

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.



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



Main stages of education / employment	Qualifications and Credit Framework/National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland* www.ofqual.gov.uk		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		Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/fheq	
	LEVEL		LEVEL		LEVEL		LEVEL		LEVEL	
Professional or postgraduate education, research or employment	8	Vocational Qualifications Level 8	8	Doctoral Degrees	10	Doctoral Degree, Higher Doctorate	12	Professional Development Awards, Doctoral Degrees	8	Doctoral Degrees
	7	Fellowships, NVQ Level 5, Vocational Qualifications Level 7	7	Master's Degrees, Integrated Master's Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Postgraduate Certificates	9	Master's Degree, Post-graduate Diploma	11	SVQ Level 5, Professional Development Awards, Postgraduate Diplomas, Master's Degrees, Integrated Master's Degrees, Postgraduate Certificates,	7	Master's Degrees, Integrated Master's Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Postgraduate Certificates
Higher education Advanced skills training	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	6	Bachelor's Degrees with Honours, Bachelor's Degrees, Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Graduate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates
Entry to professional graduate employment	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	5	Foundation Degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE), Higher National Diplomas (HND)
Specialised education and training	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,	4	Higher National Certificates (HNC), Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)
Qualified/Skilled worker Entry to higher education Completion of secondary education	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	<div>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.</div> <div>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.</div> <div><b>Qualifications can cross boundaries</b> – a rough guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland. July 2009.</div>	
Progression to skilled employment. Continuation of secondary education.	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	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	Entry Level	Entry Level Certificates (sub levels 1–3), ESOL skills for life, functional skills Entry Level (English, mathematics & ICT)	Entry Level	Entry Level Certificate (sub levels 1–3)	2	Level 2 Certificate	3	Access 3, Foundation Standard Grades, National Progression Awards, National Certificates		
					2	Level 2 Certificate	2	Access 2, National Progression Awards, National Certificates		
					1	Level 1 Certificate	1	Access 1		

\* The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) will eventually replace the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

