

Erasmus+ Project: Developing Professional Qualifications and Training for European Behaviour Analysts



http://euroba.org/

Intellectual Output 1: Referencing EuroBA Competences to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

EuroBA project partners.





















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Project summary

This project is the result of cooperation between international partners from the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Ireland, Greece, Sweden, and Italy. The project benefitted from a Professional Advisory Group (PAG) that included a further 16 European countries to ensure that the standards and competences developed in the project are acceptable to as many European countries as possible.

The overall objectives of the project were to facilitate transparency and recognition of qualifications for behaviour analysts in Europe. The profession of behaviour analyst started in the early 1970s in North America (Carr, 2011; Hughes & Shook, 2007). However, it is not formally recognised in the European Union (EU). For behaviour analysts to be able to practice within the EU with the same expectations surrounding knowledge, skills, and autonomy and responsibilities, it is necessary to create a clear range of competences for the profession.

The project has 6 Intellectual Outputs (IO). IO1 covers professional standards referenced to European Qualifications Framework (EQF). IO2 outlines the development of the behaviour analyst qualification in the context of the six partner National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF). IO3 provides a detailed glossary of terms in partner languages. IO4 outlines a competency framework for entry-level EuroBA-Technicians (EuroBA-T). IO5 is a competency framework for Master's-level EuroBA (EuroBA-M). IO6 is an online entry-level multimedia course in six partner languages.

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Introduction

This document presents the standardisation of the profession of behaviour analyst as it aligns with the European Qualification Framework (EQF). It is the result of the cooperation of the international partners coming from the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Ireland, Greece, Sweden, and Italy. Together they have created the outcomes from the Erasmus+ project entitled **Developing Professional Qualifications and Training for European Behaviour Analysts (2020-2023).**

The overall objectives of this project were to ensure transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications for behaviour analysts in Europe, tackling skills gaps, shortages, and mismatches and supporting persons with special needs and/or disabilities. The project will benefit educators and other professional staff through enhancing their skills and qualifications, thereby improving mobility and employability. This will be achieved through setting professional standards, referenced to EQF and six National Qualifications Framework (NQFs), creating competency frameworks (entry-level and masters level EuroBAs), and developing an online multilingual/cultural entry-level course.

The profession of behaviour analyst started in the early 1970s in North America. It is currently recognised in the United States by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), a US-based internationally recognised non-profit agency established in 1998 to regulate the certification and practices of behaviour analysts (BACB, 2019). Numerous states within the US have also recognised the profession of behaviour analyst and created local qualifications and licensure standards (Johnston et al., 2017).

While there is a recognised need for the profession beyond North America (Keenan et al., 2015), the behaviour analyst occupation is not formally recognised in the European Union (EU). Some countries, such as the Czech Republic, have worked to establish policies around the profession (Pancocha & Vadurova, 2022). However, this alone does not allow for the mobility of individuals within the profession throughout the EU. For behaviour analysts to be able to practice within the EU with the same expectations surrounding knowledge, skills, and responsibilities, it is necessary to create clear definitions or qualifications for the profession.

The aim of this outcome (IO1), in conjunction with outcomes IO4 and IO5, was to:

- > Briefly outline the profession of behaviour analyst.
- > Provide an overview of the knowledge, skills, and responsibilities that need to be demonstrated for an individual to potentially hold the title of behaviour analyst.
- > Support continuity in the profession across EU member states.
- ➤ Provide a description of the alignment of EuroBA components with the precedent already established by the EQF for other professions.
- ➤ Result in more competent behaviour analysts practicing within the region and support their ability to be recognised throughout the EU.

European Qualification Framework (EQF)

The EQF was launched in 2008. It created guidelines for matching the learning outcomes of a profession from one country to another. The eight-level framework serves as a translation tool to compare national qualifications across countries. As a translation tool, it does not replace the frameworks of individual nations, but rather allows for the greater mobility of professionals across countries by establishing guidelines that can be used to set the educational and practice parameters of a profession. Therefore, it can be used to facilitate the transfer of an academic or professional qualification from one country to another within the EU. It should be noted, though, that the EQF is not a database of professions, a credentialing system, or a list of specific competences. Furthermore, it does not introduce automatic recognition of qualifications between EU Member States. As a result, work needs to be done within individual countries to ensure that their qualification frameworks satisfy certain requirements for recognition (European Union, 2008; 2018).

