

## The Diploma Supplement Explanatory Notes

### *1. Principles and general guidelines for producing Diploma Supplements*

The Diploma Supplement forms an important part of the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and is an important tool for graduates to ensure that their degrees are recognised by higher education institutions, public authorities and employers in their home countries and abroad. The diploma supplement should build on and include the use of common transparency tools such as learning outcomes, ECTS and how the degrees correspond to the national qualification framework(s) and external national quality assurance and/ or accreditation.

The Diploma Supplement is jointly developed by the Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO and an updated version was adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in 2007. Since the introduction of the Bologna Process in 1999 the Diploma Supplement has been adopted in the national legislations of the participating countries, and Ministers committed themselves to issuing it to all graduates automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language by 2005.

The Diploma Supplement was also incorporated in the Europass Framework established by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers in 2004<sup>1</sup>. This revised version was endorsed by the EHEA Ministers in Paris in 2018.

The Diploma Supplement plays a particularly important role in relation to joint degrees<sup>2</sup> and transnational or cross border higher education provision. A Diploma Supplement issued with a joint degree should clearly describe all parts of the degree, and it should clearly indicate at which institutions and/ or in which study programmes the different parts of the degree have been earned.

The Diploma Supplement is intended to facilitate the implementation of the *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region*, Lisbon 1997.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint degrees, adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in Paris on 29 February 2016 available at [http://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Revised\\_Recommendation\\_on\\_the\\_Recognition\\_of\\_Joint\\_Degrees\\_2016.pdf](http://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/Revised_Recommendation_on_the_Recognition_of_Joint_Degrees_2016.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See the Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Joint Degrees, adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in 2001 and revised by the Committee in 2007, available at [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice\\_EN.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice_EN.asp#TopOfPage), and the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education adopted in autumn 2005 in the framework of both Organizations, available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/51/35779480.pdf>.

<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cc677fef-5e6c-478f-a4e7-bade47f450c5/language-en> DECISION No 2241/2004/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 15 December 2004 on a single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass).

## General Guidelines

It is strongly recommended that supplements should conform with the following:

1. The brief explanatory note (in the box at the head of the sample supplement) should be reproduced as part of each completed Diploma Supplement.
2. Institutions should follow the structure and sequence of information as provided in the template. Avoid information overload and present information as concisely as possible.
3. In combination with the credential itself, the supplement should provide sufficient information to enable the reader to make an assessment about the qualification. However, it should be clear that it is not designed to replace a curriculum vitae.
4. Supplements should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition.
5. The production of supplements is best done centrally and not devolved to different parts of academic institutions.
6. Institutions should take appropriate action to minimise the possibility of forgery and misrepresentation of their supplements.
7. Information on the higher education system (section eight) should be kept to a two-page maximum. Where possible, information should include diagrams, charts and reference to the national qualification's framework. This section could be produced for each country with the help of national Irish National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC), [www.naric.ie](http://www.naric.ie). It is particularly important that section eight of the supplement describe the national higher education structure in force at the time the qualification was awarded.
8. The Supplement should be issued automatically at the time the qualification is completed, free of charge and in a widely spoken language. Additionally, Supplements may be produced in the language(s) institutions think appropriate.
9. The original language should be used where indicated in the Guidelines. The glossary of terms associated with the supplement has been specifically produced to overcome linguistic confusions.

### ***Founding Principles:***

The Diploma Supplement is based on the following founding principles that respect national and international academic autonomy. These principles also give some further explanation of the purpose and nature of the new version.

### ***The Diploma Supplement is:***

1. a flexible, non-prescriptive tool, capable of adaptation to local needs;
2. a device that has national and international applications;
3. a system to aid recognition for academic and professional purposes;
4. an approach that specifically excludes any claims and value-judgements concerning recognition by providing sufficient objective information;
5. a tool to focus on the outcomes of the learning that has taken place;
6. an addition to the original credential, not a substitute of it.

### ***The Diploma Supplement is not:***

A Curriculum Vitae, or a substitute for the original qualification. Furthermore, it does not guarantee recognition of the qualification.

