

# Understanding Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (MRQs)

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# Acronyms

<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MRA</b>	Mutual Recognition Agreement
<b>MRQ</b>	Mutual Recognition of Qualifications
<b>PESTLE</b>	Political, Economic, Social, Technical, Legal, Environmental
<b>QA</b>	Quality Assurance
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
<b>TNE</b>	Transnational Education

# Executive Summary

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Ecctis has been commissioned by the British Council to undertake a study identifying what MRQs are; explore why countries seek to develop them and establish how they are developed. The results of this study set to aid in: stakeholder understanding of the types of MRQs; the motivations for developing them; and the stages, processes, and timeframes involved in the development and implementation of MRQs. This report also examines stakeholder perceptions and understanding of the MRQ setting process. Perceptions have been drawn from stakeholder opinions on the efficacy of agreements in place, based on the results yielded. This report also outlines in-country stakeholder appetite for future MRQs .

## Research questions and headlines

### What are the different types of MRQs?

MRQs can take many forms. The three main types of MRQs are Memorandum of Understanding, Mutual Recognition Agreement, and Treaty-level Agreement. MRQ terminology may be used varyingly regardless of type. Within this report, the term 'MRQ' has been used to refer to all agreement types. A further breakdown of MRQ definitions can be found on page 5.

### Which organisations are involved in negotiating and implementing MRQs?

Developing and implementing MRQs is an involved process, often with several national-level organisations across borders taking part. Often, working groups cumulating members of the participating organisations are formed. In many cases, a neutral organisation acts within a mediatory position, facilitating clear communication channels between organisations. Reported MRQ setting organisations per country can be found on page 15.

### What are the stages, processes, and timeframes involved in MRQs?

It can be a complex journey to developing and implementing MRQs. We set out a road map identifying the key stages which can be found on pages 9 -11. The time it takes to develop and implement MRQs can vary. Estimated time alongside outlier examples have been mapped on a timeline which can be found on page 13.

### What are the contributions of MRQs and motivations for developing them?

The motivations for setting MRQs are multifaceted. Stakeholder motivations for implementing MRQs typically relate to economic advantages, global collaboration, and alignment with in-country internationalisation strategies. Stakeholders motivations for setting MRQs can be found on page 8.

### What are the similarities and differences between in-country MRQs, key recommendations and risks associated with developing and implementing MRQs?

The process for setting MRQs across borders tends to follow the same main stages and processes, including reviewing similar documentation. Participating organisations often include similar governmental and non-governmental agencies. Differences between MRQs relate to definitions, timeframes, and challenges experienced during the MRQ development phase. The development and implementation stages are subject to the same risks across borders, including political instability, and non-recognition of qualification components. Action points, including recommendations which have been drawn from the experiences of MRQ and internationalisation policy setting stakeholders, can be found on page 31.

### How have recent MRQs evolved to include the digital revolution?

With the rise in technology assisted education and global collaboration, MRQ documentation and planning can include digital considerations. These digital considerations include qualification components such as pedagogy, examination and qualification delivery, and quality assurance, as well as MRQ development and implementation activities. These considerations can be found on page 27.



# Methodology

Using a combination of desk-based research and stakeholder engagement through interviews and surveys, MRQ data was collated, including: MRQ definitions, stakeholder motivations for setting MRQs, risks and challenges associated with developing and implementing MRQs, and real-world experiences.

Two rounds of interviews took place. The first round of interview questions were formed by the desk-based research. The second round of interview questions were formed by the experiences of individuals who were in-country experts, with MRQ or internationalisation expertise.

Following both stages of interviews there were two rounds of thematic analysis. The first round of interview data was thematically analysed using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. The second round of interview data was thematically analysed using a PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technical / Technological, Legal, Environmental) analysis. A further SWOT analysis was applied to each thematic area of the PESTLE.

Surveys were held with stakeholders in countries without an MRQ in place with the UK. There were 24 responses collected from stakeholders in Vietnam, Oman, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. The survey findings form their own section of this report, and are therefore isolated from the PESTLE and SWOT thematic analyses.

Interviews have been anonymised within this study. The interviews have been conducted with stakeholders working within a variety of organisations, including international organisations, government bodies, and higher education institutions. Quotes from these interviews have been anonymised within this report.