European Union Qualifications and National Qualifications

Many countries already have their own qualification guidelines which specify competences that need to be demonstrated by a learner to allow them to practice within a recognised profession. These guidelines may include applications of knowledge to applied practice and mastery of degree coursework. The specifics of these guidelines vary from nation to nation. Therefore, to support standardisation, and consequently recognition within the EU, an EQF Advisory Group was created. The Group invited EU countries to create or revise their own national qualifications for professions to align with the EQF. The Group allowed countries until 2010 to submit their national qualifications for referencing against the EQF. The national qualifications were assessed across 10 areas: (1) identifying national bodies responsible for the referencing process, (2) making clear links between the descriptors in the national qualifications and those used in the EQF, (3) referencing learning outcomes as part of non-formal, informal, and credit system learning, (4) making transparent inclusions for qualifications, (5) citing national quality assurance systems for education and training that are clearly linked to the national qualifications, (6) including an agreement with the quality assurance bodies, (7) including international experts in the national referencing process, (8) creating a comprehensive report outlining the alignment of the country's national standards and the EQF, (9) making a link to the referencing report available in the EQF online platform, and (10) making later appropriate documents (e.g., diplomas and certificates) issued by the nation that include clear reference to the aligning EQF level (European Commission, 2011). It should be noted that efforts to create alignment between the aforementioned areas in national qualifications and the EQF require countries to first adopt a system that uses learning outcomes to assess levels within professions.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are a group of statements that are used to relate the knowledge and competence a person should be able to evidence for them to be deemed capable in a certain profession at a determined level. They include both qualifications and expectations of a

learner. The outcomes support the development of learning, making it possible to combine learning experiences across non-formal, informal, and credited learning contexts (European Union, 2008; 2018). Learning outcome statements can be used to determine: qualification frameworks and descriptors, qualification standards, curriculum development, assessment and validation, quality assurance, and teaching and training. In the EQF, learning outcomes are presented across three main categories: (1) knowledge, (2) skills, and (3) responsibilities and autonomy. The first area, knowledge, emphasises the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that are related to a field of work or study. In the context of the EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual. The second area, skills, emphasises both cognitive and practical skills. Cognitive skills include the demonstration of logical, intuitive, and creative thinking. Practical skills are focused on the use of manual dexterity, and application of methods, materials, tools, and instruments. The third area, responsibilities and autonomy, focuses on establishing a level of independent competence within an area of practice. It looks to establish the learner's proven ability to use knowledge and personal, social and/or methodological skills, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

The aforementioned three categories are subsequently used as the framework for developing eight levels representing the progression from least to most competent. The lower levels, levels under 5, can be associated with learning outside of a credit system. However, levels 5 to 8 are generally associated with learning that was done as part of a university program. Throughout the EQF, certain key phrases are used across categories and levels to demonstrate the alignment between a profession and its expectations. Table 1 provides examples of key phrases that can be found throughout the EQF. It is clear from these examples that knowledge, skills, and responsibility and autonomy become more complex as the levels increase.

Table 1 *EQF Key Phrases across Levels and Areas*

EQF Level	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTONOMY
3	Knowledge of	Accomplish tasks	Adapt own behaviour
		Selecting and applying	Take responsibility
4	Factual knowledge of	Generate solutions	Exercise self- management
	Theoretical knowledge of		Supervise routine work of others
5	Comprehensive knowledge of	Develop creative solutions	Review and develop performance of others
			Exercise management
6	Critical understanding of	Solve complex and unpredictable problems	Take responsibility for decision making
	Advanced knowledge of		Management of groups
7	Critical awareness of	Develop new knowledge and procedures	Reviewing performance of teams
	Highly specialised knowledge		

Note. Purple indicates Level 3, red indicates Level 4, yellow indicates Level 5, green indicates Level 6, and blue indicates Level 7.

EQF Status

Numerous countries, even those without national qualification frameworks, have taken guidance from the EQF. By the time of the EQF's revision in 2017 it included 39 countries, with 34 of those countries having successfully mapped their national standards to the EQF. An example of a country mapping its qualification and education levels to the EQF is presented in Table 2. In this example, the Czech Republic has clearly noted which education levels within its system align with the eight EQF levels.

