

UNESCO has been working for a number of years to develop a system of World Reference Levels (WRL) which can be used to translate learning outcomes into an internationally recognised form. This is in response to global trends such as the increasing migration, the globalisation of the labour market, the internationalisation of education and training, and the steadily increasing variety and availability of credentials.

The **Shanghai Consensus** (2012) for transforming technical and vocational education and training recommended the development of international guidelines on quality assurance for the recognition of qualifications based on learning outcomes.

You can read more about the WRL tool in:

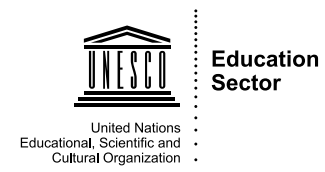
Hart, J. and Chakroun, B. (2019) **World Reference Levels for Lifelong Learning: A tool for comparison and recognition of learning outcomes.** In Cedefop, ETF & UNESCO (2019) Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks 2019, Vol 1. Thematic Chapters. Turin, ETF.

The WRL tool can be accessed at:

<https://worldreferencelevels.org>

UNESCO Education Sector

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation on which to build peace and drive sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education and the Education Sector provides global and regional leadership in education, strengthens national education systems and responds to contemporary global challenges through education with a special focus on gender equality and Africa.



The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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More information

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🌐 **UNESCO's work on skills and qualifications frameworks:**
<https://en.unesco.org/themes/skills-work-and-life/qualificationsframeworks>

🌐 **The WRL tool:**
<https://worldreferencelevels.org>

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World Reference Levels

World Reference Levels (WRL) is a new tool developed by UNESCO to facilitate international comparison of learning outcomes. It helps authorities, institutions, employers and individuals to understand, compare and recognize skills, qualifications, credentials and learning achievements.



What is the World Reference Levels?

World Reference Levels (WRL) is a tool that facilitates the comparison of qualifications and skills.

It helps those with a stake in the outcomes of learning – authorities, institutions, employers and individuals – to understand, compare and recognize skills, qualifications, other kinds of credential and learning achievements, both on a national level and across borders.

The WRL is developed by UNESCO in collaboration with experts, international partners and regional organizations that oversee regional qualification frameworks. The tool is based on research of level descriptors in a wide range of qualification frameworks and job evaluation programmes, and was designed to complement and work together with other systems of managing and recognizing qualifications and outcomes.

Why is there a need for it?

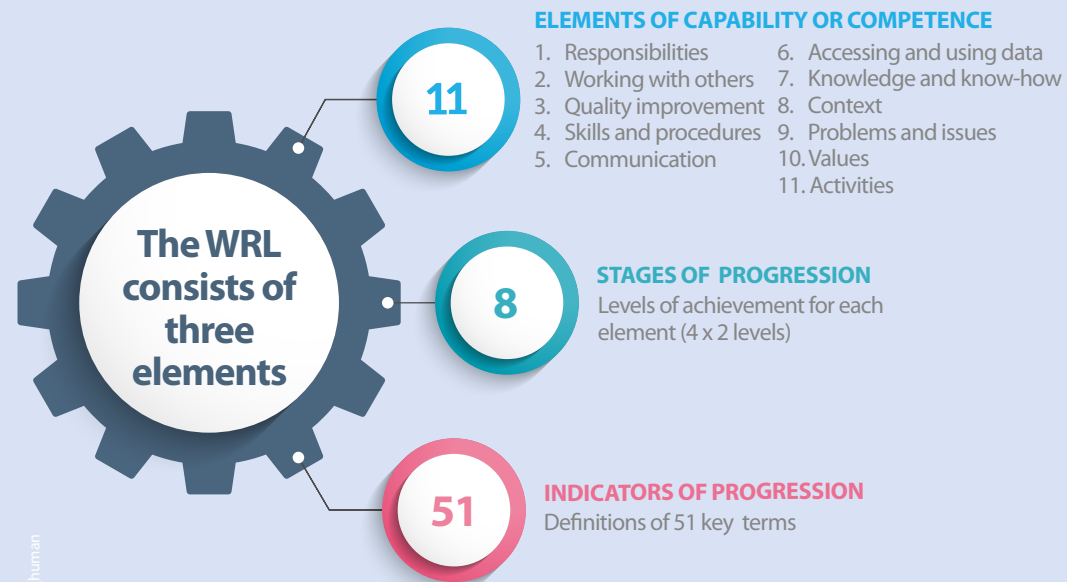
Today, globalization is affecting both labour markets and education systems. More people are on the move due to increased migration – both forced and voluntary – and this has often implications for the recognition of qualifications and skills across borders.

When people are on the move they take their skills and qualifications with them, but if their skills are not recognized where they go, it is difficult for them to access employment and further learning opportunities.

Furthermore, as the range and type of learning institutions, qualifications and other credentials increases, there is often a lack of clarity about the level, nature and quality of qualifications and skills obtained.

The WRL tool can make specific qualifications and other kinds of credential or record of outcomes, job specification, or entry requirements more transparent and comparable across different systems or countries due to its common language for skills.

How does the tool work?



Who is it for?

- **Bodies that award qualifications** and other kinds of credential and want to have these widely recognized;
- **Qualification authorities** and credential evaluators, who wish to compare qualifications and credentials issued by different systems;
- **Employers** who wish to understand whether the knowledge, skills and competences of potential employees are appropriate for specific jobs;
- **Educational institutions** and training providers wishing to assess whether a candidate's previous achievements match the entry requirements for a specific programme or course of study.
- **Any individual** who wishes to have his or her credentials, achievements and skills understood and recognized by, for example, potential employers or training providers.

WRL can turn specifications and descriptions of a person's qualifications, or other kinds of credential or sets of learning outcomes, into a standardized profile and report that can be used to evaluate their suitability for a specific job, education or training programme.

The WRL can be used with the help of a digital tool. The digital tool guides the user through a series of questions that elicits more information about their qualifications through each of the 11 elements of capability. For example, with regard to activities being one of the 11 capability elements, the user is invited to describe the activities that the qualification holder can carry out in terms of a series of characteristics such as: simple, structured, technical, complex, routine, strategic etc.

The user is also invited to provide information on whether the holder of the qualification is expected to supervise, manage, lead or collaborate with others on these activities.

At the end of each cycle of questions, the tool proposes a stage of progression for this particular element of capability, based on the answers provided. The user of the tool always has the opportunity to review and modify the proposed stage if necessary and provide supporting evidence.

The output of WRL is a graphical profile and a concise report in a format that contains key information on the qualifications or other outcomes-based achievements or requirements.

