



# BLANTYRE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

## BIU QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK POLICY

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Private Bag 98, Blantyre, Malawi  
Tel: +265 1 831516 | Fax: +265 1 831514  
Email: [info@biu.ac.mw](mailto:info@biu.ac.mw)  
Website: [www.biu.ac.mw](http://www.biu.ac.mw)



## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Principles underpinning the BIUQF</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Needs based</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Focused outcomes</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Flexibility</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Trust and accountability</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Innovation</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Lifelong learning</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Qualification types</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Review of qualifications</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Award of the qualification</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Record keeping</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Purpose</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Entry Requirements</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Exemption Policy</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Degree Course Duration</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Mode of Delivery</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Ability (developing knowledge)</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Method of Assessment</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Master's Degree</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Entry Requirements</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Duration</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Purpose</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Outcomes</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Ability (developing knowledge)</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Relationship with other qualifications</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Doctoral Degree</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Entry Requirements</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Duration</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Knowledge and understanding</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Ability (developing knowledge)</b> .....	<b>10</b>

## Introduction

The Blantyre International University Qualifications Framework (BIUQF) serves as a comprehensive repository of information delineating the expected knowledge and competencies of individuals holding academic qualifications. Furthermore, it provides insights into the avenues for further education and opportunities to which a particular qualification paves the way. The BIUQF is meticulously designed to optimize the recognition of educational accomplishments and their contributions to the economic, social, and cultural prosperity of Malawi. In particular, the BIUQF:

Conveys the skills, knowledge, and attributes acquired by graduates upon the completion of a qualification.

Articulates the development of integrated and coherent qualifications that are tailored to meet the demands of individuals, groups, industries, and the community.

Facilitates and supports the provision of high-quality educational pathways.

Bolsters confidence in the quality and international comparability of Blantyre International University qualifications.

Embodies a sense of value for investment, sustainability, and resilience.

## Principles Underpinning the BIUQF

BIU qualifications are founded on principles of necessity, outcomes, flexibility, and innovation. This design aims to establish a streamlined structure for qualifications and programs, pinpointing the fundamental skills and attributes that graduates require to thrive across a wide array of contexts. Specifically, the following principles underpin the design of BIU qualifications:

### Needs-Based

The relevance and value of a qualification are hinged on its alignment with the workforce and skill requirements of individuals, learner groups, employers, industries, and communities. Substantiating and demonstrating these workforce and skill prerequisites necessitates the presentation of concrete evidence. The qualification also takes into account the cultural and social aspirations of Malawians or other pertinent communities where appropriate.

### Evaluative Quality Assurance

An evaluative approach to quality assurance is central to BIUQF's management of qualifications and programs, emphasizing the attainment of outcomes that resonate with the needs and aspirations of key stakeholders, especially learners. It underscores the adaptability of qualifications across diverse settings, including workplaces and educational institutions, to cater to learners' educational, professional, and cultural requirements and aspirations. This may encompass the formal or informal accreditation of learning towards the qualification, including practicums, teaching practice, industrial attachments, and business experiences, among others.

### Trust and Accountability

Qualifications are developed through collaborative efforts with a diverse range of stakeholders



in an environment characterized by mutual trust and accountability. The relationships between these parties, be it government agencies or tertiary education institutions, are predicated on effective communication and collaboration. All stakeholders can rely on the integrity of the processes used and the information provided.

### **Focused Outcomes**

Clear specifications of outcomes serve to elucidate the qualification's purpose, facilitate comparisons with other qualifications (both at the national and international levels), and enhance the international portability of the qualification. These outcomes explicitly articulate what graduates can “do, be, and know” upon completing the qualification, while also delineating pathways to further education, employment, and community contributions.

### **Flexibility**

Qualifications can be obtained in diverse settings, including workplaces, home study, and educational institutions. Programmes of study and industry training leading to qualifications enable learners to pursue them in ways most suitable to their educational, occupational, or cultural needs and aspirations. This may encompass the accreditation of formally or informally acquired learning towards the qualification, such as practicums, teaching practice, industrial attachments, business experiences, and more.

### **Innovation**

BIU offers a broad spectrum of degree programs, including less conventional ones like Actuarial Science, Early Childhood Development, and Banking and Finance, fostering a culture of innovation in its offerings.

### **Lifelong Learning**

Qualifications acknowledge learning obtained through various avenues, at any stage of an individual's life, in both part-time and full-time study, across diverse settings and modalities, such as on-the-job, educational institutions, electronic platforms, online, through distance education, or a combination thereof. BIU refrains from imposing limitations on how or where people can engage in learning.

### **Dynamic Nature of the BIUQF**

The BIU Qualifications Framework is designed to evolve continuously, ensuring its effectiveness, usability, and contemporaneity.

