National
Framework
of Qualifications

Creatoibre Náisiúnta na gCáilíochtaí

National Qualifications
Authority of Ireland

Údarás Náisiúnta
Cáilíochtaí na hÉireann

*A framework for the development, recognition
and award of qualifications in Ireland*

DETERMINATIONS
FOR THE OUTLINE NATIONAL
FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS
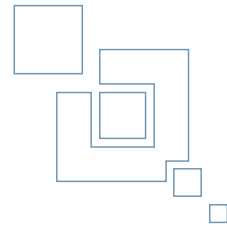
Outline National Framework of Qualifications

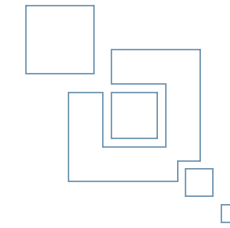## – Determinations made by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Index

Introduction

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland was established on a statutory basis, under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, on 26 February, 2001.

The two principal tasks of the Authority are to:

- establish and maintain a National Framework of Qualifications
- promote and facilitate access, transfer and progression.

The achievement of these objects will require many significant changes in the systems and structures of Irish education and training. Acknowledging the challenge of the changes involved, the Authority has adopted a consultation-based development process to enable stakeholders to work through these changes, ensuring that their interests and views are taken into account in developing the Framework. The Authority is now at a key time in its work. Over the past two years it has been consulting with stakeholders and developing its policy approach. The Authority has now finalised the Outline National Framework of Qualifications and determined its policies on access, transfer and progression.

The implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications will bring about significant changes in education and training in Ireland. Through the consultation-based development process, the aim has been to reach as much broad consensus as possible with regard to these changes. At the time of publication, the Authority is exploring the concerns of some stakeholders in relation to some of the titles of the initial major award-types. It should be noted that the Authority has built a review dimension into the policies and criteria for the Framework. In particular, there is an undertaking to review the determination made in relation to the differentiation of further and higher education and training, within a three-year period.
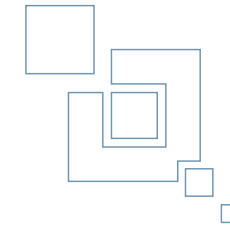
This paper brings together in a single document the determinations made by the Authority over the period October 2002 – April 2003 in relation to the outline framework of qualifications. These determinations were made under section 7(a) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999. The policies and criteria adopted by the Authority in relation to the development of the Framework are published in a separate companion document to this paper, *Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications* (October 2003).

Policies and criteria of the Authority

In April 2002 the Authority published a document, *Towards a National Framework of Qualifications – Establishment of Policies and Criteria*. This presented the first determinations of the Authority following the publication in November 2001 of its Discussion Document on the Framework and the associated public consultation. The Qualifications Act requires the Authority to establish and maintain a framework of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill and competence. Building on this, the Authority has defined the National Framework of Qualifications to be

> "The single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards."

The April 2002 document sets out the core policies and criteria adopted by the Authority for the development of the National Framework of Qualifications. These encompass

- vision and principles
- process guidelines
- a definition of knowledge, skill and competence
- the basic architecture of the Framework – design criteria and development policies.

The development of the framework of qualifications is set in the context of a vision for the recognition of learning and is in line with the broad national and European policy of promoting a lifelong learning society.

Further policies and criteria in relation to the Framework were determined by the Authority at the end of October

2002. These included policies for the division of Knowledge, Skill and Competence into sub-strands, for the definition of Levels and Level Indicators, and for the determination of award-types.

Finally, the Authority determined additional policies and criteria in February-March 2003, which complete the policy-base of the Outline National Framework of Qualifications. These included policies for the placement of existing and former awards in the Framework.

The full set of these further policies and criteria determined by the Authority for the development of the National Framework of Qualifications is summarised in a companion to this paper, *Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications* (October 2003).

Determinations made by the Authority to define the Outline National Framework of Qualifications
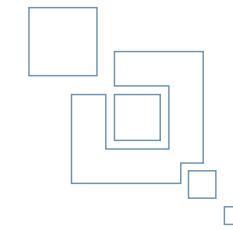
Basic structure

The Authority has determined that the Framework will be based on levels. Each level will have a specified level indicator. At each level in the Framework there will be one, or more, award-types. Each award-type will have its own award-type descriptor. It is the responsibility of the Authority to develop these level indicators and award-type descriptors. For each award-type a wide range of named awards will be developed. It is the responsibility of awarding bodies to develop named awards.

