



Global Competence Certification Standard

- Standard and Governance Framework

This document defines the GCCS System Standard for international certification of interdisciplinary qualifications.

Standard and Governance Framework is in force from April 2025 until a subsequent version is issued.

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Table of contents

Section 0: Purpose, context and international scope	3
Section 1: Scope of the standard	5
Section 2: System architecture and governance model	8
Section 3: Core principles of the gccs standard	9
Section 4: Roles and responsibilities	10
Section 5: Learning outcomes, verification criteria and qualification structure	13
Section 6: European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	15
Section 7: Examination and validation requirements	17
Section 8: Certification decision and certificate issuance	18
Section 9: Accreditation and oversight framework	20
Section 10: Documentation, reporting and auditability	22
Section 11: Change management and continuous improvement	23
Section 12: Final provisions	24



Section 0: Purpose, context and international scope

0.1 EU policy and labour market context

GCCS was developed in response to structural changes in the European and global labour market, particularly the green and digital transitions, the increasing need for upskilling and reskilling, and the policy objective of lifelong learning.

0.2 Limitations of traditional qualification and certification models

Many national occupational and certification systems remain strongly sector-based and do not fully reflect the cross-functional nature of modern roles. This can limit the recognition of transferable, interdisciplinary competences.

0.3 Interdisciplinary competences as a response to EFS+ objectives

GCCS supports the validation of interdisciplinary competences, including those related to sustainability and green economy, digital transformation and ICT, and organizational/project/regulatory competences, aligned with labour market needs.

0.4 Learning-outcomes approach as the basis for validation

GCCS follows an outcomes-based approach: qualifications are described through learning outcomes that specify what a person knows, understands, and is able to do, regardless of how learning was acquired.

0.5 Role of GCCS within national qualification systems



GCCS does not replace national qualification systems. It complements them by enabling certification of interdisciplinary competences and qualifications that can be locally mapped to national frameworks.

0.6 Relevance for EFS+ funded projects

The standard supports programme implementation by enabling formal validation of learning outcomes, consistent quality assurance, and auditable documentation suitable for public funding and monitoring requirements.

0.7 International nature of the system

GCCS was designed for international use, supporting cross-border mobility, comparability of certifications, and recognition of competences in multinational environments.

0.8 International design with national autonomy

The system provides common governance and quality rules while allowing local certification bodies to align learning outcomes and qualification levels with national requirements and market needs.

0.9 International comparability and flexibility

GCCS aims to ensure common principles of credibility and transparency without unifying or replacing national qualification structures. Local contextualization is permitted as long as system rules are met.



Section 1: Scope of the standard

1.1 Purpose and scope

This standard defines the GCCS system-level requirements for international certification, including governance, accreditation, oversight, validation principles, and certification decision rules.

1.2 What the standard defines and does not define

- The standard defines system governance, roles, processes, and minimum quality requirements.
- The standard does not prescribe detailed occupational curricula, country-specific legal requirements, or fixed learning outcomes for all jurisdictions.
- Detailed technical requirements for exam platforms are defined in separate GCCS procedures and audited by the Accreditation Body.

1.3 Alignment with ISO/IEC 17024

GCCS has been developed with reference to the principles and key requirements of ISO/IEC 17024 (Conformity assessment – General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons). The purpose of this alignment is to strengthen impartiality, competence-based assessment, transparency, and auditability of certification processes across jurisdictions. This statement does not imply that any GCCS entity is accredited to ISO/IEC 17024, unless such accreditation has been formally granted by a recognized accreditation body and can be verified independently.



Key ISO/IEC 17024-aligned elements within GCCS include:

- Impartiality and separation between training and certification/validation activities.
- Defined certification scheme components (learning outcomes, verification criteria, validation methods, eligibility, and recertification/surveillance where applicable).
- Competence requirements for personnel involved in certification activities and controlled use of outsourcing.
- Secure, supervised assessment processes with identity verification and exam integrity controls.
- Documented decision-making rules, certification status management (including suspension/withdrawal) and record retention.
- Accessible and transparent complaints and appeals mechanisms.
- Management of controlled documents, versioning, and continuous improvement.

Global Competence
Certification Standard



High-Level Alignment Map to ISO/IEC 17024 (Informative) provides an indicative mapping between GCCS content and the clause structure commonly used in ISO/IEC 17024:2012. It is provided for transparency and implementation support.

