

1st Information and Discussion Session about the Sectoral Qualification Framework for Coast Guard Functions (SQFCGF) in 2025

Date: 3 September 2025

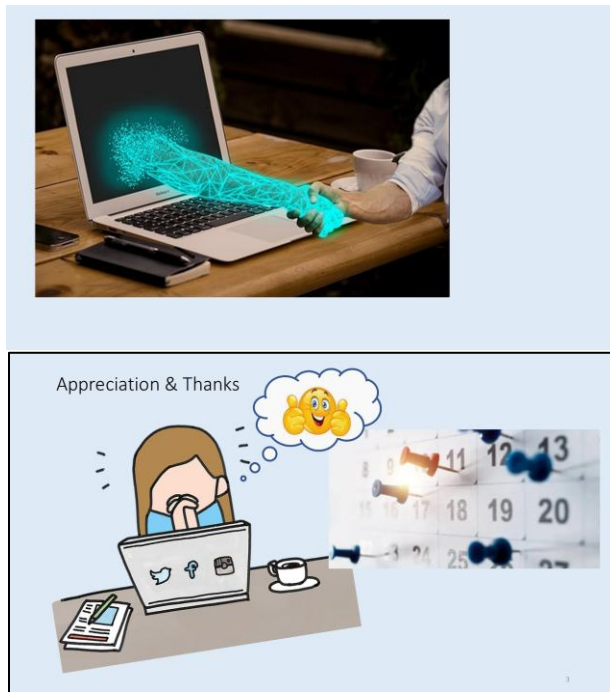
Trainer: Heinz Schneider

Session 1 – Topic 1

Welcome, Introduction & Course Descriptor Alignment with SQFCGF

Introduction (Slides 1–7)

The first topic of the EFCA Online Information and Exchange Session introduces the speaker, the purpose, the scope of the session as well as the essential concepts of course descriptors and their alignment with the Sectoral Qualification Framework for Coast Guard Functions (SQFCGF). This foundation is critical for all subsequent topics, because it establishes the principles of structured course design, the logic of qualification frameworks, and the quality assurance mechanisms that underpin professional training across EU Member States.



Timeline		
Intro	Topic 1	Break
Welcome, Introduction, Opening	Course Descriptors & SQFCGF Alignment	
09:00-09:10 10 min	09:10-09:55 45 min	09:55-10:05 10 min





Topic 1:

Course Descriptors
& SQFCGF
Alignment

Purpose of Topic 1 (Slide 8)

The central aim of topic 1 is to welcome the audience, to explain the structure and function of course descriptors and to show how these descriptors benefit from the SQFCGF. Participants are encouraged to see course descriptors not simply as administrative tools, but as key instruments to ensure clarity, comparability, and quality in training. A well-prepared course descriptor communicates the aim and scope of a course, defines its learning outcomes, and specifies how these outcomes will be taught and assessed.

Objectives of Topic 1



Explain the **structure and function of course descriptors**

Identify **key SQFCGF alignment principles**

Curriculum Development vs. SQFCGF (Slide 9)

Curriculum Design refers to the process of creating and structuring educational or training programs. It involves formulating learning objectives, selecting and sequencing content, defining

teaching methods, and establishing assessment approaches. Importantly, curriculum design can be applied to any field, from general education to specialized professional training.

The SQFCGF (Sectoral Qualification Framework for Coast Guard Functions) is not a curriculum but a guiding framework. It specifies the qualifications, skills, and responsibilities and autonomies required for Coast Guard personnel at levels 4 to 7 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Its role is to standardize training outcomes across EU member states and ensure that training programs meet sector-specific needs.

Purpose The purpose of curriculum design is to guide how teaching and learning take place: what sequence of activities learners follow, what materials are used, and how progress is assessed. The SQFCGF, on the other hand, defines what must be achieved—the intended learning outcomes and competences.

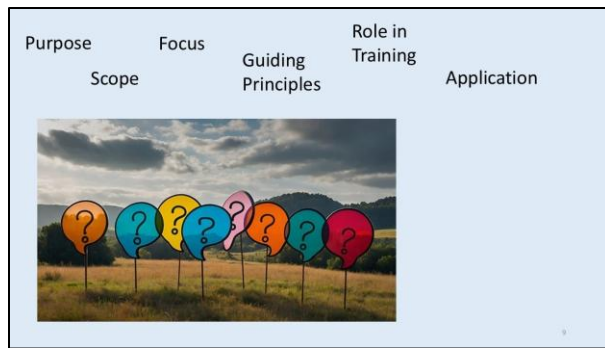
Scope Curriculum design has a universal scope: it can be applied in schools, universities, vocational programs, and specialized training environments. The SQFCGF has a much narrower scope, as it is limited to Coast Guard functions and qualifications within that sector.

Focus Curriculum design focuses on the process—how to structure learning, how to align teaching methods with objectives, and how to assess results. The SQFCGF focuses on the outcomes—the specific skills, knowledge, and competences that Coast Guard staff need to perform their duties effectively.

Principles Curriculum design is built on general educational principles such as constructive alignment, learner-centered approaches, scaffolding, and formative assessment. The SQFCGF is based on qualification principles, ensuring that training programs are consistent, comparable, and recognized across EU member states.

Role in Training In Coast Guard education, curriculum designers take the SQFCGF as a benchmark and translate its requirements into structured courses. The SQFCGF does not prescribe methods, materials, or lesson plans—it sets the standard. Curriculum design turns those standards into a concrete learning experience.

Application While curriculum design is applicable in every educational field, the SQFCGF applies exclusively to the Coast Guard sector. Its main contribution is to provide a harmonized foundation, ensuring that training programs across Europe produce personnel with comparable competences. Curriculum designers then adapt this framework to the needs of specific learners, institutions, and contexts.



The Course Descriptor: Role, Function, Course Titles, Course Aims, Target Group and Entry Requirements, Course Constraints (Slide 10-14)

A **course descriptor** is a structured template that ensures every training activity is clearly defined and easy to understand. It starts with the course title, which should be concise and informative, giving participants an immediate idea of the course’s focus and value. Good titles often reflect both the content and the target group, for example: “Leadership Strategies for Coast Guards” instead of simply “Leadership.”

A descriptor also specifies the aim of the course, explaining which problem the course addresses or what competence it develops. The target group and entry requirements clarify who the course is designed for, such as Coast Guard officers with a certain level of prior knowledge.

Finally, the descriptor lists constraints such as time requirements (independent learning, contact learning, experiential phases), recommended number of participants, training environment, online or contact requirements, and necessary resources. This level of detail ensures transparency, comparability, and helps align the course with the SQFCGF.

In practice, a well-designed template functions as both a planning tool for trainers and a reference document for learners and institutions.

The **aim of a course** is a broad, overarching statement that defines its overall purpose and goals. Unlike learning outcomes, which are specific and measurable, the course aim paints the “big picture” of what the course intends to achieve. It expresses the problem the course seeks to address and gives both instructors and learners a shared sense of direction.

A well-crafted course aim focuses on why the course exists and highlights the benefits for learners as well as for their organizations. For learners, it clarifies what kind of competence or understanding they will gain—such as a foundational grasp of maritime law. For organizations, it shows the added value of improved performance, such as enhanced operational effectiveness within the Coast Guard.

Every course descriptor should clearly define who the course is designed for. The **target group** statement briefly describes the intended audience, taking into account their professional roles, the sector in which they work, and their level of experience. For example: “This course is designed for mid-level Coast Guard officers, curriculum developers, and training coordinators involved in developing and implementing training programs aligned with the SQFCGF.”

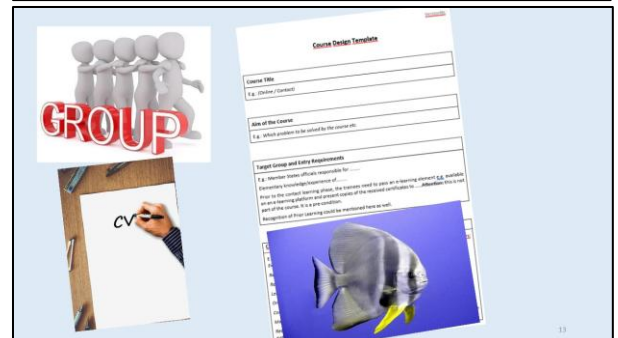
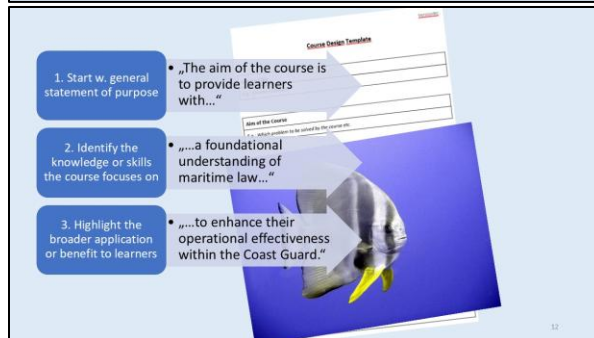
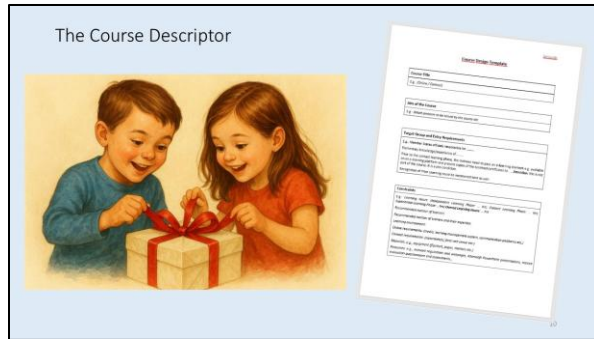
In addition, the descriptor outlines **entry requirements**, ensuring that participants are adequately prepared before they join the course. These requirements may include prior qualifications, specific skills, or relevant work experience. For example: “Participants should have at least three years of experience in coast guard operations or related fields and a basic understanding of training and qualification frameworks.”

By specifying the target group and entry requirements, trainers ensure that courses are both relevant to the learners’ context and appropriately challenging, while also helping institutions select the right participants.

Every course operates within certain **constraints**, and it is important to identify them early in the design phase. Course constraints are the limitations or challenges that may influence how a course is planned, delivered, and experienced by participants. Acknowledging these factors ensures that course objectives remain realistic and achievable.

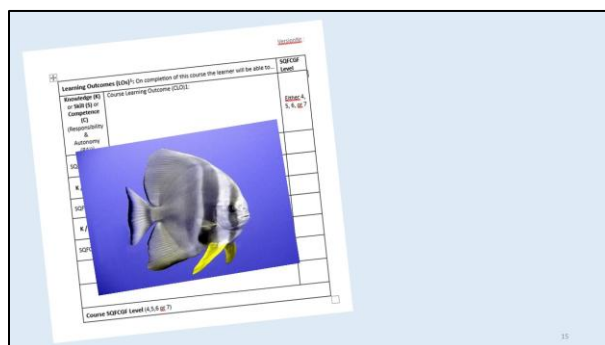
Typical constraints include time (the total hours available for independent, contact, and experiential learning phases), resources (teaching materials, technology, equipment, or access to facilities), and personnel (the number of trainers required and their level of expertise). Participant background and logistical aspects, such as travel, online access, or the availability of suitable training environments, are also key considerations.

By systematically addressing these constraints in the course descriptor, trainers can anticipate challenges and plan appropriate solutions. This prevents disruptions, supports smooth delivery, and helps guarantee that learning outcomes are met despite limitations.



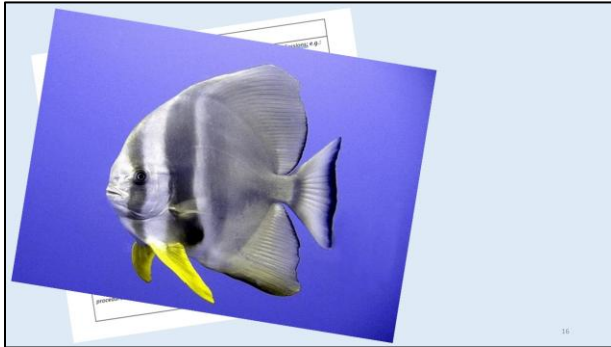
Learning Outcomes (Slide 15)

Learning Outcomes are subject of the next topic and are hardly mentioned in the introduction of the course design template.



Learning and Assessment Strategies (Slide 16)

Both are subject of topic 3 and are hardly mentioned in the introduction of the course design template.



Curriculum Outline, Indicative Content, References and Session Learning Outcomes (Slide 17)

A curriculum outline provides a structured overview of the course. It typically includes a breakdown of modules or units, their sequence, and indicative content. Each module description highlights the key knowledge, skills, or themes to be addressed. This ensures that the content is logically sequenced and that each unit clearly supports the course aim.

The outline should also indicate how modules align with the learning outcomes and relevant qualification framework levels, particularly the SQFCGF. It may briefly mention the instructional approaches to be used (e.g., lectures, practical exercises, simulations, or case studies), and identify points where assessment will take place—both formative and summative. References, essential readings, and supplementary resources are also listed, along with compliance to applicable regulations, frameworks, or organizational policies.