Table 2Relationship between Czech Republic's Education and Qualifications Levels and the EQ

EQF	Category	Qualification and educational level
1	В	Special Education Completion of an educational programme in a special school – 10 years
2	С	Lower Secondary Education Successful completion of a primary and lower secondary education programme – 9 years Upper Secondary Education One to two year programme of graduates of special schools
	J	Upper Secondary Education without Apprenticeship Certificate – 2 years of upper secondary study
	Е	Upper Secondary Education with Apprenticeship Certificate Primarily for students with disabilities 2 years of upper secondary study
3	Е	Upper Secondary Education with Apprenticeship Certificate Primarily for students with disabilities 3 years of upper secondary study
	Н	Upper Secondary Education with Apprenticeship Certificate 3 years of upper secondary study
4	K	Upper Secondary Education with Maturita Exam General Education (Gymnazium) – 4 years of upper secondary study
	L	Upper Secondary with Maturita Exam Vocational Education with practical training – 4 years of upper secondary study
		Supplementary Study leading to Maturita Exam 2 years of study after the Apprenticeship Certificate
	M	Upper Secondary Education with Maturita Exam Vocational Education – 4 years of upper secondary education
6	N	Tertiary Vocational Education DiS. degree 3-3.5 years of tertiary education
	Р	Education at Conservatories DiS. degree 2 years of tertiary education
	R	Bachelor's Programme Bc. and BcA. degrees 3-4 years of tertiary education
7	Т	Masters Programme Mgr., MgA., Ing., arch., MUDr., MDDr., MVDr., JUDr., PhDr., RNDr., Pharm.Dr., ThLic., and ThDr. degrees 2- 3 years of tertiary education beyond Bachelor's or 4- 6 years of tertiary education
8	V	Doctoral Programme PhD., ThD. degrees 3-4 years beyond Masters

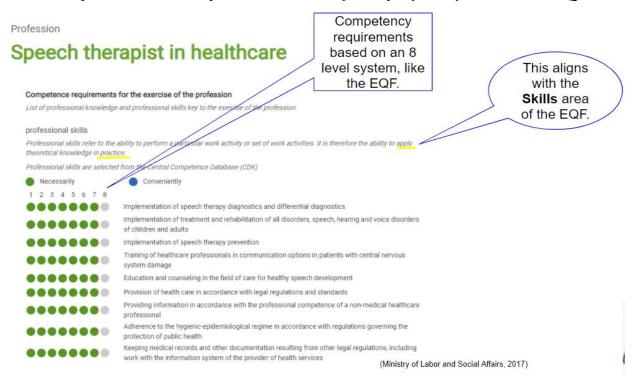
Education at the university level not required.

Education at the university level required.

(National Coordination Point of the Czech Republic, 2015)

They have also made this alignment clear within their system of specific professions. For example, in Figure 1, it is clear from the language and formatting used that the professional skills, expertise, and competencies specified by the nation align with the EQF's three main categories. The Czech Republic mapping their national qualifications to the EQF more easily facilitates a learner's certificate or diploma specifying their level within the EQF. As a result, a person looking to work as a speech therapist from another EU nation can assess the match between their own country's requirements and the Czech Republic. As the Czech Republic, and other countries, move in this direction, it is imperative that emerging professions, such as behaviour analysts, create guidelines for education and practice that align with the established EQF. Therefore, in an effort to best support behaviour analysts and the mobility of professionals within the EU, qualification development has taken the three-category framework and eight level system into consideration.

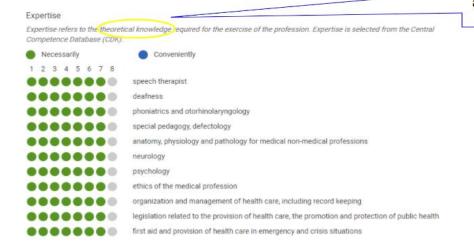
Figure 1Relationship between Czech Republic's Framework for a Specific Profession and the EQF



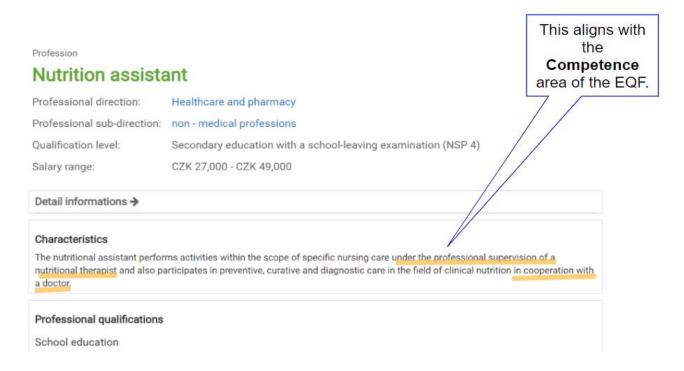
Profession

Speech therapist in healthcare

This aligns with the **Knowledge** area of the EQF.



(Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2017)

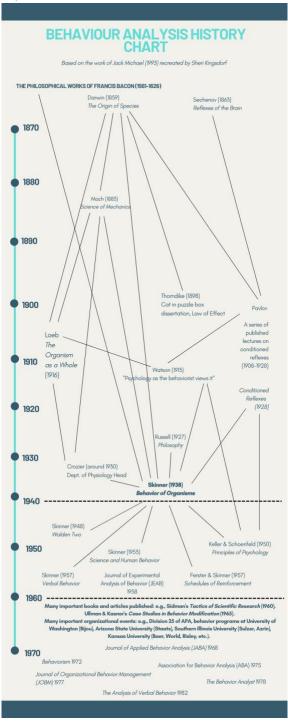


(Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2017)

Behaviour Analyst as a Profession

The profession of behaviour analyst began in the early 1970s. It is grounded in the science of behaviour analysis. Figure 2 provides a graphic depiction of the lineage of behaviour analysis.

Figure 2
Behaviour Analysis History Chart



Based on Michael (1993) with permission from the Association for Behavior Analysis International.

Today's behaviour analysts have progressed significantly beyond their roots. A professional working as a behaviour analyst in an applied setting is broadly defined as a person who has demonstrated mastery of the competences of the profession involved in assessing behaviour, designing programming in collaboration with the client/consumer/stakeholders, spearheading implementation, conducting ongoing analysis, and communicating results (Mayer et al., 2019). It should also be noted that a behaviour analyst:

- ➤ Works in any natural setting where people ordinarily function (e.g., home, school, clinic, out in the community, etc..).
- ➤ Works with individuals whose actions may present as either ordinary or exceptional daily challenges (e.g., personal problems, delays in skills, etc..).
- > Examines behavioural challenges skilfully.
- ➤ Gathers valid evidence of behaviour change over time by observing, recording, and collecting data.
- ➤ Analyses patterns of data (behaviour).
- ➤ Makes procedural adjustments based on the analysis of data to best meet the needs of the client/service user.

Behaviour analysis offers a science-based technology that facilitates the development of behaviours appropriate to a variety of skill sets. Professional behaviour analysts are obliged to be objective, using refined investigative methods, and empirically validated strategies to support those who seek their services. They are knowledgeable about the foundations of behaviour principles, and the applications of the science can take on many forms.

The work of a behaviour analyst is complex. Professional behaviour analysts support behaviour change in a variety of different populations, using positive strategies to increase adaptive skills, focusing on the individualised needs of clients and their stakeholders. They are committed to engaging with compassion and cultural competence. An overview of behaviour analysis training and scope of practice is provided in Table 3.

Table 3An Overview of Behaviour Analysis Training and Scope of Practice (adapted from Shook et al., 2004; see also, Heward, Critchfield, Reed, Detrich, & Kimball, 2022)

Training	Emphasis	Examples of relevant Professions	Client Populations and Settings	Age Groups
 In-service. Coursework not from a university. Continuing education. University courses. 	 Behaviour analysis. Positive behaviour support. Precision teaching. Direct instruction. Organisational behaviour management. Behaviour therapy. Communication disorders. Education. Medicine. Pharmacology. Social work. Counselling. 	 Administrator. Consultant. Trainer. Professor. Researcher. Social worker. Speech-language pathologist. Classroom teacher. 	 Developmental disabilities. Autism. Mental illness. Alcohol or drug abuse. Business. Government. Education. Foster care. Families. Hospital. 	 Infant. Child. Adolescent. Adult. Senior.

Regardless of the work setting or client population, some of the core principles which should govern the conduct of behaviour analysts include (BACB, 2020):

- ➤ Doing work to maximise benefits to others.
- ➤ Doing no harm.
- > Treating others with compassion, respect, and dignity.
- ➤ Behaving with integrity.
- ➤ Taking actions to ensure competence.