### ***When should the Diploma Supplement be issued?***

It is recommended that the Diploma Supplement should be issued **automatically and free of charge** to graduates within four weeks of the presentation of the parchment.

### ***Who should be issued with the Diploma Supplement?***

All graduates who have completed a programme of learning based on a minimum of 60 ECTS credits should be issued with a Diploma Supplement.

### ***Where can I access further details on the Diploma Supplement?***

Contact the Registrar's office on the higher education institution attended for information.

Ireland: <https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Europass.aspx>

Europe: [https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/education-training-youth\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/education-training-youth_en)

## ***II. Outline Structure for the Diploma Supplement***

The purpose of the Diploma Supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international 'transparency' and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It is free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO.

## Explanatory Notes for Completing the Diploma Supplement

### Section 1. Information identifying the holder of the qualification

The purpose of this section is to provide the information required to identify clearly the holder of the qualification.

- 1.1. **Last name(s)** as per parchment
- 1.2. **First name / given name(s)** as per parchment
- 1.3. **Date of birth** (day/month/year)
- 1.4. **Student identification number or code.** Provide the institutional identifier. This should identify the individual as a student enrolled at the institution on a particular programme which is described in the Diploma Supplement, e.g. through the student's personal code in the institution's database. Where the programme of study leads to a joint/transnational award, identifiers for all institutions involved should be included.

### Section 2. Information identifying the qualification

The purpose of this section is to provide the information required to identify clearly the qualification and the higher education institution(s) awarding it.

- 2.1. **Name of qualification and (if applicable) title conferred (in original language):**

For example, *Bachelor of Arts (Hons)*. Give the full name of the qualification in the original language(s). In the case of the NUI, this may be in Latin. An English translation should be supplied in brackets. If the qualification is a joint/transnational award this should be stated. Indicate if the award confers any nationally accepted title on the holder e.g. *Doctor, Chartered Engineer* etc. Indicate if the title is protected in law.

- 2.2. **Main field(s) of study for the qualification (disciplines):**

Show only the major field(s) of study (disciplines) that define the main subject area(s) for the qualification e.g. *Politics and History, Human Resource Management, Business Administration, Molecular Biology* etc. If appropriate, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997) fields of education can be used - <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

- 2.3. **Name and status of awarding institution (in original language):**

Indicate the name of the institution awarding the qualification in the original language. Awards are made by QQI, Institutes of Technology with delegated authority from QQI, Technological University Dublin and the Universities. In each case, a reference should be made to the legal basis and status of the awarding body.

The status of the institution in terms of quality assurance / accreditation should also be indicated:

Example 1: *'Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), a State body established by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, is the awarding body and quality assurance agency for the Institutes of Technology other and other higher education colleges and independent institutions outside the university sector'.*

Example 2: *'University College Dublin – UCD is recognised under state legislation (Universities Act, 1997) to award its own qualifications and has primary responsibility for quality assurance systems in place'.*

Where a programme is issued jointly by two or more institutions, the names of the institutions issuing the joint degree should be indicated.

#### **2.4. Name and status of institution (if different from 2.3) administering studies (in original language):**

This refers to the institution which is responsible for the delivery of the programme. In some cases, this will be different from the awarding body, and if so, this should be indicated here. Institutions should be identified by their more commonly known title, with a reference to the legal basis and status of the institution. If this information is the same as 2.3 above then write 'See section 2.3'.

If there is a difference between the awarding institution and the institution delivering the programme leading to the qualification, indicate the status of both, see section 2.3 above. Where the programme of study leads to a joint/ transnational award, indicate the names of all institutions involved in administering studies.

#### **2.5. Language(s) of instruction/examination:**

Indicate the language(s) by which the qualification was officially delivered and examined. In most cases, this should default to English. However, if a substantial part of a programme is delivered and examined through the medium of another language such as Irish or French, then this should be recorded in this section.

### **Section 3. Information on the Level and duration of the Qualification**

The purpose of this section is to provide the information required to identify clearly the level of the qualification and describe its duration in years and/or credits.

