

**Sectoral Qualifications Framework for**

# **BANKING (SQFB)**

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# Introduction

An indispensable condition for modern, knowledge-based socio-economic development is the continuous improvement and adaptation of employees' skills for a dynamically changing labour market. In 2014, 80% of surveyed employers conducting recruitment activities reported problems in finding workers meeting their expectations for the job positions offered (Kocór et al., 2015). School and academic education is not enough to keep up with the pace of change, making lifelong learning all the more important today. The principles of lifelong learning include an appreciation of learning in various forms and places at every stage of life, the validation of learning outcomes regardless of the way, place and time of their achievement, effective investments in learning and the general availability of such activities (*Perspektywa uczenia się przez całe życie*, 2013).

This is the context in which Poland's Integrated Qualifications System (IQS) is being implemented, governed by the Act of 22 December 2015 (Journal of Laws of 2016, item 64).

One of the main tools of the IQS is the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF). The PQF has eight levels of qualifications, as does the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Each PQF level is characterised by general statements about the learning outcomes required for a given qualification level. These general statements are called "descriptors". In determining a qualification's PQF level, it does not matter whether its required learning outcomes are attained within a structured education system or in another way.

PQF descriptors refer to the full range of qualifications' required learning outcomes in the categories of knowledge, skills and social competence. The descriptors of successive PQF levels reflect the increasing requirements in these areas (Chłoń-Domińczak, Sławiński, Kraśniewski, Chmielecka, 2016). PQF level descriptors are initially described at two stages of detail. The first stage generic descriptors, or "universal descriptors", are the most general and apply to all types of qualifications. These are then further detailed (second stage generic descriptors) for the different types of qualifications that are typically awarded in general, vocational and higher education.

The Integrated Qualifications System enables the various qualifications in our country to be collected in one system and ordered. Because qualifications are awarded by different entities, institutions and organisations, on the basis of various regulations and laws, it was difficult to compile them according to uniform criteria until now. The ability to include qualifications operating in the free market in the IQS is especially valuable, as they are now described in the language of learning outcomes and their quality is guaranteed by the state through regulations on their inclusion in the system and functioning, as well as their compliance with the principles of validation and quality assurance. The functioning of the IQS should therefore intensify the implementation of lifelong learning policies in Poland, making it easier to attain competences in line with one's own interests or the needs of the labour market.

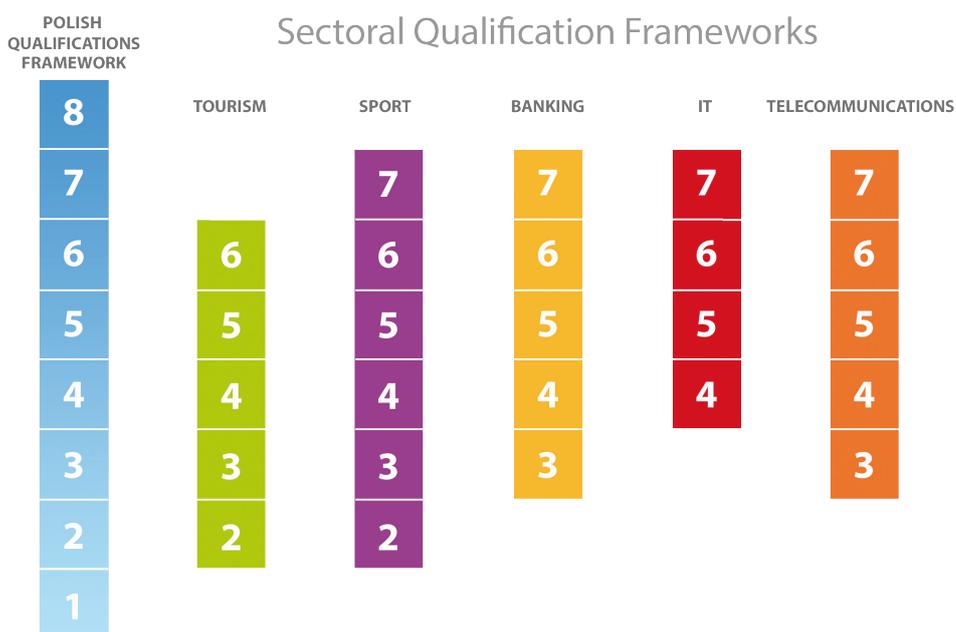
Art. 11 of the IQS Act enables the further elaboration of PQF descriptors through the development of sectoral qualifications frameworks (SQF). A sectoral qualifications framework is defined in the Act as a description of the levels of qualifications functioning in a particular sector or industry. SQFs are developed when the need arises in specific sectors.

The main principle adopted in establishing sectoral qualifications frameworks is that they be developed by the sector for the sector. This means that a wide range of stakeholders are involved, representing different entities functioning in the sector – companies, industry chambers and organisations, representatives of higher education and professional bodies, as well as regulatory authorities. Developing a framework is initiated by discussions on the competences and standards in a given sector, enabling industry representatives to exchange information and reach consensus on contested issues. Industry stakeholders are therefore both the creators as well as the recipients of the solutions developed for the sectoral framework.

A team of sectoral experts develops a draft SQF, which is then consulted with their professional stakeholders’ community. One of the most important elements of the work on an SQF is defining the sectoral determinants, the key areas of the sector’s activities. This then helps in determining the descriptors of each level.

SQF levels must match specific PQF levels, but the level descriptors should be sector specific. While it is theoretically possible for a sectoral framework to cover all PQF levels, past work indicates that the number of described levels depends on the specific nature of the industry. So far, five proposed SQFs have been developed, for banking, IT, sport, tourism and telecommunications. Efforts are now underway to have them included in the Integrated Qualifications System.

Figure 1. The levels of various sectoral qualifications frameworks



Source: IBE.

Sectoral qualifications frameworks are incorporated into the IQS by means of a regulation issued by the minister responsible for education. The inclusion process is begun by the minister with jurisdiction over the sector, either at his/her initiative or at the request of an interested party.

There are many benefits to developing a sectoral qualifications framework. First and foremost, the framework is the result of dialogue among industry representatives who work together to establish a common vision of their field of business and its needed competences. Such cooperation allows many universal solutions to be developed. The framework also facilitates work on describing and including qualifications in the IQS, as it translates the language of the PQF into a language specific to the sector. With an SQF, it is easier to understand how to reference PQF descriptors to a particular sector. This in turn makes it easier to accurately assign a PQF level to a specific qualification.

Work is currently underway at the Educational Research Institute (IBE) with the aim of developing additional sectoral frameworks. It is worth pointing out that the concept of developing multiple sectoral qualifications frameworks and integrating them into a national qualifications system is unique in Europe. Soon, SQFs could be a showcase for Polish industry in the European market.

This publication presents information on the development of the sectoral qualifications framework for the banking sector, carried out in 2012–2015.

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# 1. The concept and premises of the SQFB

A sectoral qualifications framework serves the purpose of making the qualifications of an industry transparent, ordered and improved in terms of quality. By using the language of the sector and referencing the described competence requirements to the work environment, it is a friendly tool for recognizing the complexity and level of advancement of qualifications, for comparing qualifications with one another, building coherent development paths, and creating effective systems for the continuous improvement of employee competences. In this way, it becomes an important and useful link between the world of work and the world of qualifications. In its direct link to the Polish Qualifications Framework, and indirect connection to the European Qualifications Framework, a sectoral qualifications framework opens a door to the wider use of industry qualifications internationally, which is becoming more important in the face of an increasingly integrated financial services market in the European Union.

The people working on the *Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Banking* anticipated that it would be:

- representative and relevant to the sector,
- supported by the sector,
- known and used by the sector,
- oriented toward development.

**Representativeness and relevance** means basing the framework on learning outcomes that are key to performing banking activities and should be the foundation of modern banking qualifications. The proposed framework presented here is maximally profiled on the sector and focuses on the definitive, specialised competences characteristic of the banking industry. The descriptors of each level are a balanced choice between the precision and detail of the description to capture the specificity of the sector and the necessary generalisation and integration of the learning outcomes in order to be able to refer to those constituting a qualification, and thus clearly structure the individual competences required for specific jobs.

Support from the sector must come from its active involvement in developing the framework from the very beginning of the process. This builds a sense of responsibility for the relevance and usefulness of the framework, which is the basis for its wide application. One of the key determinants of the success of the SQFB project was including a representative group of all important sectoral stakeholders in the expert team responsible for designing the framework. They included representatives of commercial banks, the Polish Bank Association, Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego [Bank of the National Economy], the Polish Financial Supervision Authority, the Warsaw Institute of Banking, cooperative bank associations, and higher education institutions.

The fundamental premise for the development of the framework was its practical utility. The framework must be **known and used by the sector**. It should encourage investing in modern qualifications. Only then will it fulfil its potential for strengthening transparency and trust in the sector, as well as serve its clients, employees and the market as a whole. An important element in the presented version of the framework is its coherence and complementarity with the solutions adopted in the PQF. The sectoral framework is based, among others, on the definitions adopted in the *Glossary of Key Terms related to the National Qualifications System* and *Poland's Referencing Report*.

The SQFB is geared towards development in two dimensions. First of all, it has a built-in periodic updating mechanism, ensuring that its content matches the evolving needs of the labour market and thus maintain the quality of qualifications' level descriptors. Second, it fulfils expectations about its creative role, which means that it is designed to facilitate the ordering of existing qualifications, their eventual redesign and the development of future competence-based sectoral qualifications. In this sense, the SQFB not only identifies the qualifications we already have, but also those that we want for the banking sector in Poland.

Modern and universally acknowledged qualifications in the banking sector are an absolute necessity. This lets customers know which qualifications are held by the banking personnel serving them. Employees have a clear picture of employers' expectations of their work, and companies are confident that investing in the right qualifications for their employees reinforces customer trust and is in line with regulatory requirements. Transparency and the quality of qualifications increase the security of financial services, strengthens the stability of the sector and extends and intensifies the use of financial services for individual and social development.

