



QFI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

ANNUAL ANALYSIS OF AWARDS MADE BY QFI 2020



QQI

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This is a synoptic analysis of QQI certification data for 2020.

It provides information on awards made in 2020 by QQI for further education and training (FET) providers and certain higher education (HE) providers. It includes a brief analysis presenting how the overall number of awards made by QQI in 2020 was affected by COVID-19 restrictions (see Annex).

QQI is the only body currently awarding FET qualifications that are included in the NFQ.

QQI awards, however account for a relatively small fraction of the HE awards made each year that are included in the NFQ.

For further statistics on QQI awards, visit: <https://infographics.qqi.ie/>

View analysis of awards made by QQI in 2019: <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/FINAL%20QQI%20Summary%20Certification%20data%202019.pdf>

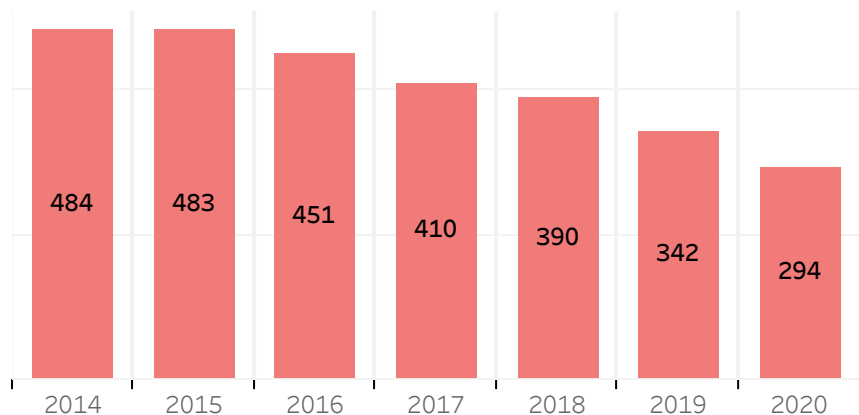
For further statistics on the FET sector, visit <https://www.solas.ie/research-lp/fet-statistics/>

For further statistics on outputs for non HE QQI awards, visit <https://hea.ie/statistics/>

OVERVIEW - AWARDS MADE BY QQI IN 2020



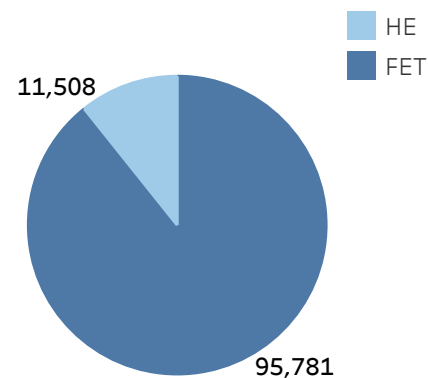
294 active providers*
(down 14% from 2019)



*87% of all providers registered with QQI were 'active' in 2020; i.e., they certified QQI awards in 2020

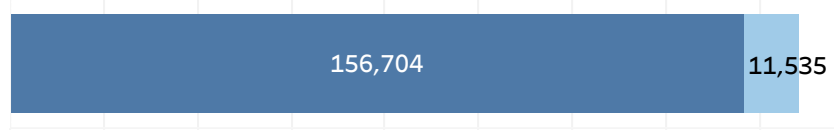


107,044 learners achieved QQI awards
(down 18% from 2019)



168,239 awards were made by QQI
(down 23% from 2019)

- 156,704 in FET, 93% of all awards made by QQI (down 25% from 2019)
- 11,535 in HE, 7% of all awards made by QQI (up 15% from 2019)



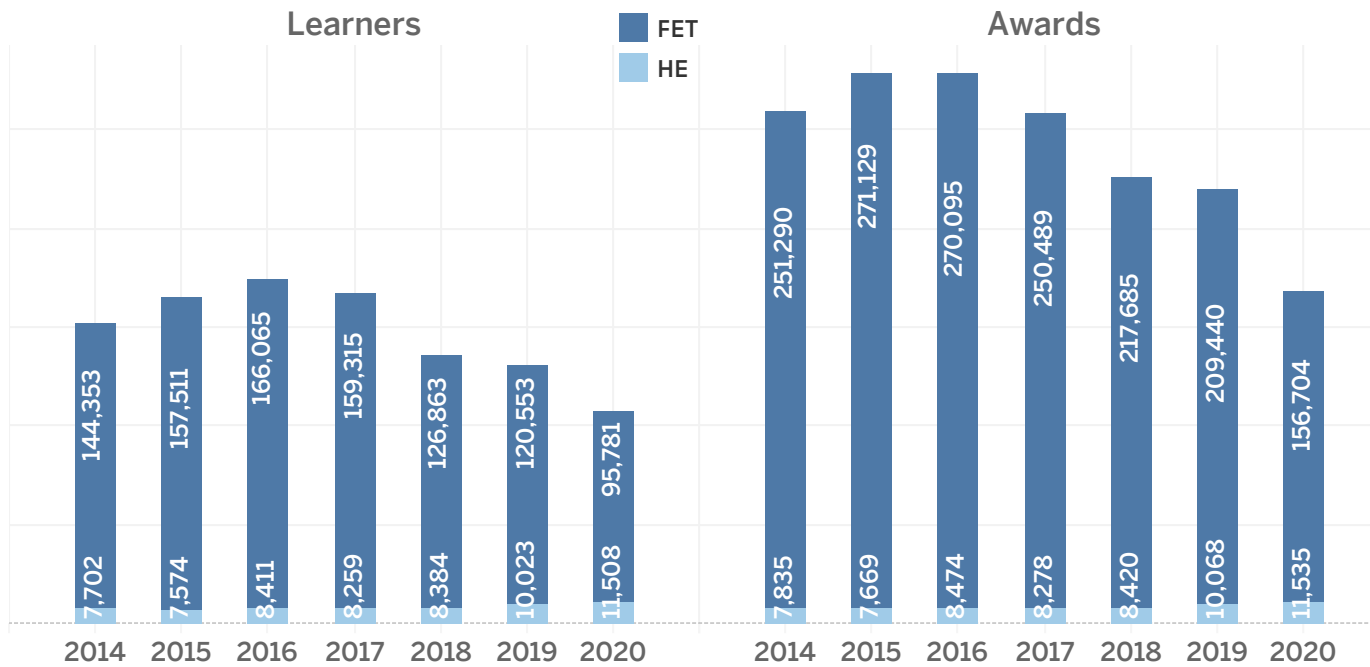
NFQ Level 5 accounted for the largest number of awards achieved by NFQ level (i.e. 52% of all awards achieved were made at this level)



6,373 learners achieved awards at two or more NFQ levels in 2020

253 learners achieved both FET and HE awards in 2020

LEARNERS ACHIEVING QQI AWARDS - TRENDS 2014-2020



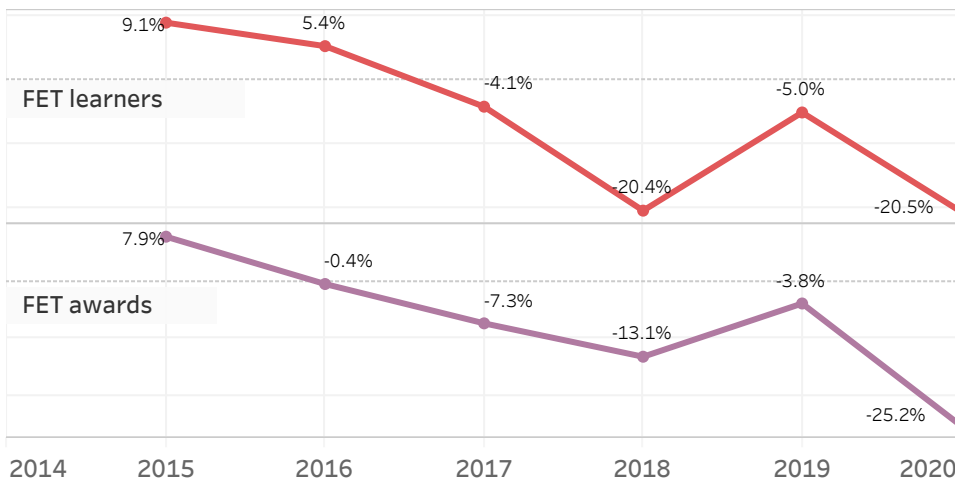
The number of **learners achieving FET awards from QQI** has declined over the years. It peaked in 2016, when 166,065 learners achieved 270,095 awards. The number of **HE learners receiving QQI awards** increased since 2016

