



EFA Advanced Competence Framework

Developing Learning Outcomes: A Practical Guide Aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

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Introduction

Across Europe, fundraising is increasingly recognised as a professional discipline that requires robust learning pathways and transparent qualifications. As fundraising organisations respond to growing societal needs, heightened public scrutiny, and evolving regulatory environments, the demand for high-quality, comparable professional education has never been greater.

Supporting members to strengthen the fundraising profession – across both national contexts and Europe as a whole – is a core part of the European Fundraising Association’s mission. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is by establishing shared reference points that enhance clarity, quality, and mutual trust in fundraising qualifications.

This guide has therefore been developed to support members in creating new fundraising qualifications under the EFA Advanced Competence Framework. It provides clear guidance on how to draft, review, and document learning outcomes in a consistent, auditable, and learner-centred way, aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Learning outcomes are central to professional education, helping to ensure that curricula are coherent, assessments are meaningful, and qualifications accurately reflect the knowledge, skills, and competences required for professional fundraising practice. Alignment with the EQF further strengthens their value by situating national qualifications within a shared European framework recognised by educators, employers, and policymakers alike.

As such, EFA encourages its members and partners to use this guide to support them in the development of their professional qualifications. By working towards greater alignment and shared standards, we collectively contribute to the professionalisation, credibility, and long-term sustainability of fundraising across Europe.

About the European Qualifications Framework

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) was developed to make qualifications more readable and understandable across countries and systems, supporting their recognition.

At its core are eight reference levels (1-8), which are defined in terms of learning outcomes. These concise, measurable statements define what learners should know, understand, and be able to do by the end of a learning experience - whether a session, module, or full qualification. In brief: their knowledge, skill and competence.

These learning outcomes form the backbone of inclusive, intentional curriculum design by:

- Structuring content and sequencing: Outcomes guide the logical progression of learning activities
- Aligning teaching and assessment: They ensure instructional methods and evaluation tools support the intended learning
- Embedding accessibility and differentiation: Outcomes enable inclusive design and flexible learning pathways
- Promoting transparency and accountability: They clarify expectations for learners, educators, and accrediting bodies.

Full information on the EQF can be accessed [here](#).

EFA Advanced Competence Framework & the EQF

EFA members can choose the EQF level at which they teach qualifications accredited against the Advanced Framework, with the option of teaching at levels 5, 6 or 7. Guidance on selecting an appropriate level is provided below, and in the EFA Advanced Competence Framework 2026 handbook.

Applications for accreditation must state at which levels a course is being taught, and evidence must be provided for how it meets these levels, particularly through learning outcomes.

Ensuring proposed qualifications align – step-by-step process

This section describes the core process for aligning qualifications with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). It focuses on the *how* of developing and reviewing learning outcomes.

EQF level descriptors, guidance on learning-outcome language, and Advanced Competence Framework mappings are provided in the appendices and should be used as reference material while working through each step.

Step one: Identify the target EQF level

Determine which EQF level your proposed qualification aligns with. The EQF provides a shared reference framework across Europe, enhancing transparency and comparability of learning achievements.

Each of the eight EQF levels is defined by descriptors in three categories:

- Knowledge: Theoretical and/or factual
- Skills: Cognitive and practical
- Competence: Responsibility and autonomy

See the *EQF Level Descriptions* for detailed guidance: [Description of the eight EQF levels | Europass](#), and *Appendix 1*, which shows the learning outcomes for levels 5-7 – the EQF levels that Advanced Framework qualifications can be taught against.

Step two: Use action-oriented, measurable language

Draft outcomes using clear, observable verbs that reflect assessable performance:

- Begin each outcome with an active verb (e.g., describe, analyse, evaluate, create)
- Use Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy to guide verb selection
- Avoid vague verbs like *understand* or *know* unless paired with context and assessment criteria

See *Appendix 2*, which provides a summary of verbs suitable for expressing learning outcomes aligned with EQF levels 1–8 across the dimensions of Knowledge, Skills, and Competence.

Step three: Match verbs to EQF level complexity

Ensure that the verbs used reflect the depth of learning expected at the designated EQF level. For example:

EQF Level	Example expectation
Level 4	Apply basic knowledge and solve specific problems
Level 6	Manage complex professional activities and make autonomous decisions
Level 8	Develop new knowledge and innovative approaches in a field of work or study

Step four: Make outcomes learner-centred

- Phrase outcomes from the learner's perspective: *"By the end of this module, learners will be able to..."*
- Focus on what learners can demonstrate, not what educators intend to teach

Step five: Limit and structure outcomes clearly

- Use 3-6 outcomes per module to maintain clarity and focus
- Group outcomes under Knowledge, Skills, and Competence to reinforce EQF alignment
- Ensure outcomes are concise, unambiguous, and jargon-free

Step six: Ensure measurability and accessibility

- Design outcomes that can be assessed through varied methods: assignments, exams, projects, or practical demonstrations
- Develop assessment criteria or rubrics that define what achievement looks like at the target EQF level

See Appendix 3, which highlights the EQF-aligned level descriptors for the learning outcomes of each cluster of competencies in the Advanced Competence Framework.