## 2. Designing the SQFB

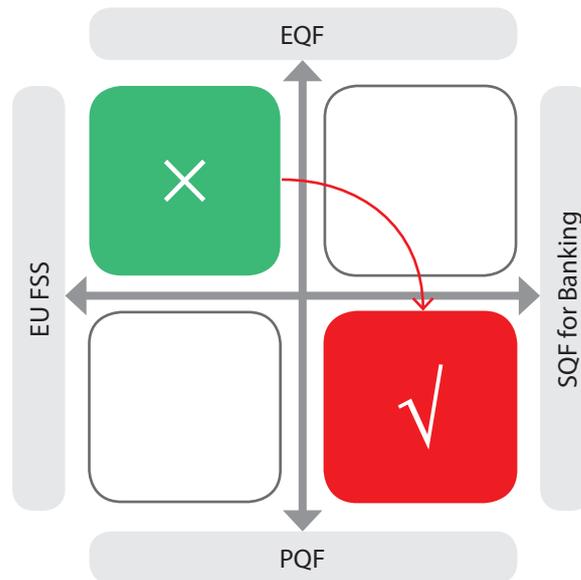
### 2.1. Premises of the design

The plan of designing the framework was based on the following premises:

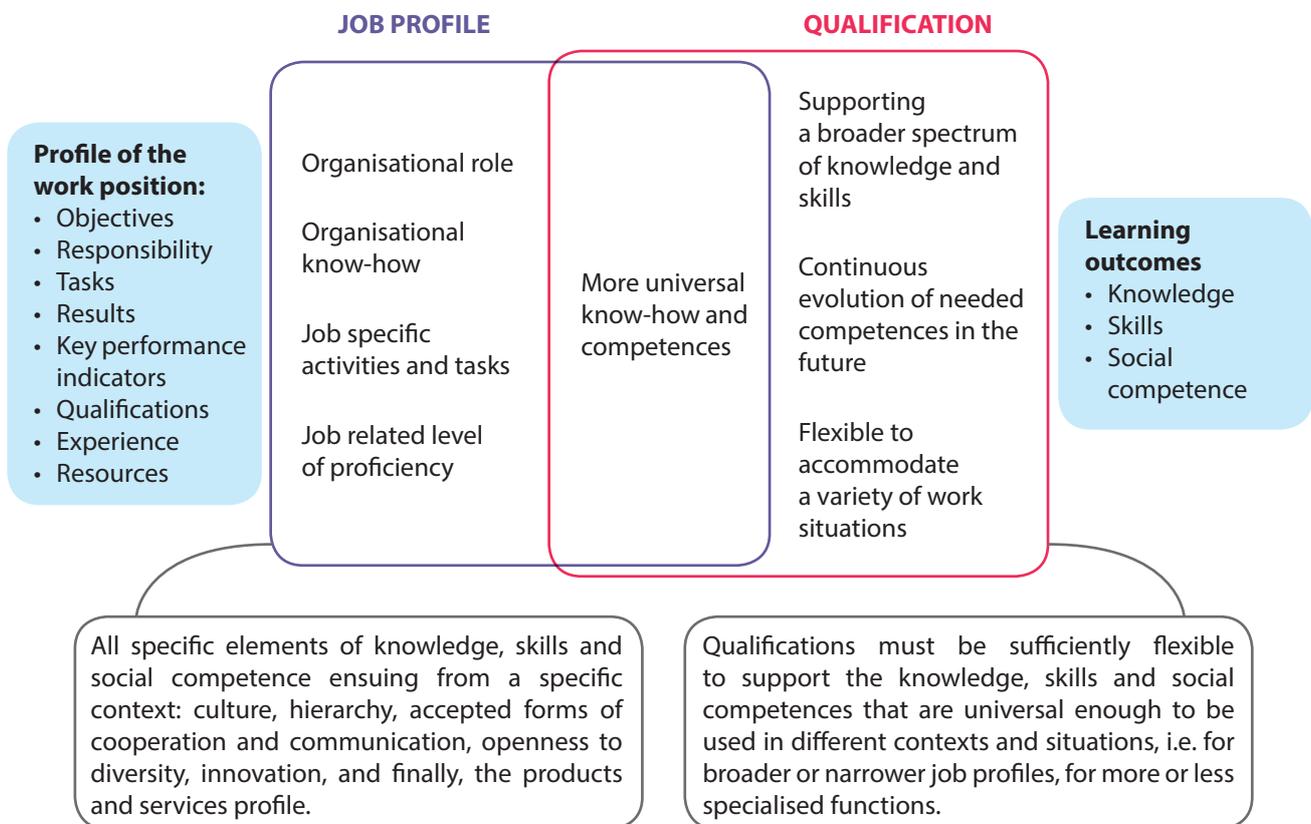
- The continuing level of uncertainty in the banking sector shifts the interest of banks from development activities to operational ones, which makes bank managers and experts reluctant to engage in activities that do not result in immediate effects.
- The lack of formal qualification requirements in a sector as highly regulated as banking, along with an ongoing formal deregulation process, do not help to attract attention to work on a sectoral framework.
- In Poland, we do not have significant experience in the use of transparently described and confirmed professional qualifications, apart from formal qualifications, a small number of regulated qualifications and those in the crafts sector.
- Currently, bank employees, managers and directors have little knowledge about qualifications frameworks.
- Without the possibility of making partners aware of the European Qualifications Framework and the Polish Qualifications Framework, it is difficult to effectively develop and consult the sectoral qualifications framework.

The key to the effective work of the team of experts and the fruitful participation of various stakeholder groups of the SQFB was the clear presentation of the main premises of the European Qualifications Framework and the design and principles of the Polish Qualifications Framework, which showed and confirmed the practical application of a sectoral qualifications framework in banking. It was very important to emphasise that the solution we sought was intended to be coherent with the EQF and PQF and thus be able to benefit from the implementation of modern European qualifications solutions in Poland. An important element supporting this objective was to present the achievements of the European FIRST Project, which enabled the SQFB project to use the sectoral version of the EQF prepared for the financial services sector in Europe (the Financial Services Sector – FSS – EQF Translator). Thus, in the process of developing the SQFB, the descriptions of qualifications' level descriptors in the EQF and the FSS EQF Translator in Europe (green shape in the upper left corner of the figure below) were transcribed into the descriptors of qualifications included in the PQF and translated into a sectoral interpretation for the Polish banking sector in the form of the SQFB (red shape in the lower right corner of the figure below):

Figure 2. Conceptualising the SQFB



It is worth emphasising that like the Polish Qualifications Framework, the SQFB serves to enable the comparison of *qualifications*, and not job profiles, job positions or the competences of individuals. This is due to the way qualifications frameworks accompanying the PQF are used and does not change the way these principles are interpreted. However, there is greater interest in extending the use of the framework for the work positions or competences of individuals in the context of the work environment. The world of work and the world of qualifications should be well connected and coherent. The competences required for jobs should be the signpost and building materials for qualifications, which are intended to serve the work environment. However, it is important to remember that these are distinct entities, with specific identities that are important and should be maintained. The relationship between these two worlds is described in Figure 3:

Figure 3. The world of jobs and qualifications<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, at the start of a sectoral framework project, it is worthwhile to refer to existing qualifications standards and specific qualifications in the sector, especially if they include competences described in the language of learning outcomes. These are important anchors for determining a new road. They are useful reference points for developing solutions that should link the world of qualifications with the world that we are trying to achieve. Incorporating known elements into the framework will help to embed it in the real business context of the sector.

## 2.2. The process of developing the SQFB

The project director was responsible for leading the substantive work of the project and for the quality of the products. The project coordinator was in responsible for coordinating the work and the smooth operation of the project, including effectively communicating with the team of experts, organising seminars and workshops, as well as contacts with IBE. The team of experts oversaw the consultation and verification process of the proposed SQFB.

<sup>1</sup> Based on EBTN. Financial seRviceS EQF Translators in EU Project brochure, p. 17.

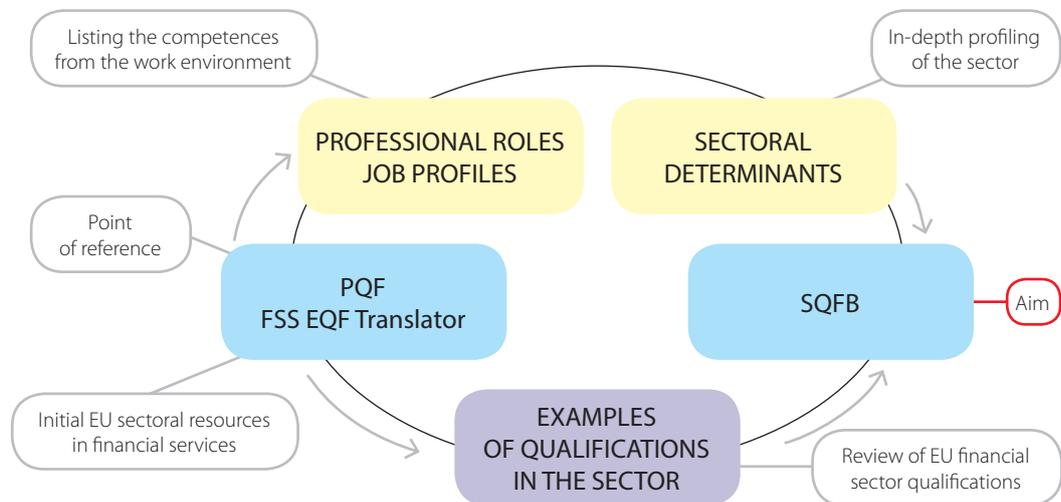
The key objective of the team's substantive oversight was to ensure that:

- The sectoral qualifications framework and sectoral determinants are complete and adequate for the work environment of the sector, fully reflecting the banking sector's requirements in terms of the competences needed by the industry.
- SQFB level descriptors and sectoral determinants are clear, understandable and useful, able to be used by different stakeholder groups in the banking industry in the future.
- The developed method of producing the SQFB guarantees a complete, understandable and useful sectoral qualifications framework or required modifications of this method will be introduced.
- The proposed framework is internally consistent and coherent with the EQF and PQF, and all modifications made are exhaustive and credibly justified.

