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Royal Decree 1027/2011, of July 15, establishing the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.

Ministry of Education
"BOE" No. 185, of August 3, 2011 Reference:
BOE-A-2011-13317

The Conference of European Ministers of Higher Education held in Bergen on May 19-20, 2005, took the decision to adopt a comprehensive qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area, built on the so-called "Dublin Descriptors". This framework contemplates the existence of three cycles, allowing, in each national context, the possibility of intermediate cycles, each of them characterized by generic descriptors based on learning outcomes and including an indicative quantification of the credits to be assigned to each of the cycles.

Taking into account the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008, which advises States to align their qualifications systems, our country, like the rest of the countries involved in the Bologna Process, has made the commitment to design and implement its qualifications framework for higher education that is comparable with its European equivalent. The articulation process must include the meticulous elaboration of the national qualifications map (its levels, learning outcomes and descriptors) identifying the cycle descriptors for the European integrating framework.

The Committee for the definition of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education created by Royal Decree 900/2007, of July 6, 2007, is the body entrusted with the task of drafting the Framework proposal, which it has carried out, in the work carried out since its constitution on October 29, 2009 until May 18, 2010, the date on which it held the session that approved the document that serves to give content to this general provision.

The Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education (MECES) proposed unanimously by the Committee incorporates a level referring to other non-university higher education studies, so as to visualize a complete itinerary for higher education, thus contributing to make more visible the integrating facet that is intended to provide to all higher education, even non-university, as is the case of vocational training and the rest of the special regime teachings. Thus, the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education (MECES) is based on a four-level structure that should enable a person to be placed according to his or her level of acquired and certified learning.

Thus, the MECES will have to contemplate in its definition the inclusion of all the higher education courses or degrees referred to in Article 3 of the Organic Law of Education, i.e., university education, artistic education, etc., as well as all the other higher education courses or degrees referred to in Article 3 of the Organic Law of Education.

The following programs are offered: higher education, higher level vocational training, higher level professional education in plastic arts and design, and higher level sports education.

On the other hand, the MECES shares with the Spanish Qualifications Framework (MECU) the objectives of informing society, promoting international mobility and the recognition of training in general throughout the European Higher Education Area. These overlapping purposes cannot, however, lead to confusion between the two frameworks, since the Spanish Qualifications Framework (MECU) covers the entire spectrum of qualifications, from those obtained in compulsory education to those obtained at the higher level of university education, vocational training, artistic and sports education, as well as those acquired in non-formal or informal education processes; in short, it refers to all levels of learning and is centered on the idea of valuing lifelong learning.

On the contrary, the scope of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (MECES) is limited to higher education degrees. Therefore, the equivalence of the term qualification referred to in the MECES, as specified in the second article, must be made with that of any degree, diploma or certificate issued by an educational institution that certifies having acquired a set of learning outcomes, after having successfully completed a training program in a legally recognized institution in the field of higher education.

The definition of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education is intended, on the one hand, to inform society and in particular students about the learning requirements of each level, and on the other, to provide information to employers about the corresponding competencies of those who are going to be employed. On the other hand, the transcendental usefulness of the MECES as a tool that will facilitate mobility and international recognition of degrees and training must be highlighted.

The definition of the four levels of the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education included in this Royal Decree must allow all types of groups to particularize the learning outcomes that characterize these levels to their thematic, knowledge or professional fields. Furthermore, the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), in collaboration with other assessment bodies of the Autonomous Communities, is entrusted with the task of validating the coherence and consistency of the particularizations arising from the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education.

Finally, the approval of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education must offer a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications it integrates and the degree descriptors of the corresponding cycle defined in the European framework, considering that the qualifications frameworks are a key tool for the materialization of the European Higher Education Area. To this end, this regulation proposes that within one month of its publication, the process to certify its compatibility with the European framework, which involves evaluation by international experts, should be initiated.

In the process of drafting this Royal Decree, the Autonomous Communities have been consulted within the General Conference on University Policy and the Council of Universities, the State School Council, the Higher Council of Artistic Education, the General Council of Vocational Training, the Higher Council of Sports and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the Ministry of Territorial Policy have issued a report.

By virtue thereof, at the proposal of the Minister of Education, in agreement with the Council of State and after deliberation of the Council of Ministers at its meeting held on July 15, 2011,

PROVIDED:

Article 1. Object.

1. This Royal Decree establishes the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, MECES, and the description of its levels, the purpose of which is to allow the classification, comparability and transparency of higher education qualifications in the Spanish education system.

2. The MECES is an internationally recognized instrument that allows the coherent leveling of all higher education qualifications for their classification, relation and comparison, and also serves to facilitate the mobility of individuals in the European Higher Education Area and in the international labor market.

Article 2. Definitions.

For the purposes of the provisions of this Royal Decree, the following definitions shall apply:

a) Qualification: Any degree, diploma or certificate issued by an educational institution attesting to the acquisition of a set of learning outcomes, following the successful completion of a training program at a legally recognized institution in the field of higher education.

b) Learning Outcome: That which a student is expected to know, understand or be able to do.

c) Level (in a Qualifications Framework): The reference defined in terms of generic descriptors for the classification of different higher education qualifications, expressed in learning outcomes, to which a particular qualification can be ascribed by appropriate comparison.

d) Descriptor: A collection of learning outcomes that characterizes a given level in a qualifications framework.