As additional input, beside of Topic 2, there is a distinction between different levels of learning outcomes:

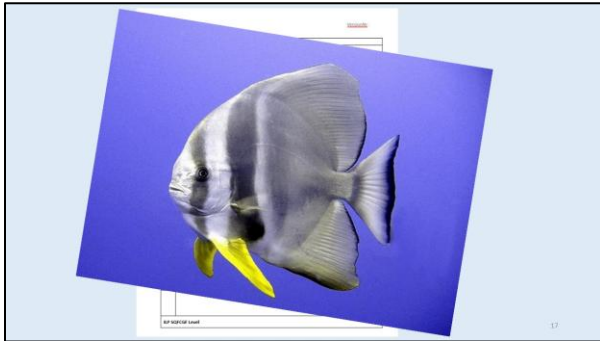
Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs): Broad, overarching statements describing what a learner will achieve by the end of the entire course, often linked to qualification frameworks.

Module Learning Outcomes (MLOs): Specific outcomes for a given module or unit, which collectively contribute to the course-level objectives.

Session Learning Outcomes (SLOs): Short-term, precise objectives for a single teaching session, indicating what learners should be able to demonstrate immediately afterwards.

Together, CLOs, MLOs, and SLOs provide a coherent roadmap from high-level course goals down to individual session achievements, ensuring alignment with the SQFCGF and maintaining transparency throughout the training process.

Descriptors also reference learning phases—Independent Learning Phase (ILP), Contact Learning Phase (CLP), and Experiential Learning Phase (ELP). These phases encourage a blended learning approach, combining self-study, classroom input, and practical exercises. Online synchronous and asynchronous formats can complement this design. Effective learning strategies ensure that teaching methods match intended learning outcomes.



Terminology (Slides 18–19)

Both slides serve as orientation slides, highlighting the core terms used in course design and training frameworks. Each concept ensures a shared understanding between trainers and learners:

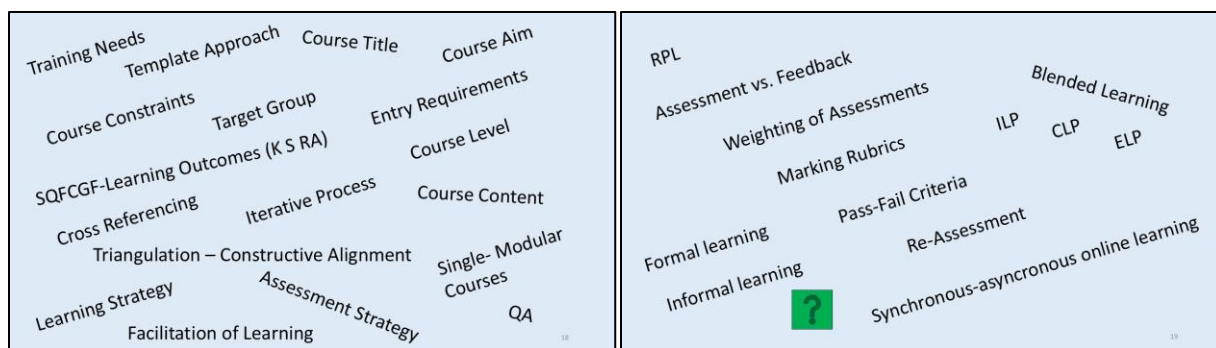
Training Needs, Template Approach, Iterative Process, Constructive Alignment, Learning Outcomes, Assessment Strategy, QA, and others: These are the building blocks of curriculum development. Going through them one by one helps participants get onboard with the terminology before diving deeper.

Formal Learning: Structured and documented learning, such as accredited courses.

Non-Formal Learning: Organised and purposeful, but less strictly documented, such as workshops or voluntary training.

Informal Learning: Unplanned and undocumented learning that happens naturally in daily practice or on the job.

These slides ensure participants share the same vocabulary, which is essential for working with course descriptors and aligning them with the SQFCGF.



EQF & NQF & SQF (Slide 20)

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) acts as the central reference point for qualifications across Europe. National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) connect individual Member States' systems to the EQF, ensuring that qualifications are comparable across borders.

Sectoral Qualification Frameworks (SQFs) can link directly to the EQF (for example, through an EU Agency) or be established at national level for a specific profession (e.g., the French SQF for hairdressers).

For the Coast Guard community, the SQFCGF plays this role. It defines qualifications and competences for Coast Guard functions, considering the diversity of organisations, their national mandates, and the physical geography of their states.

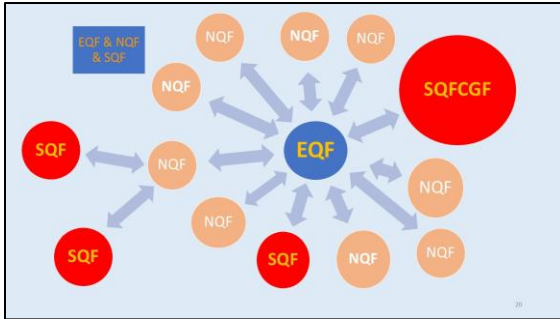
Why this matters: The SQFCGF enables the development of courses that can be accredited, since it is fully compliant with the Bologna and Copenhagen processes.

EFCA and other agencies can design high-standard training programmes aligned with the SQFCGF, which then carry a recognised qualification level.

This means training courses can be validated by Member States, granting academic value to certificates and strengthening mutual recognition across borders.

Aligning existing EFCA curricula with the SQFCGF supports Member States in developing their own national frameworks for Coast Guard training, inspiring further harmonisation and quality assurance.

In short, the SQFCGF is not just a framework: it is the key instrument that makes Coast Guard training transparent, comparable, and accredit-able across Europe.



ECGFA-Net Project by EFCA, EMSA, FRONTEX (Slide 21, 22)

The SQFCGF defines 10 Coast Guard functions, developed jointly by EFCA, EMSA, & Frontex in cooperation with MS:

- Maritime Safety
- Maritime Ship & Port Security
- Maritime Customs Activities
- Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking, Smuggling, and Law Enforcement
- Maritime Monitoring & Surveillance
- Maritime Environmental Protection & Response
- Maritime Search & Rescue
- Ship Casualty & Maritime Assistance Service
- Maritime Accident & Disaster Response
- Fisheries Inspection & Control (EFCA lead function)

These functions are translated into learning areas and learning outcomes (LOs) across EQF levels 4–7. Learning outcomes describe the essential knowledge, skills, and competences achieved at the end of training. They are grouped into three categories:

Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy

This structure ensures clarity, comparability, and consistency across Member States.

The final content slide uses a metaphor to show how the SQFCGF should be understood. It is not a tool, like a hammer. To work with the SQFCGF is to treat it like an instrument. To play with it like with a piano: For this the course developers need training and skills to be able to produce coherent results.

This illustrates that while individual training efforts may work in isolation, the SQFCGF ensures coherence, comparability, and harmony across Europe. It transforms fragmented initiatives into a structured, recognisable qualification system that benefits learners, organisations, and the Coast Guard community as a whole.





ECGFA-Net Project (2015-2019)



10 Functions
Levels 4, 5, 6, 7
22 Learning Areas
3 Types of LOs

Metaphor






VS.



Summary and Forecast (Slides 23, 24)

Provide a summary of the topic and a forecast. Then the topic ends.

Summary:

Course Descriptor:

- Title & Aim
- Target Group
- Duration, Mode, Constraints
- Entry Requirements
- Course Level
- LO
- LS & AS

SQFCGF:

- Structured & referenceable Framework
- Alignment boosts transparency, quality & learner relevance

Topic 2 Coming Soon




Source for formal, informal, non-formal learning (Slide 25)

That slide, which was not shown, simply assists with additional info about the distinction between the three. Source is: Johnson M, Majewska D: Formal, non-formal, and informal learning: What are they, and how can we research them? September 2022. Research Report. Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

Ends.

Source

Formal Learning	Non-formal Learning	Informal Learning
Learning is structured by a teacher	Learning may be structured	Learning is not structured
Learning is planned through direct teaching behaviours	Learning is prompted by the learner	Learning may not be intended by the learner
Learning is assessed by external markers	Learning is triggered by the learner	Learning may not be intended by the learner
Learning is recognised by the learner and others	Learning can take place in educational contexts	Learning is not recognised or measured through qualifications
Learning takes place in educational institutions	Learning can take place in educational contexts	Learning is not recognised or measured through qualifications
Learning has a measured duration	Learning may focus on both professional and personal development	Learning is not recognised or measured through qualifications
Learning may be recognised or measured through qualifications	Learning involves cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural aspects	Learning is not recognised or measured through qualifications
Learning may primarily focus on professional knowledge	Learning involves cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural aspects	Learning is not recognised or measured through qualifications
Learning tends to have a cognitive emphasis	Learning involves cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural aspects	Learning is not recognised or measured through qualifications

Session 1 – Topic 2

Drafting Learning Outcomes

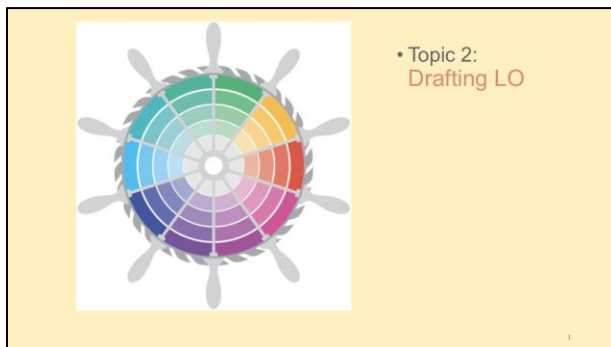
Introduction (Slide 1)

The second topic of the EFCA Online Information and Exchange Session introduces how to draft clear and outcome-oriented Learning Outcomes, drawing on the SQFCGF and Bloom's Taxonomy.

Objectives of the topic are:

- Understand what LOs are and why they matter
- Identify components of a strong LO
- Apply SQFCGF tables & Bloom's Taxonomy in LO drafting

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Why Learning Outcomes (Slides 2-4)

A Learning Outcome (LO) is a clear and concise statement describing what learners are expected to know, understand, or be able to do by the end of a course, lesson, or training programme. Unlike traditional teaching objectives, which often reflect the teacher's perspective (e.g., "the following content will be taught"), LOs focus squarely on the learner's achievements and on the results of learning, not the process. They are designed to be measurable, specific, and action-oriented, providing a minimum standard or threshold of learning that learners must reach.

Effective LOs fall into three categories:

Knowledge: theoretical and factual understanding of facts, principles, and methods.

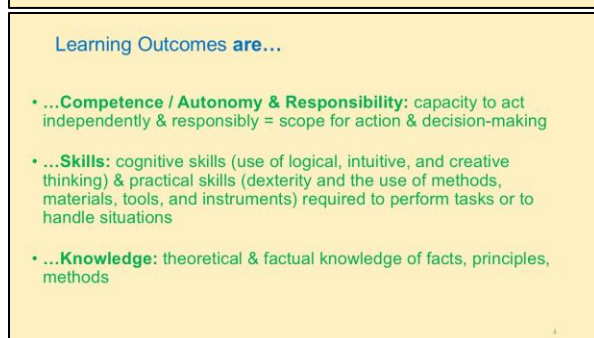
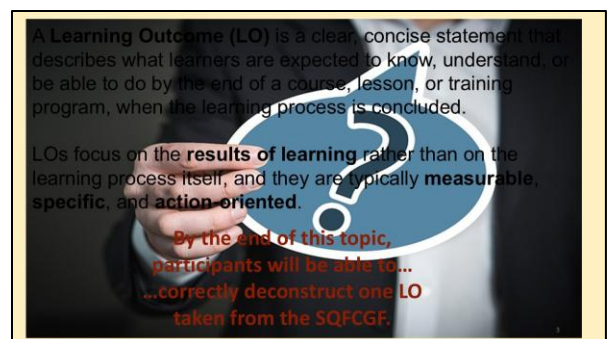
Skills: cognitive (logical, intuitive, creative thinking) and practical (dexterity, use of tools, methods, instruments).

Competence / Responsibility & Autonomy: the ability to act independently, take responsibility, and make decisions in complex situations.

In the European context, LOs are central to the European and National Qualifications Frameworks (EQF and NQFs). These frameworks aim to overcome the diversity of national education systems, which often differ in terms of duration, entry requirements, and structures. Without a shared reference point, such differences create misunderstandings and hinder mutual trust—obstacles to both cross-border cooperation and the European Single Market.

By focusing on results of learning, LOs provide a transparent and comparable description of what has been achieved, making qualifications transferable and understandable across systems. They form the basis for developing qualifications at both national and transnational levels and are crucial for mobility and permeability in education and training systems.

In the context of the SQFCGF, LOs make qualifications explicit, comparable, and operationally relevant for coast guard functions. They are not vague wish lists, but precise benchmarks of what learners can perform. For this reason, they are at the heart of qualification development, quality assurance, and the recognition of competences across borders.