ISO/IEC 17024 area (indicative)	Typical focus	Where addressed in GCCS
General requirements	Legal status, impartiality, liability/financing	SECTION 3 (principles), SECTION 7 (separation), SECTION 9 (oversight)
Structural requirements	Governance structure; separation from training	SECTION 2 (architecture), SECTION 4 (roles), SECTION 7.2
Resource requirements	Competence of personnel; outsourcing control	SECTION 4 (responsibilities), SECTION 9 (accreditation eligibility)
Records and information	Confidentiality, records, public information	SECTION 10 (documentation/reporting), SECTION 8.3 (certificate verification)
Certification schemes	Scheme components and maintenance	SECTION 5 (learning outcomes/criteria), SECTION 6 (EQF), SECTION 11 (change control)
Certification process	Application, assessment, decision, recertification/status changes	SECTION 7 (assessment/validation), SECTION 8 (certification/certificates), SECTION 9 (sanctions)
Management system	Document control, internal review, continual improvement	SECTION 11 (continuous improvement), controlled procedures/templates



Section 2: System architecture and governance model

2.1 Three-level operating model

- System Owner (Entity I): owns the GCCS standard and overall governance; develops all qualification learning outcomes and validation process descriptions; maintains the central certificate registry.
- Accreditation & Oversight Body (Entity II): grants general and qualification-specific accreditations, monitors, audits Local Certification Bodies, and promotes the GCCS standard internationally.
- Local Certification Body (Entity III): implements qualifications developed by the System Owner, delivers supervised exams, and issues certificates.

2.2 Permitted operating relations

Operational relations are limited to:

- from System Owner to Accreditation Body
- from Accreditation Body to Local Certification Body

Direct operational relations between the System Owner and Local Certification Bodies are not permitted.



Section 3: Core principles of the GCCS standard

1. Interdisciplinary relevance - validates competences combining knowledge and skills from multiple domains.
2. Learning outcomes orientation - all certifications are based on clearly defined learning outcomes.
3. International comparability - supports comparability across countries while respecting national frameworks.
4. Local adaptability - learning outcomes and qualification levels may be contextualized to national requirements and market needs.
5. Quality and reliability - processes must be consistent, transparent, and evidence-based.
6. Separation of functions - training, examination, and certification must be separated to ensure impartiality.
7. Secure and auditable assessment - integrity, traceability, and auditability must be ensured, including supervised online exams where applicable.
8. Accessibility and inclusion - fair access must be ensured, including reasonable accommodations.
9. Responsiveness to green and digital transitions - supports competences relevant to sustainability and ICT.
10. Improvement and governance - continuous monitoring and improvement of the system.



Section 4: Roles and responsibilities

4.1 System Owner (Entity I)

- maintains and updates the GCCS Standard and governance framework
- defines system-level minimum requirements and change control
- develops all qualification-specific learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, social competences), verification criteria, and detailed validation process descriptions for each qualification in the GCCS system
- maintains the central GCCS certificate registry; each issued certificate includes a unique QR code enabling verification of authenticity; the registry is accessible for review by the Accreditation Body
- maintains the central accreditation registry (general and qualification-specific accreditations)
- licenses the use of GCCS name and marks to the Accreditation Body

4.2 Accreditation & Oversight Body (Entity II)

- grants general accreditation to Local Certification Bodies (prerequisite for any qualification-specific accreditation), verifying organizational and technical capability to conduct supervised examinations, ensure separation of training and certification, and operate complaints and appeals procedures
- grants qualification-specific accreditation separately for each qualification, confirming that the Local Certification Body's validation process is consistent with the qualification description



developed by the System Owner; only bodies holding general accreditation are eligible

- conducts audits (initial, periodic, and ad hoc) of compliance with GCCS
- supervises the validation process conducted by Local Certification Bodies, verifying that examinations are carried out in accordance with the qualification description defined by the System Owner
- actively promotes the GCCS standard internationally and serves as the primary point of contact for stakeholders, including organizations considering accreditation as a Local Certification Body; publishes and maintains a publicly accessible register of accredited bodies and qualifications on the GCCS website
- aggregates system data and reports to the System Owner
- operates complaints, appeals, corrective actions, and sanction processes

4.3 Local Certification Body (Entity III)

- holds general accreditation (prerequisite for any certification activity) and implements only qualifications for which it holds qualification-specific accreditation granted by the Accreditation Body
- implements learning outcomes, verification criteria, and validation processes as defined by the System Owner, without modification
- conducts validation exclusively using examination methods permitted by the System Owner for the given qualification,



- ensuring supervised examination conditions (on-site or online proctored)
- issues certificates with a unique QR code and registers each certificate in the central registry maintained by the System Owner; the registry is accessible for review by the Accreditation Body
 - maintains full exam session documentation and periodically reports to the Accreditation Body: examination volumes, pass rates, incidents, and any changes in operational capacity

4.4 Responsibility for learning outcomes and EQF/NQF mapping

Responsibility for defining learning outcomes, verification criteria, and validation process descriptions for all qualifications rests exclusively with the System Owner (Entity I). Local Certification Bodies implement these requirements as defined, without modification. The Accreditation Body verifies that Local Certification Bodies' validation processes are consistent with the qualification descriptions developed by the System Owner.



