



# WHITE PAPER

## Policy and Criteria for Facilitating the Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications

### FOR CONSULTATION

This paper proposes the QQI policy and criteria for facilitating the academic recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland through its designation as the Irish ENIC-NARIC centre<sup>1</sup> for public consultation.

Following publication and consideration of the outcomes of consultation, this Paper will lead to Draft QQI Policy which is proposed for adoption by the Board of QQI. Once adopted, QQI policy and procedures are developed and implemented accordingly.

QQI is seeking feedback from stakeholders on the policy contained in this White Paper.

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<sup>1</sup> Information on the ENIC-NARIC Network is available at [www.enic-naric.net](http://www.enic-naric.net)

Submissions may be emailed to  
**consultation@QQI.ie**

The closing date for submissions  
is **Friday 13 February 2015**.

In your submission please clearly indicate:

1. *Your contact details.*
2. *Whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.*
3. *If you do not wish your submission to be published.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This draft policy is of interest to both individual holders of foreign qualifications and those stakeholders presented with such qualifications. It exclusively refers to the provision of advice on the general academic recognition of foreign qualifications. Such advice places the foreign qualification in the context of the Irish education and training system using the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) as a reference. The value of a qualification is concerned with desired use by the holder. General recognition advice provided by QQI is offered as a guide, regardless of the proposed use of the qualification. Thus, QQI does *not* make recognition decisions. The final value or recognition of a qualification for different purposes is made elsewhere.

For example, final recognition decisions for the purposes of accessing continuing education and/or employment are made by education institutions, professional recognition bodies and employers.

QQI defines a ‘foreign qualification’ as one obtained outside of the State where QQI has no external quality assurance role.

This policy acknowledges that recognition agreements or other arrangements relating to international qualifications resulting from bilateral engagements may be in operation. QQI respects such agreements.

This policy does not concern the recognition of international or professional awards within the NFQ. The latter recognition is dealt with elsewhere. In addition, the policy does not typically concern those qualifications which are not part of the formal national education system or National Qualifications Framework in the home jurisdiction. QQI is unable to comment authoritatively on such qualifications.

### 1.1 POLICY CONTEXT

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QQI inherited policy from the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland for the recognition of foreign qualifications: *National Policy Approach to the Recognition of International Awards in Ireland (NQAI, 2004)*.

The NFQ is the central organising feature of the Irish education and training system<sup>2</sup>. Of relevance for this policy is that the Framework is used to advise on placement (level and award-type where possible) of foreign qualifications in the context of the Irish system. Education institutions, professional bodies or employers may use this advice for providing recognition of foreign qualifications for the purposes of access for the holder of the qualification to continuing education and training or employment.

This policy facilitates individuals' mobility, and in this way supports relevant National and European policies such as those concerning education and labour market mobility.

QQI will work to increase awareness and implementation of best practice in recognition under the guiding principles of the *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (better known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC))<sup>3</sup>. An integral element of this work is the promotion of the recognition and portability of Irish qualifications abroad to build trust and reciprocity in the recognition of qualifications across borders.

### 1.2 LEGAL CONTEXT

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The LRC represents the principal international legal document aimed at helping achieve fair recognition of both completed higher education qualifications and qualifications providing access to higher education in the European Region. Ireland ratified this joint Convention of the Council of Europe (CoE) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2004.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information see the [QQI Strategy Statement](#)

<sup>3</sup> Available at <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=165&CL=ENG>

Section 9 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (Education and Training) 2012 (the 2012 Act) requires QQI to:

- » Promote, maintain, further develop and implement the NFQ
- » Co-operate with international bodies on qualifications and quality assurance policies and their implementation. In particular, this includes liaising with awarding bodies outside of Ireland in order to facilitate the international recognition of qualifications achieved in Ireland.

### 1.3 PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

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The purpose of this policy is to outline QQI's approach to the provision of general academic recognition advice on foreign qualifications.

## 2 POLICY

QQI's approach to facilitating academic recognition of foreign qualifications is to provide authoritative advice *online* in the format of non-personalised comparability statements. QQI has no role in authenticating qualifications nor determining eligibility of an individual for access to work or continuing education. These statements are supported by further information relating to the qualification in question and general links to information of interest on the relevant education and training system.

QQI's focus will be on researching foreign education and training and qualifications systems to improve the information provided. The aim is to deliver comprehensive coverage of countries with detailed information and comparability advice provided online in an easily accessible database for a variety of stakeholders.

QQI will engage in activities with stakeholders presented with foreign qualifications for various purposes. This engagement is aimed at developing recognition policy and practice to ultimately benefit those individuals seeking recognition of their foreign qualifications in Ireland. In providing advice, QQI will make reference to and raise awareness of the over-arching Frameworks (Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area and the European Qualifications Framework).

Further focus will be placed on collaborating with competent recognition authorities in Ireland to both identify and help meet information needs in providing recognition of foreign qualifications, especially through efficiently using the resources of the ENIC-NARIC Network.

### 3 CRITERIA FOR PROVIDING RECOGNITION ADVICE

QQI will compare a foreign qualification to qualifications that are placed at a particular level within the NFQ. The basis for comparability is information gained through independent research, compilation of research resources, interaction with ENIC-NARIC Network members and similar agencies in other countries.

The principles of the LRC guide evaluation of foreign qualifications. Recognition tools and initiatives such as Qualifications Frameworks, credit and Europass<sup>4</sup> documents are used in the provision of comparability advice. The status of the awarding body in the country of origin is a fundamental to the facilitation of recognition of foreign qualifications. QQI provides advice on academic recognition of foreign qualifications where the qualification is made by a *nationally recognised* awarding body constituting part of the formal education and training system in the country of origin.

#### 3.1 REVIEW OF COMPARABILITY ADVICE

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Comparability advice may be reviewed when considered necessary. Where changes occur in qualifications systems (either foreign or Irish), comparability advice may be changed. A date will be provided for any changes made. QQI will welcome feedback on recognition advice offered.

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<sup>4</sup> More information about Europass can be found at [www.europass.ie](http://www.europass.ie)

## 4 PUBLICATION

Advice on general academic recognition of foreign qualifications provided by QQI will be provided in the form of comparability statements on its website.

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