How to Formulate Learning Outcomes (Slides 5-8)

When drafting Learning Outcomes (LOs), it is just as important to understand what they are not as it is to know what they are. LOs should never be treated as a vague “wish list” of everything a learner might gain at the end of a course. They should not rely on teacher-centred language such as “teach,” “study,” or “students will learn.” Instead, we shift toward a learner-centred perspective, speaking of participants, learners, trainers, or facilitators.

There are also certain words to avoid in LOs because they are unclear, non-measurable, or open to multiple interpretations. Terms like know, understand, be familiar with, be aware of, appreciate, or learn do not provide a reliable basis for assessment. For example, how can we test what someone “knows” or whether they “appreciate” something? These words lack precision and should not be used as the main verbs in LOs.

Instead, effective LOs must always begin with a measurable, active verb that describes what the learner can demonstrably do at the end of training. Examples include analyse, explain, apply, evaluate, prepare, or ensure. Each LO should contain only one active verb, and that verb should align with the intended qualification level and the way learning will be assessed.

In addition to the verb, two other components are essential:

Specification of the verb – This clarifies how or in which context the learner acts, e.g., independently, comprehensively, under guidance, in compliance with standards.

Specification of the object – This defines what the learner is working on, including the tools, methods, or complexity involved. For example, an LO might specify whether the learner works in routine tasks, complex situations, or under changing conditions.

Here are some examples of well-formulated LOs:

- He/She is able to correctly describe the necessary work steps when admitting patients.
- He/She is able to design single-family houses in compliance with laws and regulations, taking into account customer requirements and cost-effectiveness, using computer software.
- He/She is able to extract essential content from clearly spoken audio texts.
- He/She is able to carry out simple electrical installations (e.g., sockets) under guidance.
- He/She is able to objectively evaluate the competence development of graduates using an observation sheet.

From these examples, we see that LOs must be observable, assessable, and internally consistent. They should remain focused on the essential elements of a qualification, avoiding trivial detail, over-complex sentences, or combining too many tasks in one outcome.

Finally, it is important to keep pragmatism in mind: LOs should be realistic given the timeframe, entry requirements, target group, and framework conditions of the course. They should describe outcomes that learners can genuinely achieve within the scope of the training.

In short, well-written LOs are clear, measurable, learner-centred, and context-specific. They provide both trainers and learners with a transparent benchmark for facilitating learning, learning, and assessment, and they align directly with the standards of the SQFCGF.

LO are not...  • A 'wish list' of what a learner should be capable of doing on completion of the learning activity. • Definitions do not include the word 'teach'! Do not... Do...	How to formulate LO  "Guideline" for formulating LO: – <u>Active verb</u> ("...able to..."): perform, explain, analyse, prepare, ensure, etc. - expresses the main performance objective of the learning process – <u>Specification of the verb</u> (How / in which context): independently, under guidance, taking into account..., comprehensively, according to the latest scientific findings, etc. – <u>Specification of the object</u> (What): description of the object through methods, tools, procedures, level of complexity, etc.
How to formulate LO: He/She is able to... 1. ...correctly describe the necessary work steps when admitting patients. 2. ...correctly design single-family houses in compliance with applicable laws, standards, & regulations, taking into account customer requirements as well as cost-effectiveness aspects, using computer programs. 3. ...extract essential content from short & clearly spoken audio texts. 4. ...fill in order forms & other templates based on clearly formulated instructions. 5. ...evaluate the progress of competence development of graduates of a continuing education program.	How to formulate LO Specification of the object: • Description of the context in which the action is carried out (indication of the level): complex situation, routine tasks, changing context, etc. • Description of the tools, methods, environment, etc. • Avoid overly specific theories, methods, technologies – unless absolutely necessary Specification of the verb: • Further specification of the activity: analyse comprehensively, explain in depth, etc. • Degree of autonomy (indication of scope for action and decision-making): under guidance, under supervision, independently, with participation of, coordinating within a team, with personal responsibility, largely independently, etc.

Deconstructing Learning Outcomes (Slides 9-12)

Once we have a Learning Outcome, the next step is to **deconstruct** it. This means breaking it down into its essential parts: the action verb, the topic area, the scope or context in which the learning takes place, and the type of outcome (knowledge, skills, or responsibility & autonomy). Deconstructing ensures that the LO is specific, measurable, and aligned with the intended qualification framework.

But drafting and deconstructing LOs is only the beginning. To design meaningful training, we must place these outcomes into a broader educational structure. This is where **Constructive Alignment**, a concept introduced by John Biggs, becomes crucial. Constructive Alignment links three key elements:

1. **Learning Outcomes** (LOs) – what learners are expected to achieve.
2. **Learning Activities** (LAs) – how learners engage with the material to achieve those outcomes.
3. **Assessment Methods** (AMs) – how we measure whether learners have achieved the outcomes.

The model is called **constructive** because learners construct knowledge step by step. Imagine building a brick house: you first lay the foundation, then build walls, then add the roof. Each element supports the next, and only by aligning all parts can the structure stand solidly. In the same way, trainers must carefully align outcomes, activities, and assessments to create a sturdy “house of learning.”

For example, if the LO is that learners should be able to coordinate an effective response to maritime border surveillance incidents, then the learning activities must give them opportunities to practice coordination, decision-making, and teamwork in realistic contexts. The assessment, in turn, should measure whether they can actually demonstrate those abilities, not just recall theory.

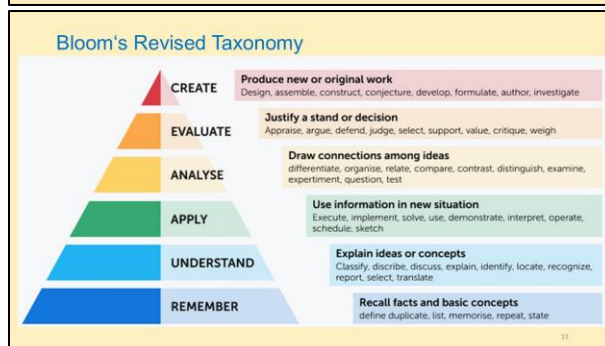
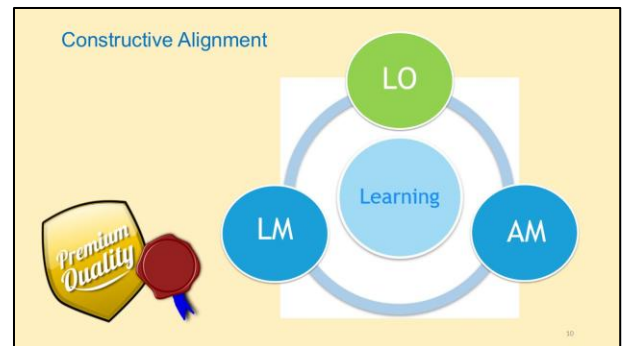
Constructive Alignment is also closely tied to the way **adults learn best**. Adults need active engagement, problem-solving, and opportunities to apply knowledge in context. By aligning LOs, activities, and assessments, trainers create learner-centred sessions where participants actively build competence rather than passively receive information.

This alignment is also at the heart of the SQFCGF. By structuring training around clear, measurable LOs and ensuring that activities and assessments flow logically from them, the SQFCGF helps guarantee consistency, quality assurance, and transparency across coast guard training. It fosters learner-centred curriculum design, strengthens certification processes, and promotes the credibility and recognition of qualifications at the European level.

In short, deconstructing LOs and applying constructive alignment ensures that training is both pedagogically sound and operationally relevant. It provides a roadmap for trainers to plan courses that are not only effective but also fully aligned with European standards.

Deconstruction of LO

- Constructive Alignment
- Deconstruct a LO
- Graphical Display
- Examples



MARITIME ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND RESPONSE Activities related to maritime pollution prevention, preparedness and response, including the control and prevention of ship-source pollution									
Learning area	K/S/C	Level 4	K/S/C	Level 5	K/S/C	Level 6	K/S/C	Level 7	
GENERAL MARITIME ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RESPONSE									
Communication	S	Demonstrate a range of skills and techniques to enable effective written and oral communications including the use of international standard maritime phraseology in routine communications	S	Demonstrate effective communication skills and techniques in a range of complex situations	S	Demonstrate advanced professional communication skills including negotiation, mediation techniques and ensure implementation of communication strategies	C	Develop organisational strategies and tactics to communicate with a broad variety of national, international and public stakeholders	

Constructive Alignment (Slides 13, 14)

To draft high-quality Learning Outcomes (LOs), it is helpful to think of them as having a clear **anatomy**. Every well-formulated LO contains five essential components:

1. **One active verb** – drawn from Bloom's Taxonomy, this verb specifies exactly what the learner will be able to do.
2. **Type of LO** – whether it belongs to knowledge, skills, or responsibility & autonomy.
3. **Topic area** – the subject matter or field in which the LO applies, either specific or general.
4. **Standard or complexity** – the expected level of achievement, often aligned with EQF levels or Bloom's cognitive levels.
5. **Scope and context** – the circumstances in which the LO is applied, including tools, environment, and conditions.

Together, these components provide a reliable framework for drafting LOs that are measurable, transparent, and appropriately matched to the level of training. Importantly, LOs always describe what the learner achieves — never what the teacher intends to do. For example, they should never use the verb *teach*. Instead, the focus is on the learner's active performance, described with a measurable verb such as *analyze*, *apply*, *evaluate*, or *demonstrate*.

Let's look at an example:

"Analyze emergency evacuation procedures during simulated fire drills onboard a Coast Guard patrol vessel, demonstrating correct use of safety equipment and coordination with team members in line with international maritime safety standards."

Deconstructing this LO shows how the anatomy works in practice:

- **Active verb:** *Analyze*
- **Type:** Skill (practical ability)
- **Topic area:** Maritime safety procedures
- **Standard/complexity:** Level 6 (advanced), requiring learners to apply complex procedures and evaluate situations
- **Scope and context:** Focused on operational tasks during simulated fire drills onboard a patrol vessel

This example illustrates how an LO sets a **threshold of learning** – the minimum standard learners must meet to demonstrate competence. At the same time, it provides clarity for trainers, learners, and evaluators alike by defining exactly what is expected, in what context, and at what level of complexity.

By following this five-part structure, trainers can ensure their LOs are explicit, level-appropriate, and directly aligned with the requirements of the SQFCGF. This, in turn, strengthens the credibility and recognition of training across Europe.

Anatomy of a LO 1) One ACTIVE VERB form; 2) Indication of the TYPE OF LO: K/S/R&A 3) TOPIC AREA of the LO: specific or general (refers to the subject matter or field); 4) Indication of the STANDARD or the COMPLEXITY OF LEARNING that is intended/achieved by the LO; 5) SCOPE and/or CONTEXT of the LO.	By the end of this topic, participants will be able to... ...correctly deconstruct one LO taken from the SQFCGF.  “...analyze emergency evacuation procedures during simulated fire drills onboard a Coast Guard patrol vessel, demonstrating correct use of safety equipment and coordination with team members in line with international maritime safety standards.”
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Deconstructing Learning Outcomes (Slide 15, 16)

What deconstruction is—and why it comes first.

Deconstructing an LO means unpacking its exact intent before you design teaching or assessment. Rather than getting only a “general sense” of the statement, you clarify precisely what learners must know, understand, and/or be able to do. This is the essential first step to plan learner-centred activities, allocate resources sensibly, anticipate contingencies, and design objective assessments that verify achievement.

From broad EQF to sector-specific SQFCGF.

EQF descriptors are deliberately general so they apply across sectors. That generality, however, creates practical challenges in specialised domains like coast guard functions:

- **Low specificity and context:** EQF language doesn't reflect the concrete tasks, tools, or environments of maritime work.
- **Ambiguity about standards/complexity:** Levels describe "advanced" or "comprehensive" ability without sector benchmarks, making it hard to set the right depth or scope.
- **Curriculum alignment gaps:** Without actionable tasks, courses risk training abstractions rather than operational skills. Mapping EQF to real roles takes extra time and expertise.
- **Assessment fuzziness:** Abstract outcomes are hard to measure consistently; interpretations vary across programmes.

The **SQFCGF** resolves these gaps by using **industry-specific, action-oriented** outcomes (e.g., operate, monitor, interpret) with **defined scope and context** (e.g., maritime zones, vessel monitoring, risk assessment) and **clear standards** (e.g., established protocols, national security guidelines). This gives curriculum developers concrete targets for training and assessment.

How to deconstruct an LO (practical checklist).

Read the statement and identify:

1. **Active verb** (Bloom-aligned action to be observed/measured).
2. **Type of LO** (Knowledge / Skills / Responsibility & Autonomy).
3. **Topic area** (the field/subject focus).
4. **Standard & complexity** (level indications—EQF/Bloom; what "good" looks like).
5. **Scope & context** (operational conditions, tools, environments, constraints).

This analysis converts the LO into a precise set of design requirements:

- **Learning activities** that deliberately practise the stated action in the stated context, at the stated complexity.
- **Assessment methods** that gather evidence of the action and standard (performance tasks, simulations, observed procedures, etc.).