Framework structure

The full range of policies and criteria setting out the basic architecture for the National Framework of Qualifications is contained in the April 2002 paper, *Towards a National Framework of Qualifications – Establishment of Policies* and *Criteria*, in the section on *Criteria for the Design of the Framework*.
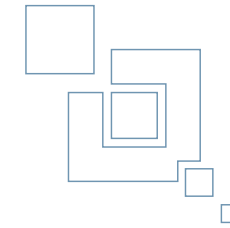
Levels and level indicators

The Authority has determined that the Framework will consist of 10 levels.

The Framework levels set out a range of standards of knowledge, skill and competence. Eight sub-strands of knowledge skill and competence have been defined by the Authority. These are set out in detail in the policies and criteria companion paper.

The sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competence have been used to generate level indicators. Level indicators are broad descriptions of learning outcomes at a given level, in terms of the eight sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competence. The Authority has now determined a 10-Level grid of level indicators. The grid shows how the outcomes in each of the eight sub-strands progress across the ten levels. The level indicators set out in this grid are intended to enable the Authority to place award-types at appropriate levels in the Framework, based on the mix of learning outcomes they contain.

The 10-Level grid of level indicators is attached at Addendum 1.

A synopsis of the outcomes at each level in the Framework is attached at Addendum 2. The synopsis, while not being part of the formal determination of the Authority, is useful in understanding the nature of the learning outcomes at each level.

Award-types

Award-types are central to the Framework. An award-type is a class of named awards sharing common features and level. At each level in the Framework there will be at least one award-type. Each award-type will have its own award-type descriptor. For each award-type a wide range of named awards will be developed. The Authority has set out that it is through the determination of award-types and descriptors for these that the Authority will set the overall standards of the awards of the two awards Councils and the Dublin Institute of Technology. While the Authority does not set the standards of the awards of the Department of Education and Science and the universities, it is through the award-types and their descriptors that these awards can be accommodated on an agreed basis in the Framework.

The Authority has determined policies and criteria for determining award-types. The Framework is intended to enable the recognition of all learning achievements and the range of award-types provided will have to facilitate this inclusiveness. Not all combinations of achievement, at a given level, are of equal importance. Accordingly, the Authority has determined four classes of award-types:

- Major award-types
- Minor award-type
- Special-purpose award-types
- Supplemental award-types

Some award-types fulfil a broader range of purposes and these are labelled major award-types. Other, more limited or specialised recognition needs are met by minor, supplemental and special-purpose award-types. The Authority's determinations in relation to award-types, and the policy basis for these determinations, are further elaborated in the policies and criteria companion paper.

Initial major award-types

The Authority has determined the initial major award-types for each of the ten levels in the Framework, as follows:

10	Doctoral Degree
9	Masters Degree and Post-graduate Diploma
8	Honours Bachelor Degree and Higher Diploma
7	Ordinary Bachelor Degree
6	Advanced Certificate and Higher Certificate
5	Level 5 Certificate
4/5	Leaving Certificate
4	Level 4 Certificate
3	Level 3 Certificate and Junior Certificate
2	Level 2 Certificate
1	Level 1 Certificate

Note:

- The titles of the initial major award-types are part of the Framework determinations made by the Authority. The Authority has further decided that the two awards Councils should implement the titles as determined, and the universities and the Dublin Institute of Technology should be requested to implement the titles.
- Advanced Certificate is the title of the further education and training award-type at level 6, and Higher Certificate is the title of the higher education and training award-type at that level.

The outline framework will therefore contain 15 award-types. A diagram is provided at Addendum 3, illustrating the structure of the Framework and how the initial set of 15 major award-types are placed at the various levels. This diagram, while not being part of the formal determination of the Authority, is useful in understanding the Framework.

The Authority has determined descriptors for the award-types. The descriptors are attached at Addendum 4. It should be noted that these award-types form an initial set only; the set may be developed further, added to, or amended in the future, as required for the continued development of the Framework.

