



CARIBBEAN  
EXAMINATIONS  
COUNCIL

# The CXC<sup>®</sup> Qualifications Structure for Classic Qualifications



CPEA™

CCSLC<sup>®</sup>

CVQ\*

CSEC<sup>®</sup>

CAPE<sup>®</sup>

CXC<sup>®</sup>-AD

\*CVQ is the trademark of the Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities

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**NOTE**

This document was developed in May 2014.

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## **The CXC® Qualifications Structure for Classic Qualifications (Revised)**

The **CXC®** Qualifications Structure (CXC®-QS) is designed to assist users in interpreting and comparing competencies across existing and future **CXC®** classic qualifications. It serves as a basis for discussion with new clients wanting custom-designed (Hybrid and Proxy) products and users seeking to compare competencies across qualifications. The Qualifications Structure may also serve as a translation device for comparing qualifications from multiple regional and extra-regional sources

# The CXC® Qualifications Structure for Classic Qualifications

## Executive Summary

The mission of the **Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC®)** is to develop the human capital of our Caribbean people through partnerships for global competitiveness. As it seeks to ensure the human resource competitiveness of the Caribbean and endorse the **CARICOM** commitment to free movement of labour, **CXC®** has developed a qualifications structure to undergird the articulation of its suite of qualifications.

The **CXC®** Qualifications Structure (**CXC®**-QS) is designed to assist users in interpreting and comparing competencies across existing and future **CXC®** qualifications. It may also serve as a basis for discussion with new clients wanting custom-designed products and users seeking to compare competencies across qualifications. The Structure may also serve as a translation device for comparing qualifications from multiple regional and extra-regional sources.

## Context and Application

The **CXC®** Philosophy aims to enable all to attain their full potential, preserve Caribbean identity and humanity and contribute to the development and integration of the region. **CXC®** offers qualifications and assessments that are branded and/or quality assured by **CXC®** that contribute to the advancement of Caribbean society. These qualifications include progressive, modular, stackable, credited, transferable, portable and internationally recognised credentials for the attainment of learners' full potential.

The Qualifications Structure defines a total of ten hierarchical levels: one pre-primary/lower primary; one primary/pre-secondary; four secondary levels (secondary to post-secondary) and four tertiary levels – eight post-primary education levels reflecting as **CXC®**-QS Level 1-10.

For each level, an anchor qualification is defined and five horizontal hierarchically structured learning domains/dimensions: Knowledge & Understanding; Application & Practice; Communication, Numeracy, and ICT; Life Skills; and Autonomy, Accountability & Working with Others.

Typical and notional qualifications (and prior learning or experience) are suggested for each level, but this connotes a level of functioning and not grade equivalence.

Descriptors help users to locate qualifications at appropriate levels of the **CXC®**-QS. These descriptors are parsimoniously written with the intention that the user interprets the competencies at any given level to be those defined for the given level and all the levels subsumed below it.

## Background

The liberalised education environment – that was only a dream in post-colonial 1973 – is today’s reality, and with a significant increase in the number and types of education and training products from familiar and unfamiliar providers, it is important for everyone to be able to make informed choices. Learners need to know what they are getting and where it can take them, and other stakeholders need to know what the qualifications mean and what they are worth. **Key criteria for evaluating qualifications include relevance, affordability, portability and articulation with new and existing products.** In this context, programme developers, learners, employers and accrediting councils have valued the introduction of regional qualifications frameworks which define qualification levels and provide guidance about regionally accepted and internationally benchmarked standards. While the **CXC®-QS** is designed primarily to undergird the design and maintenance of **CXC®**’s examination products to ensure articulation with each other and with regional and international benchmarks, it will also facilitate end-users’ evaluation of statements about programme outputs. It is anticipated that its users will be primarily learners and potential examination candidates, ministries of education, professional bodies, industry and employers; secondary users will be regional and extra-regional educational institutions and accreditation agencies.

With education being recognised as a pre-requisite for sustainable development, and educators, governments and their social partners sharing the responsibility for education, training and economic health, end-users have been demanding greater accountability in relation to educational programmes and the investment in them. In this context, **CXC®** has opted to resist focusing only on maintaining product specifications and standards over time; instead, evaluation of the relevance and fitness for purpose and comparability of these products has become a priority. In collaboration with employers, **CXC®** also anticipates market needs and plans for the systematic development and validation of relevant, high quality, flexible and portable education and training products, in a configuration that provides seamless alternative pathways for lifelong learning.