Why trainers must do this.

If we are not fully clear about the LO's explicit and implicit intent, we cannot:

- steer learners effectively toward the intended achievement,
- plan appropriate, level-matched activities and methods, or
- assess attainment objectively and fairly.

Bottom line.

Begin every planning cycle by deconstructing the LO. Use SQFCGF wording to anchor specificity, context, and standards; then select learning activities and assessments that *directly evidence* the required action at the required level. This approach keeps your session constructively aligned and operationally relevant.



Why and How to Deconstruct a Learning Outcome (Slide 17-19)

Before we even begin planning a training session, it is essential to understand in depth what the intended Learning Outcomes (LOs) actually mean. If trainers do not fully grasp the precise intent of an LO, it becomes nearly impossible to design effective learning activities or assessments that align with it. Deconstruction is therefore not an optional step but a necessary foundation for professional training design.

To make this process practical, we can use a **simple, three-step methodology** that works equally well when done individually or in collaboration with colleagues:

1. Capitalize the action verb(s).

This highlights what the learner must be able to do and helps identify whether the outcome relates to knowledge, skills, or responsibility & autonomy.

2. Underline the topic.

These are the central nouns or noun phrases—the subject matter on which the learner is expected to act.

3. Highlight or circle the standard and scope.

This specifies the level, conditions, and breadth of performance required, clarifying how complex the task is and under what circumstances it should be carried out.

Consider this example:

“Coordinate an effective response to maritime border surveillance incidents and SAR emergencies in cooperation with other relevant partners and agencies.”

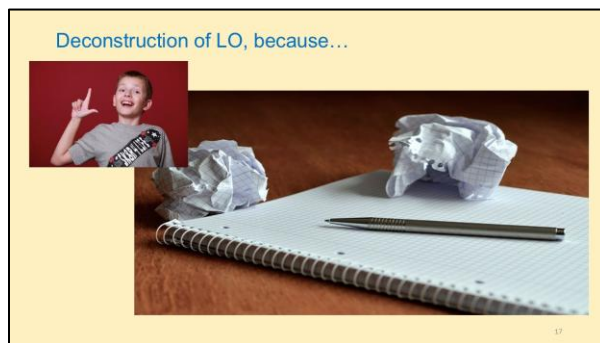
COORDINATE – Action verb, showing that this is a responsibility & autonomy type of outcome.

Response to maritime border surveillance incidents and SAR emergencies – The topic.

In cooperation with other relevant partners and agencies – The scope and standard, defining how broadly and under what conditions the learner must act.

By applying this simple deconstruction method, the wording of any LO becomes clearer, both in its explicit meaning and in its underlying expectations. Trainers can then plan sessions that target exactly the intended level of performance, avoiding vague interpretations or mismatched activities.

The key message is straightforward: **only by deconstructing LOs first can trainers design sessions that are truly aligned with learners' needs, sectoral requirements, and assessment criteria.**



How to Deconstruct a LO...

IMPLEMENT specific procedures of partnership & cooperation agreements relevant to maritime pollution prevention & response

Skill

- 1) CAPITALIZE action verb(s)
- 2) Underline the topic
- 3) Highlight (or circle) the standard and scope

How to Deconstruct a LO...

1) CAPITALIZE action verb(s)
2) Underline the topic
3) Highlight (or circle) the standard and scope

Ensure the implementation of partnerships and cooperation agreements relevant to maritime pollution prevention and response.

SKILL

COORDINATE an effective response to maritime border surveillance incidents and SAR emergencies in cooperation with other relevant partners and agencies.

RESPONSIBILITY & AUTONOMY

Application in Course Design (Slides 20-22)

Once Learning Outcomes (LOs) have been clearly deconstructed, the next step is to organise them into a structure that makes sense for course design. This means arranging the different types of LOs into a logical grid and then linking them to course and session planning.

In the SQFCGF, LOs are categorised into three types:

- **Knowledge** – theoretical understanding, expressed with verbs such as identify, define, describe, explain.

- **Skills** – practical abilities, expressed with verbs such as use, operate, perform, demonstrate.
- **Responsibility & Autonomy** – the ability to act independently and make informed decisions, expressed with verbs such as evaluate, review, integrate, coordinate.

These three categories build upon one another: knowledge provides the foundation, skills develop from that knowledge, and responsibility & autonomy represent the highest level of application in professional practice. The 2017 revision of the EQF made this even clearer by replacing the older term “competence” with “responsibility and autonomy,” emphasising that learners must not only know and do, but also take responsibility for decisions and outcomes in real-world contexts.

To make this progression visible and usable, LOs can be arranged in a **grid structure**. This helps trainers map each outcome according to its type (knowledge, skill, or responsibility & autonomy), and to see how they connect to one another in the learning journey. For example, in a single-module course, the course learning outcomes (CLOs) define the overall objectives. Each session then has its own session learning outcomes (SLOs), which break the CLOs down into smaller, achievable steps.

An illustration of this breakdown could look like this:

- **Course level:** CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4
- **Session 1:** S1LO1, S1LO2, S1LO3
- **Session 2:** S2LO1, S2LO2, S2LO3
- **Session 3:** S3LO1, S3LO2, S3LO3

This structure makes sure that every session directly contributes to the achievement of the overall course outcomes. By linking session activities and assessments to these clearly defined outcomes, trainers achieve constructive alignment and ensure that each learning step builds toward the intended qualification.

In practice, the **suitable LOs from the SQFCGF** serve as the starting point for CLOs. Trainers then cascade them down into SLOs, making sure that learners progress logically from knowledge acquisition, through skill development, to the demonstration of autonomy and responsibility in authentic operational contexts.

In short, applying this structured approach allows training to be not only systematic and transparent but also fully aligned with European standards, ensuring learners achieve outcomes that are both measurable and professionally relevant.

Visual Display

LO	COORDINATE an effective response to maritime border surveillance incidents and SAR emergencies in cooperation with other relevant partners and agencies.			
	TOPIC	STANDARD & SCOPE	ACTION VERB	TYPE OF LO
	- Maritime border surveillance incidents - SAR emergencies	Cooperation with other relevant partners and agencies	COORDINATE	Responsibility & Autonomy

Learning Outcomes (LOs) ¹ : On completion of this course the learner will be able to...		SQFCGF Level
Knowledge (K) or Skill (S) or Competence (C)	Course Learning Outcome (CLO):	Either 4, 5, 6, or 7
(Responsibility & Autonomy - R/A)		
SQFCGF LO:	CLO:	
K / S / C (R/A)		
SQFCGF LO:	CLO:	
K / S / C (R/A)		
SQFCGF LO:		
Course SQFCGF Level (4,5,6 or 7)		




Conclusion and Operational Relevance of the SQFCGF (Slides 23, 24)

As we conclude this topic, it is important to highlight one of the greatest strengths of the **Sectoral Qualification Framework for Coast Guard Functions (SQFCGF)**: its **operational relevance**. Unlike abstract frameworks that remain at a high level, the SQFCGF was created with direct input from competent stakeholders, ensuring that it reflects the real-world demands of coast guard work.

For **employers**, the SQFCGF provides a reliable reference point for defining job expectations, aligning training with operational requirements, and ensuring staff are prepared for the complex tasks of their roles. For **employees**, it clarifies what knowledge, skills, and responsibilities they are expected to develop, offering transparency and comparability of qualifications across Europe.

In practice, the SQFCGF is a **practical tool for curriculum developers and trainers**. It supports:

- **Course design and review** – by offering clear descriptors and action-oriented outcomes that can be directly translated into learning programmes.
- **Training session planning** – by providing contextual detail that guides the choice of activities and assessments.
- **Quality assurance and certification** – by linking outcomes to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and national systems, ensuring both consistency and recognition.

The framework bridges the gap between the broad language of the EQF and the concrete demands of coast guard operations. It combines the EQF's benefits—such as transparency, comparability, and transferability—with **added specificity and clarity**. This includes precise terminology, realistic operational contexts, and detailed standards.

For trainers and curriculum designers, this means being able to:

- Craft **relevant and realistic learning outcomes**.
- Ensure training is **directly aligned with job performance expectations**.
- Simplify **assessment design**, since detailed descriptors make it easier to define measurable evidence of learning.

In short, the SQFCGF makes course design both **strategic and practical**. It ensures that learning outcomes are not just theoretically aligned with qualification frameworks, but also operationally meaningful—anchored in the tasks, responsibilities, and challenges of coast guard functions. This alignment ultimately strengthens the credibility and recognition of training across Europe, supporting the professionalisation of European coast guard services.

Ends

Special Hint: **Cross Referencing**



	CLO1	CLO2	CLO3
S1LO1			x
S1LO2	x		
S1LO3		x	
Etc.			x

23

Operational Relevance of the SQFCGF



Course Design

Session 1 – Topic 3

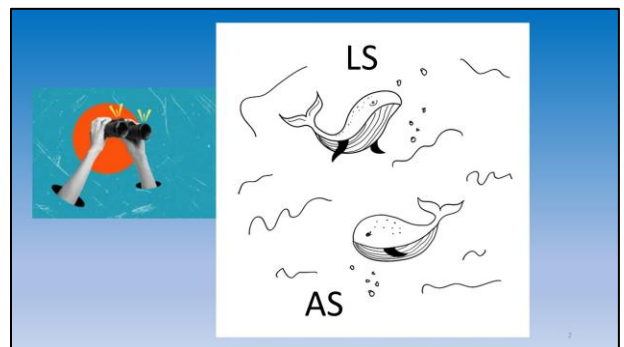
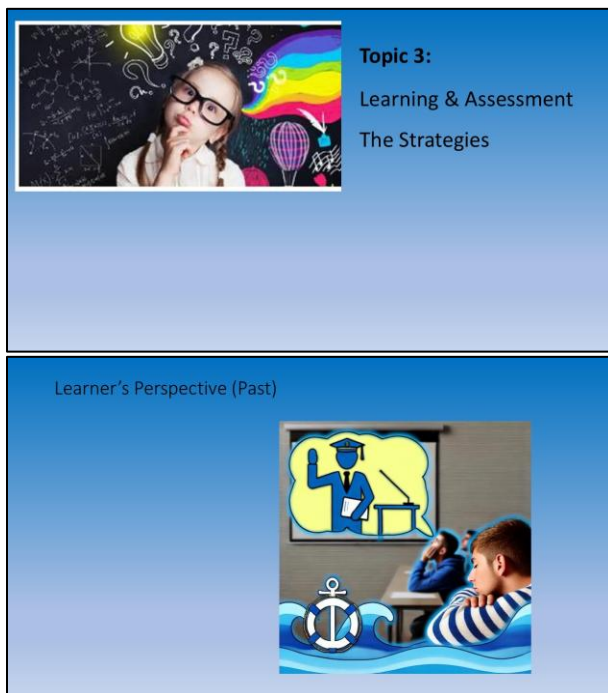
Designing Learning and Assessment Strategies

Introduction (Slide 1-3)

The third topic of the EFCA Online Information and Exchange Session focused on designing Learning Strategies (LS) and Assessment Strategies (AS). The aim of Topic 3 is to display the characteristics of well-aligned effective learning and assessment strategies in vocational education and their contribution to training quality, especially with reference to the LO from the SQFCGF.

These two dimensions of course design are critical in ensuring that training programmes not only communicate knowledge, but also foster skills, competences, and professional behaviours that learners can apply in practice. The discussion built upon earlier topics by demonstrating how learning outcomes are translated into teaching and assessment approaches. Special attention was paid to constructive alignment, the balance between learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches, and the challenges of integrating diverse strategies into coherent course design.

In the past the learners were confronted with frontal lectures only and their attendance often was involuntarily. Especially in adult learning environments, learners fell asleep rather than benefited from the educational process.



Elements of Course Design in the present (Slide 4)

Designing effective courses involves several interconnected elements that together shape the learning experience. Each element plays a role in ensuring that training is both pedagogically sound and operationally relevant.

Job Competencies (JCs) combine skills, knowledge, attributes, and behaviours that enable individuals to perform tasks successfully in their professional roles. They are measurable, observable behaviours that organisations want to see in their workforce. By embedding competencies into training design, organisations ensure that learning supports business goals and prepares employees for real-world challenges.

Learning Outcomes (LOs) are at the heart of course design. They provide an explicit description of what learners should know, understand, and be able to do at the end of a programme or module. LOs establish a minimum standard of learning—sometimes called a “threshold of learning.” Importantly, they are not wish lists, nor do they describe teaching activities. Instead, they focus on what learners can demonstrate.

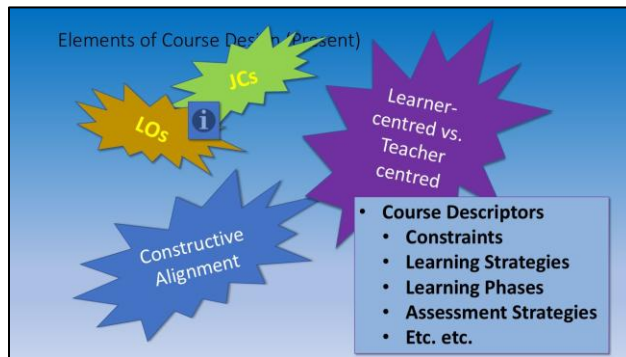
LOs are hierarchical and can be aligned with Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy, which progresses from basic recall (*remember, understand*) to higher-order skills (*apply, analyse, evaluate, create*). This structure allows trainers to set outcomes at the right cognitive level and ensure progression in learning.