Article 3. Scope of application.

The scope of application of the Framework includes official degrees from university education, higher artistic education, higher level vocational training, higher level professional plastic arts and design education and higher level sports education, as well as other degrees that have been declared equivalent.

Article 4. Structure of the MECES.

The Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education is structured in four levels with the following denomination for each of them:

1. Level 1: Senior Technician.
2. Level 2: Grade.
3. Level 3: Master.
4. Level 4: Doctor.

The four levels of the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education correspond to the following levels of the European Qualifications Framework:

1. Level 1 (Higher Technician) of the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education corresponds to level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework.
2. Level 2 (Degree) of the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education corresponds to level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework.
3. Level 3 (Master) of the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education corresponds to level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework.
4. Level 4 (Doctor) of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education corresponds to level 8 of the European Qualifications Framework.

Article 5. Senior Technician.

1. The Higher Technician level constitutes level 1 of higher education and includes higher vocational training courses, higher vocational training courses, higher education courses and higher education courses.

The purpose of these courses is to provide students with specialized training that enables them to perform a variety of professions.

2. The characteristics of the qualifications placed at this level are defined by the following generic learning outcome descriptors:

a) have demonstrated specialized knowledge in a professional or study area, with critical understanding for the integration and transfer of knowledge, as well as for the development of creativity, personal initiative and entrepreneurship;

b) apply and integrate their artistic, technological or sports knowledge in the definition and development of work procedures, in the artistic or work environment, in an autonomous way and with responsibility for the coordination and supervision of the technical work;

c) Possess the ability to analyze the information necessary to evaluate and respond to foreseen and unforeseen situations, by seeking informed, creative and innovative solutions within a field of study or profession;

d) be able to communicate their knowledge, ideas, skills and activities in professional contexts to peers, supervisors, clients and people under their responsibility;

e) possess the necessary learning strategies to advance in their training autonomously, with the maturity to innovate in their application and progress in learning and training to higher levels.

3. The qualifications included in this level are indicated in the corresponding section of the table in the annex to this standard.

Article 6. Grade Level.

1. The degree level is level 2 of the MECES, which includes those qualifications whose purpose is to provide students with general training in one or more disciplines, aimed at preparing them for the exercise of professional activities.

2. The characteristics of the qualifications placed at this level are defined by the following descriptors presented in terms of learning outcomes:

a) have acquired advanced knowledge and demonstrated an understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects and methodology of work in their field of study with a depth that reaches the cutting edge of knowledge;

b) be able, by means of arguments or procedures developed and supported by themselves, to apply their knowledge, understanding and problem-solving skills in complex or professional and specialized work environments that require the use of creative and innovative ideas;

c) have the ability to collect and interpret data and information on which to base their conclusions, including, when necessary and relevant, reflection on social, scientific or ethical issues in their field of study;

d) be able to deal with complex situations or situations that require the development of new solutions in the academic, work or professional environment within their field of study;

e) know how to communicate to all types of audiences (specialized or not) in a clear and precise manner, knowledge, methodologies, ideas, problems and solutions in their field of study;

f) be able to identify their own training needs in their field of study and work or professional environment and to organize their own learning with a high degree of autonomy in all types of contexts (structured or not).

3. The qualifications included in this level are indicated in the corresponding section of the table in the annex to this standard.

Article 7. Master's Degree Level.

1. The Master's level is level 3 of the MECES, which includes those qualifications aimed at the acquisition by the student of advanced training, of a specialized or multidisciplinary nature, oriented towards academic or professional specialization, or to promote initiation in research tasks.

2. The characteristics of the qualifications placed at this level are defined by the following descriptors presented in terms of learning outcomes:

a) have acquired advanced knowledge and demonstrated, in a scientific and technological or highly specialized research context, a detailed and well-founded understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects and methodology of work in one or more fields of study;

b) know how to apply and integrate their knowledge, understanding, scientific foundation and problem-solving skills in new and imprecisely defined environments, including multidisciplinary contexts, both research and highly specialized professionals;

c) know how to evaluate and select the appropriate scientific theory and the precise methodology of their fields of study to formulate judgments based on incomplete or limited information, including, when necessary and relevant, a reflection on the social or ethical responsibility linked to the solution proposed in each case;

d) be able to predict and control the evolution of complex situations through the development of new and innovative work methodologies adapted to the specific scientific/research, technological or professional field, generally multidisciplinary, in which their activity is developed;

e) know how to transmit in a clear and unambiguous way to a specialized or non-specialized audience, results from scientific and technological research or from the most advanced innovation field, as well as the most relevant foundations on which they are based;

f) have developed sufficient autonomy to participate in research projects and scientific or technological collaborations within their thematic area, in interdisciplinary contexts and, where appropriate, with a high component of knowledge transfer;

g) be able to take responsibility for their own professional development and specialization in one or more fields of study.

3. The qualifications included in this level are indicated in the corresponding section of the table in the annex to this standard.