The award-type descriptors for the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate are defined to enable the inclusion of these awards in the Framework. These descriptors are therefore indicative rather than prescriptive in their intent. For the purpose of inclusion in the Framework,

- the Junior Certificate is defined on the basis of published aims, objectives and outcomes associated with the Junior Certificate as an educational programme, incorporating the full spectrum of options and subjects. These are consistent with the indicators at Level 3 of the Framework.
- the Leaving Certificate is treated as a single award, incorporating the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), the Leaving Certificate Established and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The published, general aims, objectives and outcomes associated with the various Leaving Certificate options, in their totality, are consistent with the level indicators at Levels 4 and 5 of the Framework so the award is viewed as involving learning outcomes and standards spanning these levels.

Awards at Levels 7 to 10 will be made by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the Dublin Institute of Technology and the universities. At Level 6, the Advanced Certificate award will be made by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), and the Higher Certificate award will be made by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and

the Dublin Institute of Technology. At Levels 3 to 5 awards will be made by the Department of Education and Science (State Examinations Commission). At Level 5 and below, the Further Education and Training Awards Council will make awards.

Differentiation of further and higher education and training

Concerning the differentiation between further and higher education and training under section 10 of the Act, the Authority has determined the following with regard to the awards Councils:

- Further education and training awards are those made by the Further Education and Training Awards Council at Levels 1 to 6
- Higher education and training awards are those made by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council at Levels 6 to 10
- The differentiation at Level 6 will relate to the major award-type descriptor for each respective Council's award.

The differentiation of award-types will relate to standards of knowledge, skill and competence. These standards will be set through the descriptors for the award-types. The key differentiating factor between the two is the emphasis that each places on particular learning outcomes in the descriptors. The Authority has decided that the effectiveness of the differentiation should be reviewed within three years.

Standards of awards of FETAC, HETAC and the DIT

The Authority has determined that it is through the descriptors for the award-types that the Authority will set the overall standards of the awards of the two awards Councils and the Dublin Institute of Technology and that by determining award-type descriptors the overall standards are, accordingly, now set.

It should be noted that the Authority has no role in setting the standards of the awards of the Department of Education and Science and the universities. However, it is through the award-types and their descriptors that these awards can be accommodated on an agreed basis in the Framework.
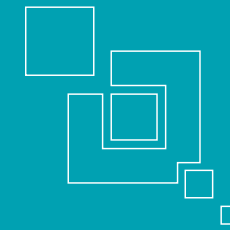
Addenda

1   10-level grid of level indicators

2   Synopsis of level outcomes

3   Diagram: Outline National Framework of Qualifications

4   Award-type descriptors: A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J,K,L,M,N,O
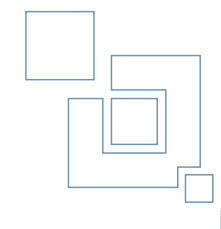
Addendum 1

Ten-level grid of level indicators

This Addendum forms part of the determination of the National Framework of Qualifications under section 7(a) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999.