Constructive Alignment is needed for strong course design—ensuring that Learning Outcomes, Learning Strategies, and Assessment Methods are fully consistent with one another. When what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is assessed are aligned, learners can clearly see the purpose of each activity and how it supports their achievement of the outcomes. This makes courses coherent and effective.

Choice Between Learner-Centred and Teacher-Centred Approaches shapes the organisation of learning activities. Teacher-centred designs emphasise the delivery of content, while learner-centred approaches focus on facilitating active engagement, critical thinking, and problem-solving. In vocational and professional training, including coast guard functions, a learner-centred approach is often more effective, as it mirrors real-life decision-making and collaborative practice.

Other Elements of Course Design also incorporate practical factors such as course descriptors, constraints (time, resources, environment), learning phases, and assessment strategies. These structural elements ensure that a programme is both achievable and sustainable, while also maintaining quality and comparability across contexts.

Course design is more than a list of topics—it is a careful integration of competencies, learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessments, all organised in a way that supports learners in achieving meaningful, demonstrable results.

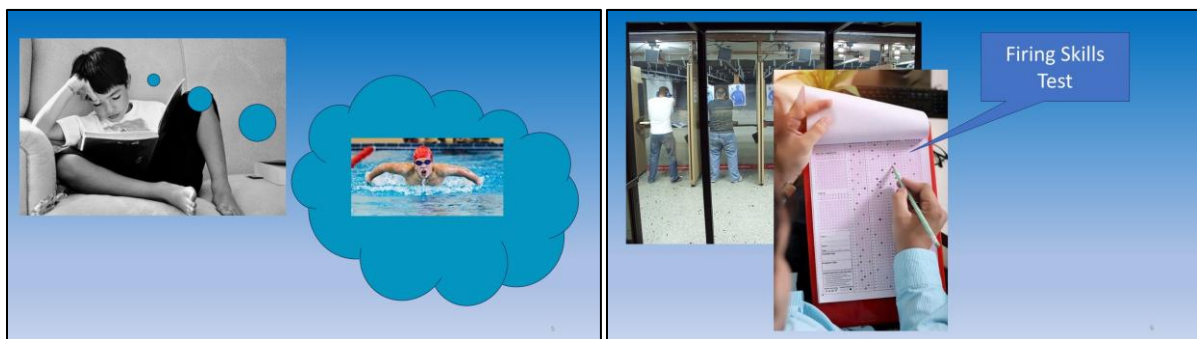


Story to Clarify the Choice of Learning and Assessment Methods (Slides 5, 6)

Imagine trying to learn swimming from a book. You could read page after page about technique, breathing, and arm movements—but unless you get into the water, you won't truly know how to swim. The learning strategy here is clear: only practice in the real environment leads to mastery.

The same principle applies to assessing professional skills. Consider firearms training: it would be meaningless to evaluate firing competence through a multiple-choice questionnaire. To test whether someone can handle a weapon safely and accurately, the assessment must involve actual practice at the shooting range.

These examples highlight a simple truth: especially in adult learning choosing the right method matters. Learning strategies must fit the nature of the skill to be acquired, and assessment strategies must authentically measure what learners are expected to demonstrate. Reading, discussing, or testing may work for some outcomes, but for practical, operational skills, nothing replaces practice and performance in real-world conditions.



Learning Strategies (Slide 7)

A **learning strategy** is more than just a teaching method. It is a purposeful, planned approach that helps learners effectively acquire knowledge and skills. At its core, a learning strategy is designed

to achieve specific outcomes, centred on the learner's engagement and active processing of information.

In the past, those strategies were narrow and teacher-centred. Learners were expected to absorb knowledge through lectures or individual study, with limited opportunity to apply what they had learned. This approach often focused more on the delivery of content than on whether learners could use the knowledge in practice.

Today, learning strategies are far more **learner-centred**. They combine varied and adaptable methods such as problem-solving, group work, case studies, and simulations. The aim is to ensure that knowledge is not only understood but also applied in operational contexts.

A good example is **blended learning**. A course might include:

- **Independent Learning Phase (ILP)**: self-paced online activities, quizzes, and readings to build foundational knowledge.
- **Contact Learning Phase (CLP)**: interactive sessions where learners apply and practice skills, supported by feedback from peers and trainers.
- **Experiential Learning Phase (ELP)**: real-world simulations or on-the-job training that allow learners to integrate knowledge and skills into professional behaviour.

Different types of learning outcomes also call for different strategies:

- **Knowledge (K)**: readings, video lectures, mind maps.
- **Skills (S)**: role-plays, drills, coaching.
- **Responsibility & Autonomy (RA)**: problem-solving, peer review, scenario decision-making.

In short, effective learning strategies ensure that learners don't just "know" something in theory, but can also **apply, evaluate, and perform** in real-life contexts. The shift from past to present reflects a move from passive reception of information to active engagement with meaningful tasks.



Assessment Strategies (Slides 8, 9)

Assessment in the past often meant memorising content at home and preparing for a final exam. Learners were judged primarily on their ability to recall information, with little attention paid to whether they could apply knowledge, demonstrate skills, or act responsibly in real-world situations. This approach was limited in scope: it rewarded rote learning but rarely tested deeper understanding, problem-solving, or performance in operational contexts.

Modern assessment strategy looks very different. Today, assessment is seen as a planned and purposeful approach to evaluating learners' achievement of Learning Outcomes (LOs). It is not a one-off hurdle at the end of a course, but an integral part of the learning journey.

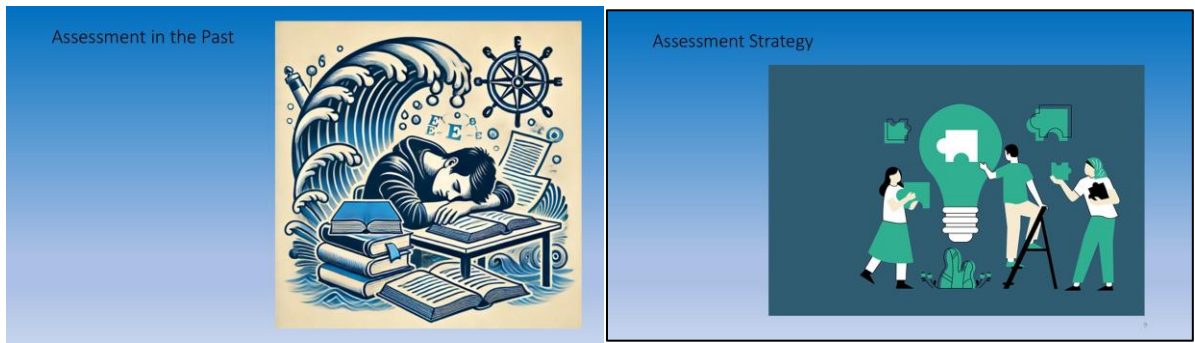
A well-designed assessment strategy has several key features:

- **Purposeful:** It is aligned with the intended LOs and measures the specific competences learners are expected to achieve.
- **Varied methods:** Assessments may include quizzes, written tasks, projects, presentations, reflective journals, case studies, or practical simulations.
- **Formative and summative:** Ongoing assessments (formative) give feedback during the course, while final assessments (summative) confirm overall achievement.
- **Fair and inclusive:** Assessments accommodate different learning styles and contexts, ensuring accessibility for all learners.

For example, a blended coast guard course might include:

- An **online theoretical test** at the end of the Independent Learning Phase (ILP).
 - A **combination of a multiple-choice test and two practical case studies** at the end of the Contact Learning Phase (CLP).
- Both assessments must be passed, with one opportunity for reassessment if necessary. All assessments are conducted in line with institutional policies and quality assurance standards.

In this way, assessment strategies ensure that learners are not just memorising information, but demonstrating their ability to use knowledge, perform skills, and take responsibility in real or simulated operational settings.



Assessment Approaches (Slides 10-12)

Assessment in modern training is no longer a single exam at the end of a course but a carefully designed process that supports learning while also verifying outcomes. A strong assessment approach combines **formative** and **summative** elements.

- **Formative assessment** takes place during the learning process. It is feedback-driven and helps learners track their progress. Examples include short quizzes, reflective tasks, or coaching conversations. The purpose is to guide learning, highlight strengths, and point out areas for improvement before the final evaluation.
- **Summative assessment** takes place at the end of a phase or course. It verifies whether learners have achieved the intended outcomes. This may involve written tests, practical simulations, or the submission of a portfolio of work. Summative assessment provides the evidence required for certification or qualification.

The most effective courses use a **mix of both**: formative methods that keep learners engaged and on track, and summative methods that confirm final competence.

Importantly, assessment must always match the verb and expectation of the learning outcome (LO). For example:

- If the LO verb is *describe*, a short-answer quiz is appropriate.
- If the LO verb is *apply*, a practical task or simulation is needed.
- If the LO verb is *evaluate*, then a scenario analysis with a written report is suitable.
- If the LO verb is *coordinate*, the best fit is a team-based scenario with structured assessment.

Misalignment between LOs and assessments can undermine course effectiveness. For example:

- A LO that requires learners to *apply skills*, but is assessed only with a knowledge-based test.
- A LO that expects *autonomy and responsibility*, but the course delivery remains purely frontal lectures.

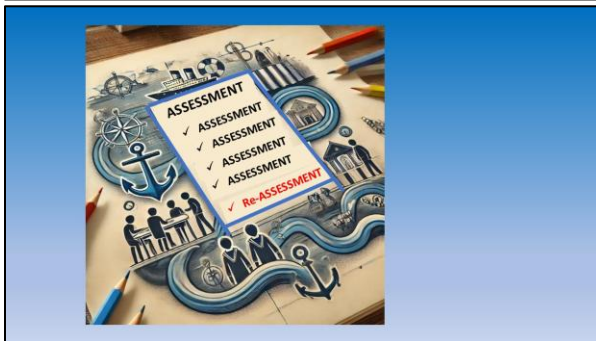
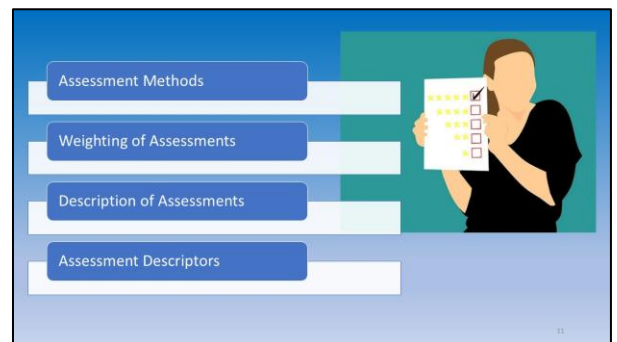
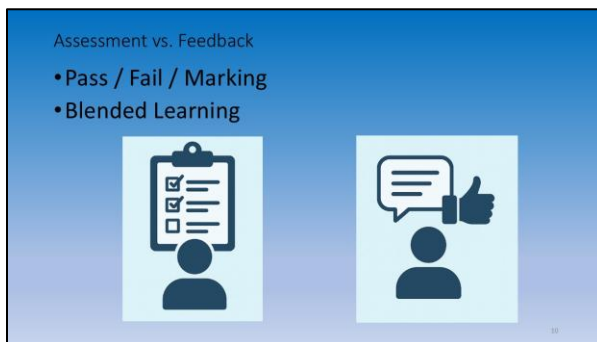
- A *responsibility*-based LO assessed only with multiple-choice questions.

Such mismatches not only frustrate learners but also weaken the credibility of the course. The **SQFCGF** helps avoid this by providing clear expectations for what LOs should look like at each level and type.

In practice, trainers should:

- Design clear assessment steps aligned with the LO type, verb, and level of complexity.
- Use both formative and summative methods for balance.
- Offer reassessment opportunities where appropriate, ensuring fairness and consistency.

By aligning assessments with LOs in this way, training becomes transparent, credible, and effective. Learners understand what is expected of them, and trainers can be confident that the results reflect real achievement.



Cross Referencing Learning Outcomes and Assessments (Slide 13)

An essential element of course design is to ensure that **every Course Learning Outcome (CLO)** is properly assessed. One practical tool to have control over this is through a **Cross-Referencing Table**. This table maps each assessment activity against the CLOs, making it clear which outcomes are being measured where.

For example, Assessment 1 might address CLO2 and CLO4, Assessment 2 may cover CLO3, and so on. By filling in this grid, course designers verify and can prove that all intended outcomes are included across the range of assessments.