The **COVID-19 pandemic** and related restrictions disrupted education and training in 2020, affecting the number of QQI certified learners and awards achieved: it accelerated the general downward trend in number of FET learners receiving QQI awards; and slowed down the upward trend in HE sector

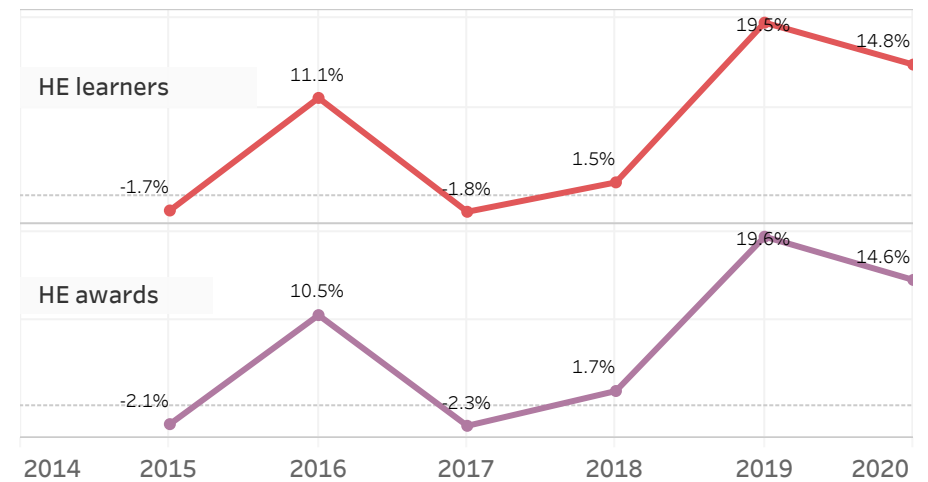
See Annex for further information on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic



The number of **FET learners and awards** has declined since 2015. The largest drop in numbers occurred in 2020 when learners declined by 21% and awards by 25%



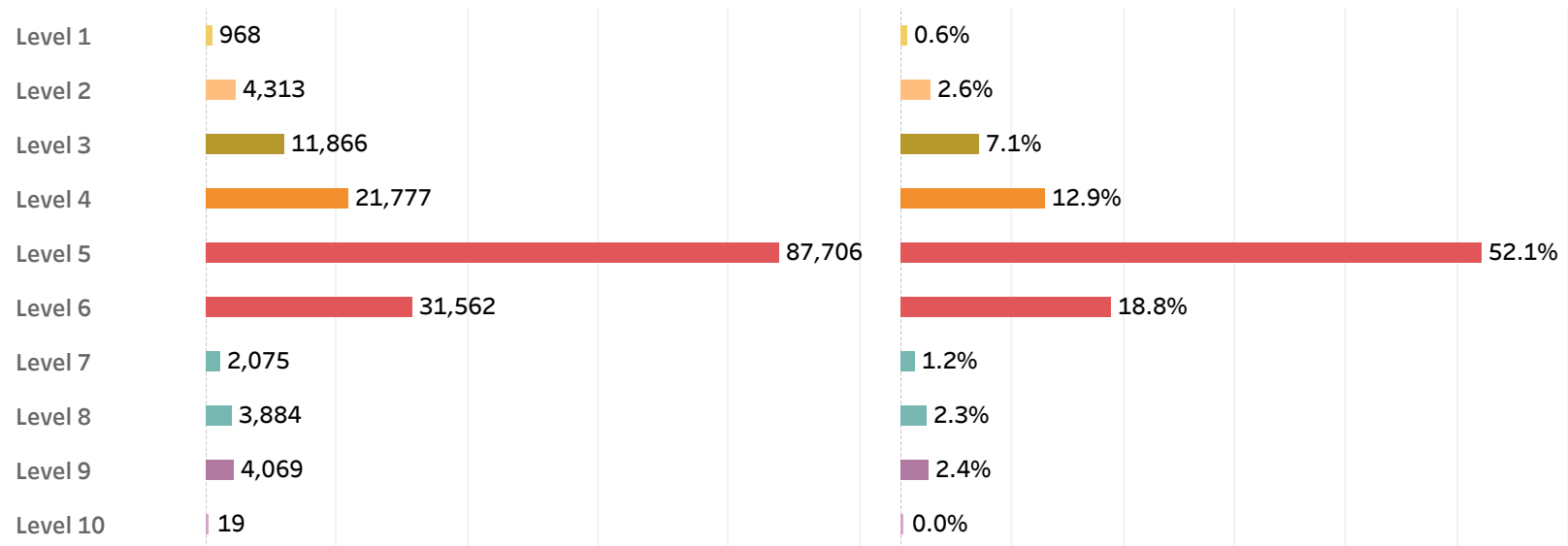
The number of **HE learners achieving QQI awards** has increased since 2016. This upward trend peaked in 2019



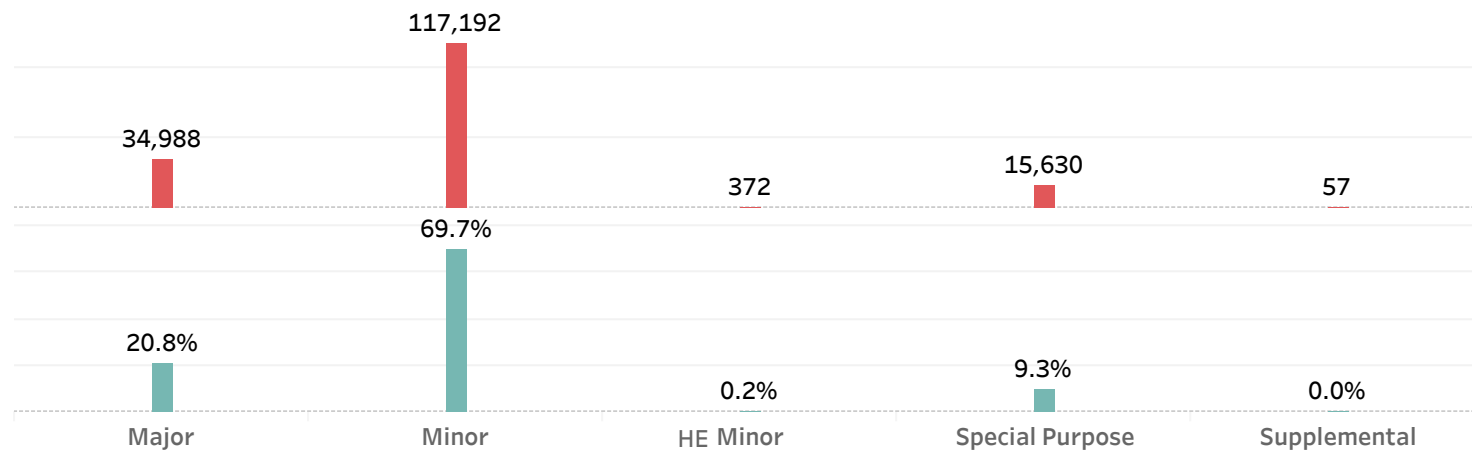
QQI AWARDS BY NFQ LEVELS & CLASS IN 2020



87,706 or 52% of all awards made by QQI in 2020 were at **NFQ level 5** (down 19% from 2019 when 108,162 awards were made at this level)



117,661 or 70% of all awards made by QQI in 2020 were **minor awards** (down 37% from 2019 when 161,700 minor awards were made)*



*The analysis of QQI minor awards for a given year does not include the components that were achieved in that year to qualify for the major award earned in that year. The standardised QQI certification dataset on which this analysis is based, suppresses the information on components. It provides only information on the major awards achieved at the end of the year

QQI AWARDS BY SECTOR (FET/HE)



117,192 or the majority of awards made by QQI in 2020 were **FET minor awards**. They are mostly made at NFQ level 5 (down 20% from 2019).

The numbers in all classes of QQI FET awards declined in 2020 from 2019: Minor awards by 27%, major awards by 12%, Special purpose awards by 28% and supplemental awards by 8%

8,903 or the majority of HE awards made by QQI in 2020 were **major awards**, mostly at NFQ levels 8 (up 14% from 2019) and 9 (up 22% from 2019).