The job roles relating to MRQ development were wide ranging and encompassed MRQ development responsibilities. The job roles have been synthesised into four distinct categories for this report:

## Target countries

- China: signed an MRA with the UK in 2003.
- Egypt: signed an MoU with the UK in 2018.
- India: signed an MoU with the UK in 2022.
- Indonesia: currently has no MRQ with the UK.
- Mexico: signed an MRA with the UK in 2015.
- Oman: currently has no MRQ with the UK.
- Pakistan: currently has no MRQ with the UK.
- Peru: signed a treaty-level agreement with the UK in 2018.
- Saudi Arabia: currently has no MRQ with the UK.
- Spain: signed an MRA with the UK in 2023.
- Vietnam: currently has no MRQ with the UK.

## Job roles

- **Education Director:** interviewees with job titles or roles within the remit of a director, or head of services relating to international education.
- **International Education Lead:** interviewees who have supplied senior leadership to the development and implementation of MRQs.
- **Project and Research Manager:** interviewees who have managed segments of smaller scale projects during the MRQ research and analysis stage.
- **Advisor and Researcher:** interviewees who have worked within an advisory role, or who have performed research and analysis without leadership responsibilities.





# Definitions

MRQs can take different forms and can be enforced differently depending on which type countries choose to develop. Within this report, the acronym 'MRQ' is used as an umbrella term for all MRQ types. An MRQ may be referred to differently across regions. Terms used across borders include: 'Direct Access Agreement', 'Mutual Recognition Agreement', 'Memorandum of Understanding of the Mutual Recognition', and 'Mutual Recognition of Academic Degrees'. Below is a list of the three main MRQ types.

## Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):

A Memorandum of Understanding is a non-ratified agreement of cross border qualification recognition. It can be used as the 'first step' for recognition, or it can fulfil all the needs and demands of mutual recognition between countries and governments.

*"[The MOU] is very overarching, and generally looks to bolster education connections"*

**International Education Lead**

*"[The MRA] is recognised as one of the significant achievements from both governments"*

**International Education Lead**

## Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA):

A Mutual Recognition Agreement is a ratified agreement which may cover a variety of qualifications at different levels. The process for implementing an MRA has more steps than a Memorandum of Understanding, and therefore, typically takes longer to develop and enforce. MRAs can be bilateral (between two countries), or multilateral (between a group of countries).

## Treaty-Level Agreement:

A Treaty-Level Agreement is the highest level of MRQ and is governed by international law. Therefore, it is a ratified and legally binding agreement between two or more countries on the mutual recognition of qualification.

*"The United Kingdom (UK) has a reputation for having a high level of education quality. Associating ourselves with the UK through the Treaty-Level Agreement is advantageous for us"*

**Project and Research Manager**



# Motivations

## Why do countries establish MRQs?

MRQs allow for formal qualification recognition processes to be established between countries. Key drivers and motivations for this process are to establish cross-border recognition, improve student mobility flow, and promote opportunities for both countries, such as:

- Strengthening the validation of cross-border qualifications as a binding agreement.
- Encouraging the expansion of exchange and partnership programmes.
- To enhance, improve, and exchange research between countries.

*“The purpose was to enhance, improve, and increase academic exchange and research collaboration... But that [recognition] is definitely a barrier that has been lowered”*

**Project and Research Manager**

### Validation of cross-border qualifications

The need for qualification recognition between countries was required for future partnership opportunities.

### Aligned goals

Both countries held mutual interest in expanding their education into the international space.

### Student mobility and skills workforce

MRQs facilitate enhanced student mobility and flow across the globe.



