QQI – Who we are and what we do

QQI
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Quality Assurance

Qualifications

QQI AWARD

NFQ
National Framework of Qualifications

naric IRELAND

Recognition

International

Plain English
Approved by NALA

QQI – Who we are and what we do

QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland is an independent State agency responsible for promoting quality and accountability in education and training services in Ireland. It was established in 2012.

Our mission is to:

- promote the enhancement of quality in Ireland's further and higher education and training, and quality assure providers;
- support and promote a qualifications system that benefits learners and other stakeholders.

Our role is to:

- promote, maintain and develop the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), a 10-level framework for the development, recognition and awarding of qualifications in Ireland;

- approve programmes offered at a variety of schools, colleges and further and higher education and training institutions. These programmes lead to qualifications (QQI awards) listed in the NFQ, which are recognised internationally;

- regulate and promote the quality of programmes offered by schools and colleges leading to qualifications in the NFQ for the benefit of learners, employers and other interested parties;

- ensure that providers* offering national qualifications provide a positive, high-quality experience to international learners coming to study in Ireland. We will do this by authorising the International Education Mark (IEM);

- provide academic advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland through a service called NARIC Ireland – the National Academic Recognition Information Centre. We also provide advice on the recognition of Irish qualifications abroad;

- inform the public about quality assured education and training programmes and qualifications through a database of programmes and a register of providers;

- manage a national scheme for the quality assurance of English language services (Accreditation and Coordination of English Language Services - ACELS);

- advise the Minister for Education and Skills about national policy on quality assurance and improvement in education and training.

*Provider refers to any college or institution

QQI - Who we are and what we do

Governance

We are an agency of the Department of Education and Skills. We are governed by a Board of 10 members. Board members are appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills. The Chief Executive is appointed by the Board with the Minister's approval.

Who we work with

QQI works with various national and international organisations and provider representative bodies which include:

- Department of Education and Skills
- HEA – the Higher Education Authority
- SOLAS - The Further Education and Training Authority (An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna)
- ETBI – Education and Training Boards Ireland
- THEA – Technological Higher Education Association
- IUA – Irish Universities Association
- ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- EQF – European Qualifications Framework
- EQAR – European Quality Assurance Register
- EQAVET - European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
- ENIC-NARIC – European Network of Information Centres and National Academic Recognition Information Centres
- MEI - Marketing English in Ireland

We also work with the community and voluntary sector, the independent colleges sector, employer groups and learner groups.

Overview of our services

Quality Assurance

- Develop quality assurance guidelines
- Approve providers' quality assurance procedures
- Validate programmes
- Monitor and review providers

Qualifications

QQI AWARD

- Set standards for education and training
- Award qualifications and issue certificates
- Enable access, transfer and progression
- Recognise qualifications

The National Framework of Qualifications

National Framework of Qualifications

- Maintain the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) as a system of relating different qualification levels to one another
- Promote and develop the NFQ
- Support the implementation of the NFQ

Recognition

naric IRELAND

- Advise on recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland
- Advise on recognition of Irish qualifications abroad

International Education

- Establish a code of practice for providers offering courses to international learners
- Authorise the use of the International Education Mark (IEM), a quality mark for international education.

Quality Assurance

What is quality assurance?

Quality assurance (QA) in education and training is an ongoing process of evaluating the quality of an education system, institution or programme. This involves assessing, monitoring, maintaining and improving quality.

Why is QA so important?

It is in everyone's best interest to ensure that learners completing national qualifications have met the nationally agreed minimum standards for those qualifications. In this way, there can be public confidence in our qualifications system and in the graduates it produces.

What is the role of the provider?

Each provider is responsible for putting systems in place to assure and improve the quality of the education and training programmes they offer. There are common approaches, principles and guidelines that providers can use when developing their quality assurance systems, but every provider must come up with a system that best suits their resources and their learners' needs.

What is QQI's role?

Providers are responsible for developing their internal quality assurance systems, and QQI is the external body that ensures that such systems are in place and that they are effective. We promote and regulate the quality of programmes offered by providers leading to qualifications in the NFQ.