Section 5: Learning outcomes, verification criteria and qualification structure

5.1 Definitions

- Learning outcomes - statements of what a candidate knows, understands, and is able to do after validation.
- Verification criteria - measurable criteria used to determine whether each learning outcome has been achieved.
- Validation methods - planned methods used to verify learning outcomes (e.g., written test, practical task, case study, interview).

5.2 Structure of learning outcomes

For each qualification certified under GCCS, learning outcomes shall be defined at minimum across:

- a) knowledge (theory),
- b) skills (practice), and
- c) social competences (practice/behaviors).

5.3 Interdisciplinary qualification design rules

Qualifications may combine outcomes from multiple domains (e.g., green economy, ICT, project and organizational competences).

Interdisciplinary scope must be explicit in the qualification description and supported by appropriate validation methods. Learning outcomes must remain coherent and assessable within supervised exam conditions.



5.4 Documentation requirements

Each learning outcome must have defined verification criteria and assigned validation methods. Version control must be applied to learning outcomes and criteria (date/version identifier). Documentation must be retained to support auditability and external review.

5.5 Publication and distribution of qualification documentation

The System Owner develops and publishes qualification learning outcomes, verification criteria, validation process descriptions, and EQF/NQF level mapping. The Accreditation Body communicates these to Local Certification Bodies as part of the qualification-specific accreditation process. Local Certification Bodies implement the qualification documentation as published, without modification.





Section 6: European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

6.1 What EQF is

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a reference framework that supports comparability of qualifications across countries by using learning-outcomes-based level descriptors. It enables transparent referencing between national qualification frameworks and supports mobility and recognition.

6.2 EQF and national qualification frameworks (NQF)

Qualifications certified under GCCS may be mapped to national qualification frameworks in accordance with national rules. Where applicable, the NQF level should be referenced to an EQF level to support international comparability.

6.3 Principles of level assignment

Level assignment is based on learning outcomes and the complexity, autonomy, and responsibility required.

The System Owner assigns EQF/NQF level mapping for each qualification as part of the qualification development process. Local Certification Bodies implement qualifications at the levels defined by the System Owner. The Accreditation Body verifies that Local Certification Bodies apply the assigned levels consistently.

6.4 EQF levels 1–8 (summary descriptors)

1. EQF Level 1 – basic general knowledge; basic skills; work/study under direct supervision in a structured context.



2. EQF Level 2 – basic factual knowledge; basic cognitive/practical skills; work/study with some autonomy.
3. EQF Level 3 – knowledge of facts, principles, processes; select and apply basic methods/tools; responsibility for completing tasks.
4. EQF Level 4 – factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts; problem-solving; self-management and supervision of routine work.
5. EQF Level 5 – comprehensive, specialized knowledge; develop creative solutions; management/supervision in contexts of change.
6. EQF Level 6 – advanced knowledge; solve complex problems; decision-making responsibility; manage professional development of individuals/teams.
7. EQF Level 7 – highly specialized knowledge; strategic problem-solving; responsibility for innovation and performance in complex contexts.
8. EQF Level 8 – knowledge at the most advanced frontier; critical analysis and synthesis; substantial authority, autonomy, leadership and innovation.



Section 7: Examination and validation requirements

7.1 Permitted examination delivery modes

On-site supervised exam - conducted in a location meeting the organizational and technical requirements defined for the qualification.

Online proctored exam - conducted with continuous audio-visual supervision (camera and microphone) and identity verification.

7.2 Separation of training and validation

Validation must be conducted independently from training and education activities. Where training is offered by the same organization, functional separation and impartial decision-making must be demonstrably ensured.

7.3 Validation integrity and auditability

Identity verification must be performed prior to the exam and, where applicable, during the exam. Exam and validation records must be retained to enable traceability and audit. Misconduct procedures must allow invalidation of exams conducted outside permitted conditions.

7.4 Reference to technical procedures

Detailed technical requirements for exam platforms, data security, and accessibility are defined in separate GCCS procedures and are subject to audit by the Accreditation Body.



Section 8: Certification decision and certificate issuance

8.1 Certification decision principles

- Certification decisions shall be evidence-based and tied to the approved learning outcomes and verification criteria.
- Decision rules (pass/fail, thresholds, retake policy) must be defined and communicated to candidates in advance.
- Impartiality must be ensured in decision-making.

