-6
- Qualifications submitted lack learning outcome statements that match the level and credit equivalence on the FQF
- Variations in credit systems across countries and the conversion of grades and percentages of foreign programmes or examination results into the local equivalence.

**Progress toward ratification of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention**

The report from the 11th Session meeting held in Seoul, Korea in 2011 with the recommendation was approved in principle by the Minister responsible for Higher Education in Fiji. A process is now underway to seek final endorsement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cabinet approval for Fiji to sign and ratify the Convention.

**Commitment to Information Sharing Mechanisms**

Fiji is ready to upload necessary information to the UNESCO managed web portals and a local contact person has been appointed to assist in this process. A request to establish a National Information Centre has been included in the Cabinet proposal. However, it will take a while to enable the establishment of the systems and processes necessary and no concrete timeline has been set to date.

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**Criteria and Procedures for Assessment**

Features and descriptors that aid the recognition process:

**A. Identifying qualification levels:**

There are ten levels within the FQF indicating varying levels of complexity of learning. Generic descriptors are used across three domains:

- Knowledge and skills
- Application
- Autonomy

**B. Credit points:**

Used to quantify complete qualifications and components of qualifications and to give them a value. The credits assigned to a full qualification (as well as to its components) represent the estimated time needed for a typical learner to demonstrate that all the specified outcomes have been achieved.

**C. Qualification type descriptors:**

These apply to whole qualifications recognised by the FQF. Options:

1. The profiles for the level and credit points of each FQF qualification type.
2. The summary descriptors for each FQF qualification type.

**For example:** A Bachelor degree must comprise a minimum of 360 credits from levels 5 to 7, including at least 72 credits at level 7. Some Bachelor degrees, notably in professional fields such as engineering, the health sciences, and law, encompass additional credits and may require a longer period of study.