The number of major and special purpose awards in HE made by QQI increased in 2020 from 2019 by 14% and 21% respectively; but the number of minor awards decreased by 5%

FET Awards Total		156,704
Major	TOTAL	26,085
	Level 1	271
	Level 2	469
	Level 3	660
	Level 4	1,032
	Level 5	17,480
	Level 6	6,173
Minor	TOTAL	117,192
	Level 1	697
	Level 2	3,844
	Level 3	11,200
	Level 4	20,573
	Level 5	61,270
	Level 6	19,608
Special Purpose	TOTAL	13,370
	Level 3	6
	Level 4	172
	Level 5	8,956
	Level 6	4,236
Supplemental	TOTAL	57
	Level 6	57

HE Awards Total		11,535
Major	TOTAL	8,903
	Level 6	120
	Level 7	1,004
	Level 8	3,722
	Level 9	4,038
	Level 10	19
Minor	TOTAL	372
	Level 6	286
	Level 7	13
	Level 8	53
	Level 9	20
Special Purpose	TOTAL	2,260
	Level 6	1,082
	Level 7	1,058
	Level 8	109
	Level 9	11

AWARDS BY FIELD OF LEARNING (ISCED) & SECTOR IN 2020



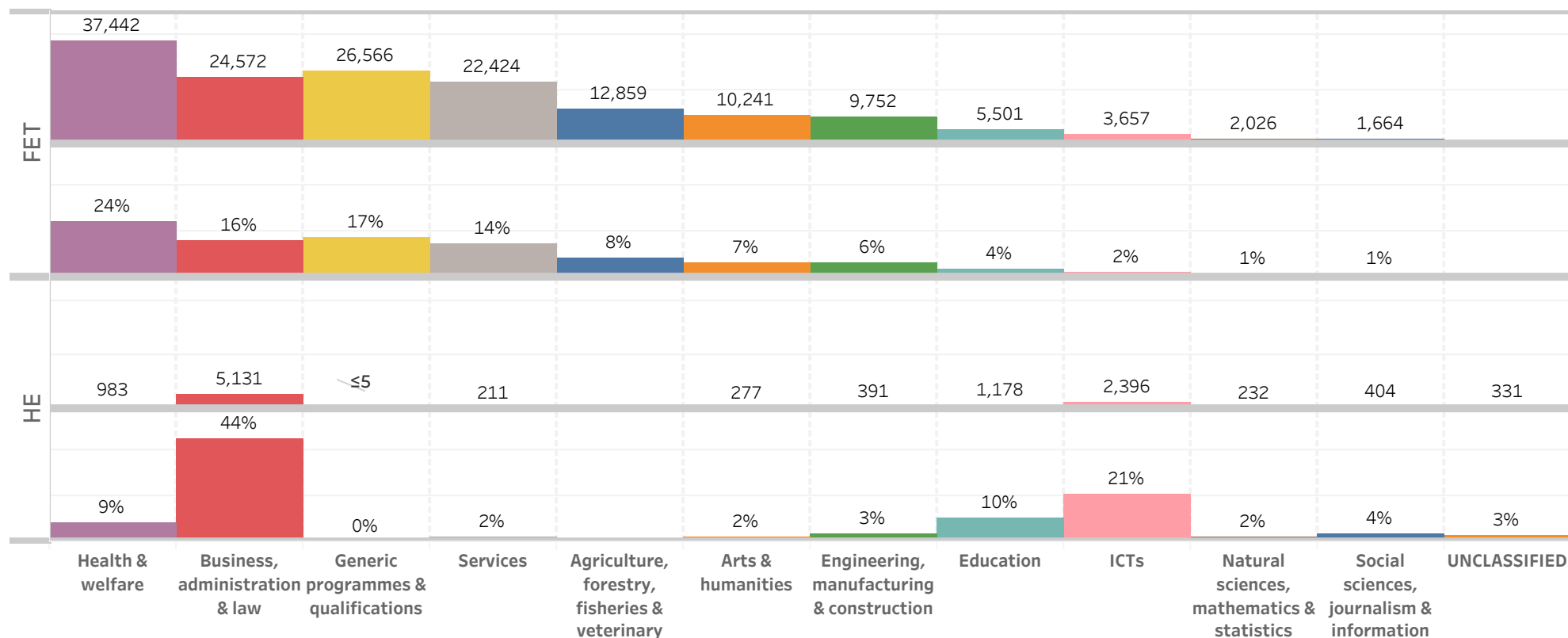
111,004 or 71% of all **FET awards made by QQI** were in the following four fields: Health & welfare; Generic programmes & qualifications; Business, administration & law; and Services.

Health & welfare accounted for the largest number of FET awards made by QQI in 2020 (24% of all QQI FET awards)*

9,688 or 84% of all **HE awards made by QQI** were in the following four fields: Business, administration & law; ICTs; Education; and Health & welfare.

Business administration & law accounted for the largest number of HE awards made by QQI in 2020 (44% of all awards made in HE)

No significant change has occurred since 2014 in relation to these top 4 fields



*A large number of awards for 'childcare and youth services' (e.g. Early Learning and Care related awards) are classified under 'Healthcare and welfare' field of learning (see [ISCED classification](#)). However, there is an argument that these awards should be included in the 'Education' field instead

AWARDS BY FIELD OF LEARNING (ISCED), NFQ LEVELS & CLASS OF AWARDS IN 2020



Fields of Learning by NFQ Levels

In the FET sector: in all but one field of learning, the majority of QQI awards (counting all classes) made were at level 5; the exception is Education, where the majority of awards made were at level 6

In the HE sector: the largest number of QQI HE awards (2,299 awards, up 15% from 2019) were made in the Business, administration & law Field at Level 8. But this pattern was not repeated in the other fields of learning

Fields of Learning by Class of Awards

In the FET sector: QQI made more FET minor awards than major or special purpose awards; except in the Engineering, manufacturing & construction field where more special purpose awards were made

In the HE sector: QQI made more major than minor or special purpose awards; except in the Service field where more minor and special purpose awards were made

	Health & welfare	Business, administration & law	Generic programmes & qualifications	Services	Agriculture, forestry & fisheries & veterinary	Arts & humanities	Engineering, manufacturing & construction	Education	ICTs	Natural sciences, mathematics & statistics	Social sciences, journalism & information	UNCLASSIFIED	
FET	Level 1		896		≤5	58				10			
	Level 2		3,915		54	316				28			
	Level 3	195	2,591	3,293	1,724	420	1,907	410	81	1,215	19	11	
	Level 4	321	3,159	6,466	6,216	3,101	1,622	369		238	258	27	
	Level 5	29,034	13,708	9,826	13,218	6,457	5,048	5,460	226	1,629	1,583	1,517	
	Level 6	7,892	5,114	2,170	1,266	2,823	1,290	3,513	5,194	575	128	109	
HE	Level 6	70	1,009		182		94	≤5	86	29		≤5	13
	Level 7	264	549		24		79	386	112	308	≤5	58	294
	Level 8	285	2,299	≤5			90	≤5	85	806	55	251	8
	Level 9	364	1,271		≤5		14		895	1,253	176	91	
	Level 10		≤5										16
FET	Major	8,576	3,438	1,183	2,075	2,997	2,795	2,854	96	680	433	958	
	Minor	28,866	21,116	25,383	14,327	8,580	7,446	2,786	3,423	2,977	1,582	706	
	Special Purpose		18		6,022	1,282		4,055	1,982		11		
	Suppleme..							57					
HE	Major	813	3,785		38		194	221	1,027	2,165	232	404	24
	Minor	12	96	≤5	123		59		29	52			
	Special Purpose	158	1,250		50		24	170	122	179		307	

TOP 15 AWARDS BY CLASS & NFQ LEVEL IN 2020



39,224 or 34% of all **QQI minor awards** made in 2020 were in the top 15 awards, mainly at NFQ level 5. All 15 were made in FET