This process has several benefits:

- It guarantees that **no CLO is forgotten**. Learners are tested on all the outcomes they were meant to achieve.
- It provides **transparency** for both trainers and learners, showing exactly how assessments link to the goals of the course.
- It supports **quality assurance**, as external reviewers can easily see how assessments are aligned with outcomes.

The risk of not cross-referencing is significant. If a CLO is **not part of any assessment**, it remains unclear whether learners have actually achieved it. This creates a blind spot: the course description promises an outcome, but there is no evidence that learners have reached it. Such gaps undermine the credibility of the course, weaken trust in qualifications, and may even create operational risks if critical competences are left unchecked.

Cross-referencing therefore acts like a **safety net**: it ensures that all learning outcomes are covered, all assessments are purposeful, and learners graduate with the competences the programme promises to deliver.

Special Hint: Cross Referencing



	CLO2	CLO3	CLO4
Assessment 1			x
Assessment 2	x		
Assessment 3		x	
Etc.			x

Challenges in Designing Learning and Assessment Strategies (Slide 14)

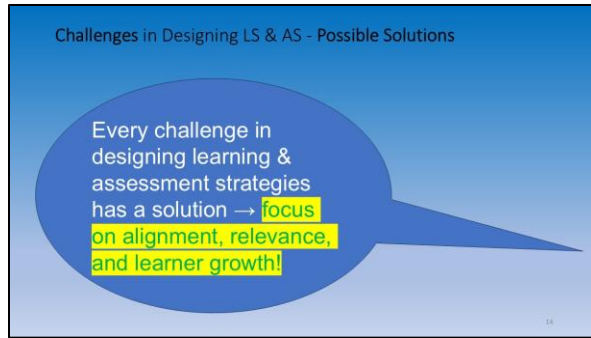
Designing learning & assessment strategies is with its challenges. Designers often face difficulties ranging from vague learning outcomes to institutional resistance to change. Yet, every challenge has a solution if we focus on **alignment, relevance, and learner growth**.

Some common challenges include:

- **Vague learning outcomes** → When outcomes are unclear, assessments become misaligned.

- Solution:* Use precise verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy and align outcomes with SQFCGF/EQF levels to ensure they are specific and measurable.
- **Overemphasis on recall** → Easy-to-test factual knowledge dominates, while skills and attitudes are neglected.
Solution: Apply constructive alignment and design assessments that also measure skills, competences, and behaviours.
 - **One-size-fits-all assessment** → Standardised tests fail to capture diverse learner needs.
Solution: Use a mix of formative and summative methods, including case studies, simulations, and group work.
 - **Lack of real-world relevance** → Learners lose motivation when tasks feel abstract.
Solution: Integrate role plays, scenarios, and coast guard-style operational tasks.
 - **Weak feedback** → Late or generic comments don't help learners improve.
Solution: Provide timely, specific, and actionable feedback, using the model of feed-up → feedback → feed-forward.
 - **Assessment overload** → Too many tests create stress for both learners and trainers.
Solution: Focus on the key learning outcomes and integrate assessments that cover multiple outcomes at once.
 - **Difficulty measuring higher-order skills** → Leadership, problem-solving, or ethics are harder to assess.
Solution: Use rubrics, portfolios, reflective journals, and performance-based tasks.
 - **Limited assessment literacy** → Trainers know their subject matter but may lack expertise in assessment design.
Solution: Provide targeted training, peer sharing, and use simple templates that link LOs, strategies, and assessments.
 - **Fairness vs. flexibility** → Balancing consistent standards with learner needs can be tricky.
Solution: Use transparent rubrics while allowing reasonable variations in how competence is demonstrated.
 - **Resistance to change** → Institutions may cling to traditional exams and lectures.
Solution: Pilot small innovations, share evidence of effectiveness, and celebrate early successes.

While challenges in strategy design are inevitable, they can all be addressed with thoughtful solutions. The guiding principles are clear: keep everything aligned with LOs, ensure tasks are relevant to professional practice, and support learner growth with effective feedback and flexibility.



Forecast Before the Break (Slide 15)

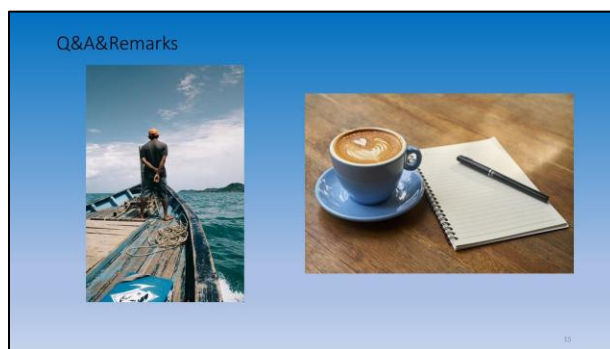
We have now explored how **descriptors, learning outcomes, and strategies** interact in the design of effective training. Together, they form the backbone of a well-structured course: descriptors set the framework, learning outcomes define the targets, and learning and assessment strategies describe how those targets will be reached and measured.

But this raises an important question: **how do we know whether the course we have designed is of high quality?** It is one thing to plan a course on paper, but another to ensure that it delivers meaningful learning, achieves its objectives, and stands up to external scrutiny.

This leads directly to the next topic: **Course Review and the SQFCGF as a Quality Assurance (QA) Support Tool**. In that session, we will look at how the SQFCGF can guide course evaluation, ensure consistency, and provide evidence of quality for both internal improvement and external recognition.

In other words, the journey continues from **design** to **review and assurance**—from planning what should happen in the classroom to making sure it really works in practice and meets agreed standards.

Ends



Session 1 – Topic 4

Course Review & SQFCGF as QA Support

Introduction (Slide 1)

The fourth and final topic of the EFCA Online Information and Exchange Session turns to the question of **quality assurance (QA)**. Having explored in earlier topics how to design course descriptors, formulate learning outcomes, and align learning and assessment strategies, the focus now shifts to ensuring that courses not only look good on paper but also **deliver lasting quality and consistency in practice**.

The **aim of this session** is to demonstrate how the **Sectoral Qualification Framework for Coast Guard Functions (SQFCGF)** can actively support QA through structured course reviews. By embedding course evaluation into the training cycle, trainers and curriculum developers can maintain transparency, comparability, and credibility across coast guard training programmes in different Member States.

This discussion draws on established European standards and guidelines, particularly **EQAVET** (European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training) and **ESG 2015** (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area). These frameworks underline that quality assurance is not a one-off audit but a **continuous process of reflection and improvement**.

To make this operational, tools such as a **Course Review Checklist** can be used to:

- Verify alignment between learning outcomes, strategies, and assessments.
- Ensure consistency with the SQFCGF and the EQF.
- Identify areas for improvement in design, delivery, or evaluation.
- Strengthen accountability and trust between institutions, trainers, and learners.

The session is structured into **45 minutes** of focused discussion on course review and QA, followed by a **10-minute Q&A and reflection segment** to address questions from participants about the entire session. Urgent remarks may also be raised in the live chat throughout.

Topic 4 closes the learning loop: from planning and delivery to **evaluation and assurance**, ensuring that courses not only meet expectations but also continuously improve in relevance, quality, and learner impact.



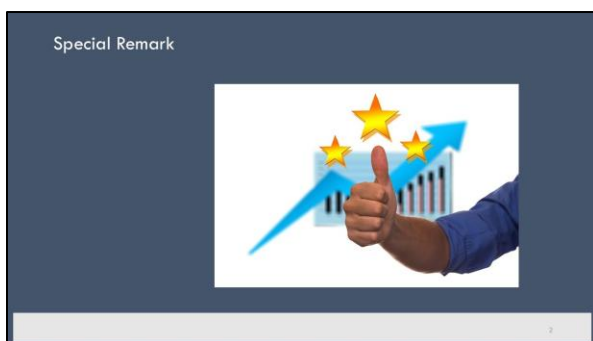
Feedback Survey (Slide 2)

At the beginning of the final topic, participants are kindly reminded to complete the **EFCA Feedback Survey** as soon as possible after the event. The survey plays a crucial role in the quality assurance cycle: it not only allows participants to share their impressions and suggestions but also provides EFCA with the data needed to refine and improve future sessions.

The purpose of the feedback survey is twofold:

1. **Optimising existing material** – Insights from participants will help identify which parts of the content were clear, engaging, and relevant, and where adjustments might be needed.
2. **Generating material for Session 2** – The results directly inform the planning and design of the next awareness session, ensuring that participant needs and expectations are reflected in the new material.

By taking a few minutes to complete the survey, participants actively contribute to the continuous improvement of EFCA’s training activities. This feedback loop is a practical example of how quality assurance works in real time: listening to learners, adapting the content, and aligning future sessions more closely with the needs of Member States and agencies.

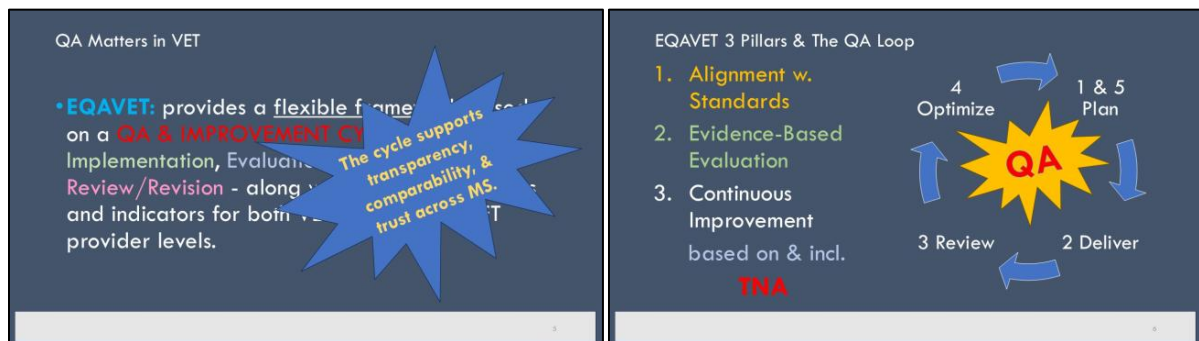


Story to Clarify the Choice of Learning and Assessment Methods (Slides 5, 6)

Imagine trying to learn swimming from a book. You could read page after page about technique, breathing, and arm movements—but unless you get into the water, you won’t truly know how to swim. The learning strategy here is clear: only practice in the real environment leads to mastery.

The same principle applies to assessing professional skills. Consider firearms training: it would be meaningless to evaluate firing competence through a multiple-choice questionnaire. To test whether someone can handle a weapon safely and accurately, the assessment must involve actual practice at the shooting range.

These examples highlight a simple truth: especially in adult learning choosing the right method matters. Learning strategies must fit the nature of the skill to be acquired, and assessment strategies must authentically measure what learners are expected to demonstrate. Reading, discussing, or testing may work for some outcomes, but for practical, operational skills, nothing replaces practice and performance in real-world conditions.



From Former Practices to Modern QA in VET (Slides 3-7)

In the past, curriculum development in vocational training often followed a **content-driven approach**. Trainers or institutions collected existing materials, combined them into a course package, and then delivered the content in a largely lecture-based style. While this method ensured that learners received a wealth of information, it was often unstructured, lacked outcome orientation, and provided little assurance that learners were achieving the necessary competences for their roles. The result could be compared to mixing various ingredients into a blender without carefully selecting or balancing them—producing a course that was “delivered” but not always effective or digestible for learners.

Today, **Quality Assurance (QA)** in Vocational Education and Training (VET) has shifted towards an **outcome-oriented, evidence-based, and learner-centered model**. QA ensures that training programmes do not merely transmit knowledge but actively build **competences**—the knowledge, skills, and responsibility/autonomy that learners must demonstrate in practice.

Key characteristics of modern QA in VET include:

- **Outcome orientation:** The central question is no longer “*What did we teach?*” but “*What did the learners achieve?*”. Training is judged by its ability to deliver measurable learning outcomes.

- **Constructive alignment:** Learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessments must be interconnected. If outcomes demand practical skills, methods and assessments must allow learners to practice and demonstrate those skills.
- **Evidence-based evaluation:** QA requires data. Completion rates, learner feedback, and employability indicators are collected and analysed to measure effectiveness.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** Effective QA is participatory. Trainers, learners, employers, and institutions all contribute perspectives to ensure relevance and quality.
- **Continuous improvement:** QA is not a one-off inspection but a loop that constantly feeds back into course design and delivery.

To guide this process across Europe, the **European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)** framework was introduced by the European Commission. EQAVET is not about control but about **supporting providers and systems to improve relevance, consistency, and learner outcomes**. It provides a **flexible framework** structured around a **continuous improvement cycle**:

1. **Planning** – Define aims, expected learning outcomes, and training structures.
2. **Implementation** – Deliver the course using methods aligned with outcomes.
3. **Evaluation** – Collect data, feedback, and assessment results to measure achievement.
4. **Review and Revision** – Use findings to refine, update, and improve.