National Framework *of* Qualifications — GRID OF LEVEL INDICATORS

| Sub-strand	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 6	LEVEL 7	LEVEL 8	LEVEL 9	LEVEL 10
Knowledge *Breadth*	Elementary knowledge.	Knowledge that is narrow in range.	Knowledge moderately broad in range.	Broad range of knowledge.	Broad range of knowledge.	Specialised knowledge of a broad area.	Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas.	An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning.	A systematic understanding of knowledge, at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning.	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of learning.
Knowledge *Kind*	Demonstrable by recognition or recall.	Concrete in reference and basic in comprehension.	Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements.	Mainly concrete in reference and with some elements of abstraction or theory.	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant depth in some areas.	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory.	Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas.	Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s).	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning.	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers.
Know-How & Skill *Range*	Demonstrate basic practical skills, and carry out directed activity using basic tools.	Demonstrate limited range of basic practical skills, including the use of relevant tools.	Demonstrate a limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools.	Demonstrate a moderate range of practical and cognitive skills and tools.	Demonstrate a broad range of specialised skills and tools.	Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools.	Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study.	Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity.	Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry.	Demonstrate a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials which are associated with a field of learning; develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials.
Know-How & Skill *Selectivity*	Perform processes that are repetitive and predictable.	Perform a sequence of routine tasks given clear direction.	Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems.	Select from a range of procedures and apply known solutions to a variety of predictable problems.	Evaluate and use information to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to varied unfamiliar problems.	Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems.	Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes.	Excercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing.	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques.	Respond to abstract problems that expand and redefine existing procedural knowledge.
Competence *Context*	Act in closely defined and highly structured contexts.	Act in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts.	Act within a limited range of contexts.	Act in familiar and unfamiliar contexts.	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs; identify and apply skill and knowledge to a wide variety of contexts.	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts involving creative and non-routine activities; transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical or creative skills to a range of contexts.	Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts.	Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts.	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill-defined contexts.	Excercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts.
Competence *Role*	Act in a limited range of roles.	Act in a range of roles under direction.	Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogenous groups.	Act with considerable amount of responsibility and autonomy.	Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities; join and function within multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups.	Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for the work of others and/or for allocation of resources; form, and function within, multiple complex and heterogeneous groups.	Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work.	Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups.	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity.	Communicate results of research and innovation to peers; engage in critical dialogue; lead and originate complex social processes.
Competence *Learning to Learn*	Learn to sequence learning tasks; learn to access and use a range of learning resources.	Learn to learn in a disciplined manner in a well-structured and supervised environment.	Learn to learn within a managed environment.	Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a supervised environment.	Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a managed environment.	Learn to evaluate own learning and identify needs within a structured learning environment; assist others in identifying learning needs.	Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group.	Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically.	Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development.	Learn to critique the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.
Competence *Insight*	Begin to demonstrate awareness of independent role for self.	Demonstrate awareness of independent role for self.	Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour.	Assume partial responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour.	Assume full responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour.	Express an internalised, personal world view, reflecting engagement with others.	Express an internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others.	Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others.	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them.	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and lead action to change them.

This 10-Level grid of Level Indicators forms part of the determination of the National Framework of Qualifications under Section 7(a) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999

Note: The outcomes at each level include those of all the lower levels in the same sub-strand.
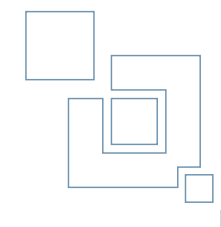
Addendum 2

Synopsis of level outcomes

This synopsis, while not being part of the formal determination of the Authority, is useful in understanding the nature of the learning outcomes at each level.

Level 1

The learning outcomes relate to the performance of basic tasks in a controlled environment under supervision and the display of an ability to learn information and basic repetitive skills, as well as to sequence learning tasks. Literacy and numeracy achievements would correspond to those measured at the initial levels of international assessment systems.

Level 2

Key outcomes at this level are basic literacy and numeracy and the introduction to systematic learning. Learning outcomes relate to the ability to learn new skills and knowledge in a supervised environment and to carry out routine work under direction. Learning outcomes at this level are typically developmental rather than geared towards a specific occupation.

Level 3

Learning outcomes at this level relate to a low volume of practical capability and of knowledge of theory. The outcomes relate to the performance of relatively simple work and may be fairly quickly acquired. Outcomes at this level may also confer a minimum employability for low skilled occupations and include functional literacy and numeracy.

Level 4

Independence is the hallmark of this level. Learning outcomes at this level correspond to a growing sense of
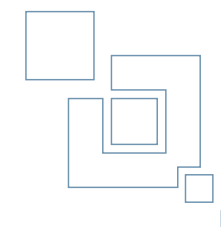
responsibility for participating in public life and shaping one's own life. The outcomes at this level would be associated with first-time entry to many occupational sectors.

Level 5

Learning outcomes at this level include a broad range of skills that require some theoretical understanding. The outcomes may relate to engaging in a specific activity, with the capacity to use the instruments and techniques relating to an occupation. They are associated with work being undertaken independently, subject to general direction.

Level 6

Learning outcomes at this level include a comprehensive range of skills which may be vocationally-specific and/or of a general supervisory nature, and require detailed theoretical understanding. The outcomes also provide for a particular focus on learning skills. The outcomes relate to working in a generally autonomous way to assume design and/or management and/or administrative responsibilities. Occupations at this level would include higher craft, junior technician and supervisor.