Step seven: Promote progression and coherence

Check for alignment across and within modules:

- Vertical alignment: Outcomes should build progressively across EQF levels
- Horizontal alignment: Outcomes across modules should complement and reinforce one another

Step eight: Reference quality assurance standards

- Use the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) to ensure consistency in outcome formulation and evaluation ([PowerPoint Presentation](#))
- Involve stakeholders—including academics, employers, and learners—to validate relevance and EQF alignment

Step nine: Review, test, and refine

- Pilot outcomes with teaching staff and assessors
- Evaluate for clarity, feasibility, and EQF consistency
- Revise based on feedback and performance data from learners and external reviewers

Summary

The checklist below can be used to check that your learning outcomes are consistent, auditable, learner-centred and are aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Checklist	Yes / No / Comments
Outcomes use measurable, active verbs	
Each outcome aligns clearly with one or more EQF dimensions	
Outcomes are realistic for the stated EQF level	
Outcomes are student-centred (“learners will be able to...”)	
Assessment methods measure intended outcomes effectively	
Stakeholders (faculty, employers, learners) reviewed outcomes	
Outcomes contribute to program-level learning outcomes	
Revisions made based on feedback / previous evaluations	

Appendix 1. Selecting an EQF level

The table below is designed to support the process of choosing an appropriate EQF level for a course. It shows the **learning outcomes for levels 5-7**: those at which courses accredited against the Advanced Framework can be taught.

Level	Knowledge	Skill	Competence
5	comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	(a) exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change (b) review and develop the performance of self and others
6	advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	(a) manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision making in unpredictable work or study contexts (b) take responsibility for managing the professional development of individuals and groups
7	(a) highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research (b) critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields	specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	(a) manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches (b) take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams

Appendix 2. Expressing learning outcomes

The table below provides a summary of verbs suitable for **expressing learning outcomes** aligned with EQF levels 1-8 across the dimensions of Knowledge, Skills, and Competence.

EQF	Knowledge verbs	Competence verbs	Skills verbs
Level 2	describe, outline, classify, define	apply simple methods, organize, demonstrate, complete	work with some guidance, cooperate, take limited responsibility
Level 3	explain, discuss, summarize, interpret	use, select, carry out, apply rules, adapt known solutions	take responsibility for tasks, work with others
Level 4	analyse, distinguish, compare, relate, summarize	operate, plan, solve, present, modify, integrate	self-manage, supervise, take responsibility for quality
Level 5	review, evaluate, integrate, interpret, synthesize	adapt, implement, design, develop, coordinate	manage processes, make judgments, guide others
Level 6	critically analyse, explain, evaluate, debate	apply, design, create, assess, innovate	manage complex activities, take initiative, make decisions
Level 7	theorize, critique, formulate, conceptualize, innovate, evaluate, justify, synthesize, develop methodologies	lead, transform, mentor, make strategic decisions	take responsibility for strategic leadership
Level 8	originate, hypothesize, redefine, challenge, evaluate critically	create new methods, research, design models, theorize	lead research, advance knowledge, take full responsibility

Appendix 3. Aligning learning outcomes to the target EQF level

The **EQF-aligned level descriptors** for the learning outcomes of each cluster of competencies in the Advanced Competence Framework are provided below.

CF6 Strategic fundraising planning and control

Level 5 descriptors: Fundraising managers (and leaders) should gain a comprehensive knowledge of all subjects and tasks related to fundraising planning and control contained in CF6. They should be able to apply that knowledge to perform tasks to a competent standard and supervise and assist others performing those tasks. They should be able to fix problems and find solutions.

Level 6 descriptors: Fundraising leaders (and managers) should have a detailed and in-depth knowledge of CF6 topics, understand the theory and evidence underpinning them, and use that to devise creative new ideas or to fix problems. They should be able to adapt existing ideas to new applications. They should be able to lead, support, manage and advise others in a way that leads to excellent outcomes and helps further those others' professional knowledge to become better fundraisers.

Level 7 descriptors: Fundraising leaders should have expert knowledge of fundraising planning, control and strategy such that they are able to innovate novel solutions to existing approaches and challenges. They should be able to identify challenges and problems well in advance of them happening and prepare pre-emptive solutions and fixes. They should be able to mentor and lead others in performing these tasks such that those others are capable of taking ownership of them with confidence.