#### **3.1. Level of the qualification:**

Give the award-type and the precise level of the qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications. Specific reference to the alignment of the qualification to international frameworks should also be clearly indicated and cross-referenced to Section 8.

The alignment of the National Framework of Qualifications with the cycles of the Bologna process and the European Qualifications can be demonstrated through use of the diagram in Section 8 which details the higher education system in Ireland.

For example, *'Honours Bachelor Degree at NFQ Level 8. See Section 8 for referencing to Bologna Cycle and EQF Level'* (See Appendix 1)

Where the programme of study leads to a joint/ transnational award, reference should be made to its place in the relevant national educational structure of awards, e.g. *'Honours Bachelor Degree - NFQ Level 8 and FHEQ Level 6'*

### 3.2 **Official duration of programme in credits and/or years:**

Indicate the number of ECTS credits associated with the qualification and the indicative duration of the qualification concerned.

For example, 'The qualification consists of at least 240 ECTS credits, 4 years full time study'. However, in order to allow for part-time mode over a number of years, a phrase such as *'part-time mode over a number of years (240 ECTS credits)'* could be used. The use of ECTS grades in the Diploma Supplement is optional. EHEA countries are expected to make reference to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)<sup>3</sup>, e.g. 2 years /120 ECTS credits.

### 3.3 **Access requirement(s)**

*The main options for access requirements include the following:*

- Leaving Certificate (NFQ Level 4/5) and/or Matriculation (or comparable)
- Further education award – NFQ Level 5/6 (or comparable)
- Honours Bachelor Degree – NFQ Level 8 (or comparable)

A cross-reference to information on alignment of the NFQ to both the 'Bologna Framework' and EQF should be made. A phrase such as 'See section 8 for international comparability of access requirements' could be used. Information on other access routes including Recognition of Prior Learning should be available via a hyperlink.

## **Section 4. Information on the programme completed and the Contents and results obtained.**

The purpose of this section is to describe in detail what the holder of the qualification has learned in the programme and the level of his/ her performance.

### 4.1. **Mode of study:**

The mode of study refers to how the programme was undertaken e.g. full-time, part-time, intermittent/sandwich, e-learning, distance, etc. Where the programme of study leads to a joint/ transnational award, any required periods of study in collaborating institutions should be recorded here.

### 4.2. **Programme learning outcomes:**

Information on the regulations covering the minimum standards required to secure the qualification. Indicate the learning outcomes associated with the qualification.

The following phrase *'Learner must fulfil all programme learning outcomes in accordance with the assessment regulations of the institution'* could be used. The reader should also be referred to the institution's website for further information on assessment and

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<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Institutions Ireland [http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/index_en.htm)

minimum standards. This information is increasingly becoming the key basis on which qualifications are assessed and/ or recognised.

**4.3. Programme details, individual credits gained and grades/ marks obtained: (if this information is available in an official transcript this should be used here)**

Indicate the individual module titles/ units completed in order to obtain the qualification, the credits attached to them and the marks/ grades awarded, credit awarded and the ECTS grade. For institutions that issue transcripts of studies, it will be sufficient to include the transcript. The use of ECTS grades in the Diploma Supplement is optional.

Where the programme of study leads a joint/ transnational award, the Diploma Supplement should clearly indicate the institutions and/ or study programmes at which the different parts of the degree have been earned.

The Diploma Supplement should include cross-references where multiple diplomas are issued to a learner in respect of a dual award.

**4.4. Grading system and, if available, grade distribution table**

As per the Institution standard provide information on the grading system and pass marks relating to the qualification. This should detail the grading scheme; with an appropriate notation on the applicability e.g. the overall classification is based on a weighted average of the final two stages. If available, information on grade distribution for the programme can be included.

**4.5. Overall classification of the qualification (in original language):**

This should identify the final classification of the award, if applicable.

## **Section 5. Information on the Function of the Qualification**

The purpose of this section is to illustrate/ explain how the qualification may be used for academic or professional purposes.

**5.1 Access to further study:**

This should identify further academic and/ or professional study paths (progression routes) available to the learner as a result of securing this qualification and National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level.

A cross-reference to information on alignment of the NFQ to the 'Bologna Framework' should be made. A phrase such as 'See section 8 for international comparability of progression opportunities' could be used.