In the over 50 years following its inception, **CXC®** developed and gained regional and international recognition for its flagship **Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate® (CSEC®)**, the **Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations® (CAPE®)**, the **CAPE® Diploma**, and the **CXC® Associate degree**. Other successful hierarchically structured products developed or incorporated in the same period – in response to stakeholder demands – include the **CSEC® Business Certificate**, **Caribbean Vocational Qualification® (CVQ\*)**, **Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence® (CCSLC®)**, and **Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment™ (CPEA®)**. Today, in a transformed environment, in addition to having a successful line of traditional products, **CXC®** is responsive to requests for newer curriculum and assessment products from the private and public sector. There is the development of stackable, non-terminal qualifications through the **Caribbean Targeted Education Certificate (CTEC®)** that allows individuals to achieve an intermediate or macro qualification via micro-credentials. A micro-credential is independent, discrete and has stand-alone value and will contribute to the achievement of intermediate or macro credentials, or complement other micro, intermediate or macro credentials, including

those obtained through recognition of prior learning. An intermediate qualification, also known as a subject award, refers to a set of defined modules that together, make up a **CSEC®** or **CAPE®** subjects. A macro qualification refers to a combination of intermediate and micro-credentials that align to an area of specialisation or employment.

**CXC®** continues to ensure the global human resource competitiveness of the Caribbean through the provision of quality assurance in education and certification.

For **CXC®**, regional universities, and other regional providers of education products at several different levels, the adoption of qualifications frameworks will have significant implications for the way in which current and newer products are evaluated and purchased, and consequently developed, marketed and maintained. Ultimately, it will affect the types and quality of relationships that the providers have with stakeholders, and how their businesses fare – in the period of transition and in the long term.

### **Architecture of the CXC® Qualifications Structure**

In the **CXC®**-QS, qualifications are differentiated by the duration of the preparatory programme for a typical learner, and by complexity of content. The **CXC®** has formulated the credit-based system for establishment at the secondary educational level. The Carnegie Unit system and the CARICOM Qualification Framework (CQF) were used as the basis for the credit system.

The Carnegie unit, as a measure of the amount of time a student has studied a subject, indicates that a total of 120 hours in one subject – meeting 4 or 5 times a week for 40 to 60 minutes, for 36 to 40 weeks each year – earns the student one “unit” of high school credit (Carnegie Foundation, 2024). The CQF references two frameworks: the Regional Qualification Framework (RQF) and the Sangster-Bethel Framework that both allocate minimum accumulated credits ranging from 20-60 after 1 to 2 years at the secondary level.

The **CXC®** Qualifications Management Framework reworked the proposals highlighted in the CQF with credit allocation range of 15-60 for the secondary and post-secondary levels. The allocation for one credit is set at a range of 10-15 credit hours per term (not including out of class work). The allocation of credits for each level of qualification – micro, intermediate and macro – offered by **CXC®** is presented on Table 1.

**Table 1. Credit Allocation for CXC® Offerings**

| <b>Qualification</b>                        | <b>Credit Value</b> | <b>Credit Hours per term</b>                       |
|---|---------------------|--|
| Micro-credential:<br><b>CSEC®</b> Modules   | 1                   | 10-15  |
| Micro-credential:<br><b>CAPE®</b> Modules   | 2                   | 20-30  |
| <b>Intermediate</b>                         |                     |  |
| <b>CSEC®</b>                                | 3                   | 30-45  |
| <b>CAPE®</b>                                | 6                   | 60-90  |
| <b>Macro-credential</b>                     |                     |  |
|   | <b>Credit value</b> | <b>Credit hours for Macro-credentials per term</b> |
| Group Certificate<br>(5 <b>CSEC®</b> )      | 15                  | 150-225  |
| Diploma<br>(6 <b>CAPE®</b> Units)           | 36                  | 360-540  |
| Associate degree<br>(10 <b>CAPE®</b> Units) | 60                  | 600-900  |

Complexity: The **CXC®**-QS reflects the regional education system and defines learning outcomes through a total of ten hierarchical levels (Appendix I): one pre-primary/lower primary; one primary/pre-secondary; four secondary levels (secondary to post-secondary) and four tertiary levels - **CXC®**-QS levels are represented from levels 2 through 6. The Framework is unified and spans general education, vocational and professional sectors.