EuroBA Competences

The profession of behaviour analyst is well established in the United States and has entities in place working to regulate practice. The Behaviour Analyst Certification Board (BACB) is a US-based internationally recognised non-profit agency established in 1998 to regulate the certification and practices of behaviour analysts (BACB, 2019). They work in conjunction with the Association of Applied Behaviour Analysis International (ABAI), a US-based

organisation established in 1974 for the membership of behaviour analysts (ABAI, 2016). Now, the two organisations work together to validate and spread approved training for behaviour analysts. Regarding educational requirements, universities with approved courses must adhere to a certain number of hours of discretionary content. This content includes ethics, professional conduct, philosophical underpinnings and principles of behaviour, measurement, analysis, experimental design, behaviour assessment, and behaviour change procedures (ABAI, 2018). In addition to educational and training requirements, guidelines were created in the 1980s, and then significantly revised over the years, now taking the form of a recognised Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behaviour Analysts (BACB, 2014). This code is part of the certification process upheld by the BACB. The aim of the code and the certification for practice which it supports is to reduce the abuses committed by individuals professing to be practicing Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) as behaviour analysts. However, the ability of this US-based certification and accompanying code to govern the application of ABA across such a wide base of practice has been brought into question, especially as it relates to the provision of ABA services by independent practitioners (Dorsey et al., 2009); which is the mode of practice most used throughout Europe. The BACB simply does not have the funds, resources, knowledge of all local policies, or legal authority to protect children and their families with autism who are receiving independent ABA services around the world. As a result, most of Europe has been left without clear guidelines for education, training, and practice of the profession of behaviour analyst. As of 2023, around 50 universities in 16 countries throughout Europe offer Masters level behaviour analytic coursework delivered at EQF Level 7.

EuroBA was designed to enable the growth of the profession by reflecting the EQF ethos of recognising education and training across non-formal and informal settings and supporting the mobility of professionals within the EU. At this time, EuroBA is not a qualification in its own right. Instead, the outputs of the EuroBA project offer European specific standards of practice for behaviour analysts at two levels, with an emphasis on knowledge, skills, and responsibilities and autonomy (competence). Figure 3 is a representation of the relationship between the two EuroBA competence levels.

Figure 3
EuroBA Competence Levels



EuroBA-Entry Level Competences

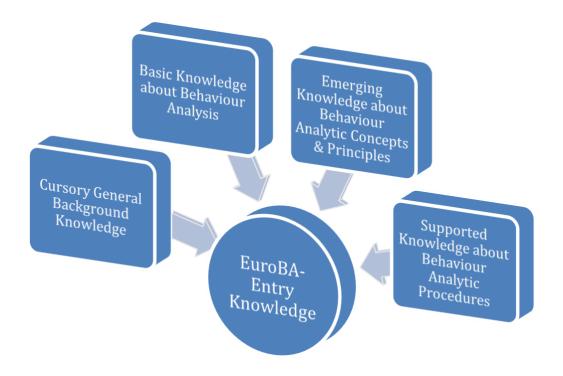
In the field of behaviour analysis there are multiple levels of practice. These different levels allow for individuals at various points in their career to use ABA in accordance with specific guidelines. The initial, or entry level, of behaviour analysis is often referred to as a behaviour technician. Behaviour technicians are considered auxiliary workers whose place is to carry out the programming developed by higher level behaviour analysts with greater expertise. Behaviour technicians may complete tasks such as (Mayer et al., 2019):

- ➤ Observing.
- ➤ Collecting data.
- ➤ Conducting technical aspects of a behaviour analysis program (for example):
 - Design observation recording systems.
 - Implement observation recording systems.
 - o Draw basic conclusions from graphic displays of data.
 - Apply strategies based on the basic principles of behaviour as defined by a higher-level behaviour analyst.

Summary of Knowledge at the EuroBA-Entry Level

The learner outcomes in the area of knowledge at the EuroBA-entry level position align mostly with level 3 of the EFQ. In accordance with the language used in the EQF to describe the attribute of knowledge, the EuroBA outcomes have focused on the professional's ability to have knowledge of certain concepts and procedures. Since this is an entry level qualification, this knowledge is meant to be cursory, not yet reaching the levels of comprehensive, critical, or advanced. It is anticipated that an entry level behaviour analyst will be growing his or her knowledge base on the job or as part of later professional development training. Some of the key knowledge components expected in repertoire when entering the field are depicted in Figure 4.