Quality Assurance

How do we externally review quality?

We review providers' quality assurance systems by:

- issuing quality assurance guidelines that highlight areas where they are expected to have quality assurance policies and procedures in place; and

- conducting regular evaluations of how effectively they are implementing those quality policies and procedures.

We also:

- set standards for qualifications;

- collect data on student completion rates; and

- engage with providers in initiatives aimed at supporting the improvement of education programmes and services.

What types of providers does QQI work with?

In addition to public colleges, institutes and the universities we are also responsible for the external quality assurance of some independent private colleges that offer programmes leading to QQI awards. We also manage a national scheme for the quality assurance of English Language Schools.

Any provider who wishes to run a programme leading to a QQI qualification must first have their quality assurance approved by us. This is to make sure that the education and training on offer meets national standards.
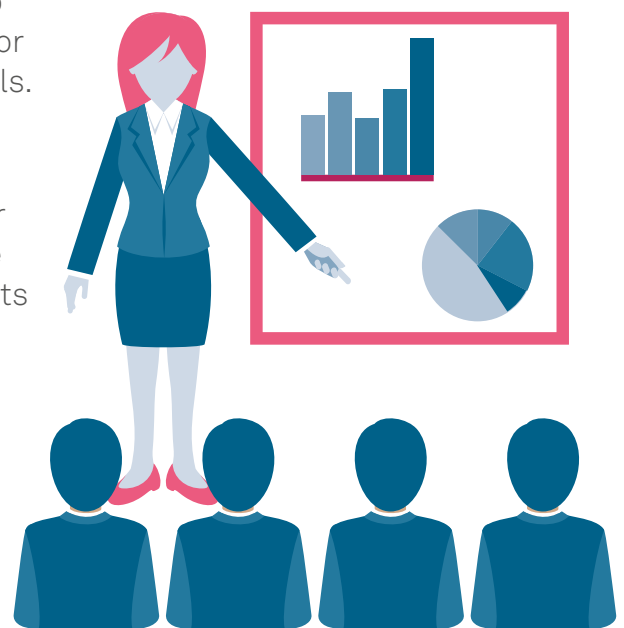
Qualifications

QQI as an awarding body

Providers can apply to QQI to have their programmes of education and training approved so that the programmes can lead to a national qualification (QQI award). This process is called programme validation. We have produced policies and guidance for providers on how to go about having a programme validated.

QQI AWARD

What is the QQI Award?

The QQI Award is the quality-assured qualification awarded for further and higher education and training in Ireland. The QQI award has replaced the certification previously made by FETAC and HETAC*. Learners receive a QQI award when they successfully complete a course at any of the 10 levels of the National Framework of Qualification (NFQ). QQI is also developing qualifications for English language programmes.

> **A major award** – a qualification that shows that an individual has achieved a broad range of skills often having studied many different subjects. A level 5 certificate and the bachelor degree are examples of well-known major awards on the NFQ.
>
> **A non-major award** – a qualification that shows that an individual has gained a set of skills which are useful for a specific task or work activity. Non-major awards can be used, in a flexible way, to achieve a major award.

In 2016, QQI made more than 280,000 awards to learners completing a wide variety of education and training programmes at all levels of the NFQ. Most awards were made at NFQ level 5. Almost 170,000 certificates were issued to students who successfully completed programmes such as further education and training (FET) or post leaving certificate (PLC) courses.

Progression routes into higher education

The Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS) gives learners the opportunity to use their QQI level 5 or 6 major FET award to apply, through the CAO (Central Applications Office), for a place on a higher education course.

