

## Main stages of education/employment

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

**Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and OfS sector-recognised standards for England (SRS)**  
www.qaa.ac.uk  
www.officeforstudents.org.uk

LEVEL

**Regulated Qualifications Framework for England and Northern Ireland**  
register.ofqual.gov.uk

LEVEL

**Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales**  
www.qualifications.wales  
www.gov.wales/cqfw

LEVEL

**National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland**  
www.qqi.ie

LEVEL

**Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework**  
www.scfq.org.uk

LEVEL

Professional or postgraduate education, research or employment

8 Doctoral Degree

8 Vocational, Technical and Professional Qualifications

8 Doctoral Degree, Vocational Qualifications

10 Doctoral Degree, Higher Doctorate

12 Doctoral Degree, Professional Apprenticeship, Professional Development Award (PDA), Award

Higher education  
Advanced Skills Training

7 Master's Degree, Integrated Master's Degree, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Postgraduate Certificate

7 Vocational, Technical and Professional Qualifications

7 Master's Degree, Vocational Qualifications, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)

9 Master's Degree, Postgraduate Diploma

11 Master's Degree, Integrated Master's Degree, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate, Professional Apprenticeship, Graduate Apprenticeship, PDA, SVQ, Award

Entry to professional graduate employment

6 Bachelor's Degree with Honours, Bachelor's Degree, Level 6 PGCE certificates, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate

6 Vocational, Technical and Professional Qualifications

6 Honours Degree, Vocational Qualifications, Professional Certificate in Education

8 Honours Bachelor Degree, Higher Diploma

10 Bachelor's Degree with Honours, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate, Professional Apprenticeship, Graduate Apprenticeship, PDA, SVQ, Award

Specialised education and training

5 Foundation Degree, Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE), Higher National Diploma (HND)

5 Vocational, Technical and Professional Qualifications, Higher National Diploma (HND)

5 Foundation Degree, Vocational Qualifications, Higher National Diploma (HND)

7 Ordinary Bachelor Degree

9 Bachelor's/Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Apprenticeship, Technical Apprenticeship, PDA, SVQ, Award

Qualified/Skilled worker

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

4 Vocational, Technical and Professional Qualifications, Higher National Certificate (HNC)

4 Higher National Certificate (HNC), Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE), Vocational Qualifications

6 Advanced Certificate, Higher Certificate

8 Higher National Diploma (HND), Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE), Technical Apprenticeship, Higher Apprenticeship, PDA, SVQ, Award

Entry to higher education

3 Technical Level Qualification Access to HE Diploma\*

3 Vocational, Technical and Professional Qualifications, GCE AS and A Level

3 Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales, Vocational Qualifications, AS and A Level, Access to HE

5 Level 5 Certificate, Leaving Certificate

7 Higher National Certificate (HNC), Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE), Modern Apprenticeship, PDA, SVQ, Scottish Baccalaureate, Advanced Higher, Award

Progression to skilled employment

\*The Access to HE Diploma is regulated by QAA but is not part of the FHEQ or part of the OfS's sector recognised standards.

2 Vocational & Technical Qualifications, GCSE at grade A\*-C and grade 9-4, Functional Skills (England), Essential Skills Qualification (NI)

2 Welsh Baccalaureate National SCC, Vocational Qualifications, Essential Skills Wales Qualifications, GCSE at grade A\*-C

4 Level 4 Certificate, Leaving Certificate

6 Higher, Modern Apprenticeship, Foundation Apprenticeship, National Progression Award (NPA), National Certificate, PDA, SVQ, Award

Secondary education. Initial entry into employment or further education

1 Vocational & Technical Qualifications, GCSE at grade D-G and grade 3-1, Functional Skills (England), Essential Skills Qualifications (NI)

1 Welsh Baccalaureate Foundation SCC, Vocational Qualifications, Essential Skills Wales Qualifications, GCSE at grade D-G