Level 7

Learning outcomes at this level relate to knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles in a field of study and the application of those principles in different contexts. This level includes knowledge of methods of enquiry and the ability to critically evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. The outcomes include an understanding of the limits of the knowledge acquired and how this influences analyses and interpretations in a work context. Outcomes at this level would be appropriate to the upper end of many technical occupations and would include higher technicians, some restricted professionals and junior management.
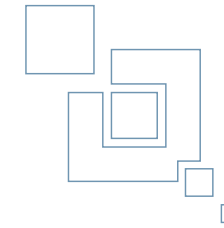
Level 8

Innovation is a key feature of learning outcomes at this level. Learning outcomes at this level relate to being at the forefront of a field of learning in terms of knowledge and understanding. The outcomes include an awareness of the boundaries of the learning in the field and the preparation required to push back those boundaries through further learning. The outcomes relate to adaptability, flexibility, ability to cope with change and ability to exercise initiative and solve problems within their field of study. In a number of applied fields the outcomes are those linked with the independent, knowledge-based professional. In other fields the outcomes are linked with those of a generalist and would normally be appropriate to management positions.

Level 9

Learning outcomes at this level relate to the demonstration of knowledge and understanding which is the forefront of a field of learning. The outcomes relate to the application of knowledge, understanding and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar contexts related to a field of study. The outcomes are associated with an ability to integrate knowledge, handle complexity and formulate judgements. Outcomes associated with this level would link with employment as a senior professional or manager with responsibility for the work outputs of teams.

Level 10

Learning outcomes at this level relate to the discovery and development of new knowledge and skills and delivering findings at the frontiers of knowledge and application. Further outcomes at this level relate to specialist skills and transferable skills required for managing such as the abilities to critique and develop organisational structures and initiate change.

Addendum 3

Outline National Framework of
Qualifications:
levels, award-types and awarding bodies

*This illustration, while not being part of the formal
determination of the Authority, is useful in understanding
the structure of the Framework and how the initial set of 15
major award-types are placed at the various levels.*

National Framework of Qualifications
INITIAL MAJOR AWARD-TYPES AND AWARDING BODIES

KEY
- FETAC - Further Education and Training Awards Council
- SEC - State Examinations Commission *(Dept. of Education & Science)*
- HETAC - Higher Education and Training Awards Council
- DIT - Dublin Institute of Technology
- Universities
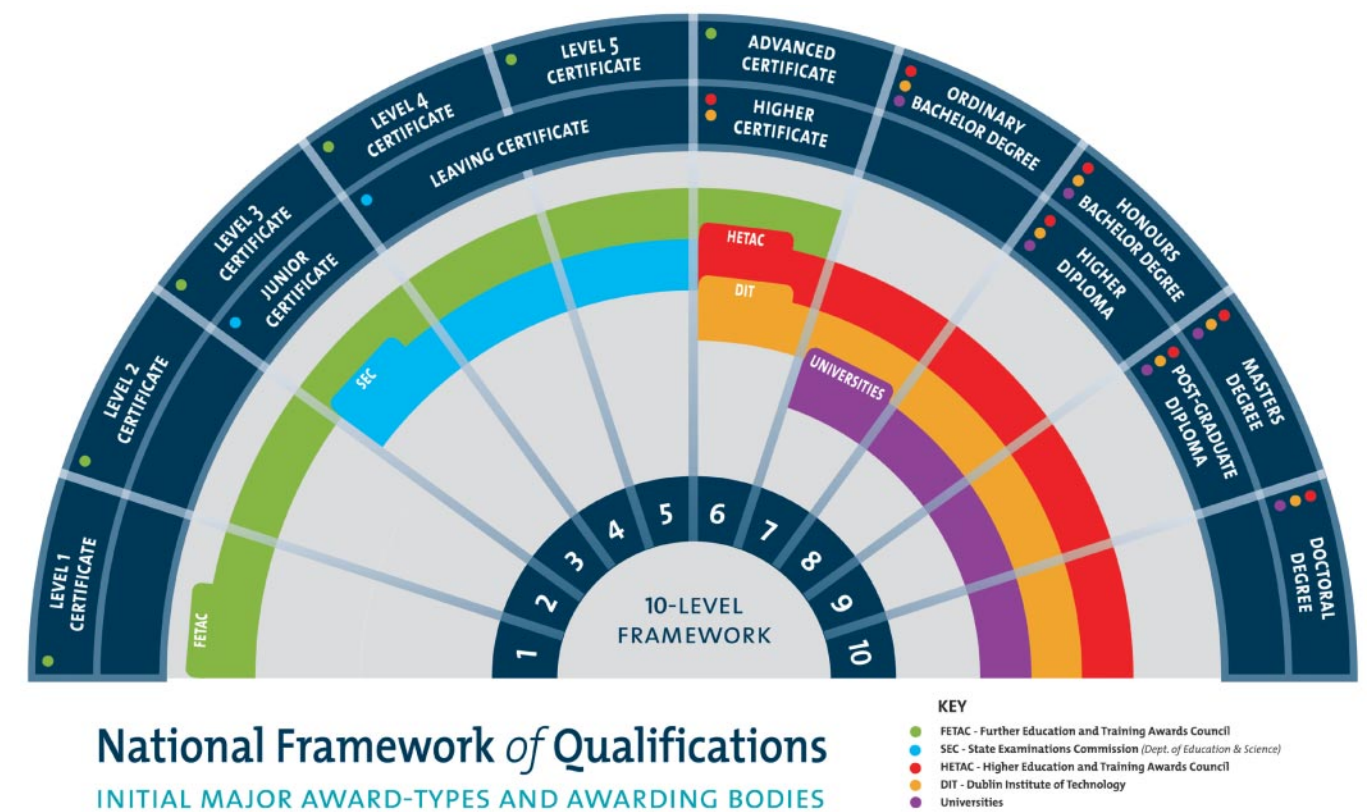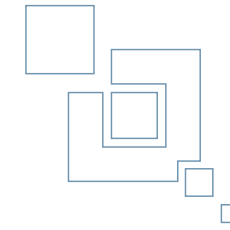
Addendum 4

