

# DEFINITIONS

This document accompanies the Humanitarian Action Qualifications Framework (HA QF) and HA Profile. It defines the descriptors, relates the levels to professions and education, and captures the humanitarian dimensions.

## DESCRIPTORS

### Knowledge

In EQF-LLL (European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning) terms, knowledge is defined as “the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning” and consists of “the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study”.

In essence, this descriptor describes what you know, which can be both theoretical and/or factual.

### Skills

In EQF-LLL terms, skills are defined as “the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems”.

In essence, this descriptor describes what you can do, which can be described as “cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)”. Together with your knowledge resources, skills form the instruments in your toolbox that are required for resolving certain tasks or issues.

### Responsibility & Autonomy

In EQF-LLL terms, the descriptor “competence” has a particular meaning that differs from what some would consider its customary meaning in English. Instead, it is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy and the descriptor is defined as “the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development”.

In essence, this descriptor describes in which situations you can work and alludes to professional conduct and the wider competences displayed in terms of attitudes, behaviour and initiative necessary for operating professionally.

While knowledge and skills are specific instruments/resources that you need to have in your toolbox, they do not tell much about when to use them or not use them. Responsibility and autonomy however relate to the contexts when and how you are expected to act pro-actively.

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**1** Level 1 qualifications are **not occupation specific** and are often sought by those with no qualification in order to access unskilled employment that may include a further element of training. Learning is normally developed **during compulsory (primary) education** and contributes to general education but is also achieved through adult learning programmes (including popular adult education) and through non-formal and informal learning.

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PROFESSIONS

**ELRHA/CPIE:** level 1 (new entrants with up to 18 months experience). **MSF IFFG** Support (1-2). **UN/OHRM:** Staff member. **ISCO** 9.

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EDUCATION

Compulsory primary education. **ISCED** 1 Primary Education.

**2** Level 2 provides access to **unskilled employment** that may include a further element of training. Some of these qualifications are occupation specific but most recognise a general preparation for work and study. Learning is usually based in a school (**lower secondary education**), an adult education centre, college, training centre or an enterprise. Learning can also develop through non-formal means through work-based or popular adult education in communities.

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PROFESSIONS

**ELRHA/CPIE:** level 1 (new entrants with up to 18 months experience). **MSF IFFG** Support (1-2). **UN/OHRM:** Staff member. **ISCO** 4-8.

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EDUCATION

**ISCED** 2 Lower Secondary Education.

**3** Qualifications at level 3 recognise a general education and skills base suitable for many job functions and typically provide access to **semi-skilled employment**, in which tasks are carried out under direction, with limited experience of practice in a particular aspect of work or study. Level 3 achievement reflects formal learning in **upper secondary education or basic training in an occupational field** and comprises adult education (including popular adult education labour market training) in schools, colleges, training centres or learning in workplaces as well as non-formal learning through work.

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PROFESSIONS

**ELRHA/CPIE:** level 1 (new entrants with up to 18 months experience). **MSF IFFG** Execution (3-5). **UN/OHRM:** Staff member. **ISCO** 4-8.

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EDUCATION

**ISCED** 3 Upper Secondary Education.

**4** Level 4 provides access to employment in **skilled, autonomous work** and entails supervisory and coordination duties. A person with this level of qualification will usually have experience of work or learning in a given field. Level 4 achievement typically reflects completion of **upper secondary education** and some formal learning in post compulsory education including labour market training and popular adult education (**VET medium level**). It takes place in a range of institutions and also takes the form of non-formal learning through work. Level 4 qualifications also form the entry level to higher education.

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PROFESSIONS

**ELRHA/CPIE:** cf. level 1 (new entrants with up to 18 months experience). **MSF IFFG** Execution (3-5). **UN/OHRM:** Staff member. **ISCO** 4-8.

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EDUCATION

VET medium level. Completion of secondary education, entry level for higher education. **Australia** Certificate IV in community services (humanitarian assistance). Cf. **ISCED** 3 Upper Secondary Education.

5 Level 5 provides access to employment in highly skilled work or to career progression through improved recognition of work capabilities, as well as to job roles requiring managerial duties. [High-grade technicians](#) achieve these qualifications that often bridge secondary and tertiary education and training. Qualifications at level 5 typically follow completion of a post secondary learning programme, such as apprenticeship together with post programme experience in a related field ([higher level VET](#)). In higher education, level 5 is linked to the short cycle within the first cycle (European Higher Education Area - EHEA).

PROFESSIONS

**ELRHA/CPIE:** level 2 (between 18 months to 5 years experience). **UN/OHRM:** Staff member. **ISCO 3** Technicians and associate professionals.

EDUCATION

VET higher level. **QF-EHEA** Dublin descriptors for higher education short cycle (120 ECTS within the first cycle; associate degree). **Australia** cf. Diploma of community services (humanitarian assistance). **HLA:** Certification in Humanitarian Logistics (level 1, operational). **ISCED 5** (2011) Short cycle tertiary education. **ISCED 5B** (1997) First stage tertiary education (professional qualifications).

7 Level 7 qualifications offer access to employment and to career progression within the specialist (or closely related) field. [Experts, senior professionals and managers](#) (e.g. second level programme managers, managers of managers) achieve these qualifications. Learning at level 7 is often highly specialised, usually takes place in specialist higher education institutions and is generally linked to [Master degrees](#) (EHEA second cycle in higher education).

PROFESSIONS

**ELRHA/CPIE:** level 3 (highly experienced with more than 5 years experience). **ECB:** Program Manager level 2. **MSF IFFG** Functional strategy (12-13). **UN/OHRM:** Manager/Manager of managers. **ISCO 2** Professionals.

