

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/Northern Ireland (FHEQ) | Regulated Qualifications Framework England/Northern Ireland (RQF) | Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) | The National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland (NFQ IE) |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 12 | 10 |
| 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 11 | 9 |
| 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 10/9 | 8/7 |
| 5 | 5/4 | 5/4 | 5/4 | 8/7 | 6 |
| 4 | | 3 | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| 3 | | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| 2 | | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| 1 | | E3 | E3 | 3 | 2/1 |
| | | 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 as follows:

| Typical higher education qualifications within each level | FHEQ 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 | | | | |
| Graduate diplomas | 6 | 9 | 7 | Intermediate qualifications within the first cycle |
| 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 | 4 | 7 | | Intermediate qualifications within the short cycle |
| Higher National Certificates (HNC) | | | | |
| Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE) | | | | |

For more information on compatibility with these frameworks see: http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/home_en.htm and www.enic-naric.net.

Scope of Apprenticeships across the UK and Ireland

| Country | Level | Qualification Type |
|------------------|-------|---|
| Scotland | 12 | Professional Apprenticeship, Not yet developed |
| | 11 | Professional Apprenticeship, Graduate Apprenticeship |
| | 10 | Professional Apprenticeship, Graduate Apprenticeship |
| | 9 | Graduate Apprenticeship, Technical Apprenticeship |
| | 8 | Technical Apprenticeship, Higher Apprenticeship |
| Ireland | 7 | Apprenticeship |
| | 6 | Apprenticeship |
| | 5 | Apprenticeship |
| | 4 | Foundation Apprenticeship |
| | 3 | Apprenticeship |
| Wales | 8 | Apprenticeship, Not yet developed |
| | 7 | Apprenticeship |
| | 6 | Apprenticeship |
| | 5 | Apprenticeship |
| | 4 | Apprenticeship |
| Northern Ireland | 8 | Higher Level Apprenticeship, Not yet developed |
| | 7 | Higher Level Apprenticeship |
| | 6 | Higher Level Apprenticeship |
| | 5 | Higher Level Apprenticeship |
| | 4 | Higher Level Apprenticeship |
| England | 8 | Degree Apprenticeship, Higher Apprenticeship, Not yet developed |
| | 7 | Degree Apprenticeship, Higher Apprenticeship |
| | 6 | Degree Apprenticeship, Higher Apprenticeship |
| | 5 | Higher Apprenticeship |
| | 4 | Higher Apprenticeship |
| Scotland | 7 | Apprenticeship |
| | 6 | Apprenticeship |
| | 5 | Apprenticeship |
| | 4 | Apprenticeship |
| | 3 | Apprenticeship |
| Ireland | 7 | Apprenticeship |
| | 6 | Apprenticeship |
| | 5 | Apprenticeship |
| | 4 | Apprenticeship |
| | 3 | Apprenticeship |
| Wales | 5 | Higher Apprenticeship |
| | 4 | Higher Apprenticeship |
| | 3 | Apprenticeship |
| | 2 | Foundation Apprenticeship |
| | 1 | Apprenticeship |
| Northern Ireland | 5 | Higher Level Apprenticeship |
| | 4 | Higher Level Apprenticeship |
| | 3 | Apprenticeships NI |
| | 2 | Traineeships NI |
| | 1 | Apprenticeship |
| England | 5 | Higher Apprenticeship |
| | 4 | Higher Apprenticeship |
| | 3 | Advanced Apprenticeship |
| | 2 | Intermediate Apprenticeship |
| | 1 | Degree Apprenticeship |

Qualifications can Cross Boundaries

A guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland

How to use this leaflet:

- This leaflet provides information that allows you to look at the ways qualifications are organised in the UK and Ireland.
- It shows which qualifications in other countries are broadly comparable in terms of the level of challenge to your qualifications (or those that you are interested in taking).
- On the left side of the principal table you will find the main stages of education or employment - you can find where you are in these stages.
- 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 in terms of the level of challenge, rather than direct equivalences, between qualifications and their levels for each country.
- The back page indicates how UK and Irish qualifications frameworks relate to qualifications frameworks in Europe.
- This leaflet is updated periodically. Check one of the websites for the most up-to-date version.



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| 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 and Northern Ireland www.qaa.ac.uk | Regulated Qualifications Framework for England and Northern Ireland www.ofqual.gov.uk www.ccea.org.uk | Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales www.cqfw.net | National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland www.cqi.ie | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework www.sccqf.org.uk |
|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| | LEVEL | LEVEL | LEVEL | LEVEL | 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, Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), 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 Entry to higher education Completion of secondary education | 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 |
| Progression to skilled employment Continuation of secondary education | 3 Access to HE Diploma* *The Access to HE Diploma is regulated by QAA but is not part of the FHEQ | 3 Vocational, Technical and Professional Qualifications, GCE AS and A Level | 3 Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced, Vocational Qualifications, GCE, 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 |
| Secondary education. Initial entry into employment or further education | 2 Vocational & Technical Qualifications, GCSE at grade A*-C and grade 9-4, Functional Skills (England), Essential Skills Qualification (NI) | 2 Vocational & Technical Qualifications, GCSE at grade A*-C and grade 9-4, Functional Skills (England), Essential Skills Qualification (NI) | 2 Welsh Baccalaureate National, 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 |
| Qualifications can cross boundaries - a guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland, Seventh edition published September 2019 | 1 Vocational & Technical Qualifications, GCSE at grade D-G and grade 3-1, Functional Skills (England), Essential Skills Qualifications (NI) | 1 Vocational & Technical Qualifications, GCSE at grade D-G and grade 3-1, Functional Skills (England), Essential Skills Qualifications (NI) | 1 Welsh Baccalaureate Foundation, Vocational Qualifications, Essential Skills Wales Qualifications, GCSE at grade D-G | 3 Level 3 Certificate, Junior Certificate | 4 National 4, SVQ, NPA, National Certificate Award |
| Qualifications can cross boundaries - a guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland, Seventh edition published September 2019 | Entry Level Entry Level Certificate (sub levels 1-3), Functional Skills (England), Essential Skills Qualifications (NI) | 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 | 3 National 3, NPA, National Certificate, Award |
| | | | | 1 Level 1 Certificate | 2 National 2, NPA, National Certificate, Award 1 National 1, Award |