This Addendum forms part of the determination of the National Framework of Qualifications under section 7(a) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999.

Award-type descriptors

Descriptors are attached for award-types **A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J,K,L,M,N** and **O**

General notes:

- The titles used for the award-type descriptors are determinations made by the Authority.
- The descriptors are all for general purpose major awards, and the purpose descriptor is common for all award-types in the set.
- The level defined for each award-type refers to the ten-level grid of level indicators as determined by the Authority.
- The volume descriptor is based on an initial general understanding of small, medium and large.
- The sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competence defined for each descriptor are in each case taken from the ten-level grid of level indicators.
- Progression and transfer possibilities listed for each descriptor are those typically associated with the particular award-type: the listing is intended to describe possibilities rather than to be prescriptive or exhaustive. In accordance with the policies of the Authority in relation to Access, Transfer and Progression*, the aim will be that the framework concept itself will greatly facilitate access, transfer and progression. It is also of note that, for each descriptor, transfer should generally be possible from a given named award to a programme leading to some other named award of the same award-type. This overall approach does not imply entitlement to a programme place, which may be limited by factors of supply and demand.

Policies, Actions and Procedures for the Promotion and Facilitation of Access, Transfer and Progression, October 2003.

- Award-type descriptors **D** and **F** are defined to enable the inclusion in the Framework of the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate awards. These descriptors are therefore indicative rather than prescriptive in their intent. For the purpose of inclusion in the Framework,
  - the Junior Certificate is defined on the basis of published aims, objectives and outcomes associated with the Junior Certificate as an educational programme, incorporating the full spectrum of options and subjects. These are consistent with the indicators at Level 3 of the Framework.
  - the Leaving Certificate is treated as a single award, incorporating the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), the Leaving Certificate Established and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The published, general aims, objectives and outcomes associated with the various Leaving Certificate options, in their totality, are consistent with the level indicators at Levels 4 and 5 of the Framework so the award is viewed as involving learning outcomes and standards spanning these levels.