TOP 15 QQI Minor awards

5N0690	Level 5	Communications	4,602
5N1356	Level 5	Work Experience	3,734
5N2706	Level 5	Care of the Older Person	3,276
6N1957	Level 6	Special Needs Assisting	3,259
4N1118	Level 4	Guarding Skills	3,202
5N2770	Level 5	Care Skills	3,192
5N1786	Level 5	Special Needs Assisting	3,149
5N3734	Level 5	Infection Prevention and Control	2,788
6N3326	Level 6	Training Delivery and Evaluation	2,189
5N1794	Level 5	Safety and Health at Work	2,164
5N1358	Level 5	Word Processing	2,094
4N1125	Level 4	Information Technology Skills	1,600
4N1114	Level 4	Door Security Procedures	1,423
5N0758	Level 5	Care Support	1,328
5N1546	Level 5	Payroll Manual and Computerised	1,224
TOTAL			39,224

14,812 or 42% of all **QQI major awards** made in 2020 were in the top 15 awards, mainly at NFQ level 5

TOP 15 QQI Major awards

5M4339	Level 5	Healthcare Support	2,011
5M2009	Level 5	Early Childhood Care and Education	1,951
5M20454	Level 5	Agriculture	1,532
6M2007	Level 6	Early Childhood Care and Education	1,408
5M4349	Level 5	Nursing Studies	1,220
5M2102	Level 5	Business Studies	953
6M18175	Level 6	Advanced Certificate in Craft - Electrical	868
5M4468	Level 5	Community Health Services	838
9M18014	Level 9	Professional Master of Education in Primary Educ..	683
5M5146	Level 5	Sports, Recreation and Exercise	669
5M1997	Level 5	Office Administration	644
5M3782	Level 5	Health Service Skills	538
5M2468	Level 5	Business Administration	509
5M2181	Level 5	Applied Social Studies	504
5M2768	Level 5	Animal Care	484
TOTAL			14,812

TRENDS TOP 15 QQI AWARDS

These **Top 15 minor, major and special purpose** awards have been consistently the most popular awards since 2014, and together they represent 36% of all awards awarded by QQI in 2020 (QQI certification data analysis from previous years can be found at <https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Infographics.aspx>)

All awards in the Top 15 groups are FET awards, except for the QQI major award '**Professional Master of Education in Primary Education**', and special purpose awards '**Certificate in Payroll Techniques**' and '**Certificate in Digital Marketing**' which are made in HE

The **Professional Master of Education in Primary Education** was introduced in 2016 as the minimum legal requirement for those wishing to work as registered teachers. This explains the higher numbers of awards made in this QQI HE award. In 2020, the **Certificate in Digital Marketing** Special Purpose award was included in the top 15 group for the first time

11,380 or 73% of all QQI **special purpose** awards made in 2020 were in the top 15 awards, mainly at NFQ Levels 5 and 6. The majority of these awards (codes start with '82') are regulate safety training in the construction sector including Safe Pass and CSCS and QSCS training provided by SOLAS

TOP 15 QQI Special Purpose awards

820105	Level 5	360° Excavator Operations	1,196
6S20487	Level 6	Farming	1,110
823505	Level 5	Telescopic Handler Operations	1,059
824905	Level 5	Signing, Lighting and Guarding at Roadworks	1,058
821905	Level 5	Front Loading Site Dumper Operations	1,042
823405	Level 5	Slinger and Signaller Operations	995
6S0242	Level 6	Manual Handling Instruction	876
6S3372	Level 6	Training and Development	821
824405	Level 5	Locating and Avoiding Underground Services	712
6S20722	Level 6	Certificate in Payroll Techniques	562
824305	Level 5	Health & Safety at Roadworks	542
826005	Level 5	Mobile Access Tower Operations	514
5S20009	Level 5	Implementing Food Safety Management Systems	329
7S16859	Level 7	Certificate in Digital Marketing	294
820305	Level 5	Articulated Dumper Operations	270
TOTAL			11,380

QQI AWARDS MADE BY TYPE OF PROVIDER IN 2020

97,722 QQI FET awards were made for the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) in 2020 (down 5% from 2019)



44,817 QQI awards (less than half of those made for the ETBs and down 2% from 2019) were made for the second biggest group: private education and training providers (PRC)

	Major	Minor	Special Purpose	Supplemental	TOTAL	
FET	CVS	487	4,850	109	5,446	
	EMP	76	687	233	996	
	ETB	18,765	78,066	867	24	97,722
	HOS	≤5	79		≤84	
	PRC	1,898	29,285	2,464	33	33,680
	PSA	26	47	159		232
	SCS	694	2,141	9		2,844
	SOL	4,137	2,037	9,529		15,703
HE	HOS			7	7	
	IOT	19			19	
	PRC	8,884	372	2,253		11,137

CVS: Community / Voluntary Sector Organisation
 EMP: Employer based learning
 ETB: Education and Training Board
 HOS: Hospital CNE
 IOT: Institutes of Technology
 PRC: Private Provider
 PSA: Public Service Agency
 SCS: Voluntary Secondary School
 SOL: SOLAS

DISTRIBUTION OF QQI AWARDS MADE BY TYPE OF PROVIDER & NFQ LEVELS

ETBs account for the largest number of QQI awards made at NFQ levels 1-5: on average, three quarters of all awards made by QQI at Levels 1-3 are for ETBs, and 67% at levels 4 and 5.

In HE, QQI awards made for PRCs are larger than for any other provider type at levels 6 to 9 inclusive

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10
FET	CVS	14.3%	11.2%	7.5%	3.1%	2.8%	2.6%			
	EMP					0.7%	1.2%			
	ETB	79.2%	83.4%	79.7%	68.1%	65.0%	38.1%			
	HOS					0.0%	0.1%			
	PRC	1.5%	2.0%	10.5%	28.6%	16.6%	36.5%			
	PSA					0.2%	0.3%			
	SCS	5.0%	3.4%	2.3%	0.2%	2.0%	1.9%			
	SOL					12.7%	14.5%			
HE	HOS							0.2%		
	IOT								0.0%	94.7%
	PRC					4.7%	100.0%	99.8%	100.0%	5.3%

FOUR PROVIDER TYPES BY QQI AWARDS MADE IN 2020



164,060 awards or 98% of all QQI awards made in 2020 were issued for four types of provider: **Community / Voluntary Sector Organisation** (CVS), **Education and Training Board** (ETB), **Private Provider** (PRC) and **SOLAS** (SOL). The majority were Minor awards at NFQ level 5

All supplemental awards in 2020 were awarded by the ETBs (24 awards) and PRCs (33), all were made at NFQ level 6