EDUCATION

Master degrees. **QF-EHEA** Dublin descriptors for higher education second cycle. **HLA:** Certification in Humanitarian Supply Chain Management (strategic). **ISCED 7** (2011) Master or equivalent. **ISCED 5A** (1997) First stage of tertiary education.

6 Level 6 qualifications provide access to professional employment opportunities and are often career entry qualifications for professional and managerial work. People working as [knowledge-based professionals](#) or in [professional management positions](#) (e.g. first level programme managers) achieve these qualifications. Learning at level 6 is often highly specialised and usually takes place in higher education institutions. However, work settings also provide a sufficiently demanding context. Level 6 is generally linked to [Bachelor degrees](#) (EHEA first cycle in higher education).

PROFESSIONS

**CBHA:** 1st level line managers. **ELRHA/CPIE:** cf. level 2 (between 18 months to 5 years experience). **ECB:** Program Manager level 1. **MSF IFFG** Strategy implementation (9-11). **UN/OHRM:** Manager. **ISCO 2** Professionals.

EDUCATION

Bachelor degrees. **QF-EHEA** Dublin descriptors for higher education first cycle. **HLA:** Certification in Humanitarian Supply Chain Management (level 2, tactical). **ISCED 6** (2011) Bachelor or equivalent. **ISCED 5A** (1997) First stage of tertiary education.

8 Level 8 qualifications offer access to employment opportunities in specialised fields and career progression for those involved in [jobs requiring research skills and/or high level leadership](#). Study for these qualifications mostly takes place in specialist higher education institutions and is generally linked to [Doctorate degrees](#) (PhDs, EHEA third cycle in higher education). Learners achieving a qualification at level 8 have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field. Learning at this level is mostly independent of formal learning programmes and takes place through self-initiated actions guided by high level experts.

PROFESSIONS

**MSF IFFG** Mission strategy (14-15). **UN/OHRM:** Manager of managers. **ISCO 2** Professionals and 1 Managers.

EDUCATION

Doctorate degrees (PhD) or higher. **QF-EHEA** Dublin descriptors for higher education third cycle. **ISCED 8** (2011) Doctoral or equivalent. **ISCED 6** (1997) Second stage tertiary education.

 **Humanitarian commitment**

“Humanitarian commitment” comprises in this framework both a **commitment** to the general humanitarian principles, appreciation of existing humanitarian standards and codes, a professional commitment to the mission of one’s humanitarian agency, as well as maintaining one’s ethical integrity and **respect** for all human beings in their diversity.

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COMPARE WITH

CBHA, MSF, UNICEF, DFID, People in Aid, ELRHA/CPIE, CARE, UN, PHPR

 **Context analysis & reflection**

“Context analysis & reflection” refers in this framework to an understanding and situational awareness of the humanitarian **context**, as well as the need to analytically analyse its complexities and critically **reflect** upon one’s actions in this context in order to learn for the future.

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COMPARE WITH

CBHA, PHPR, MSF, IASC, ECB, UNICEF, WV, ELRHA/CPIE, UN

 **Coping & safety**

“Coping & safety” encompasses in this framework a humanitarian’s self-awareness, adapting behaviour, **coping** with stress and resilience in the changing internal and external environment of a humanitarian agency, together with maintaining the **safety** of one’s own person, one’s team and one’s agency against the threats and risks of humanitarian emergency situations, as well as contributing positively to the preparedness and **protection** of crisis-affected people.

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COMPARE WITH

CBHA, MSF, CARE, IASC, UNICEF, People in Aid/ECB shortlist, PHPR, ELRHA/CPIE, ECB, WV

 **Leadership**

“Leadership” in this framework focuses specifically on guiding, motivating, coaching, empowering and **managing people** with authority in combination with establishing a clear **strategic vision**, political acumen and strategic decision-making.

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COMPARE WITH

MSF, ELRHA/CPIE, HLA/CHL, HLA/CHSCM, UNICEF, UN, WV, CARE, IASC, PHPR, CBHA, ECB

 **Collaborative relationships**

“Collaborative relationships” in this framework centres on working with others, both **internal and external** to one’s organisation, in the form of teamwork, partnerships and networking activities, and includes **cooperation** and **communication** aspects, such as cultural sensitivity, trust-building and commitment, negotiation, influencing, advocacy, showing accountability and customer orientation.

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COMPARE WITH

CBHA, CARE, DFID, MSF, ELRHA/CPIE, IASC, WV, ECB, People in Aid/ECB shortlist, UNICEF, UN, PHPR, HLA/CHL, HLA/CHSCM

 **Service to crisis-affected people**

“Service to crisis-affected people” addresses in this framework the performance, professionalism and **quality enhancement** of one’s services, based on **needs assessment** and service orientation, and includes the **set-up of operations** in terms of problem solving capacity, creative innovation, initiative, facilitating change, decision making, planning & organisation and the subsequent **implementation of operations** in terms of project management, financial management and working accountably. Linked to this dimension are **specialised technical and professional expertise**, which in several cases have been elaborated into specialised competency frameworks (e.g. HLA, NIE, CPIE, PHPR, DFID, UNICEF).

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COMPARE WITH

CBHA, MSF, WV, ECB, UNICEF, CARE, DFID, People in Aid, UN, ELRHA/CPIE, HLA/CHL, HLA/CHSCM, PHPR, IASC, ECB shortlist

*The listed humanitarian competency frameworks provide several alternative definitions for these dimensions and their sub themes as well as more specific elaborations of the elements mentioned.*