Programmes leading to level 5 and level 6 major awards are available through providers who have had their programmes validated with QQI. Please view the Provider and Programmes Directory in QSearch for details of programmes of education and training. **Please note, learners apply directly to providers for programme places.**
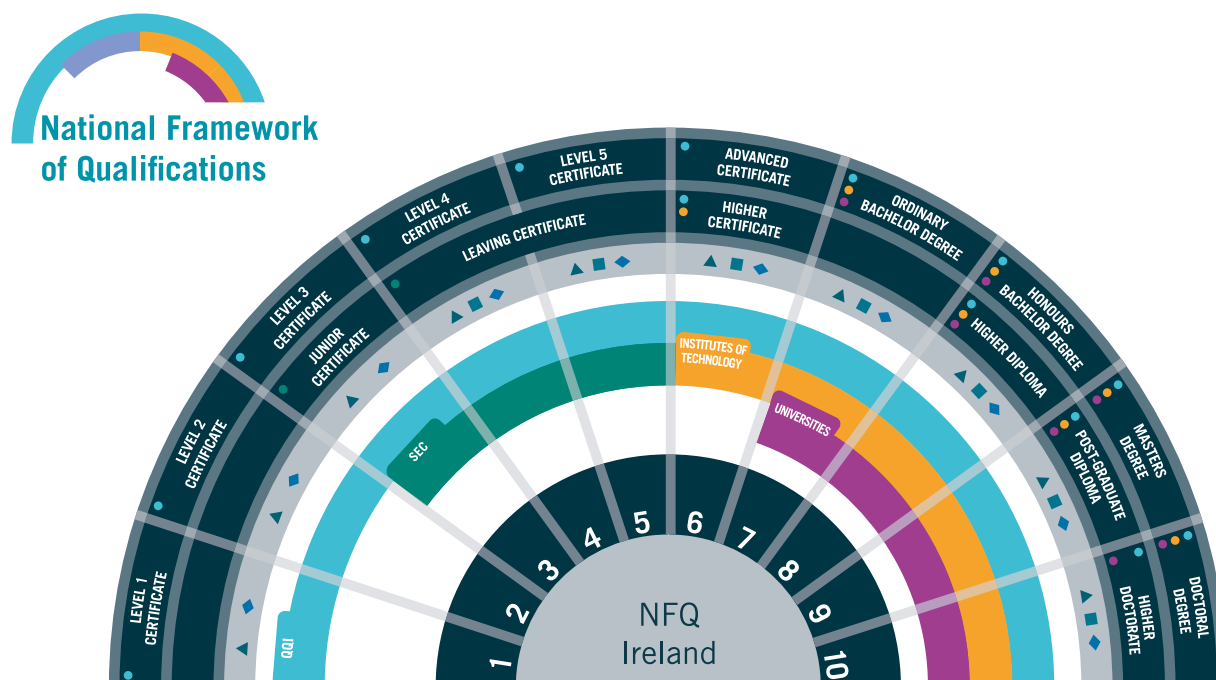
Progression Opportunities into Higher Education
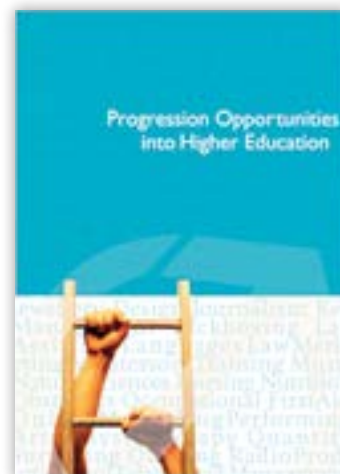
*The awarding bodies FETAC and HETAC no longer exist. Awards on the NFQ made by these former awarding bodies are still recognised.

The National Framework of Qualifications

We are responsible for promoting, maintaining, and developing the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The NFQ is a 10-level framework that includes many different types and sizes of qualifications offered by Irish education providers. Qualifications on the framework include:

- the Junior and Leaving Certificates

- the certificates, diplomas and degrees offered by the universities, institutes of technology and private higher education colleges

- the further education and training qualifications (FET awards) offered by colleges run by the Education and Training Boards.

It is our job to set standards for qualifications in the NFQ and to make sure the NFQ is understood by learners, employers and the general public. The NFQ makes it easier for people to compare and contrast qualifications. In turn, this can help people gain access to employment, and to education and training opportunities.

