

## How to use this leaflet:

This leaflet provides information that allows you to look at the ways qualifications are organised in Ireland and the UK. On one side of the table you will find the main stages of education or employment - you can find where you are in these stages. The next column shows the qualifications framework for your country. To the right of this you can see the nearest levels and similar kinds of qualifications that are used in the other countries. This makes it possible to draw broad comparisons between qualifications and their levels, rather than direct equivalences, for each country.

Qualifications are different in different countries. However, they are remarkably similar in what they tell someone about the person who has achieved them, for example that he or she is ready for a college/higher education course, or for a first skilled job. There are some clear stages people move through in education, training and work that are common to most countries. Primary education is followed by secondary education and initial entry into employment and/or further and higher education or training. Some people move on to more skilled employment. Some choose to go into higher education and many take part in specialist training in their work place. People graduating from a higher education institution may enter employment and those who complete professional or postgraduate education may also enter employment.

The table gives an indication of how you can compare qualifications across national boundaries. Examples of major qualifications at each level are provided. For more detail of the qualifications in another country, you will need to consult the website given at the head of each column. All these frameworks of qualifications change from time to time and you need to check these websites for the latest versions. Entry requirements for jobs and courses often vary within a country. This means you will need to check specific requirements with the employer or institution for the job or course that you are interested in.

This leaflet is designed to give some information to help you begin this process, for example, by telling you what your qualification or qualifications you are interested in studying, are broadly comparable to in other countries.

## Thinking of working or studying in Ireland or the UK? You may be interested in the answer to one or more of these questions.

- What do they call the qualification which matches mine most closely?
- Will my qualification get me into college or a job?
- Will I get some recognition for the qualifications I have?
- What kind of job or course can I apply for with my current qualification?

## Recruiting people with Irish qualifications in the UK or people with UK qualifications in Ireland? You may be interested in the answer to these questions.

- How do I know what a qualification from another country means in terms of level?
- Which national qualification should I compare this qualification to?
- Where can I find more detailed information about the content and level of qualifications?

## This leaflet helps you explore these questions.



**QAA**  
Southgate House, Southgate Street,  
Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Tel: +44 (0)1452 557000  
Fax: +44 (0)1452 557070  
Email: [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)

**scqf**  
scottish credit and  
qualifications framework  
Scottish Credit and Qualifications  
Framework Partnership  
39 St Vincent Place, Glasgow  
G1 2ER  
info@scqf.org.uk

**CCEA**  
Rewarding Learning  
29 Clarendon Road, Clarendon Dock,  
Belfast BT1 3BG  
Tel: +44 (0)28 9026 1200  
Email [info@ccea.org.uk](mailto:info@ccea.org.uk)  
[www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk)

**Ofqual**  
Office of the Qualifications and  
Examinations Regulator  
Spring Place, Coventry Business Park,  
Herald Avenue, Coventry  
CV5 6UB  
Tel: +44 (0)300 303 3344  
Fax: +44 (0)300 303 3348  
Email: [info@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:info@ofqual.gov.uk)  
[www.ofqual.gov.uk](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk)

**CQFW**  
CREDIT & QUALIFICATIONS  
FRAMEWORK FOR WALES  
FFRAMWAITH CREDYDAU  
A CHYMWYSTERAU CYMRU  
Ty'r Afon, Bedwas Road, Bedwas,  
Caerphilly CF83 8WT  
Email: [cqfwenquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:cqfwenquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk)  
E-mail: [info@cqfw.net](mailto:info@cqfw.net)

**Údarás Náisiúnta  
Cáilíochtaí na hÉireann  
National Qualifications  
Authority of Ireland**  
The National Qualifications Authority  
of Ireland  
5th Floor, Jervis House, Jervis Street,  
Dublin 1  
Tel: +353 (0) 1 887 1500  
Fax: + 353 (0) 1 887 1595  
E-mail: [info@nqai.ie](mailto:info@nqai.ie)

## Qualifications can cross boundaries – a rough guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland



Main stages of education / employment

Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/fheq

National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland\*

www.qca.org.uk/qualifications  
www.wales.gov.uk, www.ccea.org.uk  
www.qca.org.uk/openquals

Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales

www.cqfw.net

National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland

www.nfq.ie

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

www.sqcf.org.uk

LEVEL

LEVEL

LEVEL

LEVEL

LEVEL

Professional or postgraduate education, research or employment

8 Doctoral Degrees  
7 Master's Degrees, Integrated Master's Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Postgraduate Certificates

8 Vocational Qualifications Level 8  
7 Fellowships, NVQ Level 5, Vocational Qualifications Level 7

8 Doctoral Degrees  
7 Master's Degrees, Integrated Master's Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Postgraduate Certificates

10 Doctoral Degree, Higher Doctorate  
9 Master's Degree, Post-graduate Diploma

12 Professional Development Awards, Doctoral Degrees  
11 SVQ Level 5, Professional Development Awards, Postgraduate Diplomas, Master's Degrees, Integrated Master's Degrees, Postgraduate Certificates,

Higher education  
Advanced skills training

6 Bachelor's Degrees with Honours, Bachelor's Degrees, Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Graduate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates

6 Vocational Qualifications Level 6

6 Bachelor's Degrees with Honours, Bachelor's Degrees, Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Graduate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates

8 Honours Bachelor Degree, Higher Diploma

10 Bachelor's Degrees with Honours, Professional Development Awards, Graduate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates

Entry to professional graduate employment

5 Foundation Degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE), Higher National Diplomas (HND)

5 NVQ Level 4, Higher National Diplomas (HND), Higher National Certificates (HNC), Vocational Qualifications Level 5

5 Foundation Degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE), Higher National Diplomas (HND)

7 Ordinary Bachelor Degree

9 Bachelor's/Ordinary Degrees, Professional Development Awards, SVQ Level 4, Graduate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates  
8 Higher National Diplomas, SVQ Level 4, Professional Development Awards, Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE)

Specialised education and training

4 Higher National Certificates (HNC), Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)

4 Vocational Qualifications Level 4

4 Higher National Certificates (HNC), Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)

6 Advanced Certificate, Higher Certificate

7 Professional Development Awards, Higher National Certificates (HNC), Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE) SVQ Level 3, Advanced Highers,

Qualified/Skilled worker  
Entry to higher education  
Completion of secondary education

The table gives an indication of how you can compare qualifications across national boundaries. Examples of major qualifications at each level are provided. For more detail of the qualifications in another country, you will need to consult the website given at the head of each column.

3 NVQ Level 3, Vocational Qualifications Level 3, GCE AS and A Level, Advanced Diplomas

3 NVQ Level 3, Vocational Qualifications Level 3, GCE AS and A Level, Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification Advanced

5 Level 5 Certificate, Leaving Certificate

6 Highers, SVQ Level 3, Professional Development Awards, National Progression Awards, National Certificates

Progression to skilled employment.  
Continuation of secondary education.

This leaflet is designed to give some information to help you begin this process, for example, by telling you what your qualification, or qualifications you are interested in studying, are broadly comparable to in other countries.

2 NVQ Level 2, Vocational Qualifications Level 2, GCSEs at grade A\*–C, ESOL skills for life, Higher Diplomas, functional skills Level 2 (English, mathematics & ICT)

2 NVQ Level 2, Vocational Qualifications Level 2, Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification Intermediate, GCSEs grade A\*–C

4 Level 4 Certificate, Leaving Certificate

5 Intermediate 2, Credit Standard Grade, SVQ 2, National Progression Awards, National Certificates

Secondary education Initial entry into employment or further education

**Qualifications can cross boundaries**  
– a rough guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland. March 2009.

1 NVQ Level 1, Vocational Qualifications Level 1, GCSEs at grade D–G, ESOL skills for life, Foundation Diplomas, functional skills Level 1 (English, mathematics & ICT)

1 NVQ Level 1, Vocational Qualifications Level 1, GCSEs at grade D–G, Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification Foundation

3 Level 3 Certificate, Junior Certificate

4 Intermediate 1, General Standard Grade, Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) 1, National Progression Awards, National Certificates

Qualifications can be taken at any age in order to continue or return to education or training



\* These levels will also apply to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The QCF will eventually replace the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).