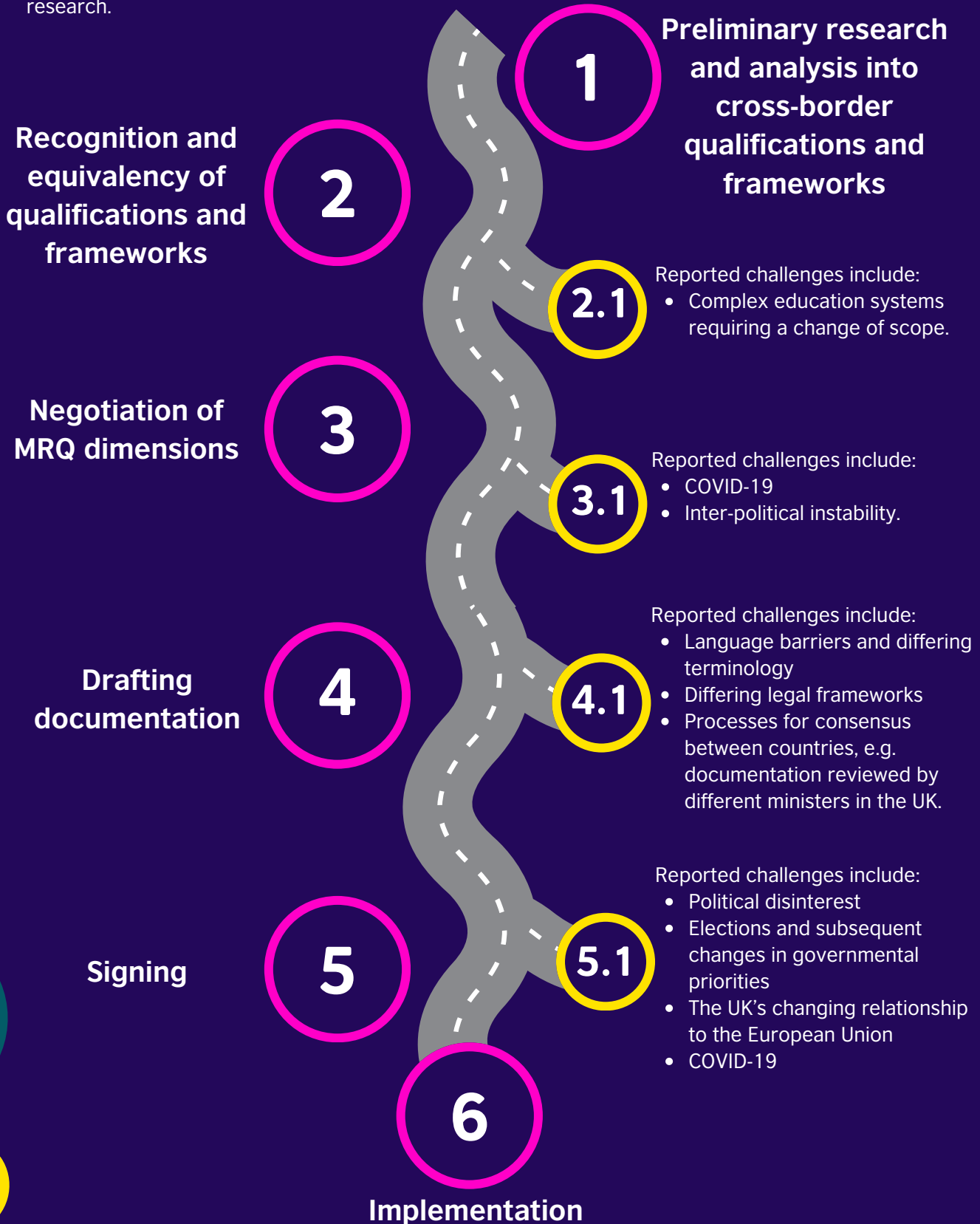
# Reported Motivations for Establishing MRQs

Further to validation of qualifications, alignment of goals, and increased student mobility, stakeholders reported additional motivations for developing MRQs. These motivations have derived from in-country organisation internationalisation strategies. Motivations outlined by stakeholders are displayed in the chart below. Motivations which were reported by multiple stakeholders have been included in the larger, pink bubbles to indicate their salience.



# A Roadmap for Developing an MRQ:

The comprehensive stages and processes, including potential and reported roadblocks. This roadmap starts at the early MRQ development stage, comprising of cross border participation and research.



# A Roadmap for Developing an MRQ:

A closer look at the comprehensive stages and processes for developing an MRQ.

## 1. Preliminary research into the cross-border qualifications and frameworks

A key theme highlighted during interviews was the importance of trust and mutuality. The shared value and need for an MRQ will be established between countries, considering factors related to the shared benefits and potential impact on student mobility, growing in-country skills workforce, and subsequent trade and internationalisation. Considerations at this step may include the MRQ type, the level and types of qualifications which will be covered, such as academic, vocational, or professional qualifications. Preliminary research and analysis into the cross-border qualifications and frameworks may be utilised.

## 2. Recognition and equivalency of qualifications and frameworks

This step involves research and analysis of the qualification components that will be agreed upon for the MRQ. Working groups, made up of different organisations across borders, may be established to research, analyse, and ultimately provide recognition of the core components of the agreed qualifications or frameworks.

*"[There is] no better show of trust than the mutual recognition of awards and degrees cross-borders"*  
Project and Research Manager

*"To establish equivalence of degrees, there must be trust between two countries"*  
Project and Research Manager

*"We decided that it was more beneficial for us to refer to the UK Regulated Qualification Framework instead of referring to all of the different UK HE-access qualification. This was in case we forgot to include a specific qualification, or if a name of qualification was due to change after the signing of the agreement"*  
International Education Lead

# A Roadmap for Developing an MRQ:

## 3. Negotiation of MRQ dimensions

The dimensions of the MRQ can be negotiated between countries. This negotiation stage may be mediated by a separate organisation working within a neutral capacity.