National Framework of Qualifications

LEVEL 5 CERTIFICATE
ADVANCED CERTIFICATE
LEVEL 4 CERTIFICATE
HIGHER CERTIFICATE
ORDINARY BACHELOR DEGREE
LEAVING CERTIFICATE
LEVEL 3 CERTIFICATE
HONOURS BACHELOR DEGREE
JUNIOR CERTIFICATE
HIGHER DIPLOMA
INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY
LEVEL 2 CERTIFICATE
UNIVERSITIES
MASTERS DEGREE
POST-GRADUATE DIPLOMA
SEC
LEVEL 1 CERTIFICATE
HIGHER DOCTORATE
DOCTORAL DEGREE
QQI

NFQ Ireland
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

AWARDING BODIES

- **Quality and Qualifications Ireland** (QQI) makes awards in further and higher education and training
- **SEC - State Examinations Commission** (*Department of Education and Skills*)
- **Institutes of Technology**
- **Universities**

AWARDS IN THE FRAMEWORK

There are four classes of award in the National Framework of Qualifications:

- **Major Awards:** named in the outer rings, are the principal class of awards made at a level
- **Minor Awards:** are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award
- **Supplemental Awards:** are for learning that is additional to a Major Award
- **Special Purpose Awards:** are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement

European Qualifications Framework

The National Framework of Qualifications - European and beyond

European Qualifications Frameworks (EQF)

Ireland's NFQ sits within a wider European context. Qualifications on Ireland's NFQ can be easily compared to those of other European countries using the 8-level European Qualifications Framework (EQF). By doing this, learners can be assured that their education and training achievements can be recognised both at home and abroad.

For more about how the national and European frameworks relate to each other, see the interactive framework fan diagram on our website.

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) aims to facilitate cooperation between systems, institutions and individual staff and students throughout Europe.

Ireland's NFQ is compatible with the Qualifications Framework (QF) for the EHEA. This means that higher education and training qualifications from Ireland are consistent with the EHEA bachelor, master and doctorate programmes.

Qualifications Frameworks - Going Global
Enhancing the transparency, quality and mobility of qualifications, nationally and internationally.
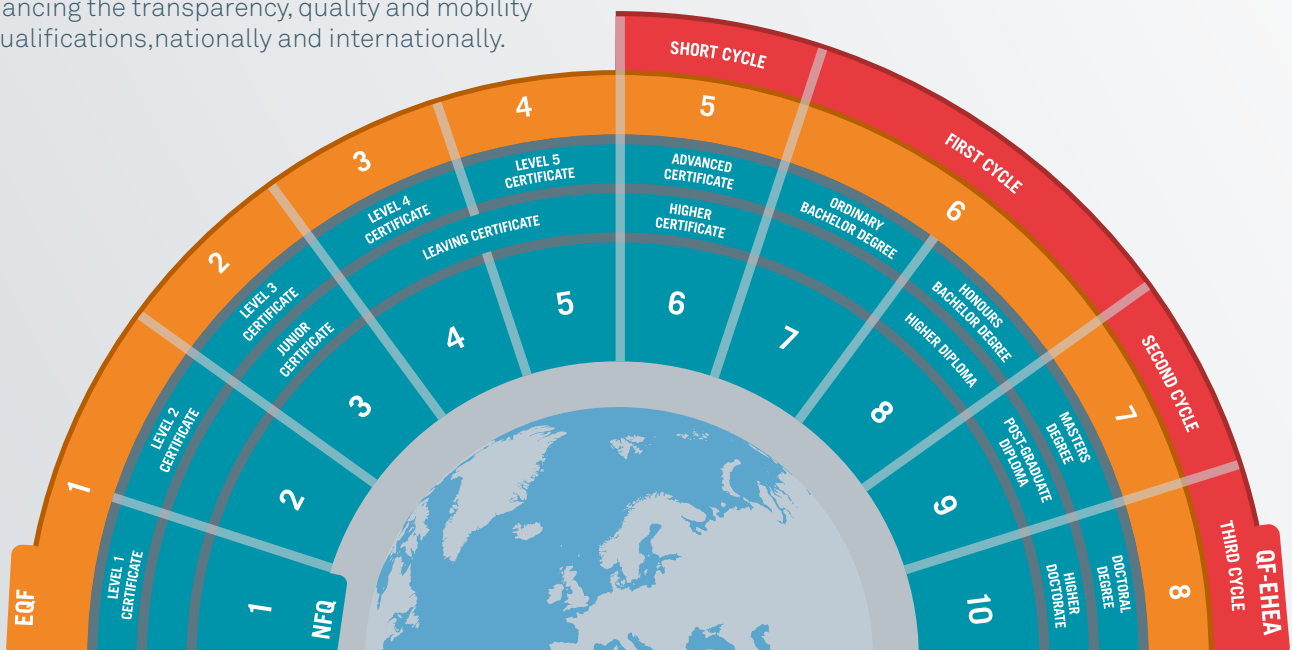
- ● **NFQ** — Irish National Framework of Qualifications
- ● **EQF** — European Qualifications Framework
- ● **QF-EHEA** — Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area