CF7 Leading in a fundraising organisation

Level 5 descriptors: Fundraising managers (and leaders) should have a broad but detailed knowledge of all relevant matters pertaining to leading in a fundraising organisation as contained in CF7. They should be able to identify and understand issues such that they can identify challenges for their organisation and department and identify ways to meet them. They should be able to explain and set out any issues and challenges in ways that make them easily understandable for others, and support others in tackling those issues and challenges. They should be able to advise and support others on how they tackle and deliver competencies set out in CF7, to enable them (those whom managers and leaders are supporting) to make decisions appropriate to their own level of knowledge and competence.

Level 6 descriptors: Fundraising leaders (and managers) should have a detailed and in-depth knowledge and understanding of the matters set out in CF7 (particularly ethics) and

be able to critically reflect on how they are implemented, and any issues and challenges that could result from their implementation. They should be able to use their knowledge to innovate and synthesise new solutions to tough challenges and to support others doing the same, ensuring that all their actions and decisions are grounded in solid thinking and argument that can be supported by relevant evidence and theory; and to analyse and evaluate how those new ideas and solutions play out in practice. They should be able to confidently take decisions on complex issues and confidently and articulately explain and justify those decisions to stakeholders. They should be able to support others in understanding and applying new knowledge and to help those others further their own professional knowledge and ability/competence.

Level 7 descriptors: Fundraising leaders should have a comprehensive, expert and specialised knowledge of most, if not all, matters and subjects set out in CF7, particularly their ethical literacy, bringing a high degree of critical thinking and reflection to the tasks. They should be able to apply new and cutting edge thinking to these matters to find ways to develop and advance the professional knowledge of the whole fundraising profession, not only to improve the performance of the organisations they work for; and to use their knowledge to create and synthesise new solutions to existing challenges, which are always grounded in appropriate theory and evidence - thus marking them out as true innovators at leading in fundraising organisations. They should be able to take ownership of making difficult decisions on complex issues, and to confidently and articulately explain and justify those decisions to stakeholders, finding new ways to overcome criticism and objections if necessary. They should be able to inspire and support others to understand and create new knowledge and to facilitate those others' development as future fundraising leaders.

CF8 Fundraising and philanthropy in context, trends, and stakeholder engagement

Level 5 descriptors: Fundraising managers (and leaders) should have a broad but detailed knowledge of all matters relating to the context of and trends in fundraising and philanthropy, and how to engage with stakeholders. They should be able to understand key concepts and how these can be, and are being, used to drive forward and create new fundraising knowledge, and any challenges in the limitations of these new ideas. They should be able to apply these ideas to creating new initiatives in their organisations, and understand and identify when and why they do not work. They should be able to engage in critical discussions with others about these ideas, and support others to articulate and realise how they want to explore these same issues.

Level 6 descriptors: Fundraising leaders (and managers) should have a detailed and in-depth knowledge and understanding of the majority of matters described in CF8 and a broad understanding of anything where their knowledge is not so detailed and in-depth (such as it would satisfy Level 5 descriptors). They should be able to analyse and evaluate key ideas and concepts in order to create new approaches and methods of fundraising at their organisations, manage and oversee their implementation, and ensure they are

appropriately assessed and evaluated. They should also be able to contribute to the development of professional knowledge within the fundraising profession. They should be able to articulate and advocate new ideas to all stakeholders, critically reflect on criticism, and find ways to meet and overcome criticisms. They should be able to support others in understanding and applying new knowledge and to help those others further their own professional knowledge and ability/competence.

Level 7 descriptors: Fundraising leaders should have a comprehensive, expert and specialised knowledge of almost all matters and subjects related to the context of fundraising and philanthropy, latest trends and engaging with stakeholders - particularly key concepts and ideas. They should be able to use these to create and synthesise new conceptual knowledge that will enhance and improve fundraising at their organisations while significantly contributing to and expanding fundraising's professional knowledge base, and use this knowledge to solve problems at their organisations and in the fundraising profession. They should be able to take ownership of implementing new ideas and solutions, and critically evaluate and assess their implementation. They should be able to build and maintain relationships with all relevant stakeholders, and communicate and advocate new ideas to stakeholders in order to achieve the best outcomes for their organisation and the fundraising profession, and overcome obstacles and criticism. They should be able to inspire and support others to understand and create new knowledge and to facilitate those others' development as future fundraising leaders.

About the European Fundraising Association (EFA)

The European Fundraising Association is a network of national fundraising organisations working together to advance and strengthen fundraising across Europe.

We speak with one voice to promote best practice, support professional certification, shape EU policy, and connect fundraisers.

We welcome applications from national fundraising associations and organisations to join our member base.

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