### Work procedure, analyses and conceptual work performed

In order to ensure the quality of the process and its final effects, a detailed process for developing the SQFB project was planned, taking into account the above-mentioned assumptions. The key stages are presented in Figure 4.

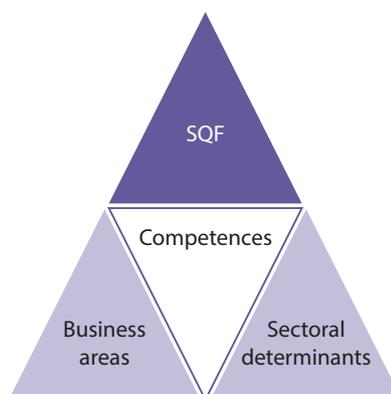
**Figure 4. The process of developing the SQFB**



The process was twofold. The starting point was the Polish Qualifications Framework and the sectoral version of the EQF developed for the financial services sector (FSS EQF Translator) within the framework of the European FIRST project mentioned earlier. The PQF guided all of the work on the SQFB and was the benchmark with which the sectoral framework is harmonised. The FSS EQF Translator provided the initial learning outcomes characteristic for the financial services industry, which was expanded in subsequent stages by drawing key competences from job descriptions in Polish banks, and profiled to the specificities of the banking sector in Poland by distinguishing and defining a list of sectoral determinants, i.e. specific areas of competence.

In developing the SQFB, a key challenge was finding effective ways to adequately reference the universality of the framework to the business context and to build a bridge between the labour market and the education and training market, between employers and trainers, between jobs and qualifications. It was assumed that the element connecting all these dimensions would be broadly understood competences. They were to be the subject of the ordered and fully controlled transfer of key requirements in business processes, professional roles and jobs to a representative structure of qualifications' levels that would provide the skills needed by the sector today and in the future (see Figure 5). Competences as the link between the world of work and qualifications). In developing the proposed SQFB, the subject of this transfer should be the learning outcomes. However, given the limited knowledge of the nomenclature of qualifications frameworks among sectoral partners, it was proposed that we start with the commonly used definitions of competences/skills and define them according to ESCO as a *broad range of theoretical and practical knowledge, the cognitive and practical ability to use this knowledge to perform tasks and solve problems, as well as the lifelong development of an individual's personal, social, methodological abilities, qualities and characteristics* (European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations, ESCO, Issue 5/2011). It was decided that these competences will be used to review selected job profiles in banking on one hand, and to distinguish and define the sectoral determinants reflected by the qualifications on the other. This was an intermediate stage, which supported the development of the final descriptors for the proposed SQFB. The approach used was guided by the main process of producing the framework (upper path of Figure 4) and confirmed that applying such a conceptual structure was very useful in working on the SQFB.

**Figure 5. Competences as the link between the world of work and qualifications**



In addition, we reviewed the sectoral competences identified in the *Balance Sheet of Qualifications and Competences in Selected Sectors* study. The analysis of this material confirmed the relevance of the key competence areas identified in the draft job descriptions and defined by the sectoral determinants, and did not provide suggestions for modifications. As reference points, we also used the classification of occupations and specialisations listed in the regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 12 November 2012 and the newly developed national standards of professional competences for selected banking professions, also prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy under the systemic project *Developing a set of national professional competence standards*

*required of employers* (2013). We also referred to the European Banking Authority Guidelines on the requirements for key executives and key decision makers in banks (EBA/GL/2012/06), where all the competence areas can be found that were defined by the sectoral determinants of the SQFB.

As shown in Figure 4, a parallel process supporting the development of the framework was the use of existing professional certificates in banking, which are described in the language of learning outcomes. The learning outcomes of selected certificates were reviewed according to two criteria: the relevance of the learning outcomes to the SQFB level descriptors according to the assumed level assignment, and the representativeness of the learning outcomes for the defined sectoral determinants. Three certificates were analysed: the professional degree of Customer Service Representative, which is part of the System of Qualifications Standards in Polish Banking, the EFCB European Banker's Certificate, implemented in Poland under accreditation by the European Banking and Financial Services Training (EBTN), leading to the professional degree of Certified Banker in the System of Qualifications Standards, and the EFA EFPA Certified Financial Advisor certificate, implemented in Poland under accreditation by the European Financial Planning Association (EFPA). The analysis confirmed the overall relevance of the choice of the determinants, indicated recommendations for supplementing their definitions, and facilitated the clarification of the framework's descriptors in terms of appropriately weighting key competence areas.

The main stages of developing the SQFB are described in more detail below.

### **Analysis of the competences in banking job descriptions**

According to the adopted process of developing SQFB level descriptors, one of the three key stages in the SQFB project was to collect and analyse the competences contained in the job descriptions of the banking sector. In order to fully represent banking activities, the team of experts decided on the following structure of financial service areas from which the required competences were collected:

- Customer service/advising: retail, SME, corporations;
- Risk: credit risk, other risks, control risk and effectiveness were distinguished;
- Dealing operations;
- Internal audit;
- Compliance;
- Security, including IT security;
- Marketing, especially in terms of product design.

Using a prepared questionnaire, the competences were collected in all agreed areas in the following structure:

Area	Status	Number of job positions
Customer service/ advising:		
retail	√	17
SME	√	2
corporations	√	5
Risk:		
credit risk	√	10
other, control risk and effectiveness	√	7
Dealing operations	√	4
Internal audit	√	5
Compliance	√	4
Security, including IT security	√	8
Marketing, especially in terms of product design	√	3
Other (macroeconomics)	√	2

Competences were understood as defined by ESCO. In cases where job descriptions did not define competences, we used the descriptions of the tasks performed in the job. On this basis, the team of experts identified the required competences. It should be noted that a smaller number of job positions often occurred in areas where the job description de facto referred to a broader set of positions, such as a client adviser, regardless of the market segment being served.

The collected competences were sorted, grouped according to knowledge, skills and social competences, and sectoral determinants were initially adopted. During the analysis, the following observations and conclusions were made:

- The adopted determinants accurately reflect the competences described in the bank positions in Poland.
- The category of knowledge dominates in the job descriptions, whereas skills are less often defined.
- The descriptions often have a wider range than a narrow understanding of the banking sector and include the full set of financial products and services (capital market, leasing, factoring, etc.).

- Proficiency levels were sought in the job descriptions: the most common gradation ranges from three to five levels (this is consistent with the initial premise of profiling five qualification levels in the SQFB).
- Interpersonal competences that are universal (common to all sectors) and semantically similar to those defined in the EQF and PQF are widely used in the job descriptions.
- The first references to required professional certificates appear in the requirements contained in the job descriptions.
- In the search for a measure of expected competences, the very imprecise requirement of “years of experience” is often used.

The analysis clearly showed that there is considerable potential for the practical benefits of converging the way competences are presented in job descriptions and qualifications. For example, sometimes the category of knowledge is given too much dominance, not reflecting the key competences required for a given job position. At the same time, the first requirements of professional certificates assigned to specific jobs are identified. This example shows that a better standardisation of qualifications, written in the language of sector-profiled learning outcomes, will naturally result in a better connection between the work environment and qualifications. Organised paths of career advancement among the job positions are developed, using subsequent levels of a given certificate. Job descriptions continue to use the imprecise requirement of “years of experience”, which decidedly should be changed into more meaningful competence requirements. Introducing a better balance between the categories of knowledge, skills and social competences will improve the quality of both job descriptions and qualifications. An important observation was made about the gradation of competences in job descriptions. It was noted that this is a direct link between job descriptions and the qualifications framework. In addition, the maximum range of the applied gradation (5 levels) corresponds to PQF levels 3–7, adopted for the SQFB. The analysis consolidated the opinion of the team of experts on the need for a sectoral framework and the multiple benefits that it can bring to the sector. It was also an important source of conclusions for modifying the initial list of sectoral determinants, described in the next section.

### Distinguishing and defining sectoral determinants

A very important moment in the process of developing the framework was to define the “sectoral determinants” defining the sector-specific and key areas of competence characterising the qualifications of the banking sector and distinguishing them from those of other sectors. The determinants were distinguished due to the specific nature of the sector and the importance of particular areas of the banking industry. Determinants are another important link between the business context and the sector’s qualifications.

The basis for identifying sectoral determinants was the analysis of the main business processes and functional areas in a bank, represented by key professional roles and jobs. Starting from the determinants<sup>2</sup> of the FIRST project, an expert diagnosis of

<sup>2</sup> In FIRST project publications they were called differentiators. In IBE publications, the term determinants is used.

the most important areas of banking sector competence was performed in the first stage of the project, and six sectoral determinants were initially adopted. They were to represent the full spectrum of competences found in banking qualifications and meet the criterion of sector specificity and relevance in banking. This meant that there were areas among the determinants that could also occur in other sectors. However, they are so important for banking competence that the team of experts considered them to be indispensable in the list of determinants for the SQFB project. During the “brainstorming” moderated by the experienced project director, participants looked for answers to the following questions: “What is the business of a bank? What is the core of our business? What defines the specificity of banking activities? What do we do in our business that other sectors do not?” A set of determinants was sought that would show the “big picture” of the banking sector’s qualifications and present the potential of the sector’s qualifications. It is worth emphasising that the definition of determinants was an important transition from considering the competences contained in the job descriptions to addressing the qualifications themselves, as this is the actual context of the sectoral framework. This approach made it easier for sectoral experts to understand the distinction between the world of work and the world of qualifications, as well as their close connection.

As indicated above, the analysis of the competences contained in the job descriptions resulted in important conclusions to modifying the list of determinants. The following observations were formulated:

- Three determinants dominate: client orientation (K), risk/income orientation (R), compliance orientation (C).
- The determinants permeate and become more integrated as we move to higher levels of qualifications. This means that the higher we are in the framework, the more often individual learning outcomes will relate to several determinants simultaneously.
- Client orientation may include marketing areas, including product design.
- The risk/income orientation may include the areas of control, bookkeeping and accounting, asset and liability management. Distinguishing credit risk as the leading area was considered.
- The compliance orientation should emphasise the ethical dimension. It may include the area of security.
- It is important to assign important competence areas to the determinants, such as security and internal control, financial mathematics, accounting and bookkeeping, economic and financial analysis and IT.