For each level, an anchor qualification is defined in relation to the following learning domains: Knowledge and Understanding; Application and Practice; Communication, Numeracy and ICT Skills; Life Skills; Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others. The learning domains' scope and definitions are as follows.

| DOMAIN   | DESCRIPTOR  |
|--|---|
| <b>I. Knowledge and Understanding</b>                      | Theoretical and/or factual; they relate to the individual possessing the ability to recall and present information - including the demonstration of knowledge and understanding of specific facts, concepts, principles, procedures and theories.   |
| <b>II. Application and Practice</b>                        | The cognitive (logical, intuitive, and creative thinking) and practical competencies (manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments) to achieve results.  |
| <b>III. Communication, Numeracy and ICT Skills</b>         | Literacy in verbal and non-verbal communication, in numerical and graphical tasks and in information and communications technology applications is demonstrated through the ability to use a range of skills in context, to access, process, produce and respond appropriately to information.  |
| <b>IV. Life Skills</b>                                     | Psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviours that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They are loosely grouped into three broad categories of skills: cognitive skills for analysing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and inter-personal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others. |
| <b>V. Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others</b> | The nature of working relationships, levels of responsibility for self and others and managing change in which individuals collaborate and the impact of this on their job role and those of other individuals.   |

Typical and notional qualifications, prior learning or experience are suggested for each level. The descriptors are parsimoniously written with the intention that the user interprets the competencies at any given level to be those defined for the given level and all the levels subsumed below it.

## Using the CXC®-QS

The CXC®-QS is presented in a graphical illustration that depicts:

1. the existing CXC® qualifications and their classification by CXC®-QS Level, generic name, and typical educational level with which they are associated; and,
2. parallel occupational opportunities described in terms of job classification, skill level, and supervision level.

In the CXC®-QS, education and training are portrayed as a progression along different levels – traditional academic, technical and vocational, occupational, and permutations of these. The model depicts the different levels on the CXC®-QS and a synopsis of learners'/workers' interest, environment and opportunities. The learner/worker must matriculate to progress to the next level. The movement is stepwise and, in moving, the learner/worker may choose to continue in the same level or change track without prejudice.

## Articulation

While the CXC®-QS uses different nomenclature and number of levels from the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), there is significant overlap in the structure and the concepts and principles delineated. However, there is acceptable fit between the CXC®-QS and the CARICOM Qualifications Framework which is benchmarked against the EQF.

## Appendix: The CXC® Qualifications Structure

| Qualification Level/<br>Typical Educational Level | Typical Occupational Level  | Notional Qualification Level  |
|---|---|---|
| Level 10<br>Tertiary                              | <b>Radical Innovator</b><br>Senior Academic<br>Senior Executive<br>Director | Doctoral Degrees or Equivalent  |
| Level 9<br>Tertiary                               | <b>Advanced Professional</b><br>Senior Manager<br>Chartered Professional    | Master's Degrees or Equivalent  |
| Level 8<br>Tertiary                               | <b>Senior Technologist</b><br>Middle Manager<br>Professional                | Post Graduate Diplomas<br>and Equivalent Professional<br>Qualifications   |
| Level 7<br>Tertiary                               | <b>Technologist</b><br>Junior Manager Paraprofessional                      | Bachelor's Degrees/First Degree or<br>Equivalent  |
| Level 6<br>Post-Secondary/Tertiary                | <b>Technician</b><br>Supervisor   | Associate Degree - Professional<br>• CXC® Associate Degrees – Macro-credential  |
| Level 5<br>Post-Secondary/Tertiary                | <b>Skilled Worker</b><br>(Limited supervision) Advanced apprentice          | Diploma<br>• CAPE® Intermediate Credentials (Subject Awards)<br>*CTEC – CAPE® – Micro-credentials<br>• CAPE® Diploma – Macro-credentials  |
| Level 4<br>Upper Secondary                        | <b>Semi-skilled Worker</b><br>(Supervised) Intermediate apprentice          | Advanced Certificate<br>• CSEC® Intermediate Certificates (Subject Awards)<br>*CTEC–CSEC® – Micro-credentials<br>• CSEC® – Macro-credentials<br>• *CVQ Level I<br>• *CVQ Level II |
| Level 3<br>Lower Secondary                        | <b>Entry-level Worker</b><br>(Supervised) Junior apprentice                 | Certificate III<br>• CCSLC® Intermediate Certificates (Subject Awards)<br>Grades: Competent & Master<br>• CCSLC® – Macro-credentials  |
| Level 2<br>Primary/<br>Pre- Secondary             |   | Certificate II<br>CPEA® Grades: Competent &<br>Advanced Competent   |
| Level 1<br>Pre-Primary/<br>Lower Primary          |   | Certificate I<br>Grades   |

- CVQ\* is the trademark of the Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities. **NB:** CVQ\* Levels I and II are considered certificates.
- **CTEC®** micro-credentials are modules of both **CSEC®** and **CAPE®** individual subjects. They are worth 1 and 3 credits, respectively, and can be stacked to attain an intermediate credential (subject award).