8.2 Minimum Certificate of qualification content

- unique certificate number, date of award, and unique QR code enabling verification of authenticity via the central GCCS certificate registry
- full name of certified person
- qualification title and, where used, qualification code/version.
- issuing Local Certification Body
- GCCS Accreditation Number.
- examination score or, where used, examination scores.
- Local Certification Body Examiner
- Methods used for validation
- the signature of the Authorized Signatory - CEO of the Local Certification Body
- learning outcomes and verification criteria
- the following information: "The validation was carried out based on the verification criteria defined in the learning outcomes, in accordance with the planned validation methods, and with the separation of education and training processes from the validation process maintained" - can be rephrased.



- the following information: “The certification process for this qualification was conducted in accordance with GCCS requirements, including impartial assessment, supervised examination, and audit-ready documentation. Learning outcomes and verification criteria for the qualification are maintained by the issuing local certification body and validated through the GCCS accreditation and oversight process” – can be rephrased.

8.3 Certificate verification

Each certificate issued under GCCS must include a unique QR code enabling immediate verification of authenticity. Certificates are registered in the central registry maintained by the System Owner at the moment of issuance by the Local Certification Body. The registry is accessible for review by the Accreditation Body and enables any third party (employer, institution) to confirm the certificate’s validity and status.

Global Competence
Certification Standard



Section 9: Accreditation and oversight framework

9.1 Eligibility for accreditation

- Legal capacity to operate in the relevant jurisdiction.
- Documented organizational capability to run supervised examinations and certification.
- Ability to ensure separation of training and certification functions.
- Commitment to comply with GCCS and to undergo audits.

9.2 Accreditation process (two-level model)

- Stage 1 – General accreditation: application submission (organizational documentation, platform readiness, personnel competence); formal and substantive review; initial audit; decision: granted, conditional, or refused. General accreditation is a prerequisite for any qualification-specific accreditation.
- Stage 2 – Qualification-specific accreditation: issued separately for each qualification; confirms that the applicant’s validation process is consistent with the qualification description published by the System Owner; verifies examiner competences and technical infrastructure (online/on-site); decision: granted, conditional, or refused independently per qualification.
- Withdrawal of qualification-specific accreditation may occur independently of general accreditation. A Local Certification Body may lose entitlement to certify one qualification while retaining accreditation for others.
- All accreditation documents (general and qualification-specific) are publicly accessible for verification on the GCCS website, maintained by the Accreditation Body.



9.3 Oversight and monitoring

- Periodic audits to verify ongoing compliance.
- Ad hoc audits triggered by incidents, complaints, or risk indicators.
- Corrective actions with defined deadlines and verification of implementation.

9.4 Sanctions

- Conditional accreditation with required corrective actions.
- Suspension of accreditation where risks are significant.
- Withdrawal of accreditation in cases of serious or repeated non-conformity.

9.5 Complaints and appeals

A documented complaints and appeals mechanism must be available to candidates and stakeholders. The Accreditation Body ensures impartial handling and records outcomes and corrective actions.



Section 10: Documentation, reporting and auditability

10.1 Documentation requirements

- Approved learning outcomes, verification criteria, and validation methods for each qualification.
- Exam session records (identity checks, supervision notes, results).
- Certification decisions and issued certificates.
- Complaints, appeals, incidents, and corrective actions.

10.2 Reporting to the Accreditation Body

Local Certification Bodies must provide periodic reports, including volumes of exams, pass rates, incidents, complaints, and any changes to qualification documentation.

10.3 Record retention and traceability

Records must be retained for a defined period consistent with applicable legal requirements and funding/audit rules, ensuring traceability from candidate identity to certification decision.



Section 11: Change management and continuous improvement

11.1 Change control

The System Owner initiates changes to the standard. The Accreditation Body communicates changes and implementation deadlines to Local Certification Bodies. Versioning rules apply to all controlled documents.

11.2 Continuous improvement

- Monitoring of audit outcomes and non-conformities.
- Stakeholder feedback and complaints analysis.
- Periodic review of relevance to labour market needs, green/digital transitions, and international comparability.





Section 12: Final provisions

12.1 Hierarchy of documents

This standard is the primary system document. Procedures and templates issued under GCCS must be consistent with this standard.

12.2 Non-conflict rule

Local procedures and qualification documentation may be adapted to national requirements, provided they do not conflict with GCCS principles and system rules.

12.3 Entry into force

This standard enters into force on the date defined by the System Owner and remains valid until superseded by a later version.