In the context of the above conclusions, the following possible modifications of the determinants were proposed:

- Modify/expand the definitions to include a wider range of K, R, C orientations,
- Reduce the number of determinants,

- Distinguish new determinants:
  - » Lead determinants, such as IT orientation, security orientation,
  - » Auxiliary determinants: e.g. credit risk orientation, financial mathematics orientation, accounting and bookkeeping orientation, economic and financial analysis orientation.

In the course of discussions, the team of experts agreed that the design should aim for fewer determinants, which will be better defined and more capacious. Following subsequent attempts, five determinants were chosen during the final discussion, which are definitively to be called “determinants”, and agreement was reached on their detailed definitions.

The experts all agreed that the adopted list of determinants ensures the representativeness and completeness of the SQFB level descriptors. It was emphasised that they proved to be a very helpful tool and factor disciplining the process of developing the level descriptors of qualifications that are adequate and complete for the sector.

### Analysis of the coherence of the SQFB with the PQF

The direct starting points for the SQFB level descriptors were the PQF universal (first stage) descriptors and PQF second stage descriptors for vocational education and training. The expert team was tasked to skilfully translate these into the language and working environment of the banking sector, taking into account the expected standards of future qualifications in the sector. An important supportive tool facilitating preparation of the first version of the SQFB was the FSS EQF Translator from Project FIRST, which was fully referenced to the EQF.

The analysis of job descriptions and sectoral determinants became a tool to profile the sectoral learning outcomes of the framework, with the intention of ensuring the adequacy and completeness of the SQFB level descriptors in relation to the requirements of the sectoral qualifications at subsequent framework levels. The second important quality criterion of the SQFB was its coherence with the PQF. For this purpose, a comparative table was prepared by compiling the descriptions of EQF level descriptors, PQF universal descriptors, PQF descriptors for vocational education and training and the FSS EQF Translator. The analysis showed the overall coherence of the proposed SQFB descriptors with those of the PQF and revealed several discrepancies, particularly with regard to the vocational descriptors. These were the subject of a thorough discussion among the team of experts, which resulted in the final proposal of the SQFB.

In summary, it should be emphasised that the SQFB descriptors were prepared as a coherent, further development and supplement to the PQF descriptors. They are an integrated set, used together with the PQF. SQFB descriptors for levels 3 to 7 accompany the PQF universal descriptors. At levels 1–2 and 8, the framework uses the PQF universal descriptors.

## 2.3. Consulting the SQFB

### Consultation and verification of the proposed SQFB

SQFB consultations were crucial. Their aim was to have a representative group of stakeholders assess and verify the proposed SQFB, contributing to its improvement. The results of the consultations were the basis for the work of the SQFB team of experts to modify and improve the framework, thereby leading to its finalisation as complete and adequate for the work environment, as well as transparent, understandable and useful for the banking sector in Poland.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to conduct the consultations. The tool used in the quantitative study was a questionnaire addressed to the framework's stakeholders, to be filled out on the Internet. The qualitative tool was the individual in-depth interview (IDI) conducted with selected stakeholders of the framework. The Warsaw Institute of Banking (WIB) prepared proposals for both tools, which were then assessed and verified by the SQFB expert team and IBE. Their comments were taken into account in the final versions of the tools.

To optimise the project schedule, parts of both surveys were conducted simultaneously.

### Quantitative study – questionnaire

#### Study implementation

The questionnaire was conducted using the LimeSurvey public Internet application. This allowed us to produce a survey that was easy for respondents to fill out and enabled WIB to monitor the course of the study and then analyse the results.

The questionnaire had three parts: respondent characteristics, two introductory questions and 12 main questions. The questions were closed-ended, with the possibility of providing comments to supplement the responses. The questionnaire was accompanied by a set of materials on the sectoral framework, which was also available on the WIB website. The set included an information package with two attachments: *Proposed Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Banking Sector* and *Determinants*, as well as summary information on the EQF, PQF and SQFB in the form of Power Point presentations.

An invitation to complete the survey was sent by e-mail to a wide group of people listed in WIB's database, who belonged to the stakeholder group. In terms of the banks in this group, invitations were sent to representatives at different hierarchical levels and the most important job groups, reflecting key business areas and processes in the banking industry. These include: retail banking, corporate banking, risk management, control and accounting, human resources management, internal audit and compliance and bank security. The e-mail was accompanied by the telephone contact information of persons encouraging participation in the study, including representatives of non-bank stakeholders,

such as higher education institutions and training institutions. Expert team members played the role of SQFB ambassadors. In some banks, they organised in-house meetings on the SQFB, involving the HR staff and selected managers representing various business lines. An additional incentive to participating in the study was the possibility of winning a prize in the form of free participation in selected training offered by WIB (for 3 persons) or receiving the *2013 Report on BANKS* (for 10 people).

### Study results

130 respondents participated in the survey. Only those persons who completed the entire questionnaire were counted as respondents. Respondents could fill out the questionnaire anonymously, without providing their name, but they could indicate their employer in order to identify the stakeholder group they belong to. Providing a name and email address were optional for those interested in participating in the prize drawing. Almost half of the respondents used this option and provided their personal information.

Respondents included representatives of all SQFB stakeholder groups:

Stakeholder group	No. of respondents (N=130)
commercial banks	46 persons, 18 commercial banks
cooperative banks	12 persons, 2 associations
bank sector employees	51 persons
supervisory or regulatory institutions	2 persons, 1 institution*
training institutions	6 persons, 5 institutions
employee associations/certifying organisations	4 persons, 1 institution**
higher education institutions	7 persons, 5 institutions
sectoral organisations	2 persons, 1 institution***

\* Polish Financial Supervision Authority [Urząd Komisji Nadzoru Finansowego]

\*\* European Financial Planning Association Poland

\*\*\* Polish Bank Association [Związek Banków Polskich]

Bank respondents represented all banking areas identified by the WIB as key in the banking industry. Below is a detailed breakdown by respondents.

Area (if the respondent is employed in a bank):		
Response	Number	Percent (%)
retail banking	18	13.85
corporate banking	31	23.85
asset and liability management (Treasury)	4	3.08
risk management	16	12.31
control and accounting	5	3.85
human resources management	21	16.15
internal audit and compliance	8	6.15
bank security	4	3.08
other	20	15.38

Based on the names of the departments and job positions provided by the respondents, there were also representatives of areas not included in the selection list in the survey, which are important for the functioning of the bank, e.g. IT, sales support. This broadened the scope of the consultations.

The survey collected answers to key questions about the quality of the framework, including its adequacy and utility.

### Qualitative study – individual in-depth interviews (IDI)

#### Study methods

A scenario was prepared for the in-depth interviews so that all the interviews were conducted in a standardised way to provide structured data for the analysis.

Interviews were conducted by three WIB experts involved in the SQFB project. All of these individuals had in-depth knowledge of issues relating to the EQF, PQF and SQFB as the result of participating in international projects on the EQF, ECVET, EQAVET, engaging in public consultations on the national qualifications system, or being involved in the SQFB project in 2013. Thanks to the profile of the leading experts, the interviews created an additional opportunity to disseminate knowledge on the planned implementation of the national qualifications system and, in this context, the sectoral framework.

Each interview was preceded by providing information on the EQF, PQF and SQFB. The main appendices to these materials were the *Proposed Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Banking Sector* and *Determinants*. This material was accompanied by IBE's brochure on Poland's *Referencing Report* and *A Glossary of Key Terms related to the National Qualifications System*.

Interviews were conducted mainly at the respondents' workplaces and usually lasted about 1½ hours. The interviewers recorded the statements on specially prepared forms. After each interview, they compiled detailed reports in a common spreadsheet, in an agreed, standardised format. This facilitated the processing of the aggregated interview results.

The structure of the respondents was designed to meet all of the requirements in terms of type of institution, and, in the case of banks, position in the hierarchy (managerial and non-managerial positions), as well as the represented banking area (all key areas identified in the project). People who met the above criteria were invited to participate in the study. Invitations to specific individuals were identified directly by WIB or were recommended by the SQFB ambassadors working in banks.

### Study results

30 interviews were conducted<sup>3</sup>. The respondents included representatives of all SQFB stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder group	Number of IDIs (N = 30)
commercial banks	8 persons, 9 commercial banks
cooperative banks	5 persons, 2 associations
bank sector employees	8 persons
supervisory or regulatory institutions	1 person, 1 institution
training institutions	2 persons, 2 institutions
employee associations/certifying organisations	1 person, 1 institution
higher education institutions	4 persons, 4 institutions
sectoral organisations	1 person, 1 institution

<sup>3</sup> Institutions represented in the qualitative study were: a) commercial banks: Bank Handlowy w Warszawie SA, Bank Ochrony Środowiska SA, Bank Pekao SA, BZ WBK SA, Credit Agricole, ING Bank Śląski SA, mBank SA, Raiffeisen Polbank SA, Societe Generale; b) cooperative bank associations: association of BPS SA, association of SGB-Bank SA; c) supervisory institution: Polish Financial Supervision Authority; d) training institutions: Bankowy Ośrodek Doradztwa i Edukacji (BODiE), Międzynarodowa Szkoła Bankowości i Finansów w Katowicach (MSBiF); e) organisations certifying employees in the banking sector: Fundacja na rzecz Standardów Doradztwa Finansowego EFPA Polska; f) higher education institutions (faculties relating to banking and finance): Warsaw University of Life Sciences SGGW, Warsaw University of Economics SGH, Poznań University of Economics and Business, University of Warsaw; g) sectoral organisations: Polish Bank Association.

The areas of banking represented by respondents working in banks and number of persons:

retail banking	3
corporate banking	2
asset and liability management (treasury)	2
risk management	3
control and accounting	1
human resources management	5
internal audit and compliance	2
bank security	1
marketing	1
economic analysis	1

### Summary of the quantitative and qualitative studies

In summary, the SQFB project consultation and verification process was:

- Complete in terms of the subject matter, that is, it included the proposed framework, sectoral determinants and the method of developing the framework;
- Complete in terms of quality, i.e. it verified the completeness, adequacy, clarity, understanding and usefulness of the level descriptors and sectoral determinants;
- Complete in terms of scope and representativeness, i.e. it took into account the direct participation of representatives of all stakeholder groups in the quantitative and qualitative studies.

