

# Qualifications can Cross Boundaries

A guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland

## About this leaflet:

- This leaflet provides information that enables comparability between qualifications across the UK and Ireland, and how those qualifications are organised.
- It shows which qualifications in UK and Ireland are broadly comparable in terms of the level of challenge.
- The principal table shows the main stages of education and employment and the comparable levels of similar kinds of qualification that are used in UK and Ireland that allows for broad comparisons in terms of the level of challenge rather than direct equivalences.
- Tables 1 and 2 illustrate how UK and Irish qualifications frameworks relate to qualifications frameworks in Europe.



Main stages of education/employment	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	Regulated Qualifications Framework for England and Northern Ireland register.ofqual.gov.uk	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales www.qualifications.wales www.gov.wales/cqfw	National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland www.qqi.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	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
Advanced Skills Training	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
Entry to professional graduate employment	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
Specialised education and training	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
Qualified/Skilled worker	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
Entry to higher education					6 Higher, Modern Apprenticeship, Foundation Apprenticeship, National Progression Award (NPA), National Certificate, PDA, SVQ, Award
Completion of secondary education					
Progression to skilled employment		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	5 National 5, Modern Apprenticeship, SVQ, NPA, National Certificate, Award
Continuation of secondary education					
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	4 National 4, SVQ, NPA, National Certificate, Award
		Entry Level	Entry Level	2 Level 2 Certificate, Junior Cycle	3 National 3, NPA, National Certificate, Award
				1 Level 1 Certificate, Junior Cycle	2 National 2, NPA, National Certificate, Award
					1 National 1, Award

\*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.

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 Postgraduate certificates				Intermediate qualifications within the second cycle
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 Graduate certificates		Intermediate qualifications within the first cycle		
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](#).

## Scope of Apprenticeships across the UK and Ireland

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

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