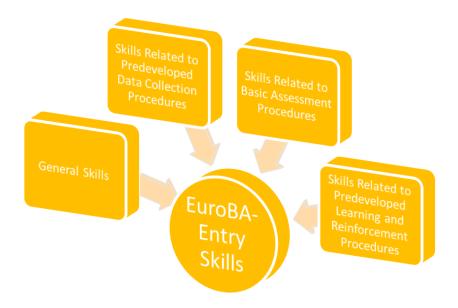
Figure 4
Contributions to Learner Outcomes in the Area of Knowledge at the EuroBA-Entry Level



Summary of Skills at the EuroBA-Entry Level

The learner outcomes in the area of skills at the EuroBA-entry level position align mostly with Level 3 of the EQF. In accordance with the language used in the EQF to describe the attribute of skills, the EuroBA outcomes have focused on the professional's ability to select and apply (e.g., measurement, assessment, and intervention procedures). Again, since this is an entry level qualification it is expected that even the skills of selection and application will be done under the appropriate supervision of a professional with a more advanced qualification. Some of the key skill components are depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5
Contributions to Learner Outcomes in the Area of Skills at the EuroBA-Entry Level



Summary of Responsibilities and Autonomy at the EuroBA-Entry Level

The learner outcomes in the area of responsibilities and autonomy at the EuroBA-entry level position align mostly with level 3 of the EFQ. In accordance with the language used in the EQF to describe the attribute of responsibilities and autonomy, the EuroBA outcomes have focused on the professional's ability to adapt their own behaviour and take responsibility for their own actions. While it is anticipated that a certain level of self-management skills should be evident in even entry-level professionals, there is still the expectation that they will be guided by the mentorship of higher-level professionals. Some of the key skill components are depicted in Figure 6.

Figure 6Contributions to Learner Outcomes in the Area of Responsibilities and Autonomy at the EuroBA-Entry Level.



EuroBA Competences at Masters Level

Certain activities within the science of behaviour analysis require a higher level of knowledge to be completed competently. These activities are typically learned through more targeted educational activities and practicum experiences which are part of a higher education program. Behaviour analysts with this increased level of knowledge will have completed mentorships and a graduate degree. Their competences would have been assessed in a variety of different ways (e.g., observed applications, presentations, exams, thesis, etc..). While practice is at the masters level for this qualification, many will be prepared to pursue a subsequent academic career in behaviour analysis (e.g., Ph.D.). Behaviour analysts at this more advanced level of practice complete tasks such as (Mayer et al., 2019):

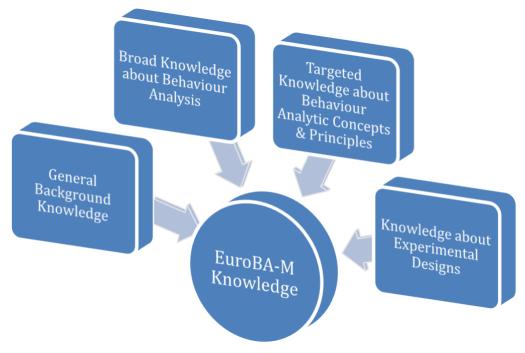
- ➤ Designing procedures to increase behaviour, reduce behaviour, expand behaviour, and refine or narrow a range of behaviours.
- ➤ Preparing an environment supportive of behaviour change.
- > Supporting the individualised needs of stakeholders.
- > Creating and agreeing on well-defined goals and objectives with stakeholders.
- > Supervising and supporting the work of behaviour analysts at entry level.
- > Creating conditions for socially significant behavioural changes that persist over time.

Summary of Knowledge at the EuroBA-Masters Level

The learner outcomes in the area of knowledge at the EuroBA-masters level (EuroBA-M) position align mostly with Levels 6 and 7 of the EQF. In accordance with the language used

in the EQF to describe the attribute of knowledge, the EuroBA outcomes have focused on the professional's ability to demonstrate comprehensive, highly specialised, and advanced knowledge, as well as critical awareness and understanding. Some of the key knowledge components are depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7 *Contributions to Learner Outcomes in the Area of Knowledge at the EuroBA-M Level*