### Conclusions from the study and adopted modifications of the proposed SQFB

Based on the quantitative and qualitative studies described above, WIB experts formulated proposals for modifying the proposed SQFB and developed a new version of the SQFB, which was presented to the team of experts. In the course of analysis and discussion, the experts decided to introduce the changes and improvements and adopt the final version of the SQFB sectoral determinants and the *Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Banking*.

## 2.4. Results of the work on the SQFB

### Sectoral determinants

According to the adopted definition of the SQFB, learning outcomes represent knowledge, skills and social competences. The sectoral determinants of the learning outcomes, called in short – sectoral determinants – are five sets of ordered learning outcomes, each with a specific orientation:

- financial markets and the economic environment,
- client centric,
- the process and organisation of banking activities,
- the risk/income relationship,
- security and corporate governance in the bank.

Sectoral determinants were the starting point for developing the framework and represent the quintessential requirements for the learning outcomes that are most characteristic and important to the banking sector. Together, they reflect the pillars of banking activities and the functioning of a banking organisation that translate into the qualifications used in banking. They were produced as an auxiliary tool for developing the sectoral qualifications framework.

The learning outcomes for each determinant occur at every SQFB level, ensuring its completeness. There are different ones at each level, just as there are different ones for various job positions. Together they reflect a synthetic form of all the learning outcomes included in the qualifications of the banking sector in Poland.

It is worth remembering that the SQFB learning outcomes are integrated, i.e. a single learning outcome described in the framework can refer to several determinants, such as, *Assume responsibility, compliance with the law, supervisory regulations, internal procedures, quality standards and professional ethics, to meet the needs of external and internal clients* (Social competence, SQFB level 4, Determinants: client centric, security and corporate governance). The integration of learning outcomes intensifies as we move to higher levels of the framework. For example, *Is able to prepare solutions for external or internal customers, in accordance with the limits of the bank's acceptable risk, legal requirements, security standards, with a view towards improving quality and using available technologies* (Skills, SQFB level 5, determinants: client centric, risk/income relationship, security and corporate governance).

As mentioned above, the list of determinants with their descriptions was an auxiliary tool for developing the sectoral qualifications framework. It should also be emphasised that individual determinants are not independent. They may contain elements that could be included in the descriptions of other determinants. The completeness of the descriptions of the determinants can only be assessed by analysing them together.

Having effectively fulfilled its role in the formation of the SQFB, the list of determinants and descriptions can still be used, among others, for:

- a detailed interpretation of descriptions of SQFB level descriptors and their future updates,
- developing and reviewing sectoral qualifications,
- developing and reviewing job descriptions and qualifications requirements for employees at banks,
- developing and reviewing training programmes in banking.

## FINANCIAL MARKETS AND THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT ORIENTATION

The bank operates in financial markets, in an economic environment. Understanding the mechanisms and macroeconomic variables, the rules of the functioning of financial markets and their impact on banks' activities at different levels of the organisation is a prerequisite to effectively fulfil the professional role of a bank employee.

Learning outcomes relating to this determinant allow an employee to knowingly offer banking services directly to clients and carrying out tasks in support of banking processes, and – in line with the increasing requirements of qualifications at higher levels – develop banking services, business plans, risk analyses and risk assessments in this sphere of the industry in a professional manner.

## CLIENT CENTRIC ORIENTATION

The bank is a service company. It offers services to customers from different market segments. The services are offered to clients through an advisory and sales process, which is carried out through an orderly structure of support processes in the bank.

The learning outcomes relating to this determinant are focused on knowledge about the specificity of the client, the ability to diagnose his/her needs, expectations and possibilities, and to match the appropriate set of banking services to the diagnosis. An important learning outcome for this indicator is the provision of high quality services to both external and internal clients. The ethical dimension of working with the client, including the transparency and relevance of the conveyed information, and the avoidance of conflicts of interest, are important. Included in this determinant are requirements on the ability to use technology in customer services, cooperation with the client and the ability to synthesise information. This determinant includes knowing about the scope of banking services and the products of competitor institutions, as well as being able to design new solutions for clients. An important element is the skill of conducting financial and economic analyses and assessing products for the customer.

## PROCESS AND ORGANISATION OF BANKING ACTIVITIES ORIENTATION

The bank is an institution of public trust that acts as a financial intermediary between entities needing to deposit funds (depositors) and entities needing to secure funds (creditors). In transforming monetary resources in terms of amount, timeliness, risk and information, banks form the foundation of a viable economic system in the country.

The learning outcomes relating to this determinant are the foundation for the professional performance of a bank employee, from the lowest to the highest level of qualifications. They enable employees to understand the essence of a banking business based on trust and the role played by banks in a modern economy and society in mediating in the circulation of money. They represent knowledge about the functions and organisation of the bank, business models, distribution channels, but also – to the extent relevant to the level of the qualification – knowledge of the bank's balance sheet and the ability to analyse it.

## RISK/INCOME ORIENTATION

The Bank is a commercial enterprise that knowingly takes risks in order to make a profit. Achieving effective performance, measured by the ratio of risk (sales) and generated income, is a key determinant of the success of banking. The primary risk in a bank is credit risk. Bank-level risk management is integrated and involves managing credit, market, liquidity, operational risks and other significant risks in the bank's operations.

Learning outcomes relating to this determinant permeate all levels of sectoral qualifications, with correspondingly increasing complexity and sophistication, leading to aggregated risk management at the level of the entire bank. This orientation is an immanent feature of all banking processes and services. Learning outcomes manifest themselves in the knowledge and skills of managing different types of risk, at customer, industry, portfolio and aggregate levels of the entire bank. They also include elements relating to bank accounting, control and analysis of the profitability of banking activities and individual services. This determinant is also a control point for including financial mathematics requirements in the descriptions of qualification levels.

## SECURITY AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IN THE BANK ORIENTATION

The bank as a public trust must operate securely in an environment of high standards of internal control systems. This builds the reputation of the bank and strengthens its competitive position while limiting the risks involved and thus the costs of operating and raising capital. Maintaining security and adequate internal supervision in the bank is ensured by internal control systems, compliance, risk management and internal audits. Of particular importance to security is operational risk management, which includes IT and physical safety in the bank.

This determinant ensures that descriptions of qualification levels include all relevant learning outcomes relating to the security of the bank's functioning and adequate supervision within the banking organisation, taking into account

applicable laws, regulations and codes of good practice and conduct. The ethical dimension in terms of institutional solutions is an important element of this determinant.

### **SQFB level descriptors and final recommendations**

The team of experts developed detailed, industry-specific learning outcomes for the five main qualification levels, equivalent to PQF levels 3 to 7. They are representative of the qualifications in the banking sector. Levels 1 and 2 were considered non-specific for the industry and level 8 was universal and from this standpoint, were least able to be profiled and unable to add much of value to the sectoral framework. The SQFB will use the universal PQF descriptors for these three levels. Learning outcomes are presented in the categories of knowledge, skills and social competence, reflecting the structure of the PQF. Moving on to successive levels, the framework maintains the principle of the gradation of PQF levels, which refers to the depth and breadth of knowledge, problem solving and the innovative application of knowledge in practice, the ability to cope in a changing environment and the willingness to cooperate and assume responsibility for the performance of assigned tasks.

The team of experts conducted an intensive process of improving drafts of the SQFB. As a result, there is greater integration of learning outcomes, especially at the higher levels of the framework. This means, as mentioned earlier, that as you move to higher levels of the framework, individual learning outcomes are simultaneously applicable to a greater number of determinants, which is in line with the increasing complexity of professional tasks in higher job positions, requiring higher qualifications. Many unnecessary repetitions were eliminated, entries were fine-tuned using industry terminology. A list of verbs was used to distinguish the learning outcomes for knowledge from those that describe skills. This approach supports both the framework development process and its subsequent application in the process of aligning framework levels with qualifications.



## 3. Recommendations

### Proposed sectoral solutions for the operation of the SQFB<sup>4</sup>

All the opinions gathered from participants in the studies agreed that the banking sector should be responsible for the SQFB. Most respondents recommended that the industry chamber should play a leading role in the operation of the SQFB and that a special body should be appointed, representing banks and other sectoral stakeholders, to work on SQFB issues. One of the main tasks of such a body would be to update the framework. It was also suggested several times that the framework should be reviewed in a year's time, to determine if eventual modifications are needed after having used it in practice. The sector should also maintain responsibility for awarding SQFB qualifications and conducting certification exams for qualifications with an SQFB level. A recommendation was made to seek the supportive involvement of the Polish Financial Supervision Authority, for example, as a patron.

Below is a proposed organisational scheme for the operation of the SQFB adopted by the SQFB team of experts. The purpose of this proposal is to present a viable organisational solution for the functioning of the SQFB that is endorsed by the banking sector and would make it possible for the authorised minister to delegate the implementation of specific regulatory tasks relating to the SQFB to banking sector representatives. The proposal took into account the draft provisions of the Act on the Integrated Qualifications System from early 2015. The Act was finally passed on December 22, 2015.