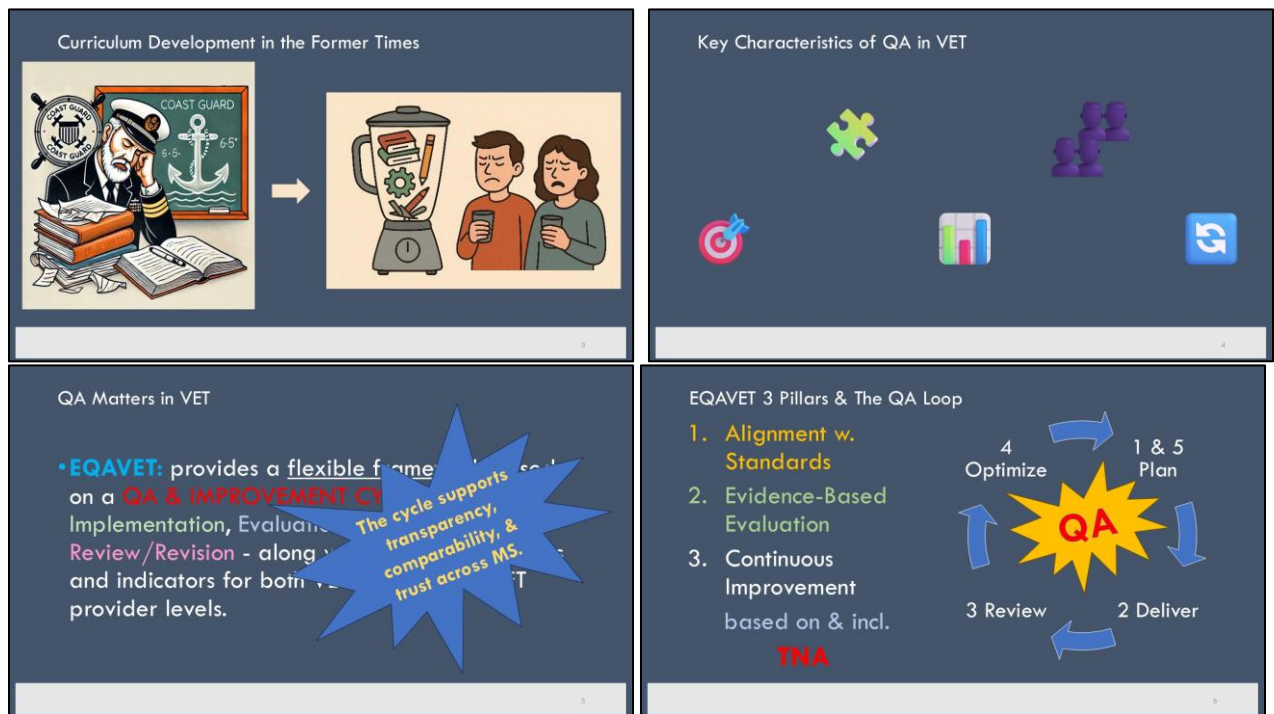
This cycle enhances **transparency, comparability, and trust** between Member States, ensuring that learners in one country are recognised as having acquired competences that are valid and relevant across the EU.

Within this framework, **three pillars** are particularly relevant for course reviews:

1. **Alignment with standards** – Learning outcomes must be clearly formulated, measurable, and aligned with frameworks like the SQFCGF and EQF.
2. **Evidence-based evaluation** – Learner feedback, trainer reflections, and assessment results are systematically collected and analysed.
3. **Continuous improvement** – Course reviews should highlight gaps, update materials, and ensure that training evolves with new operational requirements.

A vital element of continuous improvement is the integration of **Training Needs Analysis (TNA)**. By comparing course content with organisational needs, operational demands, and updated learner profiles, TNA helps ensure that courses remain **fit for purpose**. Without this link, training risks becoming outdated, detached from reality, or misaligned with the competencies that coast guard staff actually require.

QA in VET today is about **closing the loop**: from planning and delivery to evaluation and continuous revision. This process ensures that training is not static but remains relevant, effective, and strategically aligned with both organisational priorities and European standards.



QA Principles from ESG 2015 (Slide 7)

The **European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG 2015)** were originally developed for higher education institutions across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). However, their influence extends well beyond universities, shaping vocational education and training (VET) through frameworks such as **EQAVET** and sectoral qualifications frameworks like the **SQFCGF**.

The ESG 2015 establish principles of both internal and external QA that are now widely recognised across Europe. Their relevance lies in ensuring that education is not just delivered but is systematically designed, monitored, and improved. The key principles include:

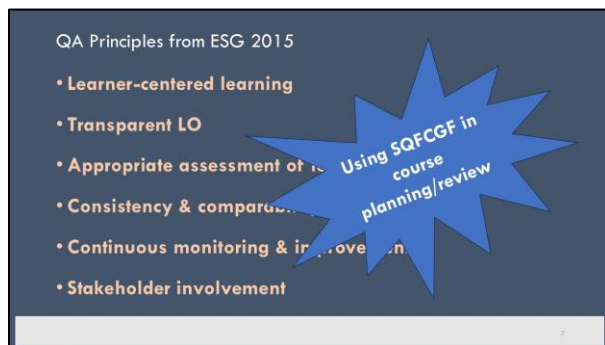
- **Learner-centred learning:** Courses must be organised around the needs of learners, rather than institutional routines or convenience.
- **Transparent learning outcomes:** It must be clear what learners are expected to know, understand, and be able to do.
- **Appropriate assessment of learning:** Assessment methods must genuinely measure the intended outcomes, not just recall of facts.
- **Consistency and comparability:** Qualifications should be recognised and trusted across institutions and countries.

- **Continuous monitoring and improvement:** QA is understood as a cycle of review and enhancement, not a one-off inspection.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** Learners, trainers, employers, and institutional leaders all need to be actively included in QA processes.

The **SQFCGF** supports these ESG principles in very practical ways:

- By **structuring learning outcomes across EQF levels 4–7**, it ensures transparency and comparability.
- By embedding **constructive alignment** (linking outcomes, methods, and assessments), it guarantees valid and appropriate assessment.
- Through the use of **course descriptors and course review tools**, it fosters continuous monitoring and evidence-based improvement.
- As a **shared European framework**, it reinforces trust, credibility, and recognition of training programmes across Member States.

When Coast Guard organisations apply the SQFCGF in course planning or review, they not only strengthen their own curricula but also align themselves with **European QA standards**. This situates their training within a recognised European quality culture, supporting both internal improvement and external recognition.



The Role of the SQFCGF in Strengthening QA (Slides 8-10)

The **Sectoral Qualification Framework for Coast Guard Functions (SQFCGF)** is not only a framework for structuring learning outcomes but also a powerful tool for **supporting Quality Assurance (QA)** in vocational education and training. By providing clarity, comparability, and operational relevance, it ensures that training is not only designed consistently but also recognised and trusted across different Member States.

The SQFCGF strengthens QA in four main ways:

1. Clear Learning Outcomes (EQF Levels 4–7)

- The SQFCGF defines learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and responsibility/autonomy, linked directly to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).
- These outcomes act as **benchmarks of quality**, ensuring that courses are measurable, transparent, and aligned with sector-specific needs.

2. Structured Course Descriptors

- The framework provides templates for course design, guiding trainers and institutions in structuring aims, methods, learning phases, and assessments.
- This ensures systematic design and facilitates course review, making training less dependent on individual preference and more aligned with shared standards.

3. Comparability and Transparency

- By embedding SQFCGF descriptors, qualifications become comparable across agencies and countries.
- This transparency strengthens trust between Member States and facilitates mobility of coast guard personnel.

4. Reference for Accreditation and Peer Review

- The SQFCGF serves as a quality reference point, useful in formal accreditation processes as well as in peer reviews and internal evaluations.
- It provides a common language for discussing course quality, ensuring consistency across institutions.

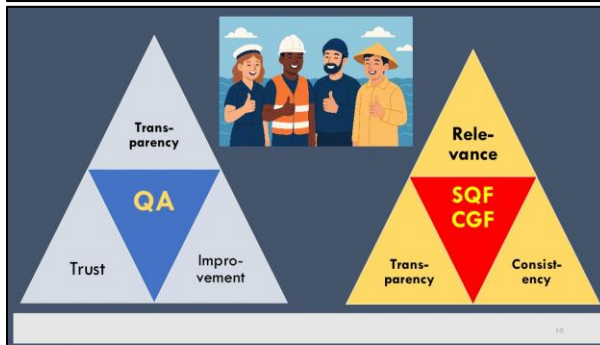
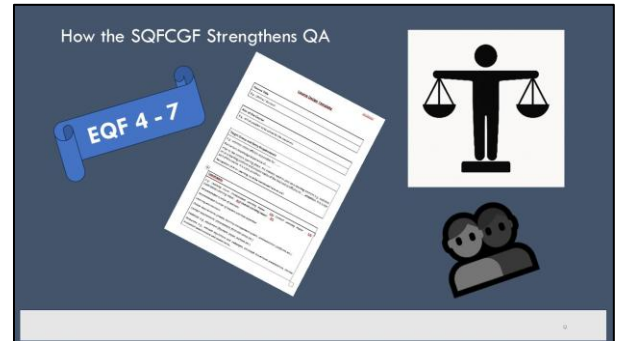
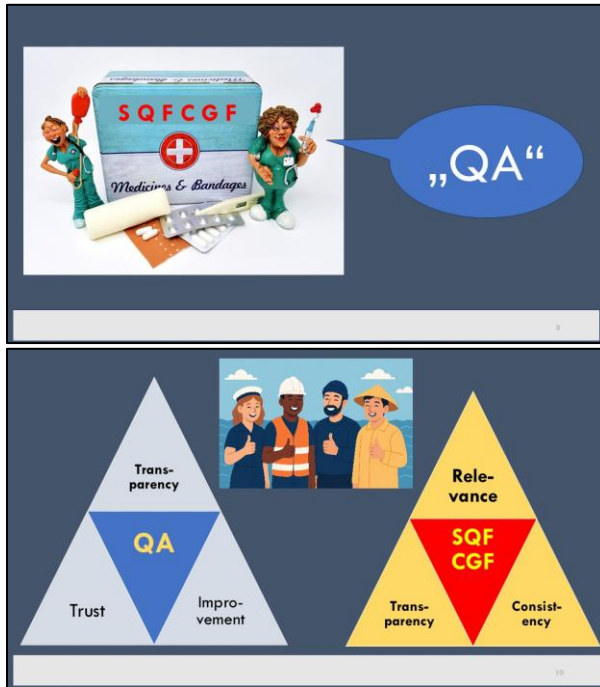
In practical terms, this means that **vague or generic learning outcomes** (e.g., *“Participants will know everything about port security equipment”*) can be transformed into **precise and measurable outcomes** with SQFCGF guidance (e.g., *“Operate X-ray scanning equipment to detect prohibited items and accurately interpret scan results, applying international and national maritime port security regulations”*). This transformation highlights the operational relevance and clarity that the framework brings to training.

Finally, it is important to underline that QA is **not about bureaucracy** or excessive paperwork. Instead, it is about building **trust, transparency, and improvement**. When institutions use the SQFCGF in course planning and review, their training becomes:

- **More relevant** – aligned with real operational needs.
- **More transparent** – with clearly formulated outcomes and assessments.

- **More consistent** – comparable across agencies and Member States.

In this way, the SQFCGF ensures that coast guard training is credible, future-oriented, and embedded in a recognised European quality culture.



Course Review as a Pillar of Quality Assurance (Slides 11-13)

A systematic course review is essential to ensure that training programmes in the Coast Guard sector are not only well-designed but also effective, relevant, and future-oriented. Too often, reviews are seen as administrative exercises, leading to despair rather than satisfaction. In reality, however, course review is the key to moving from frustration to confidence — providing a structured process that verifies alignment with frameworks, integrates feedback, and adapts training to evolving operational demands.

Course review goes beyond asking whether a course “went well.” It requires evidence-based reflection, drawing on learner evaluations, trainer observations, assessment data, and updated Training Needs Analysis (TNA). This process ensures that training is not static but evolves in line with new technologies, regulatory frameworks, and mission requirements. In this sense, course review is not a burden but a powerful mechanism to guarantee relevance, comparability, and long-term quality.

The Role of Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

TNA usually takes place before course design, but its role extends into the review stage. By systematically comparing existing course content with current operational and institutional needs, TNA provides a reality check:

1. **Relevance to Needs** – Does the course still address the real tasks and challenges that learners face in their roles?
2. **Detection of Shifts** – Have learner profiles, job functions, or sector priorities changed since the course was last delivered?
3. **Future in Focus** – How can the course anticipate emerging demands, ensuring that training prepares staff not just for today but also for tomorrow?

Integrating TNA into course review closes the loop between design and delivery, ensuring that training remains “fit-for-purpose” and strategically aligned with organizational goals. It transforms the review process from a backward-looking exercise into a forward-looking one.