AWARD-TYPE DESCRIPTOR 'A'

Title	Level 1 Certificate
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	1
Volume	Small
Knowledge - breadth	Elementary Knowledge
Knowledge -kind	Demonstrable by recognition or recall
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate basic practical skills, and carry out directed activity using basic tools
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Perform processes that are repetitive and predictable
Competence -context	Act in closely defined and highly structured contexts
Competence -role	Act in a limited range of roles
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to sequence learning tasks; learn to access and use a range of learning resources
Competence -insight	Begin to demonstrate awareness of independent role for self
Progression & transfer	Progression to programme leading to a Level 2 Certificate, or at a higher level if appropriate.
Articulation	

Title	Level 2 Certificate
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	2
Volume	Medium
Knowledge - breadth	Knowledge that is narrow in range
Knowledge -kind	Concrete in reference and basic in comprehension
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate limited range of basic practical skills, including the use of relevant tools
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Perform a sequence of routine tasks given clear direction
Competence -context	Act in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts
Competence -role	Act in a range of roles under direction
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to learn in a disciplined manner in a well-structured and supervised environment
Competence -insight	Demonstrate awareness of independent role for self
Progression & transfer	Progression to programme leading to a Level 3 Certificate, or at a higher level if appropriate.
Articulation	

Title	Level 3 Certificate
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	3
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	Knowledge moderately broad in range
Knowledge -kind	Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate a limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems
Competence -context	Act within a limited range of contexts
Competence -role	Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogeneous groups
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to learn within a managed environment
Competence -insight	Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour
Progression & transfer	Progression to programme leading to a Level 4 Certificate, or at a higher level if appropriate.
Articulation	

Title	Junior Certificate.
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	3
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	• Knowledge moderately broad in range.
Knowledge -kind	• Mainly concrete in reference. • Some comprehension of relationships between knowledge elements.
Know-how and skill -range	• Demonstrate a limited range of skills and tools in various domains of activity - artistic, intellectual, scientific, physical and practical.
Know-how and skill -selectivity	• Choose from a limited range of varied procedures. • Apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems.
Competence -context	• Act within a limited range of contexts.
Competence -role	• Act under direction with limited autonomy. • Function within familiar homogeneous groups.
Competence -learning to learn	• Learn to learn within a managed environment.
Competence -insight	• Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour.
Progression & transfer	• Progression to programme leading to Leaving Certificate. • Progression to programme leading to Level 4 Certificate, or at a higher level.
Articulation	

Title	Level 4 Certificate
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	4
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	Broad range of knowledge
Knowledge -kind	Mainly concrete in reference and with some elements of abstraction or theory
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate a moderate range of practical and cognitive skills and tools
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Select from a range of procedures and apply known solutions to a variety of predictable problems
Competence -context	Act in familiar and unfamiliar contexts
Competence -role	Act with considerable amount of responsibility and autonomy
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a supervised environment
Competence -insight	Assume partial responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour
Progression & transfer	Progression to programme leading to a Level 5 Certificate, or at a higher level if appropriate.
Articulation	

AWARD-TYPE DESCRIPTOR 'F'

Title	Leaving Certificate
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	4/5
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	• Broad range of knowledge.
Knowledge -kind	• Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking with significant depth in some areas. • Some underpinning theory.
Know-how and skill -range	• Demonstrate a broad range of cognitive and practical skills, and tools.
Know-how and skill -selectivity	• Select from a range of procedures and apply known solutions to a variety of predictable problems. • Evaluate and use information to plan and develop investigative strategies.
Competence -context	• Identify and apply skill and knowledge to a moderately broad range of contexts. • Take responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.
Competence -role	• Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities. • Function within familiar homogeneous groups.
Competence -learning to learn	• Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a managed environment.
Competence -insight	• Assume responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour.
Progression & transfer	• Progression to programme leading to a further education and training award at level 5, or at a higher level. • Progression to programme leading to a higher education and training award at level 6, or at a higher level.
Articulation	

The Leaving Certificate is typically awarded following a two-year full-time programme of education prescribed by the Department of Education and Science.