The proposal is based on using existing sectoral experience in the field of sectoral cooperation, including in the area of qualifications. The proposal assumes the further development of the existing *System of Qualifications Standards in Polish Banking* in a way that ensures the proper autonomy of processes and decisions and at the same time maximizes the representativeness of the sectoral organisation and the effectiveness of the functioning of the new structure. The key element of the solution is to create an independent Sectoral Qualifications Council in the representative sectoral organisation. The Council would consist of representatives of commercial and cooperative banks, chambers of commerce, training firms, associations, higher education institutions, as well as the Polish Financial Supervision Authority and the National Bank of Poland. The tasks of the Council, under the authority of the authorised minister, would be to carry out tasks relating to the implementation of SQFB, i.e.:

- Validating applications for the registration of sectoral qualifications in the Integrated Qualifications Register, including confirmation of the SQFB levels of sectoral qualifications (A) and

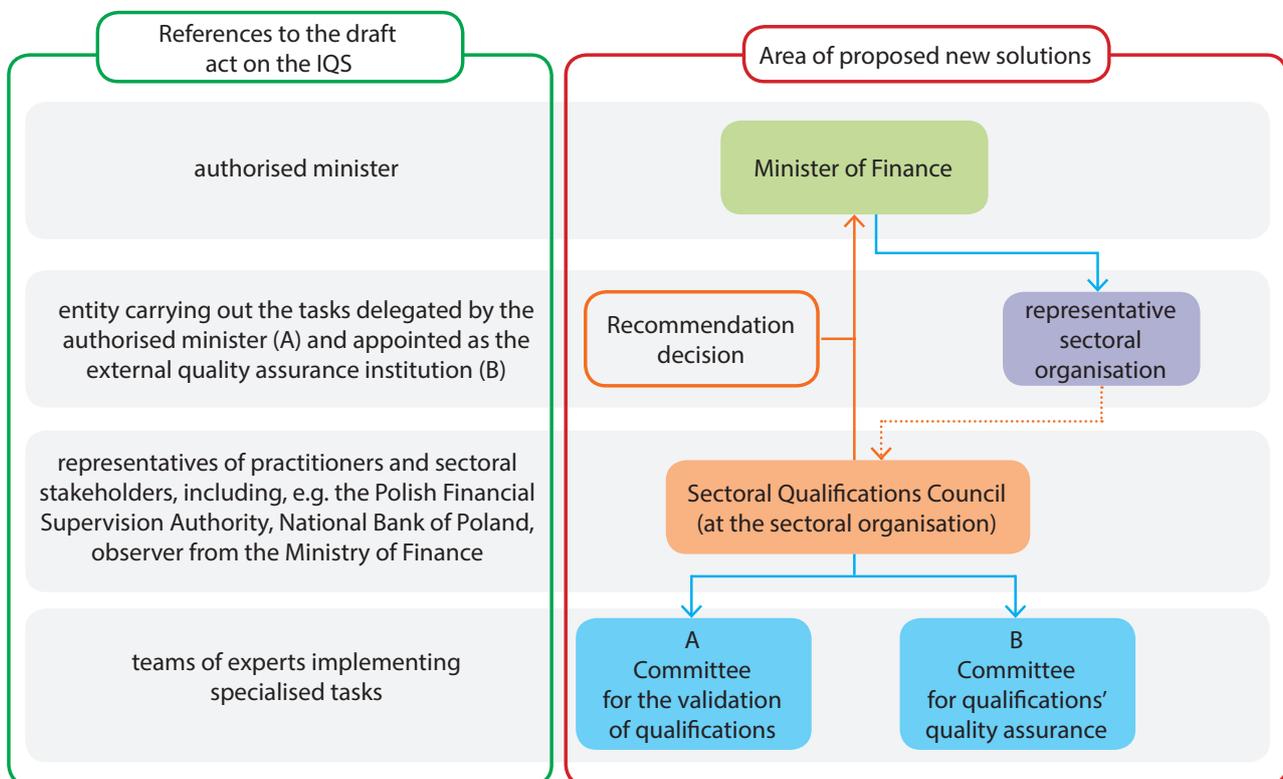
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<sup>4</sup> A Sectoral Skills Council for the Financial Sector was appointed on September 1, 2016 as the result of a contest held by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP). It currently has funding from the European Social Fund. The initiators of the Council are the Warsaw Institute of Banking, Polish Bank Association and the Polish Insurance Chamber. More information is available (in Polish) at <http://wib.org.pl/rada/>.

- External quality assurance for sectoral qualifications (B), i.e. supervising the maintenance of the quality of qualifications assessed in the validation process, including the quality of awarding bodies.

The decisions of the Sectoral Qualifications Council would be independent of the management structures of the professional organisation and would be in the form of recommendations to the authorised minister. In this solution, we propose that these two groups of tasks be seconded to two independent committees. The Chairperson of the Council together with the chairpersons of the two committees would form an Executive Committee, which would be supported by the secretary of the Sectoral Qualifications Council.

**Figure 6. Proposed sectoral solutions for the operation of the SQFB**



This proposal was presented to the Board of the Polish Bank Association, which wrote: (...) *The final solutions for the sectoral qualifications framework will depend on the provisions of the Act on the Integrated Qualifications System, which are not yet known at this stage. However, we share the view that the success and effectiveness of using a public system to support the development of sectoral qualifications requires industry involvement and the delegation by public authorities of at least part of the key tasks to a sectoral representative. Thus, we also approve the proposal for the future organisational solutions developed by the SQFB team of experts on the basis of the opinions gathered in the sectoral consultation process, and which advocates the involvement of sectoral representatives in the implementation and operation of the SQFB, with the important role of the Polish Bank Association in this process. The Board of the Polish Bank Association appreciates the importance that the SQFB can have for the development of banking personnel and thus for the stability and credibility of the*

*sector, as well as for the quality of services to clients. We acknowledge the importance of the activities undertaken in this field thus far and declare our further support and partnership for them.*

## Benefits and application of the SQFB

In the research process, analyses and expert team discussions, industry representatives conveyed a number of benefits that they could foresee with the effective implementation of the framework, as well as its applications. Among those worth mentioning are:

- The voluntary character of the sectoral initiative, which is also part of a national systemic solution, and the linking of the SQFB to the European market through the Polish and European Qualifications Frameworks;
- The common language of qualifications developed for partners in the sector – banks and sectoral infrastructure companies, as well as internal banking personnel and HR representatives;
- Descriptions of current requirements and the banking sector's needs for qualifications, which developed a picture of the desired level of qualifications of employees in the banking sector;
- Providing new, precisely described and assessed skills needed in the labour market;
- Increasing the development perspectives of young workers who will benefit from the greater order, transparency and comparability of qualifications, also internationally, thus enhancing mobility in the labour market;
- Facilitating long-term development planning and confirming one's value in the labour market, carried out individually and with an employer;
- The ability to confirm the achievements of persons with experience in the validation process to maintain one's value in the labour market;
- Special benefits for large and more developed organisations, including those operating in international structures, where internal coherence and standardisation are important;
- The effect of the standardisation of sectoral qualifications, which is coherent with the character of the sector and the standardisation of processes and services therein, combined with a high level of sector regulation;
- The client centric orientation is one of the fundamental principles in force in the framework, reducing the risk of bank operations and improving the quality of bank portfolios, building competitive advantages, enhancing customer security and the transparency of cooperation, as a manifestation of a bank's corporate social responsibility, process optimization, improving the efficiency and

effectiveness of human resource management processes in banks, including effective investments in new qualifications;

- Taking advantage of creating pathways for development and training, career paths, including advancement, recruitment (external and internal) and employee assessment in various processes, based on transparent “rules of the game”, developing job descriptions with requirements to have qualifications at a specific level;
- Banking Qualifications “at a Level”, which provide proven skills needed in the work of banking as the main and most valuable effect of an operating sectoral qualifications framework.

Such benefits and applications provide important guidance on how to communicate about the framework and set specific aims for the activities to support its effective implementation.

### Opportunities and barriers in implementation

Guided by one of the basic features adopted for the framework, i.e. for it to be “known and used”, we sought to identify the opportunities and barriers to SQFB implementation in order to obtain as many recommendations from the sector as possible for its effective implementation and operation. Four specific areas were identified:

- Dissemination of information about the PQF and SQFB,
- Quality assurance of the system and of the qualifications assigned an SQFB level,
- Sectoral cooperation for the SQFB,
- Implementation of the Act on the Integrated Qualifications System.

Disseminating information about the European Qualifications Framework, Polish Qualifications Framework and SQFB is the foundation and prerequisite for the effective implementation of the new qualifications system. This requires developing an appropriate strategy for presenting the framework and communicating about it with partners. The strategy should include guidance on using simple language, concise formulas and descriptions and applying the language of its benefits. One of the supporting solutions is to develop a brochure presenting the SQFB that would be widely available. Such a brochure has been prepared and will be distributed at the final conference of the project, *Banking Qualifications “at a Level”. The Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Banking Sector in Poland*. Its motto is: *Qualifications “at a level”*. The brochure uses short texts accompanied by illustrations. At the centre is a person with many qualifications, which are at different levels of the framework. The brochure explains that a qualification is a diploma or certificate, and emphasises that the main “manifestation” – the effect of the SQFB – is the qualification itself. In this sense, the framework is just a tool.

A very important mechanism of popularising the SQFB, to a large extent determining the success of framework, will be its implementation on a large scale. This requires flexibility in the approach to the requirements of qualifications, including actually opening the validation pathway of attaining qualifications. This will be particularly important for recognising the learning outcomes attained in the professional career of more experienced banking staff. It is also important to develop model tools for using the SQFB in the internal processes of managing employees in banks. It is recommended that financial support for these activities be sought from the pool of European funds.

The most important strategic aim of the framework's implementation is to provide qualifications with a new quality, which means providing new skills needed for working in banks. In this context, the importance of sector representation in confirming the relevance of new qualifications and their referencing to the SQFB takes on greater significance. It is also important to monitor the maintenance of the quality of qualifications that are assigned an SQFB level and included in the Integrated Qualifications Register. Hence the proposal to set up the Sectoral Qualifications Council as a continuation of the sectoral co-operation already initiated during the development of the framework. At the current stage of the project, we were able to involve the sector in co-developing the framework through the work of a representative team of experts and the successfully conducted quantitative and qualitative studies. This is the cornerstone for continued sectoral cooperation in the future. The active involvement of the Polish Bank Association and the participation of representatives of the Polish Financial Supervision Authority are very important. Following completion of the project, a sectoral approach to the implementation of the framework should be continued. It will be valuable to acquire the first banks, their boards and HR departments, to pioneer and authorise the use of the framework in their organisations. This would be a ground-breaking enhancement of sectoral, strategic leadership in the implementation of the SQFB. In this way, another recommendation on developing good practices of using the SQFB for banks would be put into place. This task could take the form of a new development project in the area of sectoral qualifications frameworks financed by European funds. To ensure the success of the SQFB, it is worthwhile to seek the support of the Polish Financial Supervision Authority for this new undertaking, through its official confirmation and positive assessment of the sector's efforts aimed at protecting clients' interests and reducing operational risk through greater transparency and the higher qualifications of bank employees. A supporting partner could also be the National Bank of Poland.

