8th thematic training workshop on skills anticipation and matching
27-28 June, Milan

John O’Connor
Quality and Qualifications Ireland
About QQI

QQI - Who we are and what we do

Quality Assurance

Qualifications

NFQ - National Framework of Qualifications

Recognition

International

www.QQI.ie
Session Input

- The role and contribution of the NFQ within the Ireland’s skill and qualifications system
- Quality assurance of the NFQ in a context of increasing diversity of modes of learning and certification
- NFQ, a trusted source of information? The role of qualifications registers.

‘qualification’ means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards’ (EU Recommendation on EQF 2017)
The Irish NFQ

National Framework of Qualifications

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

For further Information consult: www.nfq.ie  www.QQI.ie  ©QQI 2014
NFQ – Internationally Connected

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

For further information consult: www.nfq.ie  www.QQI.ie
Celebrating **15 YEARS** of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

After an extensive period of public engagement and consultation, the NFQ was established as the single national entity through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other.

The NFQ was self-certified as compatible with the Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), the first national Qualification Framework to complete this exercise.

The NFQ was referenced to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning the first national Qualifications Framework to complete this exercise.

2003 - National Framework of Qualifications

2006


2009 - References to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning

2012 - Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act reaffirms the statutory basis of the NFQ and entrusts maintenance and development of the NFQ to QQI.

2016 - Reflections and Trajectories - Qualifications Policy Insights as a companion paper to the Policy Impact Assessment of the NFQ.

2017 - NFQ Policy Impact Assessment

NFQ - Taking Stock

- Policy responsiveness
- Awareness and use
- Employer Engagement
- Quality of Levelling Processes
- NFQ access for other awarding bodies
- International Engagement
- Quality of data and analysis
- NFQ Forum
Purpose of the NFQ

- Promote the use of learning outcomes
- Conceptual order and consensus about what constitutes a qualification
- Acts as a system for classifying qualifications in Ireland
- Defines the relationship between qualifications and supports learners to progress to further education and employment opportunities
- Contribute to public confidence in the quality of qualifications in Ireland
- Contribute to better recognition of qualifications achieved in Ireland
- Act as an enabling tool in relation to Irish Government policy and goals for lifelong learning, internationalisation and skills formation.
- Platform to convene diverse stakeholders in qualifications system
Growth of NQFs
Knowledge for NQF policy and practice

Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks 2017

Volume II:
National and regional cases

ETF QUALIFICATIONS TOOLKIT
Getting organised

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK
DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE 2017
Findings from Meta-Analysis

• 7 Regional Qualifications Frameworks (Europe, ASEAN, Pacific, Caribbean, US and Africa)

• 150 National Qualifications Frameworks
  • Overarching characteristics (Cedefop 2018, UNESCO 2017)
    • Comprehensiveness
    • Loose (integrate sub-frameworks and refrain from uniform rules for design and award of qualifications)
    • Learning Outcomes based level descriptors

• Purpose
  • Transparency
  • Reform
  • Lifelong learning

• Conditions for Impact
  • Stakeholder mobilisation
  • Political mandate and integration into mainstream policy processes
  • Sustainability and Visibility
  • Public Confidence
NFQ for Skills Reporting

Table 1.1 ISCED levels of education, main programmes in Irish education/training, typical awards and NFQ levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISCED 2011 Level</th>
<th>Corresponds to:</th>
<th>Typical award</th>
<th>Award NFQ Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Pre-primary education</td>
<td>Early Start and other pre-primary</td>
<td>QQI Certificate</td>
<td>Level 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Primary education</td>
<td>Primary education</td>
<td>QQI Certificate</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Lower secondary</td>
<td>2nd level education – Junior Cycle</td>
<td>Junior Certificate</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Upper secondary</td>
<td>2nd level education – Senior Cycle</td>
<td>Leaving Certificate</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Post-secondary non-tertiary</td>
<td>Apprenticeship, PLC courses, other FET¹</td>
<td>QQI Level 5 Certificate</td>
<td>Level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Short-cycle tertiary education</td>
<td>Third level – higher certificate/university diploma / new post 2016 apprenticeship</td>
<td>Higher Certificate</td>
<td>Level 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Bachelor’s degree or equivalent</td>
<td>Third level – ordinary &amp; honours bachelor degree/higher diploma/new post-2016 apprenticeship</td>
<td>Ordinary Degree</td>
<td>Level 7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Honours Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>Level 8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Diploma</td>
<td>Level 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Master’s degree or equivalent</td>
<td>Third level – master’s degree and postgraduate certs/diplomas new post - 2016 apprenticeship</td>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma Master’s degree</td>
<td>Level 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Doctor or equivalent</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Level 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from ISCED 2011 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics)
### Table 2: Highest level of education attained by persons aged 15-64, classified by age group, Q2 2015 - Q2 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Age group</th>
<th>Primary or below None:1/2</th>
<th>Lower secondary 3</th>
<th>Higher secondary 4/5</th>
<th>Post Leaving Certificate 4/6/8</th>
<th>Third level (in total): 6/7/8/9/10</th>
<th>Higher Certificate or Ordinary Degree equivalent: 6</th>
<th>Higher Degree or equivalent: 7</th>
<th>Honours bachelor degree or equivalent: 8</th>
<th>Postgraduate qualification: 9/10</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>April to June 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-19 years</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-24 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-34 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-44 years</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-54 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>All persons aged 15 to 64</td>
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<td>27</td>
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Employers satisfaction