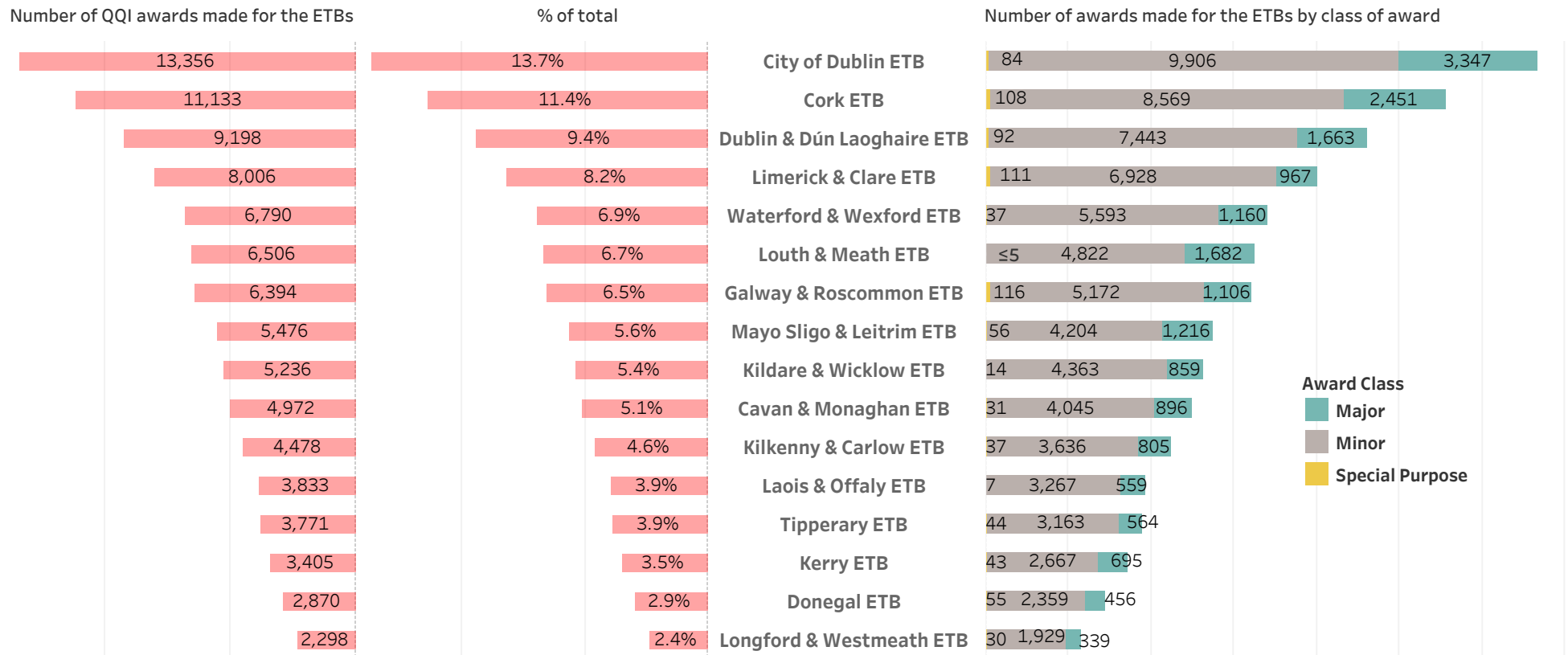
		Major	Minor	Minor	Special Purpose	Supplemental	TOTAL
CVS	Level 1	73	65				138
	Level 2	98	386				484
	Level 3	57	836				893
	Level 4	17	659				676
	Level 5	168	2,260				2,428
	Level 6	74	644		109		827
	TOTAL	487	4,850		109		5,446
ETB	Level 1	153	614				767
	Level 2	331	3,267				3,598
	Level 3	548	8,900		6		9,454
	Level 4	999	13,748		94		14,841
	Level 5	14,272	42,669		90		57,031
	Level 6	2,462	8,868		677	24	12,031
	TOTAL	18,765	78,066		867	24	97,722
PRC	Level 1	≤5	14				≤19
	Level 2	15	71				86
	Level 3	33	1,215				1,248
	Level 4	11	6,132		78		6,221
	Level 5	1,156	13,080		349		14,585
	Level 6	802	8,773	286	3,119	33	13,013
	Level 7	1,004		13	1,058		2,075
	Level 8	3,722		53	102		3,877
	Level 9	4,037		20	11		4,068
	Level 10	≤5					
TOTAL	10,782	29,285	372	4,717	33	45,189	
SOL	Level 5	1,349	1,370		8,401		11,120
	Level 6	2,788	667		1,128		4,583
	TOTAL	4,137	2,037		9,529		15,703
TOTAL		34,171	114,238	372	15,222	57	164,060

QQI AWARDS MADE FOR THE EDUCATION & TRAINING BOARDS (ETBs) IN 2020



13,356 QQI awards were made for the City of Dublin ETB (30% down from 2019); followed by Cork ETB (11,133 awards, down 23%) and Dublin & Dún Laoghaire (9,198 down 23%). One in three of all awards made for the ETBs were accounted for by these three ETBs

The majority of awards made for the ETBs are **minor awards** (on average 80% of all awards; no change from 2019), followed by major awards (on average 19%; up 3% points from 2019)



24 Supplemental awards were made by QQI for the ETBs (23 were made in 2019): 19 by City of Dublin ETB; and 5 by Cork ETB. All of these awards were made in 'Domestic Gas Safety' at NFQ Level 6

DISTRIBUTION OF AWARDS MADE BY QQI FOR THE ETBs BY NFQ LEVELS



On average, half of all awards made by the ETBs are at level 5. Higher than average proportions of awards at levels 1, 2 and 3 were made in Donegal ETB. Similarly, higher than average proportions of awards at levels 3 and 4 were made in Longford & Westmeath ETB.

ETB	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Cavan & Monaghan ETB		7.5%	10.8%	14.5%	54.5%	12.8%
City of Dublin ETB		3.4%	7.0%	14.2%	61.5%	13.9%
Cork ETB	0.2%	3.3%	8.6%	14.1%	58.2%	15.6%
Donegal ETB	5.4%	12.0%	15.6%	10.7%	47.0%	9.3%
Dublin & Dún Laoghaire ETB		1.9%	5.9%	15.3%	61.0%	15.9%
Galway & Roscommon ETB		0.4%	8.9%	14.6%	62.8%	13.2%
Kerry ETB		0.5%	7.1%	16.3%	67.8%	8.3%
Kildare & Wicklow ETB		3.5%	13.7%	18.1%	54.5%	10.2%
Kilkenny & Carlow ETB	1.2%	1.2%	8.4%	17.1%	61.3%	10.9%
Laois & Offaly ETB	3.1%	5.7%	14.4%	22.5%	47.5%	6.9%
Limerick & Clare ETB	0.6%	2.6%	8.7%	9.6%	60.7%	17.8%
Longford & Westmeath ETB	0.0%	2.4%	14.7%	34.4%	43.3%	5.1%
Louth & Meath ETB	2.9%	4.5%	11.1%	10.6%	62.3%	8.7%
Mayo Sligo & Leitrim ETB	0.8%	2.3%	9.3%	10.2%	63.8%	13.4%
Tipperary ETB	1.1%	6.4%	9.6%	24.4%	50.4%	8.1%
Waterford & Wexford ETB	1.5%	6.7%	14.1%	16.8%	53.4%	7.4%

QQI MAJOR AWARDS TO APPRENTICES 2020 vs 2019



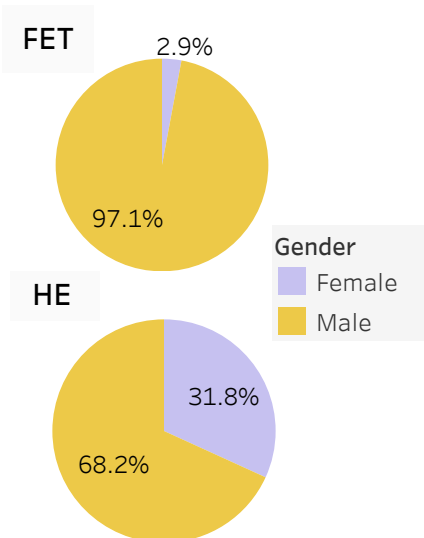
2,512 QQI Major awards to apprentices were made in 2020 (up 34% from 2019), mainly at NFQ Level 6 in the FET sector. SOLAS is the relevant provider for craft apprenticeships. A number of new apprenticeships were validated by QQI since 2019 but are not included in this analysis as they have not yet graduated their first cohort.

QQI apprenticeship awards were made in four fields of learning only, the majority in the 'Engineering, manufacturing & construction' field. However, the number of apprenticeships is growing and apprenticeship is expected to expand into new fields in the future

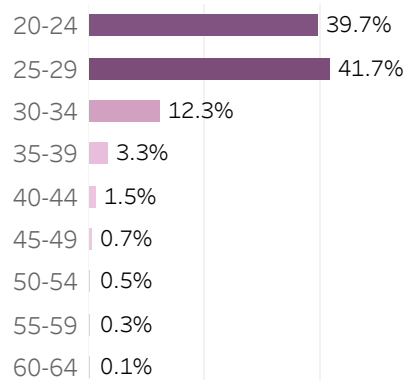
Provider	Sector	Field of Learning	Level 6	Level 8
ETB	FET	Business, administration & law	48	0
SOL	FET	Arts & humanities	38	0
		Engineering, manufacturing & construction	2,350	0
PRC	FET	Business, administration & law	56	0
		ICTs	8	0
	HE	Business, administration & law	10	12
TOTAL			2,512	10

On average:

- more than 83% of apprentices who achieved QQI Major awards in 2020 were male. The gender gap is wider in the FET than in the HE sector
- more than 82% of apprentices who achieved QQI Major awards in 2020 were between 20-29 years of age



Age



QQI MAJOR AWARDS TO APPRENTICES IN 2019

1,871 QQI Major awards to apprentices were made in 2019 (down 3% from 2018), mainly at NFQ Level 6 in the FET sector in three fields of learning only, the majority in the 'Engineering, manufacturing & construction' field