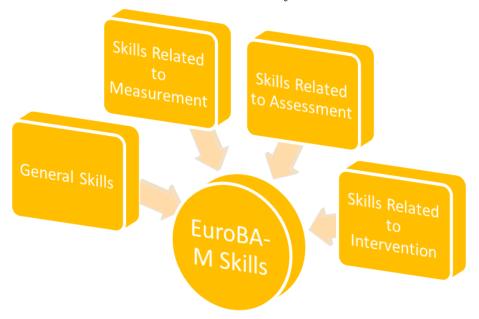


Summary of Skills at the EuroBA-Masters Level

The learner outcomes in the area of skills at the EuroBA Masters level (EuroBA-M) position align mostly with Levels 6 and 7 of the EQF. In accordance with the language used in the EQF to describe the attribute of skills, the EuroBA outcomes have focused on the professional's ability to develop creative solutions, solve complex and unpredictable problems, and implement advanced procedures in behaviour analysis. Some of the key skill components are depicted in Figure 8.

Figure 8

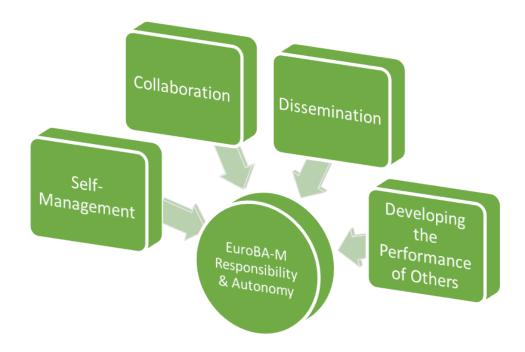
Contributions to Learner Outcomes in the Area of Skills at the EuroBA-M Level



Summary of Responsibilities and Autonomy at the EuroBA-Masters Level

The learner outcomes in the area of responsibilities and autonomy at the EuroBA Masters level (EuroBA-M) position align mostly with Levels 6 and 7 of the EQF. In accordance with the language used in the EQF to describe the attribute of responsibilities and autonomy, the EuroBA outcomes have focused on the professional's ability to exercise self-management, generate solutions, take responsibility for decision making, ethical issues, collaboration, and dissemination. Some of the key components for responsibility and autonomy are depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9Contributions to Learner Outcomes in the Area of Responsibilities and Autonomy at the EuroBA-M Level



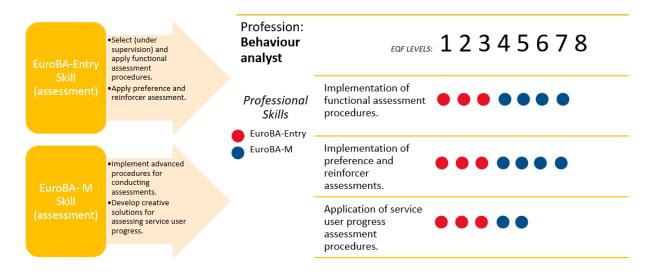
Relationship between EQF and EuroBA Competence Levels

The seamless integration of the EuroBA standards with the EQF should make it easy for the 39 countries who have already adapted their national frameworks to adopt these new standards surrounding the profession of behaviour analysis. This is likely to enable professionals wishing to study and/or practice in the field to move between countries. It also provides a roadmap for students, educators, and social and health care workers across many nations for assessing what specific educational and training components are needed to practice competently in the field.

Summary

The two tiers of behaviour analytic qualifications reviewed here are outlined in detail in other project outcomes (IO4 and IO5). It is important to consider, though, that the cursory details provided here, and even the more comprehensive competency lists in the additional documents, are just a starting place for establishing the field of behaviour analysis in Europe. Extensive work still needs to be done by EU member nations to map their own qualification networks to support the development of behaviour analysis as a profession. The details reviewed here outline the steps that were taken by the project team to help facilitate this process by aligning the EuroBA competencies with the EQF. A conceptualisation of moving forward with the process of integrating the EuroBA competency frameworks into an NQF structure which is already aligned with the EQF, like that of the Czech Republic (see Figure 3 for their NQF example), is presented in Figure 10.

Figure 10Conceptualisation for Aligning the EuroBA Competences to an EQF/NQF Structure



Lastly, it should be remembered that the field of behaviour analysis is constantly evolving. Therefore, just as it is expected that the knowledge and skills of practitioners will grow, so should the expectations for best practice. These competency lists are a starting point. They should be individualised as per the cultural needs of each country and enriched with new areas of practice as the field of ABA continues to empirically validate new practices and procedures.

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