### **Qualification Types**

All quality-assured qualifications on the BIUQF fit into specific qualification types, each defined by a set of agreed-upon criteria, including the qualification's level. Detailed definitions of these qualification types are available later in this document.

### **Review of Qualifications**

Periodic reviews of qualifications on the BIUQF are conducted to ensure their continued relevance and utility, meeting the evolving needs of learners, industry, and stakeholders for which they were initially developed. The review process allows qualification developers



and stakeholders to reassess the qualification’s necessity and its alignment with its intended purpose. Typically, reviews are completed within a span of no longer than five years following the preceding review. Factors influencing the review period include the rate of industry changes and the qualification’s scope.

### Award of the Qualification

As a tertiary education institution, BIU is empowered to confer qualifications listed in the BIUQF. Each learner can be awarded an individual qualification only once. If additional learning, such as strands, is pursued in connection with the qualification, this will be documented on the learner’s academic record or record of achievement. The certificate issued bears the qualification title, along with the date of issuance.

### Record Keeping

BIU maintains records of learner progress and program completion, documenting the date of qualification award and certificate issuance.

### Bachelor’s Degree

#### Purpose

A bachelor’s degree is a form of higher education that offers academic study leading to qualifications like a BA or BSc. This undergraduate degree is designed to equip learners with a comprehensive understanding of a subject, typically requiring four years of full-time study. Bachelor’s degrees with honors extend this duration to five years. A Bachelor’s Degree serves as a systematic and coherent introduction to a recognized major subject, instilling problem-solving abilities and fundamental self-directed work and learning techniques.

A Bachelor’s Degree consists of at least one sequential study program, progressively building foundational knowledge to serve as a basis for postgraduate study and professional practice.

### Entry Requirements

Admission into the Bachelor’s program involves a selective screening process based on academic achievements at the secondary school level. The table below illustrates the standards employed in evaluating credentials for admission at BIU.

Examination	Minimum Requirement
Malawi Certificate of Secondary Education (MCSE ) or IGCSE/GCSE	A full certificate with at least SIX credit passes
A-Level	One ‘A’ level pass
IB	One upper level pass
Mature Entry	Work or Business Experience of three years or more



## Exemption Policy

Students may be exempted from certain levels or courses in approved cases if they have successfully completed equivalent university-level courses elsewhere. However, they must complete at least 50% of the program at Blantyre International University (BIU).

Specifically, the following persons may apply for a 50% exemption:

- a) A person who has obtained a degree of this type from another university.
- b) A person who has obtained a three-year Diploma from a recognised institution of higher learning.

Where a person does not qualify to apply for a 50% exemption, the academic transcripts will be examined and placement determined by the Academic Committee.

## Degree Course Duration

The duration of BIU's first-degree courses is typically four years. Students may be exempted from certain levels or courses in approved cases, but they must complete at least 50% of the program at BIU.

## Mode of Delivery

Courses at BIU are delivered through various methods, including:

- Print media
- Tutorials
- Lectures
- Group discussions
- Videos/DVDs
- Audio cassettes

## Knowledge and Understanding

**Extending knowledge:** Graduates' knowledge and understanding build on the level of the higher education entrance qualification and extend significantly beyond this.

Graduates have proven their broad and integrated knowledge and understanding of the scientific principles of their field of learning.

**Consolidating knowledge:** Graduates have a critical understanding of the key theories, principles and methods of their degree programme and are able to consolidate their knowledge vertically, horizontally and laterally. Their knowledge and understanding corresponds with the state of specialist literature, but should, at the same time, include some consolidated areas of knowledge of the current state of research in their field of learning

### Ability (developing knowledge)

At the completion of the degree graduates will have acquired the following competences:

**Instrumental competence:** - They can also apply their knowledge and understanding as well as their problem-solving skills to new and unfamiliar situations that lie in a broad or multidisciplinary context relating to their academic subject.

**Systemic competences:** - They can integrate knowledge and handle complexity; - They can make scientifically-founded decisions and draw conclusions, also on the basis of incomplete or limited information, and in so doing can consider social, scientific and ethical insights that also derive from the application of their knowledge and their decisions; - They can independently acquire new knowledge and ability; - They can carry out independent scientific or applied research projects in a largely self-directed and/or autonomous manner.

Graduates have acquired the following competences:

**Instrumental competence:** - They can apply their knowledge and understanding to their occupational or professional context and can develop and advance solutions to problems and arguments in their subject area.

**Systemic competences:** - They can collect, assess and interpret relevant information, in particular on their degree programme; - They can draw scientifically-founded conclusions that consider social, scientific and ethical insights; - They can independently organise advanced learning processes.