4. Undergraduate degrees that, due to the requirements of European Union regulations, are of at least 300 ECTS credits, provided that they include a minimum of 60 ECTS credits that participate in the characteristics of the descriptors of section 2 of this precept, may be assigned to Level 3 (Master's Degree) regulated in this Royal Decree. The regulations on the organization of official university education shall establish the procedure to be followed to obtain this affiliation.

Article 8. Doctorate level.

1. The PhD level is level 4 of the MECES, which includes those qualifications aimed at the advanced training of the student in research techniques.

2. The characteristics of the qualifications placed at this level are defined by the following descriptors presented in terms of learning outcomes.

a) have acquired advanced knowledge at the frontier of knowledge and demonstrated, in the context of internationally recognized scientific research, a deep, detailed and well-founded understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects and scientific methodology in one or more research areas;

b) have made an original and significant contribution to scientific research in their field of knowledge and that this contribution has been recognized as such by the international scientific community;

c) have demonstrated that they are capable of designing a research project with which to carry out a critical analysis and evaluation of imprecise situations where they can apply their contributions and their knowledge and work methodology to synthesize new and complex ideas that produce a deeper understanding of the research context in which they are working;

d) have developed sufficient autonomy to initiate, manage and lead innovative research teams and projects and scientific collaborations, national or international, within their thematic area, in multidisciplinary contexts and, where appropriate, with a high component of knowledge transfer;

e) have shown that they are capable of developing their research activity with social responsibility and scientific integrity;

f) have justified that they are able to participate in scientific discussions at international level in their field of knowledge and to disseminate the results of their research activity to all types of audiences;

g) have demonstrated within their specific scientific context that they are capable of making advances in cultural, social or technological aspects, as well as fostering innovation in all areas in a knowledge-based society.

3. The qualifications included in this level are indicated in the corresponding section of the table in the annex to this standard.

Article 9. Definition of thematic references for the levels of the MECES.

1. The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), in collaboration with other assessment bodies of the Autonomous Communities, will be in charge of validating and filing those interpretations of the definitions of the MECES levels that arise in both thematic and professional areas.

2. The Secretary of State for Education and Vocational Training will be responsible for defining the specificities related to non-university education.

Sole additional provision. MECES self-certification process.

Within a maximum period of one month from the entry into force of this Royal Decree, the Ministry of Education will initiate the process of self-certification of the MECES with the European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, in accordance with the criteria agreed at the Bergen (2005) and London (2007) ministerial meetings.

First final provision. Competent title.

This Royal Decree is issued under the provisions of Article 149.1.30 of the Spanish Constitution, which grants the State exclusive jurisdiction over the regulation of the conditions for obtaining, issuing and homologation of academic and professional degrees, and is applicable throughout the national territory.

Second final provision. Application and updating of the MECES.

The Minister of Education is authorized to issue the necessary instructions for the application of this Royal Decree, as well as to update or modify, when appropriate, the contents of the annex to this regulation.

Third Final Provision. Entry into force.

This Royal Decree shall enter into force on the day following its publication in the Official Gazette.

"Boletín Oficial del Estado".

Given in Madrid, on July 15, 2011.

JUAN CARLOS R.

The Minister of Education,
ÁNGEL GABILONDO PUJOL

ANNEX

Levels		Qualifications
1	Senior Technician.	Higher Technician of Vocational Training ¹ . Higher Technician in Plastic Arts and Design ² . Higher Sports Technician ³ .
2	Grade.	Graduate Degree ⁴ . Higher Degree of Higher Artistic Education ⁵ .
3	Master's degree.	University Master's Degree ⁶ . Master's Degree in Artistic Education ⁷ . Graduate Degree of at least 300 ECTS credits comprising at least 60 ECTS credits at Master's level, which has obtained this level of qualification by resolution of the Council of Universities ⁸ .
4	Doctor.	Doctorate Degree ⁹ .

¹ In accordance with Royal Decree 1147/2011, of July 29, which establishes the general organization of vocational training in the educational system.

² In accordance with Royal Decree 596/2007, of May 4, 2007, which establishes the general organization of the professional teaching of plastic arts and design.

³ In accordance with Royal Decree 1363/2007, of October 24, 2007, which establishes the general organization of special regime sports education.

⁴ In accordance with Royal Decree 1393/2007, of October 29, 2007, which establishes the organization of official university education, as amended.

⁵ In accordance with Royal Decree 1614/2009, of October 26, 2009, which establishes the organization of higher artistic education regulated by Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, 2006, on Education.

⁶ In accordance with Royal Decree 1393/2007, of October 29, 2007, which establishes the organization of official university education, as amended by Royal Decree 861/2010, of July 2, 2010.

⁷ In accordance with Royal Decree 1614/2009, of October 26, 2009, which establishes the organization of higher artistic education regulated by Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, 2006, on Education.

⁸ In accordance with Royal Decree 1393/2007, of October 29, 2007, which establishes the organization of official university education, as amended by Royal Decree 861/2010, of July 2, 2010.

⁹ In accordance with Royal Decree 1393/2007, of October 29, 2007, which establishes the organization of official university education, as amended.