Provider	Sector	Field of Learning	Level 6	Level 8
SOL	FET	Arts & humanities	25	0
		Engineering, manufacturing & construction	1,790	0
PRC	FET	Business, administration & law	44	0
		HE	Business, administration & law	12
TOTAL			1,871	12

LEARNERS ACHIEVING A QQI AWARD BY GENDER & AGE IN 2020

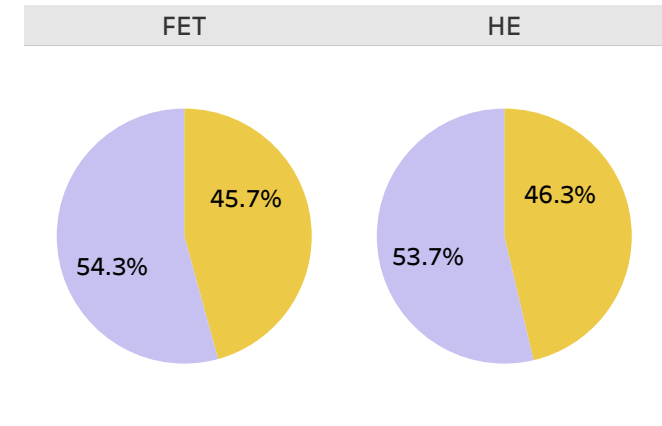


58,049 learners achieving QQI awards were female in 2020 (54%, up 2% points from 2019). 94,414 awards were achieved by these female learners (56% of all awards made)



48,987 were male learners (46%, down 2% points from 2019). 73,825 awards were achieved by these male learners (44% of all awards made)

Gender distribution is similar in FET and HE



Learners



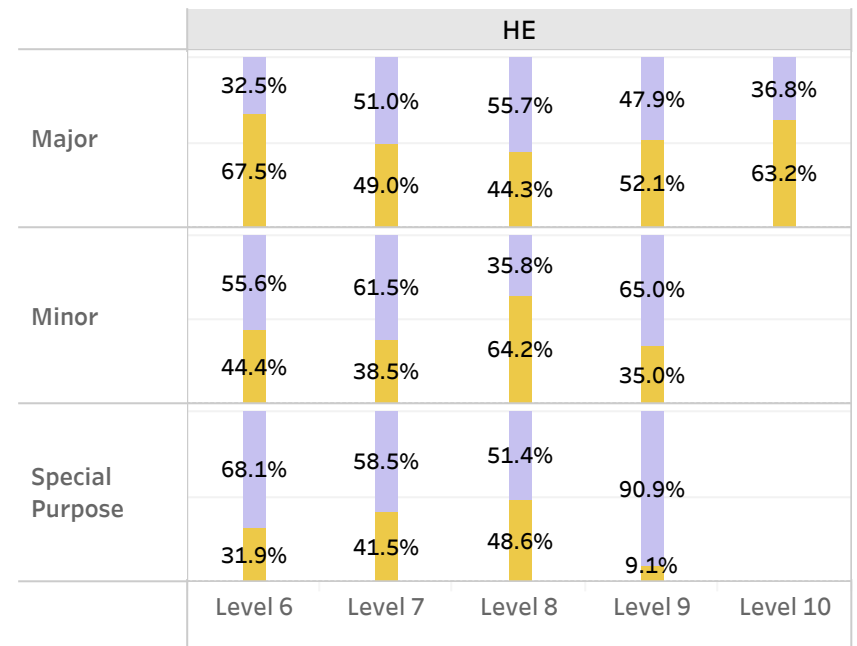
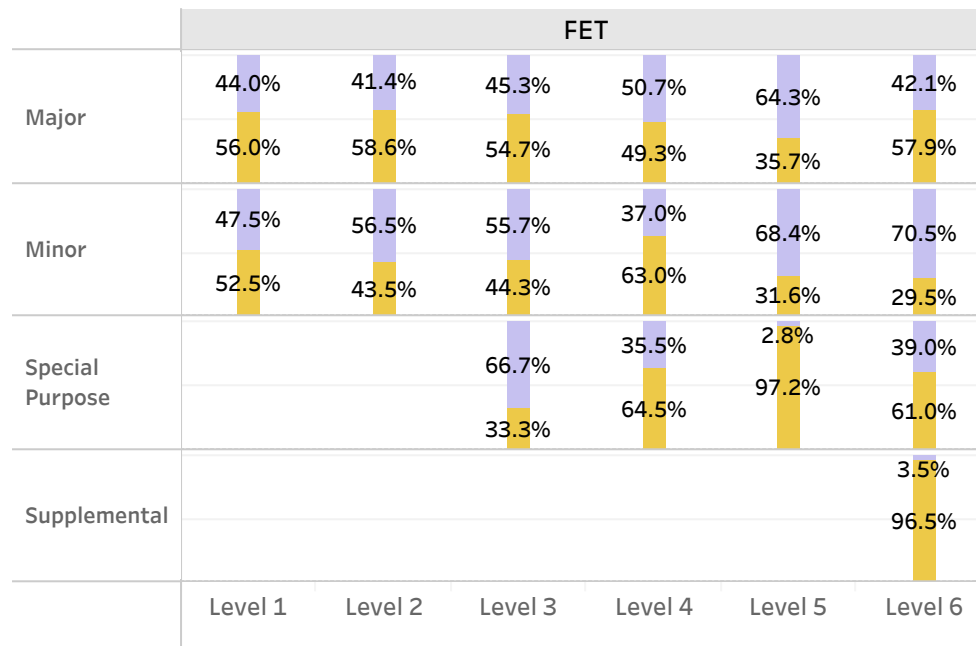
Awards



More female than male learners attained QQI awards in 2019

For all classes of QQI awards, the **total proportion** achieved are higher for female than for male learners; except:

- **In the FET sector:** for major awards at NFQ levels 1, 2, 3 and 6; minor awards at level 1 and 4; and for all special purpose (except at level 3) and supplemental awards
- **In the HE sector:** for major awards at NFQ levels 6, 9 and 10 and minor at Level 8



ANNEX

How the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions might have affected the number of QQI awards made in 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions disrupted education and training in 2020.

This annex looks at general trends (2014-2020) to assess to what extent the number of QQI learners and awards achieved in 2020 were impacted by these restrictions. QQI used the technical indicator simple moving average (SMA) to aid the analysis. The SMA provides an indication of what proportion of the 2020 fluctuations in the total number of learners and awards reflects the general trend and what proportion could have been affected by COVID-19 restrictions. The SMA highlights long-term trends whilst smoothing out any short-term fluctuations or random outliers (i.e. the restrictions in 2020)^[1]

We found these takeaways:

FET sector

- There has been a substantial decrease in the number of QQI awards achieved in the FET sector. The decline is more evident in relation to minor awards (down 27% from 2019) and at the lower levels of the NFQ (levels 1 to 4, on average down by 49% from 2019)
- This decline is part of the general downward trend that the FET sector has been experiencing since 2014
- We found that the pandemic accelerated this trend.

HE sector

- The changes observed in the number of QQI learners and awards achieved in the HE sector were by and large part of the general upward trend
- The disruptions in 2020 slowed this positive trend observed in the sector since 2018
- The COVID-19 pandemic has boosted the popularity of micro-credentials (up by 21% from 2019).