85% of Irish employers are happy with the quality of HE and FET graduates that they have recruited in the last 24 months.

86% HE (Higher Education Authority) graduates

84% FET (Further Education and Training System) graduates
Public awareness of NFQ

Awareness of NFQ has increased significantly this year, following a drop off in 2016. One in three claim to have heard of NFQ; a historical high. Awareness is drive by younger cohorts and those from a professional/white collar background, along with Dubliners.

Base: All Adults 15+ (n=1,004)

*Caution: Small Base Size  = Significant difference vs 2016
Key findings from the survey showed that:
- 71% sometimes find it difficult to find people with the right qualifications
- 74% find the evaluation of foreign qualifications challenging
- 63% were interested in qualifications achieved outside the formal education and training system are important;
- 96% were aware of the NFQ and 54% referred to it during recruitment
- 69% were aware of the EQF and 17% referred to it during recruitment
- EQF level 6 seen as gold standard for entry to employment
- Role of qualifications for work varies by occupation level.
Creeping credentialism?

- Risk of skills mismatch
- Risk of over qualification
- Consequence of skill polarisation (future of EQF level 5 – Intermediate level skills and qualifications)
- Uncertainty about the relevance and quality of qualifications on offer
- Divergence between skills and qualifications?
The INTEGRITY of the NFQ

Because qualifications attract significant public and private investment, it is important that the public has confidence in qualifications that are part of the national system.

- **Trustworthiness** Confidence in the people and organisations that offer and regulate qualifications.

- **Quality** Confidence in procedures that produce assured qualifications, fit for their intended use.

- **Value** Confidence that users are at the centre of accessible and relevant qualifications.

- **Transparency** Confidence that public information about qualifications is accessible and authoritative
QQI Mission

QQI sustains public confidence in the quality of education and training, promotes trust in the National Framework of Qualifications...
European Convergence in Quality Assurance of NQFs

National QA system shaped by European norms
Quality Assurance - Policy

Using QQI’s Statutory QA Guidelines To:
- Express practical expectations
- Drive longer term ambitions

QAG Structure

Policy
- Rationale
- Structure
- Principles

Core QA
- Core Guidelines that apply to ALL providers

Sector Specific

Topic Specific

Policy
- Underlying rationale, structure and principles

Core QA
- Core Guidelines that apply to ALL providers

Sector-Specific
- Guidelines that apply to a specific sector

Topic-Specific
- Guidelines that will only apply to some providers

Consultative Forum
Balancing autonomy and accountability
Emerging Developments

National Framework of Qualifications

Fit for purpose qualifications, appropriately levelled and offered by awarding bodies with transparent and effective arrangements for the development, design, review, delivery and certification of qualifications.

Universities; RCSI; DIT; Technological Universities

Institutes of Technology

Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Department of Education and Skills

Listed Awarding Bodies
Qualification Registers as trusted sources of Information

• "The most successful information providers will likely be those that are able to assist in curating information in a way that helps people navigate 'the information jungle.'"
Qualification Registers as trusted sources of information
Reflections on NQFs and skills matching

• NQFs - useful condition for enhancing skills matching but only a small part of larger skills ecosystem
  • NQFs should not over-promise on the employment agenda
  • Impact depends on extent to which concepts such as skill and competence enjoy a shared meaning in world of work and world of education
  • NQFs as a platform for dialogue should not be underestimated
  • Need to understand the relationship between qualifications and work performance
  • Trust and confidence in qualifications important for labour market actors (buyers and sellers)
  • International orientation of NQFs can facilitate mobility of skills
  • Policy learning rather than policy borrowing
Thank You

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www.nfq.ie