AWARD-TYPE DESCRIPTOR 'G'

Title	Level 5 Certificate
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	5
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	Broad range of knowledge.
Knowledge -kind	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant depth in some areas
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate a broad range of specialised skills and tools
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Evaluate and use information to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to varied unfamiliar problems
Competence -context	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs; identify and apply skill and knowledge to a wide variety of contexts
Competence -role	Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities; join and function within multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a managed environment
Competence -insight	Assume full responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour
Progression & transfer	Progression to a programme leading to an Advanced Certificate or a higher education and training award at Level 6, 7 or 8
Articulation	

Title	Advanced Certificate
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	6
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	Specialised knowledge of a broad area
Knowledge -kind	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant depth in some areas
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems
Competence -context	Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts
Competence -role	Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for the work of others and/or for the allocation of resources; form, and function within, multiple complex and heterogeneous groups
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a managed environment
Competence -insight	Express an internalised, personal world view, reflecting engagement with others
Progression & transfer	Transfer to a programme leading to a Higher Certificate (award-type I). Progression to a programme leading to an Ordinary Bachelor Degree (award-type J) or to an Honours Bachelor Degree (award-type K).
Articulation	

Title	Higher Certificate
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	6
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	Specialised knowledge of a broad area
Knowledge -kind	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems
Competence -context	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs; identify and apply skill and knowledge to a wide variety of contexts
Competence -role	Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for the work of others and/or for the allocation of resources; form, and function within, multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups
Competence -learning to learn	Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group
Competence -insight	Express an internalised, personal world view, reflecting engagement with others
Progression & transfer	Transfer to programme leading to an Advanced Certificate (award-type H) Progression to a programme leading to an Ordinary Bachelor Degree (award-type J) or to an Honours Bachelor Degree (award-type K).
Articulation	

Title	Ordinary Bachelor Degree
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	7
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas
Knowledge -kind	Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes
Competence -context	Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts
Competence -role	Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work
Competence -learning to learn	Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group
Competence -insight	Express an internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others
Progression & transfer	Progression to programme leading to an Honours Bachelor Degree (award-type K) or to a Higher Diploma (award-type L) Progression internationally to some second cycle (i.e. 'Bologna masters') degree programmes.
Articulation	

Title	Honours Bachelor Degree
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	8
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning
Knowledge -kind	Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing
Competence -context	Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts
Competence -role	Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically
Competence -insight	Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view manifesting solidarity with others
Progression & transfer	Transfer to programmes leading to Higher Diploma (award-type L). Progression to programmes leading to Masters Degree or Post-graduate Diploma (award-types M or N), or in some cases, to programmes leading to a Doctoral Degree (award-type O). Progression internationally to second cycle (i.e. 'Bologna masters') degree programmes
Articulation	

Title	Higher Diploma
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	8
Volume	Medium
Knowledge - breadth	An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning
Knowledge -kind	Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing
Competence -context	Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts
Competence -role	Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically
Competence -insight	Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view manifesting solidarity with others
Progression & transfer	Progression to programmes leading to Masters Degree or Post-graduate Diploma (award-types M or N)
Articulation	From an Ordinary Bachelor Degree (award-type J) , or from an Honours Bachelor Degree (award-type K), into a new field of learning

Title	Masters Degree
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	9
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	A systematic understanding of knowledge at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning
Knowledge -kind	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques
Competence -context	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill defined contexts
Competence -role	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development
Competence -insight	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them
Progression & transfer	Progression to programmes leading to Doctoral Degree (award-type O), or to another Masters Degree or to a Post-graduate Diploma (award-types M or N).
Articulation	

Title	Post-graduate Diploma
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	9
Volume	Medium
Knowledge - breadth	A systematic understanding of knowledge, at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning
Knowledge -kind	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques
Competence -context	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill defined contexts
Competence -role	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development
Competence -insight	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them
Progression & transfer	May exempt from part of the programme leading to a Masters Degree (award-type M)
Articulation	

Title	Doctoral Degree
Class of Award-type	Major
Purpose	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
Level	10
Volume	Large
Knowledge - breadth	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of learning
Knowledge -kind	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers
Know-how and skill -range	Demonstrate a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials which are associated with a field of learning; develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials
Know-how and skill -selectivity	Respond to abstract problems that expand and redefine existing procedural knowledge
Competence -context	Exercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts
Competence -role	Communicate results of research and innovation to peers; engage in critical dialogue; lead and originate complex social processes
Competence -learning to learn	Learn to critique the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts
Competence -insight	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and lead action to change them
Progression & transfer	
Articulation	

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