## 4. Drafting documentation

The legal documentation containing the components of the MRQ are collated and sent to the relevant stakeholders across countries. This process can be time consuming due to the complexity of determining agreement across countries.

## 5. Signing

After MRQ details are agreed across borders, governments can progress to signing, thus formally agreeing upon the conditions of the MRQ.

## 6. Implementation

The time in which the MRQ will be implemented can vary. It has been reported that the implementation can take effect in as little as 30 days to a year. As part of the implementation process, post-ratification activities may take place to assist with the technical onboarding and provide stakeholders with opportunities to develop understanding.

*“It falls under [our] remit to be part of discussions surrounding mutual recognitions to both promote UK education systems and facilitate recognition of international qualifications, so [we] played an intermediary role”*

**Advisor and Researcher**

*“As soon as [the agreement] is signed, the MRQ will come into effect the following academic year”*

**International Education Lead**

*“ [the Memorandum of Understanding] does not provide a clear mechanism for removing any barriers to education in the regulatory or legal sense”*

**International Education Lead**





# MRQ Timeline

The time involved in MRQ development and subsequent implementation can be unpredictable. Stakeholders have identified the estimated and actual MRQ development time.

## Treaty-Level Agreement

Estimated up to **four years**.

*“There is a general perception that these agreements take very many years to get off the ground. I think that’s a pervasive view and it could also be one of the reasons why we don’t necessarily proactively work on mutual recognition”*

**Education Director**

## Mutual Recognition Agreement

Estimated **one and a half to two years**.

### Outlier example:

One stakeholder reported that developing and implementing an MRA took up to 4 years due to environmental factors, including COVID-19, as well as disagreement on the type of MRQ (one side preferring an MRA, the other side preferring a Treaty-Level agreement).

## Memorandum of Understanding

Estimated between **six to eight months**.

### Outlier example:

It was reported from one stakeholder that the Memorandum of Understanding they worked on was under development for 10 years due to disagreement and non-recognition of qualification components as well as disinterest from governments.

### Did you know?

MRQs can be worked into MoUs, which allows for trade and education to be discussed in tandem during policy dialogues.



# MRQ and International Education Policy Setting

Stakeholder interviewees outlined the following global collaborators involved during the development and implementation stages of their country's MRQ with the UK:

## Mexico

- British Council
- Ministry of Public Education
- Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation
- Secretaría de Educación Pública

## UK

- British Council
- Department for Business and Trade
- Department for Education
- Foreign Commonwealth Development Office
- UK ENIC

## China

- British Council
- Ministry of Education Overseas Study Service Center

## Peru

- British Council
- Superintendencia Nacional de Educación Superior Universitaria

## Spain

- British Embassy Madrid
- Ministry of Education and Vocational training
- Ministry of Universities

## India

- British Council
- Department of Higher Education
- Association of Indian Universities
- University Grants Commission

## Egypt

- British Council
- Supreme Council of Universities

*"It was like [the UK] endorsed the university reform that [country] had been going through. This reform had quality as their main goal, so if a country like UK signed an MRQ then it is like an automatic challenge to continue displaying good quality standards"*

