

The structure of the High Vocational-Professional Education (HVPE) Area Ideas for international common names and terms

Specific situations – level 5 and SCHE not being used – national approach

Part 3e
January 2025

Preamble

This document concerns proposals relating to the international Tertiary Education Area, based on all types of formal and non-formal qualifications at levels 5 to 8 of the EQF. This TEA is divided into a number of sectors. These can be clearly defined on the basis of a number of criteria and with the use of instruments that explicitly determine such a sector.

This is an approach that applies to the international classification of the TEA and the sectors indicated therein. In addition, English names are given that are proposed to be used in the international context. These can be used in international cooperation and agreements based on this between countries, institutions and organizations, as the associated sectors have their own defined characteristics.

Every country that wants to participate in this process in one way or another has complete freedom to design its own 'National Tertiary Education Area', with a self-chosen subdivision and appropriate criteria. Choices are made regarding having names for all kinds of concepts, often in the national language. If the government then uses English translations within one's own official communication about the national system, it can also choose one's own approach. There is no international body that can prescribe and enforce this.

We hope that in the coming years more and more countries will base themselves on our proposal and work with it. This can be compared to the Bologna Process that led to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Voluntary agreements have been established that people can adhere to in all kinds of partnerships. It is true that there are still countries that design certain deviating constructions, for all kinds of reasons. Countries can address each other within the EHEA about these matters, but never force each other to make the right adjustments. This can lead to misunderstandings and less transparent constructions and that is why we hope that our initiative will also lead to a form of harmonization for every National HEA.

In short, we work with international proposals and every country may and may participate in the process that we intend to initiate.

1 Introduction

In this short document we discuss a specific approach that can be taken by a country for positioning the Short Cycle HE, without calling it SCHE or using level 5 for it. There could be all kinds of reasons for this.

The example is the Norwegian approach (situation 2023).

2 Reasons and construction

As is known, the SCHE was formally included in the EHEA in 2018, with the result that a country can work within the National HEA with four cycles. But there may be a situation where higher education wants to stick to the system with the three cycles, i.e. First, Second and Third. In certain cases, the SCHE is unfortunately seen as a form of downgrading or having a qualification with a lesser status, perhaps internationally.

But the government can also contribute and believe that a shorter programme, between 90 and 120 credits, can help for the accessibility of national higher education and making learning paths more flexible.

There may also be plans to offer qualifications at level 5 that do not belong to the NHEA in a formal sense, so to - as we propose in this series - the HVPE Area. This may in turn be a reason for providers in the NHEA to indicate that their short program will not be associated with level 5. It is thought that this may lead to confusion among future students.

In short, that would mean:

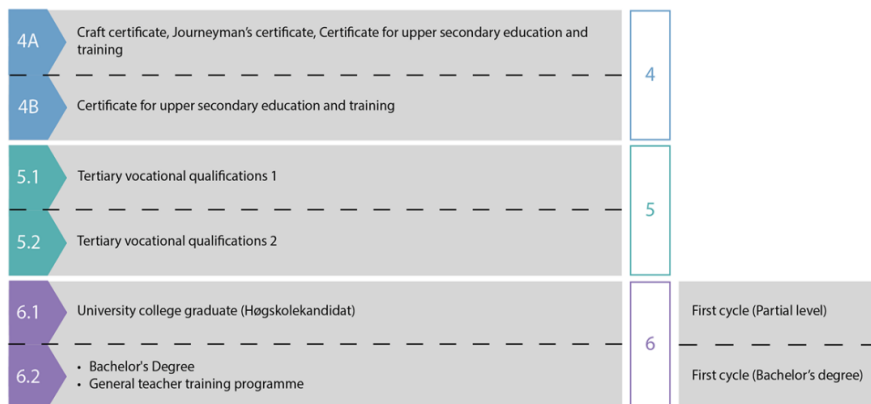
- There is a short programme within the NHEA.
- It is not formally declared as a SCHE as exists within the EHEA.
- Level 5 is not linked to it, as has been internationally agreed, but for the formal SCHE.

However, for that short program one can certainly use the instruments that also apply to the Bachelor, Master and PhD. This also includes working with the Dublin Descriptors for the SCHE, the ECTS, the ESG, etc.

Here as an interesting example of this construction, used in Norway. The creative aspect of this national approach (because one has to fall back on the EQF) is:

- Not level 5 but 6.1
- For the Bachelor this is 6.2
- It is a programme that fits the Bachelor - and is called a 'partial level' (which is not a formal concept, such as 'intermediate level', as proposed at the beginning of the Bologna process).
- This programme is offered in its own context by a University College, with the option to progress to the University's Bachelor's degree.

Here's the overview:



3 International context

As can be seen, the consequence is that 6.1 is actually the SCHE but falls under level 6 of the EQF. This could possibly lead to misunderstandings in international cooperation with institutions that have their SCHE at level 5. There will therefore have to be very good communication about how the system works.

A recent study also indicated that Norway does not have a SCHE in a formal sense, because this programme falls under level 6. This is also included as such in the tables that have been drawn up.

An option is to simply give 6.1 the status of level 5 again, with the distinction being 5.3.

There is no degree linked to level 6.1. It is a 'graduate', so in Norway it means Høgskolekandidat. It may be possible that in the long term it can still be called an 'Associate'.

We will have to keep a close eye on this in this series. International agreements can be made, but countries can deviate from them. They must take the consequences into account, although this means that not all interests of the stakeholders can be defended.

The topics within this series are:

1. Classification of tertiary education, the positioning of the VPEA and the use of international common names
2. A closer look at the division of tertiary education
3.
 - a Levels within the VPEA
 - b Learning paths within the VPEA
 - c Progression from 5 (VPE - SCHE) to 6 (First Cycle)
 - d Top-up programmes at level 5
 - e Level 5 and SCHE – creative approach
4. Subdivision within the VPEA and certificates
5. The positioning of the L5A
6. Use of credits in tertiary education, linked to sectors
7. Harmonization of instruments for the EHEA and the VPEA – for example looking at the European Standards and Guidelines, the Dublin Descriptors and the ECTS for the EHEA, EQAVET, EQF-LLL descriptors and ECVET respectively.
8. Use of micro-credentials in the EL5A
9. Why having the EHEA and the VPEA next to each other...