In discussing the opportunities and barriers of implementing the SQFB, the expectations of the respondents and the recommendations of the expert team in relation to the Act on the Integrated Qualifications System should finally be presented<sup>5</sup>. For the effective implementation of the SQFB, it is important that the law comes into force as soon as possible and in a way that facilitates its practical application. It should include an explicit reference to sectoral frameworks and empowerment of the sectors concerned to "lead" the sectoral qualifications

<sup>5</sup> The Act on the Integrated Qualifications System was passed at the end of 2015 and came into force on January 15, 2016. It is now in the process of being fully implemented. The Integrated Qualifications Register began operating on July 15, 2016.

framework. This is an important premise not only for the success of the SQFB, but also for achieving the main aims of the PQF and the new Integrated Qualifications System. In this context, it is recommended that incentive mechanisms be established for sectors that would be interested in making the effort to develop, implement and operate sectoral frameworks. This is particularly important given the negative signals from higher education institutions and based on the experiences of academia in implementing the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. Based on the research and opinions of the expert team, we predict that the banking sector is exceptionally predestined to successfully pioneer the implementation path for the sectoral qualifications framework in Poland. The sector is interested in taking on this role and is currently best prepared to do so.

### **Recommendations on the consultation and verification of sectoral qualifications framework projects for other industries and cross-sectoral cooperation**

In the course of the consultations, the method of developing the framework was considered to be effective and highly regarded. The value of using all the elements of the method: determinants, review of job descriptions, use of the Project FIRST Translator and existing qualifications, including international ones, was emphasised. The importance of the sectoral consultations was highlighted, which should include, first, as broad and representative involvement of the sector as possible, i.e. including representatives of all important companies and types of industry organisations, together with people from different levels of management hierarchy, business and functional areas typical of the industry.

Second, it is of utmost importance that the consultations are planned and implemented in such a way that the comments are actually taken into account in shaping the final version of the sectoral framework. This is a key recommendation to other industries on the consultation and verification process. Achieving the strongest sense of co-authorship and responsibility in the industry for the sectoral framework is important not only for the quality of the final design, but also for the future success of its implementation in the broadest possible scale. To achieve this, it is worth recommending the recruitment of “ambassadors” of the sectoral framework from key industry and business organisations. This is the only way of successfully transferring a sense of co-authorship of the framework from the level of individuals to the level of the organisation and the entire sector. It should also be noted that the consultation process, including direct interviews with industry representatives, is an indispensable tool for disseminating knowledge about the sectoral framework and its purpose.

During the consultation process, an interesting recommendation was made to implement a pilot of the SQFB, and on this basis, develop best practices for its use. Such a project could provide new conclusions for further improvement of the framework. It was considered that developing a common sectoral framework for financial services should be considered only in the long term, after implementing the framework in the banking sector and gaining experiences. It was emphasised that the banking sector is most likely to successfully implement the sectoral framework in Poland due to its characteristics: highly regulated, with high levels

of service and process standardisation, strong, organised sector representation, and the existence of numerous large organisations, including international ones. Cooperation with the banking sector at the European level was also recommended.

In term of cooperating with other sectors of the economy in the country, an openness was declared for sharing the achievements of the SQFB with them. In particular, the usefulness of applying sectoral determinants was highlighted. Taking into account the characteristics of the banking sector and its pioneering role in implementing the sectoral framework, inter-sectoral cooperation should primarily consist of ensuring the consistency of key solutions in developing sectoral qualifications frameworks and the comparability of qualifications among industries.



# Annex 1

## Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Banking

The **Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Banking (SQFB)** is the sector's interpretation of the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF).

The **SQFB** translates the universal descriptors of the Polish Qualifications Framework into the language specific to the banking sector.

The PQF presents the requirements of knowledge, skills and social competence for eight levels of qualifications.

The **SQFB** describes the requirements of five levels of qualifications, from level 3 to 7.

They were determined to be the most representative levels of the qualifications functioning in the banking sector. Banking sector qualifications at the remaining levels (1, 2 and 8) refer only to the universal PQF descriptors.

### **Representatives of the following companies and institutions contributed to the development of the SQFB:**

Alior Bank SA, Bank Gospodarki Żywnościowej SA, Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, Bank Ochrony Środowiska SA, Bank Polskiej Spółdzielczości SA, CITI Handlowy, Bank Millennium SA, Bank Pekao SA, Banking Centre for Consultancy and Education, Credit Information Bureau, BPH SA, BZ WBK SA, Credit Agricole Bank Polska SA, DZ BANK AG SA Branch in Poland, Eurobank SA, Foundation for Financial Planning Standards EFPA Poland, ING Bank Śląski SA, Educational Research Institute (IBE), mBank SA, International School of Banking and Finance in Katowice, Nordea Bank Polska SA, PKO Bank Polski SA, Raiffeisen Bank Polska SA, SGB-Bank SA, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Warsaw School of Economics, Poznań University of Economics, University of Warsaw, Polish Financial Supervision Authority, Warsaw Institute of Banking, Poznań School of Banking, Wrocław School of Banking, University of Finance and Management, Polish Bank Association

# Level 3

## Sectoral qualifications at SQFB level 3:

- Are equivalent to PQF level 3 and thereby to European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 3
- Are based on formal general education, confirmed by a minimum of an upper secondary school diploma
- Confirm:
  - the basic foundation of professional knowledge
  - the ability to perform various types of simple professional tasks following an established procedure and under supervision
  - the ability to work in a team and to learn autonomously
  - the competence to act in accordance with ethical standards in all professional activities
- Constitute the foundation for further professional development in banking
- Are typical for the first level of jobs in the hierarchy of banking positions

## A person with SQFB level 3 qualifications:

### KNOWLEDGE

- Concisely characterises the current economic situation
- Explains in simple language the role of banks in the economy and how a bank operates
- Describes the key features of basic financial services
- Identifies risk in a bank and explains how risk relates to his/her job
- Identifies the key elements of the legal and regulatory system, the institutions of the banking sector and the internal system of controls in a bank, including codes of good practice and ethics
- Lists specific regulations, rules and procedures relevant to his/her job, including those relating to security

### SKILLS

- Is able to find and use basic legal, regulatory and economic information to perform professional tasks based on provided guidelines
- Is able to deliver a simple banking service or support the performance of a task following relevant laws, regulations and procedures, in compliance with quality and security standards
- Is able to evaluate the basic financial needs of a customer and his/her risk profile using standard banking procedures and match the needs with basic banking services
- Is able to perform basic calculations of financial mathematics
- Is able to learn autonomously

### SOCIAL COMPETENCE

- Is customer centric in his/her professional role, oriented towards providing services to customers in compliance with quality standards
- Acts in accordance with the law, regulations, internal procedures and the standards of professional ethics
- Is able to work in a team

## Polish Qualifications Framework level 3 descriptors

### A PERSON KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS:

- basic facts and concepts as well as the dependencies between selected natural and social phenomena and the products of human thought
- furthermore, a broader scope of selected facts, concepts and dependencies in specific areas
- the basic conditions of conducted activities

### A PERSON IS ABLE TO:

- complete moderately complex tasks following general instructions under partially variable conditions
- solve simple, routine problems under partially variable conditions
- learn partially autonomously under guidance in a structured form
- understand moderately complex statements, formulate moderately complex statements
- understand and formulate very simple statements in a foreign language

### A PERSON IS READY TO:

- be a member of various types of communities, function in various social roles and assume the basic obligations ensuing from this
- act and cooperate with others partially autonomously in structured conditions
- evaluate one's own actions and those of the team; take responsibility for the results of those actions

# Level 4

## Sectoral qualifications at SQFB level 4:

- Are equivalent to PQF level 4 and thereby to EQF level 4
- Are based on formal general education, confirmed by a minimum of an upper secondary school diploma
- Confirm:
  - a solid foundation of general banking knowledge
  - the ability to perform standard banking tasks autonomously and responsibly, without needing direct supervision
  - the ability to work in a team, monitor the routine work of others, learn autonomously and plan one's own development
  - the competence to act ethically and to recognise conflicts of interest in professional practice
- Constitute the foundation for further professional development in banking and performing jobs that require higher qualifications
- Are typical for the second level of jobs in the hierarchy of banking positions

## A person with SQFB level 4 qualifications:

### KNOWLEDGE

- Explains key macroeconomic variables and how their changes affect the operations of a bank in the economy
- Explains customer segmentation: types of customers and their financial needs
- Describes in plain language a wide range of banking services, including the benefits of each product for a customer
- Describes the key elements of a bank's financial reports and the indicators that are used in the analysis
- Defines the most important types of risks to a bank, the basic rules and processes of managing risk and explains his/her role in the process
- Explains how a bank operates, including the internal system of controls ensuring the bank's security and compliance with the requirements of legal and supervisory regulations

### SKILLS

- Is able to collect and apply economic data in work, including information on financial markets, the business and household sectors
- Following internal procedures, is able to analyse the needs and/or credit worthiness of a customer taking into consideration the economic environment, and translate this into an offer of appropriate banking services or carry out tasks in support of this process
- Is able to analyse the key factors influencing the price of a banking service for a customer
- Is able to perform the financial mathematics calculations needed to prepare an offer for a customer or to support the production of internal materials
- Is able to prepare and present solutions that comply with the level of acceptable risk in the bank as well as with the legal, regulatory and procedural requirements, which must be followed to ensure the security of the bank's operations
- Is able to use available technologies effectively in his/her job
- Is able to learn autonomously and plan his/her professional development

### SOCIAL COMPETENCE

- Takes responsibility for meeting the needs of external and internal customers in compliance with the laws, supervisory regulations, internal procedures, quality standards and professional ethics
- Is able to work well independently under routine conditions and work well as a team member
- Is able to monitor the routine work of others

## Polish Qualifications Framework level 4 descriptors

### A PERSON KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS:

- a broadened set of basic facts, moderately complex concepts and theories and the dependencies between selected natural and social phenomena and the products of human thought
- furthermore, a broader scope of facts, moderately complex concepts and theories from specific fields and the dependencies between them
- the basic conditions of conducted activities