**5.2 Access to a regulated profession (if applicable)**

Give details of any rights to practise, or professional status accorded to the holders of the qualification, in accordance with national legislation or requirements by a competent authority. Indicate if the qualification gives access to a 'regulated profession' and the competent authority which allows this.

Example 1: In the case of an Honours Bachelor Degree in Engineering – ‘*This programme has been accredited by Engineers Ireland as satisfying the educational standard for Ordinary membership of Engineers Ireland and for the title of Chartered Engineer*’.

Example 2: ‘*In Ireland, ‘architect’ is a title regulated by national legislation. The Building Control Act 2007 sets out the requirements for eligibility to register as an architect. This qualification is listed in the relevant annex of Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications, level e and complies with the requirements of Article 46 of that Directive. The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland is the Competent Authority for architects in this State [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie)*’

The Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications should be referred to if:

- The qualification falls under the general system for the recognition of professional qualifications, the level of the degree in terms of article 11 of the Directive should be indicated.
- The qualification is listed in the Directive 2005/36/EC as giving eligibility for automatic recognition (doctors, nurses responsible for general care, dental practitioners, specialised dental practitioners, veterinary surgeons, midwives, pharmacists and architects), this should be stated.

A link to information on regulated professions and contact details of competent authorities should be provided, for example the Department of Education and Skills<sup>4</sup>

## Section 6. Additional Information

The purpose of this section is to include any other information which could not be included in the previous sections and is relevant to the purpose of assessing the nature, level and usage of the qualification.

### 6.1 Additional information:

Indicate any individual learning achievements gained outside of the programme and/ or any additional information not included above that have been certified by the institution and are relevant to the purpose of assessing the nature, level and usage of the qualification. For example, a mobility period abroad, a work placement, voluntary work etc. for which the student has not received credits or recognition, but which nonetheless contribute to the graduate’s learning outcomes. Or where an individual has received Recognition of Prior Learning for access, transfer or a full award and this information can be recorded.

Where the programme of study leads to a joint/ transnational award, additional relevant information on the arrangement/ delivery or assessment should be noted.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Qualifications-Recognition/Contact-List-Mutual-Recognition-of-Professions.pdf>

## 6.2 Further information sources:

Indicate any further useful information sources and references where more details on the qualification could be obtained, for example, The Higher Education Authority, [www.hea.ie](http://www.hea.ie); Quality and Qualifications Ireland, [www.qqi.ie](http://www.qqi.ie); Department of Education and Skills, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie); Irish National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC), [www.naric.ie](http://www.naric.ie); National Europass Centre, [www.europass.ie](http://www.europass.ie)

## Section 7. Certification of the Supplement

### 7.1 Date:

The date the Diploma Supplement was issued – not necessarily the same date as per awarding of the qualification.

### 7.2 Signature:

The name and signature of official certifying the Diploma Supplement.

### 7.3 Capacity:

The official post of the certifying individual.

### 7.4 Official stamp or seal:

The official stamp/ seal/ electronic stamp of the awarding body or bodies who provide authentication of the Diploma Supplement.

## Section 8. Information on the Irish Higher Education System (August 2020)

The purpose of this section is to provide background information on the national Higher Education System within which the qualification is awarded.

### *Description of Higher Education and Training System in Ireland*

Higher education in Ireland is provided by universities, technological universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education. In addition, a number of other third level institutions provide specialist education in such fields as art and design, medicine, business studies, rural development, theology, music and law.

The Department of Education and Skills maintains a [list of Higher Education institutions in Ireland](#), which provide higher education and training programmes leading to awards included in the National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ). These institutions offer a wide range of different types and levels of awards. Applications for entry to undergraduate courses in universities, technological universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education, are processed by the Central Applications Office (CAO). In recent years, there has been an increase in the availability of alternative access routes into higher education and training.