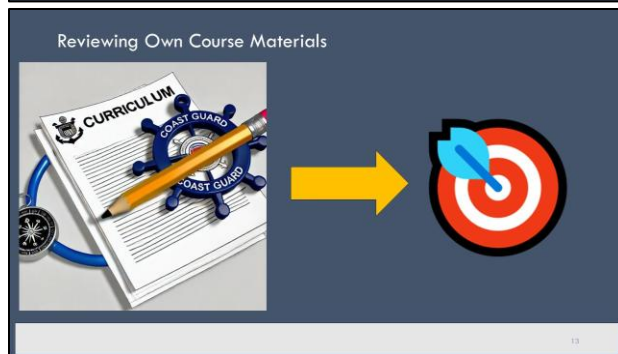
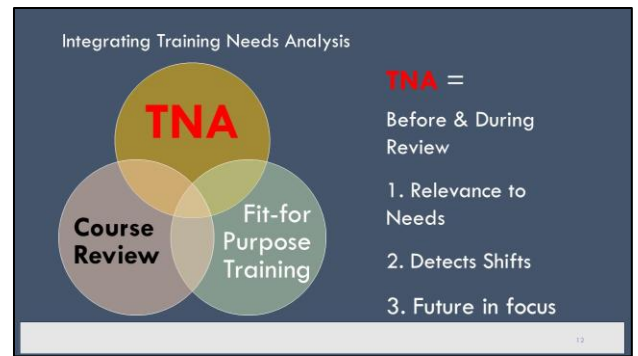
Purpose and Outcomes of Course Review

The main purpose of course review is to verify **alignment with SQFCGF and QA principles**, particularly transparency, relevance, and comparability. By checking whether learning outcomes are clearly measurable, whether assessments are aligned, and whether course content remains operationally valid, institutions strengthen their curricula and ensure recognition across Member States.

The outcomes of a robust course review process include:

- **Stronger curricula** – courses that are pedagogically sound, transparent, and learner-centered.
- **Easier recognition** – training that is comparable across national and institutional contexts, facilitating mobility and cooperation.
- **Improved learner experience** – participants gain confidence that their training is meaningful, relevant, and directly linked to job competences.
- **Optimized competence development** – learners are better equipped to achieve operational excellence in Coast Guard functions.

Top Outcome: *Quality goes up!* — course review, when systematically applied, elevates the standard of training, strengthens institutional credibility, and contributes to a shared European quality culture.



Practical Review Hints (Slide 14)

When reviewing a course descriptor, the focus should be on whether the key elements — aims, learning outcomes, and assessments — are coherent, measurable, and relevant to the operational context. A course review is not simply about polishing documents; it is about ensuring that what is written truly translates into learning that equips participants with the competences needed in practice. Several checkpoints can guide this process:

1. Learning Outcomes (LOs)

LOs must be formulated with precision. Using clear, active verbs from **Bloom's Taxonomy** ensures that outcomes are observable and measurable rather than vague statements. Moreover, they must match the correct **EQF/SQF level**, avoiding the mistake of mixing outcomes of different levels within the same course. Well-written outcomes should always enable assessors and learners alike to see whether competence has truly been achieved.

2. Course Aim vs. Learning Outcomes

The aim of the course provides an overall orientation — what the course intends to achieve in broad terms. LOs, however, must break this aim down into specific, assessable competences. A frequent issue arises when course aims and LOs overlap or remain too general. In such cases, the clarity and purpose of the course are weakened. A strong review ensures that course aims give direction while LOs provide concrete evidence of competence acquisition.

3. Assessment Alignment

A fundamental principle of constructive alignment is that assessments must match the intended LOs. For example, a knowledge-based outcome can appropriately be tested through a written exam, but a skills-based outcome requires performance assessment, simulation, or practice. If assessment methods do not align with the stated outcomes, the course risks measuring the wrong things — creating misalignment between teaching, learning, and evaluation.

4. Context and Relevance

LOs must remain meaningful in the present operational environment. Terminology, scope, and focus should reflect current realities — for instance, shifting from outdated terms such as “vessel boarding” to more accurate phrases like “boarding operation in mixed environments.” This ensures that training remains credible, relevant, and in touch with real-world practices and challenges faced by Coast Guard officers.

5. Consistency

Internal coherence is critical: all LOs within a course should reflect a consistent level of complexity and difficulty. It is problematic, for example, to have one LO at EQF Level 4 while another is set at EQF Level 6 within the same training. In addition, courses must consistently reflect the training needs of the organisation, aligning with both sectoral standards and institutional priorities.

By systematically checking these aspects, course reviewers can ensure that descriptors are more than administrative documents — they become powerful tools for delivering training that is transparent, comparable, and above all effective in preparing learners for their duties.



Simulation of a Learning Outcome (LO) Review (Slides 15-18)

This shows how SQFCGF descriptors act as a “repair kit” for weak or vague outcomes. By replacing unclear intentions with precise, measurable, and context-relevant outcomes, trainers ensure constructive alignment, valid assessment design, and a direct link to sectoral competence standards. Ultimately, this process strengthens both the quality and credibility of training programmes.

A practical example of quality assurance in course review is the examination and “repair” of a poorly formulated learning outcome.

The example LO states: “*Participants will know everything about the equipment used in port security.*”

At first glance, this might seem acceptable, but a closer review reveals several critical flaws:

- **Unclear verbs:** “know everything” is vague and non-measurable. It does not specify what actions learners should be able to perform.
- **Unrealistic scope:** “everything” is far too broad; no course can deliver complete knowledge of a subject.
- **No reference to level:** It does not indicate the degree of complexity or responsibility, making it impossible to align with EQF/SQFCGF levels.
- **Lack of assessability:** Trainers cannot design valid assessments for such an outcome, as there is no observable evidence of achievement.
- **Misalignment:** It risks creating a disconnect between the course aim, activities, and assessments.

This highlights the importance of precise LO formulation, not only for clarity but also for ensuring constructive alignment with methods, assessments, and frameworks.

The SQFCGF is there to be used for Guidance. It provides structured descriptors that help correct vague or unrealistic outcomes. Within the Learning Area “*Tools and Equipment*” for Maritime Ship and Port Security, the framework specifies what learners should achieve at different EQF levels:

- **Level 4:** Use *basic* tools and equipment relevant to maritime ship and port security.
- **Level 5:** Use a *broad range* of tools and equipment relevant to the domain.
- **Level 6:** *Systematically evaluate* existing tools and equipment and *identify potential new technologies*.
- **Level 7:** *Strategically evaluate and integrate* tools, equipment, and technologies into port security operations.

This progression ensures that LOs are tied to measurable complexity and autonomy, offering trainers clear guidance.

The vague LO can be transformed into a precise, measurable one aligned with Level 5 of the SQFCGF.

Revised LO:

“Operate X-ray scanning equipment to detect prohibited items and accurately interpret scan results, applying international and national maritime port security regulations.”

This revised outcome demonstrates several strengths:

- **Active, measurable verbs:** Operate, interpret, apply clearly describe observable learner actions.
- **Direct operational relevance:** It links directly to critical port security tasks.
- **Assessability:** Trainers can design practical tests (operating equipment), scenarios (interpreting scans), and compliance checks (applying regulations).
- **Contextual flexibility:** The outcome is not tied to one specific machine but remains applicable to a variety of operational environments.
- **Alignment with Level 5:** It reflects the learner’s ability to independently use a broad range of equipment with responsibility.

The revised LO also illustrates best practice in LO design when analyzed against key quality dimensions:

- **Active Verb:** “Operate, interpret, apply” – concrete and measurable.
- **LO Type:** Skills – practical and applicable, supported by knowledge of regulations.
- **Topic Area:** Maritime ship and port security – tools and equipment.
- **Complexity of Learning:** EQF/SQFCGF Level 5 – appropriate breadth and autonomy.
- **Scope/Context:** Use of X-ray scanners for prohibited items in compliance with international and national maritime regulations.

Simulation of a LO Review



“Participants will know everything about the equipment used in port security.”

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From Maritime Ship and Port Security:

Learning Area: Tools and equipment

Skill Level 4: Use basic tools and equipment relevant to maritime ship and port security

Skill Level 5: Use a broad range of tools and equipment relevant to maritime ship and port security

Skill Level 6: Systematically evaluate existing tools and equipment used for maritime ship and port security activities and identify potential new tools, equipment and technology

Skill Level 7: Strategically evaluate and integrate new tools, equipment and technologies for maritime ship and port security activities

14

Repair with SQFCGF (Level 5 – Tools & Equipment)



“Participants will know everything about the equipment used in port security.”

“Use a broad range of tools and equipment relevant to maritime ship and port security.”

“Operate X-ray scanning equipment to detect prohibited items and accurately interpret scan results, applying international and national maritime port security regulations.”

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Repair with SQFCGF (Level 5 – Tools & Equipment)



“Operate X-ray scanning equipment to detect prohibited items and accurately interpret scan results, applying international and national maritime port security regulations.”

Active Verb

LO Type

Topic Area

Complexity of Learning

Scope or Context

16

Course Review – Some Elements to Check (Slide 19)

A course review is not a bureaucratic formality but a systematic structured process that ensures training programmes remain relevant, effective, and aligned with sectoral and European quality standards. To make this process transparent and practical, EFCA, EMSA, and Frontex provide a **Course Review Checklist** as a handout for trainers, curriculum developers, and quality assurance officers. This checklist is meant to function as a guide for systematically assessing all key elements of a course descriptor. Ultimately, this structured approach is meant to strengthen *trust, comparability, and transparency* across Member States and organisations.

Key Elements to Check

1. Learning Outcomes (Cross Referencing)

- Do they use *clear, active verbs* based on Bloom’s Taxonomy?
- Are they linked to the *correct EQF/SQFCGF level*?
- Are they *observable and measurable* in practice?

2. Course Aim vs. Learning Outcomes (Cross Referencing)

- Is the *course aim* distinct and not overly broad?
- Do the learning outcomes truly reflect the *intended competences*?

3. Assessment Alignment (Cross Referencing)

- Do assessment methods *match* the learning outcomes?
- Example: knowledge outcomes → written test; skills outcomes → simulation or exercise.

4. Context & Relevance

- Are the outcomes and content still relevant to *current operational needs*?
- Has terminology been updated to reflect changes in practice (e.g., “boarding operations in mixed environments” instead of “vessel boarding”)?

5. Consistency & Training Needs

- Is there a *consistent level of complexity* across all outcomes (avoiding a mix of EQF 4 and EQF 6 outcomes in the same course)?
- Is the training tailored to the *specific national or organisational needs* of the audience?

6. Learning Resources & Materials

- Are training materials *high-quality, up-to-date, and accessible*?
- Do they reflect current regulations, technology, and operational standards?

7. Quality Assurance & Continuous Improvement

- Is there a *feedback mechanism* in place to gather learner and trainer perspectives?
- Are courses *regularly updated* based on this evidence?

8. Transfer & Impact Evaluation

- Does the course ensure that *learning is transferred to the workplace*?
- Are there processes to evaluate the long-term impact of the training on performance?

By applying this checklist, trainers and curriculum developers can systematically verify that courses meet both operational demands and quality assurance principles. The process helps to close the loop between course design, delivery, and review, ensuring that training is not only well-structured but also continuously improved. Ultimately, this structured approach strengthens *trust, comparability, and transparency* across Member States and organisations.



Key Takeaways & Closing (Slides 20-21)

Course review should never be seen as a mere administrative burden. Instead, it is a practical and strategic quality assurance (QA) tool that ensures training remains meaningful, aligned with operational needs, and consistent with European-level standards. By systematically checking aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessments against recognised frameworks, course review guarantees that Coast Guard training is not only compliant but also future-oriented.

The **SQFCGF** provides the structure needed for this process: it anchors outcomes at EQF levels 4–7, strengthens transparency and comparability, and links training to a shared European reference point. When combined with QA frameworks such as **EQAVET** and **ESG 2015**, it creates a culture of trust and continuous improvement across Member States.

To support this process, EFCA, EMSA, and Frontex have provided a **Course Review Checklist** — a practical tool that enables trainers, curriculum developers, and QA officers to apply quality principles step by step. Participants are encouraged to use this checklist in their own institutions to identify strengths, detect gaps, and reinforce alignment with the SQFCGF.

The outcome is straightforward but powerful: **better learning**. Courses become more learner-centred, relevant, transparent, and consistent, ensuring that training outcomes truly match the competences required for modern Coast Guard functions.

The session concludes with a joint reflection and an invitation for participants to share questions or remarks. This dialogue provides space to clarify points, highlight practical examples, and exchange experiences.

Finally, EFCA delivers the **closing remarks**, underlining the importance of collective ownership of QA processes, the role of the SQFCGF in ensuring comparability and trust across Europe, and the next steps for preparing Session 2.

By ending on dialogue and reflection, the session reinforces its central message: **quality assurance is not a one-off check, but a shared responsibility that strengthens both national training systems and European cooperation.**

Ends

Course Review with SQFCGF – Key Takeaways	Questions & Remarks
 <u>Course review is a QA tool:</u> ensures aims, outcomes, assessments, and context align. <u>SQFCGF provides structure:</u> levels 4–7, transparency, and comparability across MS. <u>Review process is practical:</u> check verbs, levels, assessment, relevance, & consistency. <u>Result = better learning:</u> learner-centered, relevant, and quality-assured training.	 