### A PERSON IS ABLE TO:

- complete moderately complex tasks, partially without instructions, often under variable conditions
- solve moderately complex and somewhat non-routine problems often under variable conditions
- learn autonomously in a structured form
- understand complex statements, formulate moderately complex statements on a broad range of issues
- understand and formulate simple statements in a foreign language

### A PERSON IS READY TO:

- assume responsibility for participating in various communities and functioning in various social roles
- act and cooperate with others autonomously under structured conditions
- evaluate one's own actions and those of the persons one is directing
- take responsibility for the results of one's own actions as well as those of the persons one directs

# Level 5

## Sectoral qualifications at SQFB level 5:

- Are equivalent to PQF level 5 and thereby to EQF level 5
- Are based on formal general education, confirmed by a minimum of a licentiate diploma from a higher education institution
- Confirm:
  - specialised, professional knowledge in a given field
  - the ability to perform complex tasks in one's own field of professional specialisation effectively, fully autonomously, with attention towards high quality and in a variable environment
  - the ability to perform effectively as a member of project team, to lead a small team and to share knowledge
  - the competence to actively apply ethical standards and to resolve conflicts of interest in professional practice
- May indicate above average potential for further professional development in banking, in an expert or management career path
- Are typical for the third level of jobs in the hierarchy of banking positions

## A person with SQFB level 5 qualifications:

### SOCIAL COMPETENCE

- Takes initiative and responsibility for following the trends and changes in the economic environment, focusing also on the business and household sectors
- Takes initiative in meeting the complex needs of external and internal customers, autonomously or as a member of a team
- Takes responsibility for identifying problems, examples of ineffectiveness as well as opportunities for quality improvement in his/her work environment
- Makes decisions with consideration for the bank's accepted level of risk and planned profitability
- Works effectively in a variable environment
- Is able to work well in a project team
- Is able to manage a small team
- Is a model for ethical behaviour in his/her team

## A person with SQFB level 5 qualifications:

### KNOWLEDGE

- Explains how basic economic mechanisms and financial markets influence a bank's operations, within his/her specialised field
- Explains in detail the characteristics of all banking services within his/her specialised field and their interdependencies from the point of view of the bank and the customer
- Presents examples of standardised business solutions and best banking practices in his/her specialised field
- Describes the elements of a bank's financial statements and the key analytical methods important in his/her work
- Explains the types of risks and risk management techniques relevant to his/her work, using professional terminology
- Explains all relevant laws, regulations and procedures important in his/her work

### SKILLS

- Is able to analyse a complex set of indicators, including sectoral ones, and use the results of the analysis to develop an offer for a customer or synthetic reports for internal use in the bank
- Is able to collect and use internal and external information, the expertise needed in his/her work as well as that which extends beyond his/her specialisation
- Is able to present to customers, in a comprehensive and transparent way, the best, integrated solutions to their financial needs, using a wide range of banking services
- With the effective use of financial mathematics, is able to perform valuation and return and income analyses of banking services in his/her specialisation and present the results in a concise form to external or internal customers
- Is able to prepare solutions for external or internal customers, in accordance with the limits of the bank's acceptable risk, legal requirements, security standards, with a view towards improving quality and using available technologies
- Is able to share his/her knowledge with others

## Polish Qualifications Framework level 5 descriptors

### A PERSON KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS:

- a broad scope of facts, theories, methods and the dependencies between them
- the diverse conditions of conducted activities

### A PERSON IS ABLE TO:

- complete tasks without instructions under variable, predictable conditions
- solve moderately complex and non-routine problems under variable, predictable conditions
- learn autonomously
- understand moderately complex statements, formulate moderately complex statements using specialised terminology
- understand and formulate very simple statements in a foreign language using specialised terminology

### A PERSON IS READY TO:

- assume basic professional and social responsibilities, evaluate and interpret them
- independently act and cooperate with others under structured conditions, direct a small team under structured conditions
- evaluate one's own actions and those of others and the teams one directs
- assume responsibility for the results of those actions

# Level 6

## Sectoral qualifications at SQFB level 6:

- Are equivalent to PQF level 6 and thereby to EQF level 6
- Are based on formal general education, confirmed by a minimum of a master's diploma from a higher education institution
- Confirm:
  - advanced, specialised professional knowledge in a given field and the interrelationships with related disciplines, including the international perspective and practices
  - the ability to proficiently perform complex tasks in one's own field, solve complex, non-routine tasks in one's own field, solve complex, non-routine problems, propose new solutions, in a variable environment
  - the ability to manage teams and projects, plan one's own learning and the learning of subordinates, including the sharing of knowledge
  - the competence to promote ethical standards in the organisation and solve complex conflicts of interest in professional practice
- May indicate the potential to be able to work well in jobs requiring high qualifications, both on an expert or management career path
- Are typical of the fourth level of jobs in the hierarchy of banking positions

## A person with SQFB level 6 qualifications:

### KNOWLEDGE

- Explains in depth how the economy, the banking sector and related institutions work, covering major development trends
- Explains the innovations that are used by market leaders to transform the processes of delivering banking services to customers
- Interprets the complex dependencies between assumed risks, operations security and the business effectiveness of a bank functioning in local and international markets

### SKILLS

- Is able to analyse forecasts of important economic variables, including sectoral data, present them in a synthetic form and use them to build/restructure customers' portfolios or to properly manage the bank
- Is able to be innovative in developing solutions to the most complex financial needs of customers or in developing new procedures, tools and systems, which help the bank to deliver good solutions to customers and increase the quality of the bank's management
- Prepares synthetic analytical reports to facilitate management decisions made in the bank
- Is able to analyse if a specific financial product from his/her specialisation is adequately priced by proficiently using financial mathematics
- Develops innovative solutions using available technologies to create services optimising the risk/return ratio of the bank
- Monitors proposals for new regulations and evaluates their influence on the bank's operations in his/her scope of responsibility so that appropriate procedures and solutions, including pioneering ones, are ready in due time
- Is able plan the professional development of employees
- Is able to effectively transfer his/her knowledge, using professional terminology

## A person with SQFB level 6 qualifications:

### SOCIAL COMPETENCE

- Takes initiative and responsibility to cope with complex changes in the economic and regulatory environment of the sector
- Initiates improvements in the quality of customer services and in the effectiveness of the team and the processes that he/she manages
- Manages employees so that they act in accordance with the law, procedures, best practices and professional ethics
- Is able to effectively solve complex ethical dilemmas in his/her own professional practice and that of his/her team
- Motivates the teams to develop professionally, promoting lifelong learning

## Polish Qualifications Framework level 6 descriptors

### A PERSON KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS:

- an advanced level of facts, theories, methods and the complex dependencies between them
- the diverse, complex conditions of conducted activities

### A PERSON IS ABLE TO:

- innovatively complete tasks and resolve complex and non-routine problems under variable and not fully predictable conditions
- autonomously plan one's lifelong learning
- communicate in one's environment, substantiate one's position

### A PERSON IS READY TO:

- cultivate and disseminate models of good practice in the workplace and beyond
- make decisions independently
- critically evaluate one's own actions, those of the team one directs and the organisations in which one participates
- assume responsibility for the results of those actions

# Level 7

## Sectoral qualifications at SQFB level 7:

- Are equivalent to PQF level 7 and thereby to EQF level 7
- Are based on formal general education, confirmed by a minimum of a master's diploma from a higher education institution
- Confirm:
  - the most advanced professional knowledge of an expert or manager profile, which integrates knowledge from different fields
  - the ability to develop and implement strategic and transformation processes in a bank, to develop innovative solutions, new practices, to manage large teams, in a highly variable environment
  - the competence to be a mentor of ethical standards in the organisation
- May indicate the highest potential for further professional development in banking and the ability to hold top executive positions in banks
- Are typical of the fifth level of jobs in the hierarchy of banking positions

## A person with SQFB level 7 qualifications:

### KNOWLEDGE

- Thoroughly explains the most complex dependencies among diverse factors affecting the economic conditions in which banks operate, both in national and international markets
- Identifies cutting edge trends which shape the development opportunities for banks
- Explains in detail the legal and regulatory environment and the factors relating to risk management influencing a bank's business operations; integrates knowledge from all financial services segments as the basis for original business thought oriented towards a bank's development

### SKILLS

- Based on a deep analysis of the economic and regulatory environment of the bank, prepares internal reports leading to the development of new solutions and strategies in an appropriate timeframe for the bank and its customers
- Using available technologies, is able to prepare new solutions to the most complex financial needs of customers in different market segments, or procedures, tools and internal systems which help the bank to deliver new solutions to customers that are innovative in the sector
- Effectively implements adopted strategies, business projects and transformation processes in the bank
- Is able to develop new solutions that improve the security, quality of internal control systems and business effectiveness of a bank
- Is able to plan the development process for large teams and work with others to develop solutions supporting this process

### SOCIAL COMPETENCE

- Is strongly driven to use market opportunities to create competitive advantages for the bank
- Is able to act effectively in crises
- Effectively manages and leads strategic and transformation processes
- Takes responsibility for achieving planned targets in the performance of a bank's services and processes, in compliance with the accepted level of risk
- Actively engages in ensuring the security of operations and the high quality of internal control systems of a bank
- Is able to solve complex professional and ethical problems
- Promotes the professional ethos of excellence, enhancing a culture of communication and cooperation, bringing added value to all partners
- Leads large teams, supports their continuous professional development and cares about work-life balance

## Polish Qualifications Framework level 7 descriptors

### A PERSON KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS:

- an in-depth level of selected facts, theories, methods and the complex dependencies between them, also in relationship to other fields
- the diverse, complex conditions and axiological context of conducted activities

### A PERSON IS ABLE TO:

- complete tasks as well as formulate and solve problems with the use of new knowledge, also from other fields
- independently plan one's own lifelong learning and direct others in this area
- communicate with various target groups, appropriately substantiate one's position

### A PERSON IS READY TO:

- establish and develop models of good practice in the environments of work and life
- initiate actions, critically assess oneself as well as the teams and organisations in which one participates
- lead a group and take responsibility for it

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