## *Government Agencies*

The Higher Education Authority ([HEA](#)) has a statutory responsibility, at central government level, for the effective governance and regulation of higher education institutions and the higher education system. In addition, it is the funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and other designated higher education institutions. Quality and Qualifications Ireland ([QQI](#)) is responsible for establishing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

## *Higher Education Institutions*

Irish Universities are recognised under State legislation (Universities Act 1997). The Universities make their own awards and validate programmes in institutions recognised by them. They provide programmes of study leading to awards included at NFQ Levels 7-10 and engage in basic and applied research. The Universities have primary responsibility for their own quality assurance systems.

The Technological Universities Act 2018 provides an analogous legislative framework for TUs and the eligibility criteria and processes for the establishment of this new type of Higher Education Institution.

The Institutes of Technology (IoT) are designated under State legislation (Institutes of Technology Act 2006). They provide programmes leading to awards at NFQ Levels 6 - 10. The Institutes of Technology make their own awards at specified levels under Delegated Authority from QQI.<sup>5</sup>

Other providers of higher education and training may apply to QQI for approval of their quality assurance procedures and subsequent validation of their programmes. While such providers have primary responsibility for quality assurance, QQI has a statutory role in quality assurance monitoring and review.

Furthermore, any person may apply to QQI for an award based on their lifelong learning achievement without reference to a programme of higher education and training.

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) has been incorporated into the awards systems of QQI, the Institutes of Technology and the Universities and most programmes are ECTS compatible. ECTS is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes. It aims to facilitate planning, delivery, evaluation, recognition and validation of qualifications and units of learning as well as student mobility.

## *National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)*

In terms of higher education and training, the NFQ sets the overall standards for all higher education and training awards. It is the single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured. It also defines the relationship between all education and training awards. It is a 10-level framework based on learning outcomes that are determined by standards of knowledge, skill and competence. Higher education and training awards are at NFQ Levels 6 to 10 and may be made by QQI, the

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<sup>5</sup> Amendment detail for updating.

Universities and Institutes of Technology. The framework consists of 16 major award types with minor and special purpose awards available at each level and supplemental awards available at NFQ Levels 4 to 10. All awards included in the Framework are underpinned by legislative quality assurance arrangements.

## Appendix 1:

### Bologna Framework/ European Qualifications Framework

The major awards of the NFQ are set out below together with the alignment to the ‘Bologna Framework’ and the draft alignment to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF):

EQF Level	EHEA Framework (Bologna)	National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level	NFQ Major Award-Types
EQF Level 1		NFQ Level 1	Level 1 Certificate
		NFQ Level 2	Level 2 Certificate
EQF Level 2		NFQ Level 3	Level 3 Certificate; Junior Certificate
EQF Level 3		NFQ Level 4	Level 4 Certificate; Leaving Certificate
EQF Level 4		NFQ Level 5	Level 5 Certificate; Leaving Certificate
EQF Level 5		NFQ Level 6	Advanced Certificate
	Short Cycle Higher Education		Higher Certificate
EQF Level 6	First Cycle Higher Education	NFQ Level 7	Ordinary Bachelor Degree
		NFQ Level 8	Honours Bachelor Degree; Higher Diploma
EQF Level 7	Second Cycle Higher Education	NFQ Level 9	Masters Degree; Post- Graduate Diploma
EQF Level 8	Third Cycle Higher Education	NFQ Level 10	Doctoral Degree; Higher Doctorate

### Bologna’ Framework of Qualifications/European Qualifications Framework

The Bologna Process, which commenced in 1999, is designed to lead to the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. A central initiative in the process is the adoption of a system based on three cycles – undergraduate, graduate and doctorate.

The main Bologna transparency tools are the **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System** ECTS, **Diploma Supplement** and **National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)**. In 2006, Ireland became the first country to formally align the NFQ with the “Bologna Framework”.

At the Bologna meeting of the ministers of education in Berlin in 2003 there was agreement that every student graduating from all Bologna country universities as from 2005 would receive the **Diploma Supplement** “automatically and free of charge”.

Running parallel to the Bologna Process is the development of the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** for lifelong learning. Ireland completed the process of referencing the National Framework of Qualifications to the EQF in May 2009 (see referencing outcome above).

Alignment facilitates the recognition of learning and supports access, transfer and progression for learners.