

This process demonstrates that it is possible to compare qualifications frameworks / systems with different numbers of levels. For example, there is a distinct difference between the Ordinary Bachelors Degree at NFQ Level 7 and the Honours Bachelor Degree at NFQ Level 8. However from an international perspective, these NFQ levels are both 'best described' by EQF level 6.

How should stakeholders engage with the EQF?

Stakeholders gain the benefits of EQF by engaging with the National Framework of Qualifications.

The EQF acts as a reference framework for different countries' national systems. The EQF does not replace national systems and does not include individual qualifications. Levels of the NFQ are referenced to levels of the EQF as illustrated.



What about the 'Bologna Framework'?

The EQF is compatible with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area ('Bologna Framework'). There is clear cross referencing of EQF levels 5 to 8 with the Bologna cycle descriptors.

EHEA Framework (Bologna)	EQF levels	NFQ Levels	NFQ Major Award-types
	1	1	Level 1 Certificate
		2	Level 2 Certificate
	2	3	Level 3 Certificate, Junior Certificate
	3	4	Level 4 Certificate, Leaving Certificate
	4	5	Level 5 Certificate, Leaving Certificate
Short Cycle within First Cycle	5	6	Advanced Certificate (FET award); Higher Certificate (HET award)
First Cycle	6	7	Ordinary Bachelors Degree
		8	Honours Bachelor Degree, Higher Diploma
Second Cycle	7	9	Masters Degree, Post-Graduate Diploma
Third Cycle	8	10	Doctoral Degree, Higher Doctorate

Ireland verified the compatibility of the NFQ with the Bologna Framework in 2006. See http://www.nqai.ie/interdev_bologna.html for further details. The outcomes of comparing the NFQ to each of the European overarching frameworks can be seen in this table.



European Qualifications Framework

What is the European Qualifications Framework?

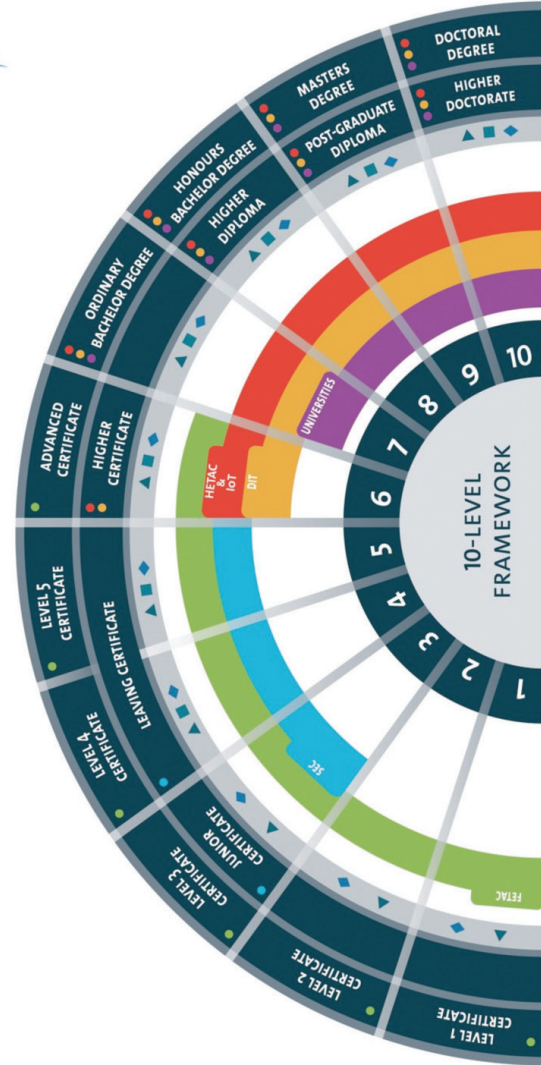
The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is an overarching qualifications framework which links different countries' qualifications frameworks together. It acts as a translation device to make qualifications easier to understand across different countries and systems in Europe. Its main aim is to help people moving from one country to another for work, or to continue their education or training. If a country does not have a national qualifications framework, the qualifications system can still be linked to the EQF.



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NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS

Údarás Náisiúnta
Cáilíochtaí na hÉireann
National Qualifications
Authority of Ireland



AWARDING BODIES

FEAC - Further Education and Training Awards Council
SEC - State Examinations Commission (Department of Education & Science)
HEAC - Higher Education and Training Awards Council
IOT - Institutes of Technology (make their own awards at specified levels under Designated Authority from HEAC)
DIT - Dublin Institute of Technology
Universities

AWARDS IN THE FRAMEWORK

There are four types of award in the National Framework of Qualifications:
Major Awards: 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



For further information consult: www.nfq.ie

For further information consult: www.nfq.ie www.qualrec.ie

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Benefits of the EQF

For employers and education or training providers, the EQF will make it easier to understand qualifications from other European countries.

Learners or workers moving from one country to another will also gain from the EQF.

- Individuals coming to Ireland from other countries benefit from increased understanding of their qualifications, for further studies or employment
- Individuals from Ireland benefit from the same increased understanding in other countries.

In this way, the EQF supports individuals' **mobility** and **lifelong learning**.

The greatest benefits of the EQF for individuals will be realised when many countries have referenced their national qualifications systems to the EQF. Most European countries intend to do this during 2011-2012.

Based on Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes describe what a learner knows, understands and can do. This means an award at a particular level can be achieved through a variety of different learning experiences, in different institutions, during work-based learning, and over different time periods.

The NFQ is based on the learning outcomes of knowledge, know-how and skill and competence. The EQF is also based on learning outcomes. These are knowledge, skill and competence.

When is this happening?

All countries in the EU have decided to implement the EQF. There are two main stages to this process. The first stage is to explain how different levels of the national qualifications framework / system can be compared to levels of the EQF. Ireland completed the process to compare the NFQ to the EQF in June 2009.

See http://www.nqai.ie/interdev_eqf.html for further details.

The second stage is the introduction of a reference to the EQF in all new Certificate and Diploma Supplements. This should be in place by 2012.

What is the relationship between the NFQ and the EQF?

Ireland completed the first stage of implementing the EQF in June 2009. The results of this stage - comparing the levels of the NFQ and the EQF - can be seen below:

EQF Levels	Irish NFQ Levels
1	1
	2
2	3
3	4
4	5
5	6
6	7
	8
7	9
8	10