**Communicative competences:** - They can formulate specialised positions and solutions to problems and can defend these through argument;

They can discuss information, ideas, problems and solutions with specialists and non-specialists; They can take on responsibility in a team

### Method of Assessment

Students must submit two assignments for each course attempted during a semester, and they are also required to sit for a 3-hour examination for each course. Examinations take place at the end of each semester.

### Master's Degree

#### Entry Requirements

To enter programs leading to a Master's qualification, students must have a Bachelor's Degree or equivalent from a recognized institution of higher learning. Admission is based on an evaluation of the applicant's ability to undertake postgraduate study in a specialist field.

#### Duration

The duration of the Master's degree is 18 months, with an optional 6-month extension for completing the dissertation.



## Purpose

Master's degrees qualify individuals to apply advanced knowledge in various contexts for research, further learning, professional practice, and scholarship. They are typically built upon Bachelor's Degrees or extensive professional experience.

## Outcomes

A graduate of a Master's Degree will be able to:

- show evidence of advanced knowledge about a specialist field of enquiry or professional practice
- demonstrate mastery of sophisticated theoretical subject matter
- evaluate critically the findings and discussions in the literature
- research, analyse and argue from evidence
- work independently and apply knowledge to new situations
- engage in rigorous intellectual analysis, criticism and problem-solving.
- demonstrate a high order of skill in the planning, execution and completion of a piece of original research or creative scholarly work
- apply such skills learned during the study programme to new situations.

The research should be completed to internationally recognised standards and demonstrate that the graduate has a capacity for independent thinking.

## Knowledge and understanding

**Extending knowledge:** Master's graduates have a proven level of knowledge and understanding that normally builds on the Bachelor's level and significantly consolidates or extends this. They are able to define and interpret the special features, limits, terminologies and schools of thought in their field of learning.

**Consolidating knowledge:** Their knowledge and understanding form the basis for the development and/or application of independent ideas. This may be more practice-oriented or more research oriented. They have a broad, detailed and critical understanding of the latest state of knowledge in one or more special areas.

## Ability (developing knowledge)

At the completion of the degree graduates will have acquired the following competences:

**Instrumental competence:** They can apply their knowledge and understanding as well as their problem-solving skills to new and unfamiliar situations that lie in a broad or multidisciplinary context relating to their academic subject.

**Systemic competences:** They can integrate knowledge and handle complexity;

They can make scientifically-founded decisions and draw conclusions on the basis of

incomplete or limited information, and in so doing can consider social, scientific and ethical insights that also derive from the application of their knowledge and their decisions; they can independently acquire new knowledge and ability; they can carry out independent scientific or applied research projects in a largely self-directed and/or autonomous manner.

### **Relationship with other qualifications**

A person who holds a Master's Degree achieved to an appropriate standard, that includes a research component, may be considered for admission to a programme of advanced study and/or original research leading to a Doctoral Degree.

### **Doctoral Degree**

The Doctoral Degree is a research degree whereby the individual becomes an increasingly independent scholar who makes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge.

It is normally the culmination of study which begins at the bachelor level and reaches a stage beyond the masters. The development takes place under the guidance of recognised experts in the field of study and under circumstances that allow the individual access to appropriate research resources.

The contribution to knowledge is judged by independent experts in the discipline. The hallmark is the individual's capacity for substantial research activity as attested by his/her work as demonstrated by a submitted dissertation.

The major component of all doctorates is original research that culminates in a dissertation.

Coursework of a standard more advanced than that of a Master's degree form a part of a coherent programme with the research work.

### **Entry Requirements:**

Master's degree awarded by a recognised university

Additional admission requirements are set by the concerned faculty.

### **Duration**

Duration of the Doctoral Degree is three years. However, a student may take an additional one year to complete the dissertation.

### **Knowledge and understanding**

Extending knowledge: Doctoral graduates have a systematic understanding of their research field and have mastered the skills and methods used in research in their field

They have a comprehensive knowledge of the relevant literature.

Consolidating knowledge: By presenting a scientific paper or thesis they have made an independent contribution to research that is capable of extending the borders of knowledge and can stand up to national or international review and examination by experts and specialists in the field.



### Ability (developing knowledge)

**Extending knowledge:** At the completion of the Doctoral degree graduates shall have a systematic understanding of their research field and shall have mastered the skills and methods used in research in their field.

They shall have comprehensive knowledge of the relevant literature.

By the end of the study programme the Doctoral graduates will have acquired the following competences:

**Instrumental competence:** They can independently design and carry out significant research projects with scientific integrity.

**Systemic competences:** They can independently identify scientific questions and issues; they can critically analyse, develop and synthesise new and complex ideas; they can advance the social, scientific and/or cultural progress of a knowledge society in an academic or non-academic professional environment.

**Communicative competences:** They can discuss findings and results from their special fields with colleagues, and can communicate these to an academic public as well as to the general public

They can lead a team.