3 Level 3 Certificate, Junior Cycle

5 National 5, Modern Apprenticeship, SVQ, NPA, National Certificate, Award

Entry Level

Entry Level Certificate (sub levels 1-3), Functional Skills (England), Essential Skills Qualifications (NI)

Entry Level

Entry Level Qualifications, Essential Skills Qualifications

2 Level 2 Certificate, Junior Cycle

4 National 4, SVQ, NPA, National Certificate, Award

1 Level 1 Certificate, Junior Cycle

3 National 3, NPA, National Certificate, Award

2 National 2, NPA, National Certificate, Award

1 National 1, Award

The table gives an indication of how you can compare qualifications across national boundaries. Examples of major qualifications at each level are provided. For further details of qualifications that are current or no longer available to learners, you will need to consult the website given at the head of each column.

This leaflet is designed to give some information to help you begin the process to compare qualifications across national boundaries, for example, by telling you what your qualification, or qualifications you are interested in studying, are broadly comparable to in UK countries and Ireland.

## Correspondences between UK and Irish frameworks with European qualifications frameworks

Within Europe, two overarching qualifications frameworks exist to which the national qualifications frameworks of the UK and Ireland relate: The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) also known as the Bologna Framework.

**Table 1** shows the correspondence of levels established between national qualifications frameworks and the EQF

| European Qualifications Framework (EQF) | Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and OfS sector-recognised standards for England (SRS) | Regulated Qualifications Framework England/Northern Ireland (RQF) | Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) | The National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland (NFQ IE) | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| 8                                       | 8  | 8   | 8  | 10  | 12  |
| 7                                       | 7  | 7   | 7  | 9   | 11  |
| 6                                       | 6  | 6   | 6  | 8/7   | 10/9  |
| 5                                       | 5/4  | 5/4   | 5/4  | 6   | 8/7   |
| 4                                       |  | 3   | 3  | 5   | 6   |
| 3                                       |  | 2   | 2  | 4   | 5   |
| 2                                       |  | 1   | 1  | 3   | 4   |
| 1                                       |  | E3  | E3   | 2/1   | 3   |
|   |  | E2  | E2   |   | 2   |
|   |  | E1  | E1   |   | 1   |

**Table 2** shows the outcome of verifying the compatibility of higher education frameworks for Scotland (FQHEIS/SCQF), for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and for the NFQ for Ireland (NFQ IE) with the FQ-EHEA

| Typical higher education qualifications within each level | FHEQ and SRS level | FQHEIS/SCQF level | NFQ IE level | Corresponding FQ-EHEA cycle                         |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|---|
| Doctoral degrees  | 8                  | 12                | 10           | Third cycle (end of cycle) qualifications           |
| Master's degrees (including Integrated Master's)          | 7                  | 11                | 9            | Second cycle (end of cycle) qualifications          |
| Postgraduate diplomas                                     |                    |                   |              | Intermediate qualifications within the second cycle |
| Postgraduate certificates                                 |                    |                   |              |   |
| Bachelor's degrees with honours /Honours Bachelor Degrees | 6                  | 10                | 8            | First cycle (end of cycle) qualifications           |
| Irish Higher Diplomas                                     |                    |                   |              |   |
| Bachelor's degrees/ Ordinary Bachelor Degree              |                    | 9                 | 7            | Intermediate qualifications within the first cycle  |
| Graduate diplomas   |                    |                   |              |   |
| Graduate certificates                                     |                    |                   |              |   |
| Foundation Degrees (for example FdA, FdSc)                | 5                  | 8                 | 6            | Short cycle qualifications                          |
| Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE)                      |                    |                   |              |   |
| Higher National Diplomas (HND)                            |                    |                   |              |   |
| Irish Higher Certificates                                 |                    |                   |              |   |
| Higher National Certificates (HNC)                        | 4                  | 7                 |              | Intermediate qualifications within the short cycle  |
| Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)                 |                    |                   |              |   |

For more information on compatibility with these frameworks, see the [European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\)](#) and [ENIC-NARIC](#).