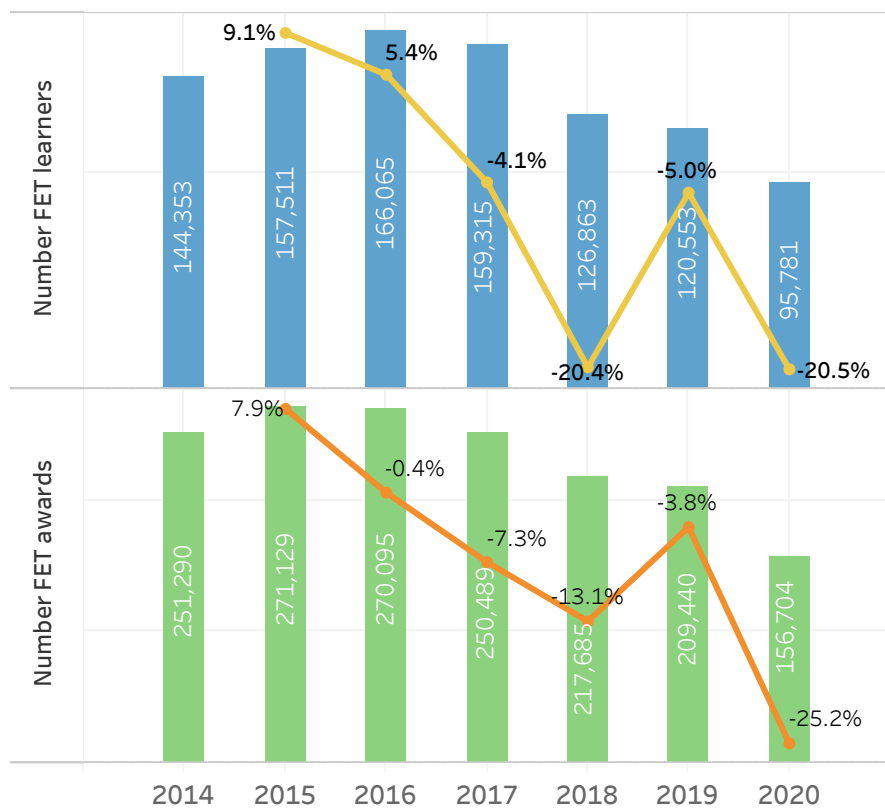
^[1] SMA is calculated by adding the number of learners and the number awards made over the 7 years period and dividing the sum by the total number of periods. The SMA takes the average of the value of each given year and the values either side of it (e.g. for 2014 can't be done as we are not using data from the preceding year. For 2015, the moving average value averages the 2014, 2015 and 2016 and this is repeated for the next trio 2015, 2016 and 2017). The equation being:

$$\bar{x}_n = \bar{x}_{n-1} + \frac{1}{N} (x_n - x_{n-N})$$

FET SECTOR - QQI AWARDS ACHIEVED IN 2020 COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEARS

There is a general downward trend in the number of QQI learners and awards achieved in the FET sector since 2016, with a deep trough in 2018 when the number of learners declined by 20% and the total award achieved by 13%.

In 2020 there was a 21% decrease in the number of FET learners achieving QQI awards compared to 2019 (which don't deviate from the drop observed in 2018). The decline was larger in the total number of QQI awards achieved, down 25% from 2019*



TECHNICAL INDICATOR *SIMPLE MOVING AVERAGE (SMA)*

The SMA^[1] on the time series years 2014-2020 provides an estimation of the 2020 long-term trend value for the total number of QQI learners and awards achieved in the FET, whilst smoothing the short-term fluctuation due to COVID-19 disruptions

FET sector	Number Learners	Number Awards
Long-term estimated value 2020	114,401	194,627
Actual numbers 2020	95,781	156,704
% Change 2019 and estimated long term value 2020	- 5.1%	- 7.1%
Actual % Change 2019 and 2020	- 20.5%	- 25.2%
Difference - Estimated % Change due to COVID	- 15.4%	- 18.1%

The long-term estimated value for 2020 suggests that the disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic affected the FET sector significantly:

- a decline of about 5% in the number of learners and 7% in the number of awards made is part of the general downward trend that the FET sector has experienced since 2014
- the pandemic accelerated this trend by an estimated 15% in the number of learners and 18% in the number of total awards made from 2019.

* This reverses the trend observed in 2019 when the number of learners decreased more than the number of awards they achieved. In other words, in 2020 there were more learners who achieved a major award and fewer learners who achieved more than one minor. This may reflect a combined effect of a decrease in the number of learners commencing courses (this in turn may include an on-trend decrease component and a COVID-specific cancellation of shorter programmes) and a fall in the numbers of learners completing programmes they commenced in 2019/20, especially in lower levels of the NFQ.

[1]
$$\bar{x}_n = \bar{x}_{n-1} + \frac{1}{N}(x_n - x_{n-N})$$

FET SECTOR - QQI AWARDS ACHIEVED IN 2020 COMPARED TO 2019

By class of award

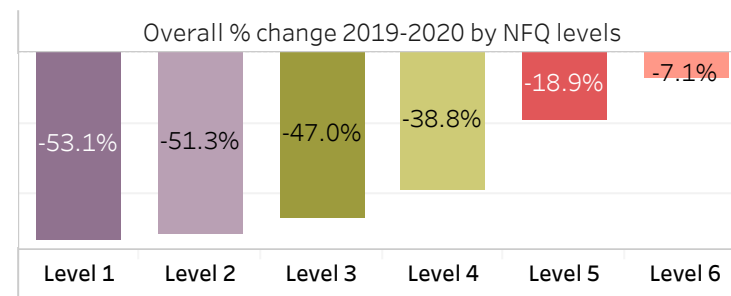
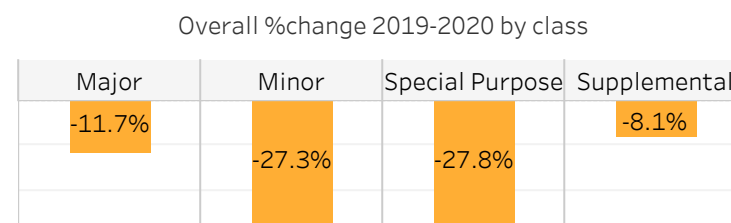
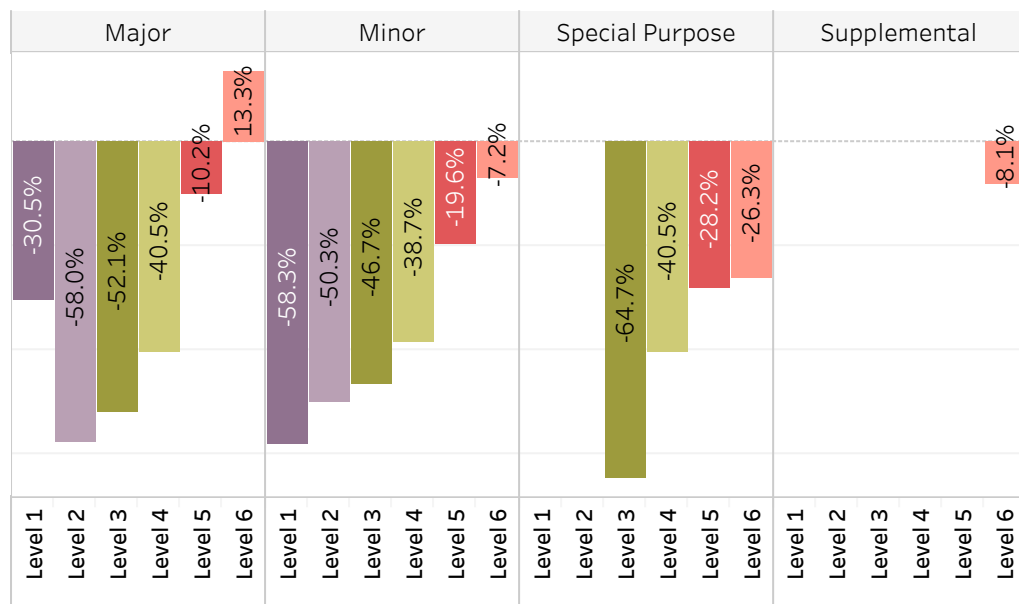
The reduction in the total number of awards made in FET in 2020 relates primarily to non-major awards. The decline in the number of major awards at 12% was below the long-term estimated 'percentage change 2019 – 2020' value (18%) which might indicate that COVID-19 only in part accelerated the general downward trend the FET sector is experiencing since 2014.

By NFQ levels

The reduction in the number of awards made in FET in 2020 affected all NFQ levels with the exception of major awards at level 6 -up 13.3% from 2019. The decline in numbers was more significant at the lower NFQ levels (levels 1 to 4) for all class of awards -on average down 48% from 2019.