**Project and Research Manager**

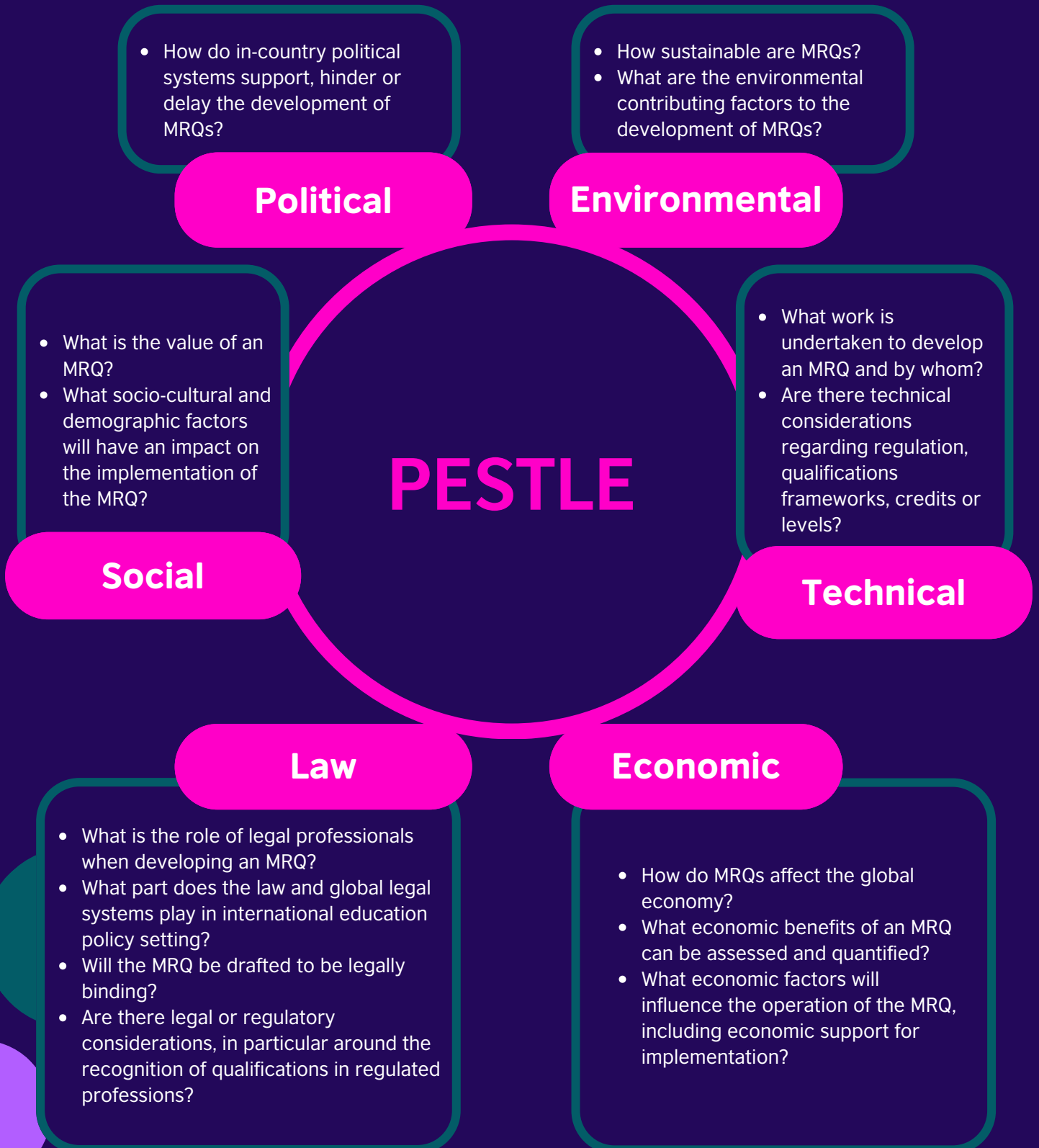
## Quality assurance

Quality assurance (QA) processes and procedures are not universal. Some countries' QA processes are well-established, whilst others are working towards improvements. MRQs provide an opportunity for mutual collaboration of best practice in this field, and foster improvement to allow for increased awareness of the impact that QA has on education.



# Methodological Approach

Using PESTLE, in-country stakeholder interviews were thematically analysed. For each thematic area of the PESTLE, analysis of stakeholder interviews was made using the following guiding questions:





# PESTLE: thematic analysis

## POLITICAL

MRQs are affected by political motivators and can take many forms. Some MRQs have been influenced by visionary government strategies for internationalisation and TNE in-country. This means that governments which are actively participating in the global market might find the collaborative aspect of an MoU or MRA beneficial in furthering their strategies for partnership and exchange opportunities in the TNE landscape.

*"MRQs require political will and backing, and are often aligned with current in-country policy"*

**Education Director**

*"...The government began to feel the negative impact of that insular approach that they were taking [of] cutting off their universities and they began to understand that international cooperation actually helps in enriching the higher education sector... they began to be more open to it...you need two things - political commitment and the technical work through"*

**Education Director**

Through creating government strategies for internationalisation, political motivation for cross-border collaboration increases. This is powered by motivated governments who have a keen interest in establishing new connections and strengthening new connections. In turn, this facilitates conversations of interest to the political agenda such as trade and cross-country qualification validation.

Political instability has also been recorded as an influencer of MRQ establishment, development, and implementation. The majority of the target countries for this study highlighted the impact that inter-political instability can have on policy dialogues and MRQ implementation. Instability can take many forms such as changing governments and subsequent shifting priorities.