European Qualifications Framework

National Framework of Qualifications

For further information consult: www.nfq.ie   www.QQI.ie
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Recognition

Recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland - NARIC

Hosted by QQI, NARIC Ireland provides free advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland.

The NARIC Ireland qualifications database has details of almost 900 qualifications from over 60 countries. The information we provide is particularly useful to registrars, admissions officers, international officers and employers dealing with foreign applicants for education and training programmes or employment opportunities in Ireland.

We offer advice online in the form of a Comparability Statement which places the foreign qualification in the context of the Irish education and training system.

To find out more about the NARIC Ireland service to go www.naric.ie

Recognition of Irish qualifications abroad

If you wish to have your Irish qualification recognised abroad, you should need to contact the:

- The local ENIC-NARIC office (for higher education and training qualifications - for example, degrees at level 7 and level 8 on the NFQ)

- The local National Reference Point Office (for further education and training, for example a FET certificate at level 5 or an Advanced Certificate at level 6 on the NFQ)

You can also find useful information at www.europass.ie. This is a European initiative hosted by QQI which helps you to organise your documents to make your skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe and further afield. Documents such as the Diploma and Certificate Supplements will be of help to you.

International Education

Code of Practice for providers offering courses to international learners

We are required by law to establish a "Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners" (the Code). This Code sets out expectations relating to the quality of services and supports available to international learners in Ireland. It also requires providers to comply with the London Statement – a code of ethics to be used when engaging with international education recruitment agents.

The Code of Practice highlights the following areas of focus for providers:

- General requirements, including arrangements for protection of enrolled learners
- Marketing, recruitment and admissions practices
- Fees, refunds and subsistence
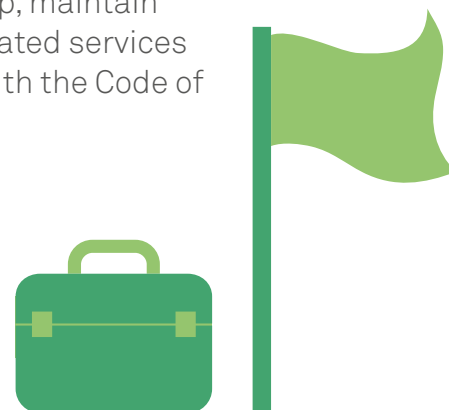- Supports and services for international learners

Any providers running programmes (courses) for international learners must comply with the Code if they want to have those programmes approved by QQI. We encourage providers' staff to be familiar with the Code and the needs of international learners.

International Education Mark (IEM)

QQI is authorised to award the International Education Mark (IEM) to approved providers offering English language and higher education and training courses to international students.

To access the IEM, colleges will first have to establish quality assurance procedures. These procedures should show that a provider is able to develop, maintain and improve the quality of education, training, research and related services for all learners. Providers must also show they are compliant with the Code of Practice (see above).

The Department of Education and Skills is currently revising legislation to enable the introduction of the IEM. QQI will publish information on the introduction of the IEM when it is available.

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www.QQI.ie