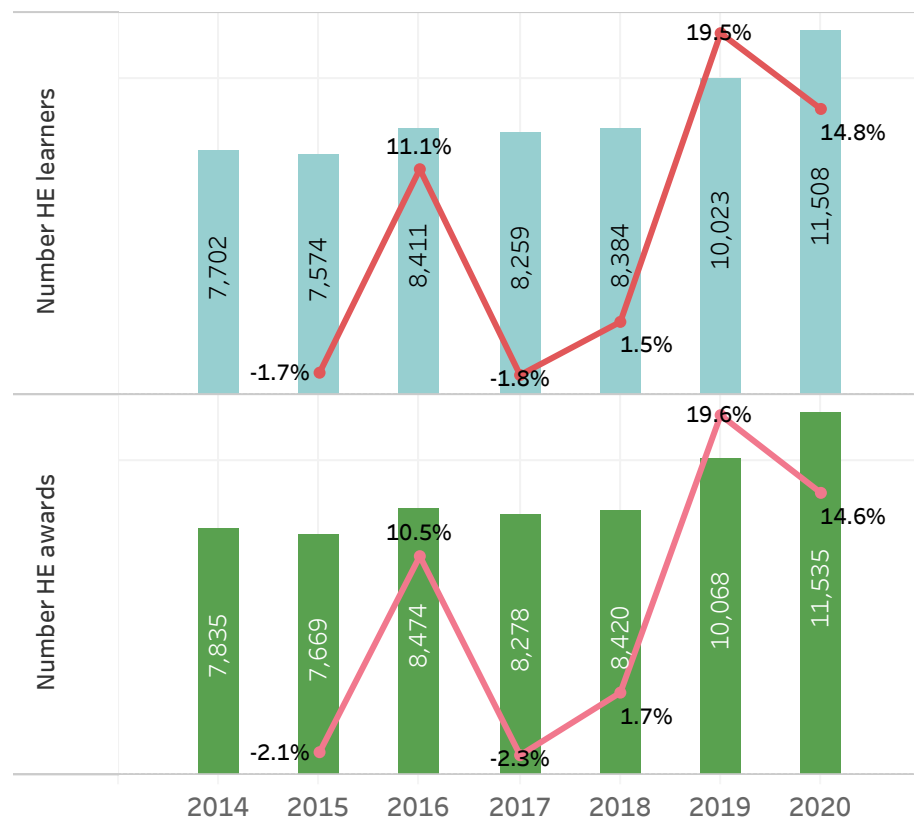
Level	Major		Minor		Special Purpose		Supplemental		TOTAL by LEVEL	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Level 1	390	271	1,673	697					2,063	968
Level 2	1,123	469	7,733	3,844					8,856	4,313
Level 3	1,377	660	21,007	11,200	17	6			22,401	11,866
Level 4	1,735	1,032	33,547	20,573	289	172			35,571	21,777
Level 5	19,466	17,480	76,219	61,270	12,477	8,956			108,162	87,706
Level 6	5,447	6,173	21,131	19,608	5,747	4,236	62	57	32,387	30,074
TOTAL by CLASS	29,538	26,085	161,310	117,192	18,530	13,370	62	57	209,440	156,704
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020

PERCENTAGE CHANGE BETWEEN 2019 AND 2020 BY CLASS & NFQ LEVELS



HE SECTOR - QQI AWARDS ACHIEVED IN 2020 COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEARS

There is a general positive trend in the number of QQI learners and awards made between 2016 and 2020 in the HE sector. The growth in numbers peaked in 2019 when the total number of QQI learners and awards increased by 20% from the previous year. Between 2019 and 2020, numbers grew by 15%



TECHNICAL INDICATOR *SIMPLE MOVING AVERAGE (SMA)*

The SMA^[1] on the time series years 2014-2020 provides an estimation of the 2020 long-term trend value for the total number of QQI learners and awards achieved in the HE, whilst smoothing the random outlier or short-term disruptions due to COVID-19 in 2020

HE sector	Number Learners	Number Awards
Long-term estimated value 2020	9,972	10,008
Actual numbers 2020	11,508	11,535
% Change 2019 and estimated long term value 2020	- 0.5%	- 0.6%
Actual % Change 2019 and 2020	+14.8%	+14.6%
Difference - Estimated % Change due to COVID	+14.3%	+14%

The upward general trend in the total number of QQI learners and awards achieved in the HE sector since 2018 was smothered by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- it slowed this trend marginally;
- it boosted the rate of some class of QQI awards achieved (e.g. special purpose awards), explaining part of the increase in total number of learners and awards made in 2020.

[1]
$$\bar{x}_n = \bar{x}_{n-1} + \frac{1}{N}(x_n - x_{n-N})$$

HE SECTOR - QQI AWARDS ACHIEVED IN 2020 COMPARED TO 2019

By class of award

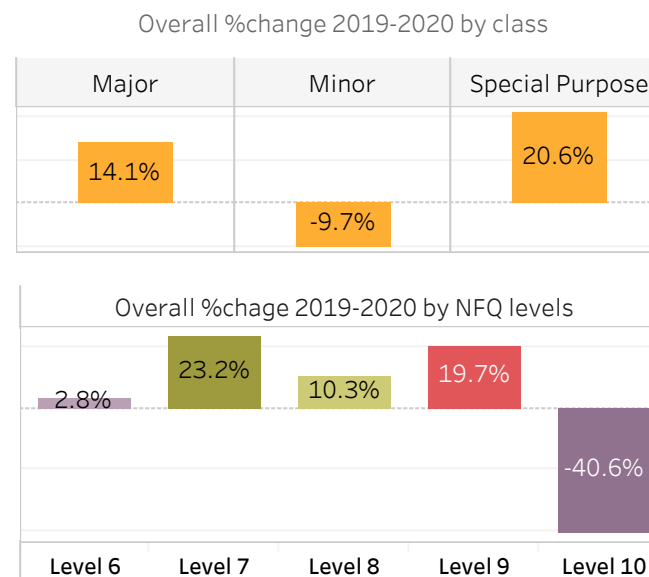
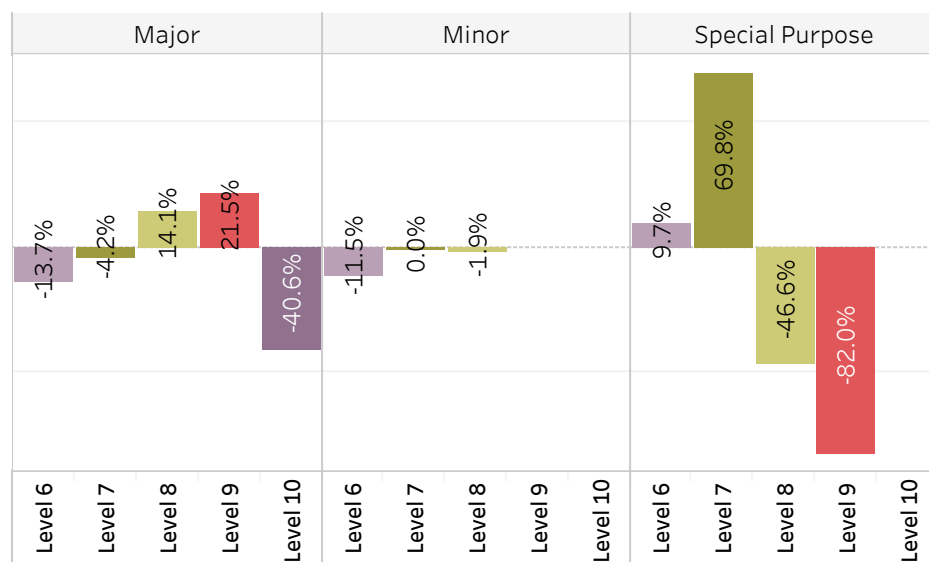
QQI HE special purpose awards increased by 21% in 2020. The increase is above the long-term estimated 'percentage change 2019 – 2020' value at 14% which might indicate that COVID-19 boosted the rate of QQI special purpose awards made in the HE sector

By NFQ levels

The significant growth in the number of special purpose awards achieved in the sector was the result of an increase at NFQ levels 6 and 7. However, the number of major awards made declined at levels 6, 7 and 10*; and minor awards at all levels except at level 7

	Major		Minor		Special Purpose		TOTAL by LEVEL	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Level 6	139	120	323	286	986	1,082	1,448	1,488
Level 7	1,048	1,004	13	13	623	1,058	1,684	2,075
Level 8	3,262	3,722	54	53	204	109	3,520	3,884
Level 9	3,323	4,038			61	11	3,384	4,049
Level 10	32	19					32	19
TOTAL by CLASS	7,804	8,903	390	352	1,874	2,260	10,068	11,515
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020

PERCENTAGE CHANGE BETWEEN 2019 AND 2020 BY CLASS & NFQ LEVELS



*The substantial drop in level 10 reflects the transfer of some institutes of technology into technological universities, with graduates receiving their PhDs from the universities