*"There's absolutely no use in signing a new Memorandum of Understanding until we know who the next Minister will be... [they will] set their own priorities and that would fundamentally affect what we would put in a Memorandum of Understanding"*

**International Education Lead**

# PESTLE: thematic analysis

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## ECONOMIC

Stakeholders reported the effect of the economic environment on MRQ establishment, development, and implementation. Targeted countries discussed the importance of funding which is provided towards the building of these agreements, and how any cuts to spending can negatively impact the development and implementation of MRQs.

*“Many funds that were open for international cooperation closed, so many programmes disappeared. That means that the tools that the [government] had for nurturing international cooperation with countries were limited, so policy engagement was also limited and the opportunities to connect with government officials was further limited. I think that stopped many of the conversations that we originally had when we had funds full of money to pay for international cooperation”*

**Education Director**

*“The evaluation [of degrees] is definitely affecting how fast this is going on, because for a university they need to guarantee the return on investment, and with the devaluation and the economic crisis...is affecting how fast it is growing. But in 2023 I have seen a growing appetite from UK universities to come and work in [Country]”*

**Education Director**

Countries also reported the impact of in-country economic crises, and how this could cause shifts either towards priorities or away from global collaboration. This is linked to countries' national strategies, cross-border relationships, and current focus on TNE building.

*“So it's not only about academic excellence, but it's also about employment and entrepreneurial skills, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary as the main field for education”*

**Education Director**

MRQs have also created opportunities for a more enhanced workforce due to the ease of qualification recognition and qualification validation. Stakeholders see the benefits of their students studying overseas and then returning to close skills shortages in their home country.



# PESTLE: thematic analysis

## SOCIAL

One contributing factor to the development and implementation of MRQs is social influences. This has taken many forms but predominantly drives the development and implementation of agreements between countries.

All targeted countries make reference to the importance of student mobility, and how MRQ implementation will enhance the process of student admissions at entry level within both countries. MRQs also encourage students to return to their home-country, where their degrees will be recognised and validated by the relevant authority body.

*"I think for both countries they're keen for the institutions to work together and for the students and academics to have exchange or have mobility programmes...so this MRQ would definitely help with that... The other one would be something like transnational education or the institutional partnerships with the UK"*

**International Education Lead**

MRQs have also been reported to increase opportunities in partnership exchange. This supports nations which have a focus on TNE capacity building and increased cross-collaboration, subsequently fostering mutual socio-economic support networks between countries.

Many stakeholders also made mention of how MRQs can influence trust and transparency between countries, which leads to strengthened mutuality. Establishing strong relationships built on these foundations fosters productive policy dialogues and developments in establishing an MRQ which works for both countries.

*"The trust is very important, but also knowing who can make those higher-level decisions... So, I think it's trust but also transparency"*

**Advisor and Researcher**

*"...The students who decide to [study abroad] have that as a supporting factor for their decision to go to the UK because they know that when they complete their studies, they will return and they will just take their degree to [authorised regulation body] and they will have it recognised and validated"*

**Project and Research Manager**

# PESTLE: thematic analysis

## TECHNICAL

Organisations take on different roles during the development stage. In some cases, an organisation was tasked with facilitating and mediating conversations between countries and organisations who are involved with developing an MRQ.

*“We have noticed a load of elective modules [in non-UK countries], whereas [in the UK] they tend to be more fixed. That’s because [in the UK] students do their Masters’ degree for one year, so you cannot afford to do electives and to be creative when you just have one year to study and then go. Whereas there I think it’s more flexible in other countries”*

**Advisor and Researcher**

*“[Our role] was to ensure that they had all the information they needed on the UK education system to be able to make decisions and recognise UK qualifications. That was something we did working with the recognition body just to make sure that they had all the information they needed”*

**International Education Lead**

Across multiple interviews in different regions, a key weakness indicated was the inability to agree upon the UK Master’s degree. A UK Master’s degree tends to require one-year of full-time study; however, Master’s degrees from many other countries require two-years of full-time study. Comparability and recognition of the Masters’ degree across borders has been difficult to agree upon.

Issues can arise when providing technical support in recognising and agreeing upon the components of cross-border qualifications. For instance, differences in quality assurance processes and teaching and pedagogy can make agreement difficult to reach. In one example, vocational qualifications could not be included in the MRQ coverage due to vast differences in core components of these qualifications across countries.

*“There are systemic challenges in [country] in terms of quality of outcomes. The assessment standards are generally weaker than you would find in Europe or the UK”*

**International Education Lead**

### Did you know?

Spain and the United Kingdom signed an agreement in 2023 for the recognition and agreement of Higher Education access qualifications. In the UK, this agreement is considered and enforced as a Treaty-Level Agreement, and in Spain, this is a Mutual Recognition Agreement (referred to as a Direct Access Agreement).

Where there is a disagreement or non-compatibility on the type of MRQ needed for countries, MRQs can be customisable and utilised differently across borders.

# PESTLE: thematic analysis

## LEGAL

Legal professionals and departments are required to review the terms, conditions, and language exhibited within the MRQ documentation. This process can be complex, especially considering that there may be language barriers between countries. Drafting MRQ documentation needs to consider different legal systems and frameworks within countries.

The dimensions of the terminology surrounding MRQ development has been highlighted as an important take away.

*There is a difference between recognition and evaluation. You might recognise a qualification, but you might not necessarily evaluate it in the way that the host country deems or regards that qualification"*

**International Education Lead**

Language exhibited within MRQ documentation is carefully curated to fit the needs of both participating countries.

*"[The language displayed within the agreement] is far more diplomatic than technical language"*

**International Education Lead**

## ENVIRONMENTAL

Environmental factors affecting the development of implementation of MRQs have been limited to issues relating to COVID-19. Many of the targeted countries for this study were in the process of developing an MRQ during the worldwide pandemic. COVID-19 brought unique challenges, including the extending of MRQ development timelines, organisation restructures, and changing political priorities in-country.

*"UK's re-prioritisation after COVID is something that we should be mindful of, where we have the Indo-Pacific tilt towards more high-tech economy places like Korea, the US, Canada, Southeast Asia, China and Israel"*

**Education Director**

The challenges brought by COVID-19 also sparked innovative solutions. Where MRQ discussions were once logistically complex to organise, with organisations across the globe meeting in one physical space, COVID-19 sparked the adoption of technology-assisted meetings.

*"the MRQ actually recognises that due to Force Majeure conditions, if you are unable to do a regular degree, the online learning will be recognised in place of the original degree conditions"*

**Education Director**



# SWOT

From the PESTLE and stakeholder engagement, the below SWOT infographic highlights a range of over-arching strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats which were identified during the building, development and implementation of targeted stakeholder countries' MRQs.

## S

### Strengths

- Wider, productive cross-border collaboration for MRQs are supported by established working groups.
- MRQs support wider understanding and stakeholder acceptance of qualifications in signatory countries.
- Education holds importance globally, and as such, MRQs can be developed and grown in separation from political and/or geopolitical instability.
- Mutuality and trust established across both countries fosters cohesive collaboration.

### Weaknesses

- Scope and timeframes of MRQ development are potentially weakened by countries' complex education systems that can cause confusion and miscommunication between countries.
- Lack of MRQ exposure and understanding at governmental levels can affect governmental MRQ appetite.
- Pedagogy and teaching standards in some countries cause overarching quality assurance concerns.

## W

## O

### Opportunities

- Trade opportunities and economic growth between countries can be facilitated by implementing MRQs.
- MRQs boost educational and partnership exchange from signed MRQs.
- MRQs can enhance the level of English spoken in Non-Anglophone countries, which in turn aids in diversifying languages spoken.
- MRQs encourage and equip countries with the tools to work towards and achieve their internationalisation strategies.

### Threats

- Political upheaval and policy changes threaten global relationships.
- MRQ development can be significantly prolonged by language barriers relating to qualification and MRQ terminology, as well as cultural differences between countries.
- Geo-political and environmental factors affect governmental priorities, such as the global power shift to South East Asia.
- Lack of clarity and ambition within the development and implementation stages can cause tension between participating organisations.
- Statements of comparability or lack of education frameworks can cause logistical barriers during the MRQ development phase.

## T



# Digital Revolution: the Rise in Technology in Education and Quality Assurance

Stakeholders have identified how emerging technology is being used when developing and implementing MRQs.

## Technology

AI may be incorporated into qualification content. An MRQ would need to be digital-ready.

*"The United Kingdom (UK) has a reputation for having a high level of education quality. Associating ourselves with the UK through the Treaty-Level Agreement is advantageous for us"*

**Project and Research Manager**

Emerging AI technology could assist with the writing of MRQ documentation.

COVID-19 resulted in cross-border collaboration activities to be held virtually. This allowed for negotiations and communication across borders to remain on-track and focus on the designated task at hand.

Online and distance learning is not covered in past MRQ documentation.

Online and distance learning is not recognised in some countries as fulfilling qualification requirements.

*"Quality Assurance of online and distance learning couldn't be reached because there was not an agreement between the countries"*

**International Education Lead**

*"COVID-19 [and the subsequent use of technology-assisted communication channels] allowed for more orchestrated conversations in room. Doing it online expedited decision-making"*

**Advisor and Researcher**





# Surveys

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Surveys were conducted with stakeholders in Indonesia, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Vietnam. The survey contained a wide range of questions related to MRQs and internationalisation strategies. The aim of the survey was to determine stakeholder understanding and interest in MRQ development and implementation within the context of their country.

## Key take aways include:

- **100%** of respondents believe education is prioritised by their government.
- **100%** of respondents believe implementing an MRQ builds trust between countries.
- **93%** of respondents believe the establishment of an MRQ would be mutually beneficial between participating countries.
- **57%** of respondents reported that there are internationalisation strategies in place within their country. When asked if an MRQ would align with these strategies, **88%** responded 'yes'.
- **57%** of respondents reported that international student mobility is measured within their country.
- **19%** of respondents reported that they had a full and comprehensive understanding of MRQs. **13%** of respondents reported to have no knowledge or understanding of MRQs.

**57%** of respondents noted that there is interest within their organisation to establish an MRQ. Reasons stated include:

- To **internationalise** [our] university.
- **MRQs support transparency** of foreign qualifications. This will support students in understanding foreign programmes/qualifications.
- **MRQs support validation** of qualifications.

When asked if respondents are aware of a successful MRQ between other countries, respondents replied:

- 'Italy, Northern European countries, and from ENIC-NARIC... [because] education quality and the transparency of qualifications frameworks [was made] using the capacities (knowledge, skills, experience) instead of the qualifications/certificate'.
- 'Australia and New Zealand... [because there is] increased mobility of professionals and academics'.
- 'India and the UK... [because] they already have very close links in a number of areas such as trade and many Indian students go to the UK to study'.
- 'Malaysia, UK, and Singapore... [because] clear qualification mapping is evident between countries and awards'.

The survey findings indicate that respondents in participating countries believe entering into an MRQ would be beneficial in **increasing internationalisation, supporting economic growth, and enhancing quality assurance processes.**





# Action Points

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To encourage productive and mutual policy dialogues, it is recommended that the following five action points are taken into consideration when establishing and implementing an MRQ.

## Establishing trust and mutuality:

Establishing trust and mutuality has been identified by stakeholders as a key process when developing an MRQ. Effective and transparent communication channels between participating organisations need to be established early in the development of a MRQ.

## Division of MRQ development tasks:

Write a list of outcomes which each party wishes to achieve during the development of the MRQ to enable a mutual understanding of each country's objectives and goals in developing the MRQ together.

## Working groups:

Create a small team of people to work on the MRQ with authority to carry out negotiations and drafting. These individuals are typically representatives from degree recognising/validating bodies at government level.

## Delivering capacity building workshops to relevant stakeholders:

Involve other relevant stakeholders in the process to gain feedback, highlight any possible issues with the drafting as it progresses, and ensure relevant parties are informed of progress.

## Further research:

Invest in conducting further research, illustrating MRQ development and implementation processes across the globe. An impact study can aid with stakeholder understanding of the complex steps undertaken to achieve recognition.

*"We got [the work we conducted on the MRQ development] into the road map so that [we] became answerable for how far [we] had progressed on [the MRQ] ...That protected it from being thrown off agenda"*

**Education Director**

*"[We ensured] that [country] had all the information they needed on the UK education system to be able to make decisions and recognise UK qualifications"*

**Advisor and Researcher**

*"It would be important like to have access to a register of recognition. At this point, we don't know the true impact or the effect of the signing of the MRQ"*

**Project and Research Manager**

## Limitations to the Study

This study aimed to provide an over-arching understanding of MRQs, countries' motivations for developing them, and how they might be developed and implemented. Evidence for these three research topics were found within the desk-based research and through holding interviews with stakeholders around the world. However, it is important to highlight how future MRQ work can be improved and developed upon for future stakeholders seeking to utilise this research.

This project is considered to be a pilot study, and is to be utilised as a baseline for initial understanding and comprehension of MRQs. Similarly, this topic is wide-reaching, and as such its size and scope concludes a top-down depiction of the MRQ landscape. Through conducting this research, Ecctis has come to further understand the complexity of establishing an MRQ. This considers many elements and moving pieces, including but not limited to its processes and components, different governmental agencies, timeframes, leadership comprehension and education structures. Whilst Ecctis and British Council undertook significant outreach activities to all countries listed in its map, it is important to highlight that there was a lack of survey responders, so full data could not be obtained from this aspect of the research.

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