

Background to the Development of Broad Award Standards at NFQ levels 1-4

Legislation

Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012, QQI is required to establish the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners before an award can be made by QQI or by a provider to which authority to make an award has been delegated. QQI may determine different standards for different awards or different classes of award. In doing so, QQI must consult on draft award standards to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

Providers offering QQI validated programmes or providers operating under delegated authority to make awards from QQI, are required to ensure that an enrolled learner acquires the standard of knowledge, skill or competence associated with the level of the award concerned within the NFQ before the award is made.

QQI and providers offering QQI validated programmes share responsibility for the development and maintenance of QQI award standards.

QQI Policy

The determination of the draft award standards is provided for both in legislation and in [QQI Policy on the Determination of Award Standards](#). In consultation with relevant stakeholders QQI may determine award standards that vary in terms of how broad or narrow, statements of knowledge, skill or competence are expressed. The implementation of broad award standards is further enabled by [QQI Core Policy and Criteria for the Validation of programmes of Education and Training](#) and by [QQI Policy and Criteria for Making Awards](#)

National and European context

The draft broad award standards and the proposed implementation guidelines are designed to support national and European ambition for reform of qualifications at lower levels of the NFQ and the contribution of levels 1-4 to effective qualifications pathways and lifelong learning opportunities.

[The Adult Literacy for Life Strategy \(2021\)](#) highlights the development of QQI award standards at NFQ levels 1-4 so that *'everyone has the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully participate in society and reach their potential'...the work undertaken by QQI to develop standards at levels 1 to 4 will also support this process'*.

Ireland's [Further Education and Training Strategy](#) (SOLAS 2020), supports the gradual development of integrated FET approaches across levels 1-4 while still preserving community access. The strategy calls for courses which are focused on foundation or transversal skills development, including literacy and numeracy are intended to build the core capabilities which will allow participants to move on to more advanced learning opportunities.

The [DFHERIS Statement of Strategy](#) (2021) sets out national ambition for the development of talent, human capital and inclusion, all of which depend on suitable qualifications and qualifications pathways that support lifelong learning. Qualifications at low and intermediate levels are seen as

‘empowering learners to become active members of society, engaging in employment, contributing to prosperity and driving vibrant and diverse communities’.

The [EU Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning](#) urges member states to support the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning and ensure opportunities for all to develop key competences from an early age and throughout life, for all individuals, as part of national lifelong learning strategies and upskilling pathways.

Engagement with Stakeholders

The development of draft award standards at NFQ levels 1-4 was informed by the findings of the [Review of QQI Award Standards at NFQ levels 1-3](#) and subsequently by the findings from the [Review of QQI Award Standards at NFQ levels 1-9](#)

While the development of the draft broad award standards at NFQ levels 1-4 was coordinated by QQI, standards development groups comprising subject matter experts and other relevant stakeholders produced and agreed the content of the draft broad award standards. This consensus driven and collaborative approach is consistent with the international norms and conducive to the determination of QQI award standards that are fit for purpose.

QQI is very grateful to the large number of experts and practitioners who gave generously of their time and professional judgement in the development of the draft broad award standards for consultation. Their Institutional affiliation is included in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION OF EXPERTS AND PRACTITIONERS WHO SUPPORTED DEVELOPMENT OF THE BROAD AWARDS STANDARDS AT NFQ LEVELS 1-4
AN COSÁN
AN POST
AONTAS
ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS
BORD BIA
BRAY ADULT LEARNING CENTRE
CAVAN AND MONAGHAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD
CDETB TEACHERS CENTRE, MOUNTJOY PRISON

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CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF BUILDING IN IRELAND
CIF EDUCATION, TRAINING & SKILLS COMMITTEE
CITY OF DUBLIN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD
COPE FOUNDATION
CORK EDUCATIONAL TRAINING BOARD
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS
DESIGN & CRAFTS COUNCIL IRELAND
DIRECTOR OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOL
DONEGAL EDUCATION TRAINING BOARD
DUBLIN AND DUN LAOGHAIRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD
DUBLIN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY - TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN
EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND
EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS IRELAND (ETBI)
FAILTE IRELAND
FIT (FASTRACK INTO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY)
FRS RECRUITMENT
FURTHER EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICE
GALWAY ROSCOMMON EDUCATION TRAINING BOARD
GOREY SCHOOL OF ART
HEALTH SERVICES EXECUTIVE
HEALTH SERVICES EXECUTIVE - DONEGAL

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INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TRALEE - NOW MUNSTER TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (MTU)
IRISH HOSPITALITY INSTITUTE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
KERRY EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD
KILDARE AND WICKLOW EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD
KILKENNY AND CARLOW EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD
LAOIS AND OFFALY EDUCATION TRAINING BOARD
LIMERICK AND CLARE EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD
LIMERICK AND CLARE EDUCATION TRAINING BOARD
MAYO, SLIGO AND LEITRIM EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD
MEMBERS OF QA COMMITTEES, ETB OVERSIGHT LANGUAGE
MICROSOFT IRELAND
NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY AGENCY
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT
NATIONAL LEARNING NETWORK
NATIONAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OFFICE DISABILITY SERVICES, H.S.E.
PRE-HOSPITAL EMERGENCY CARE COUNCIL (PHECC)
REHAB IRELAND
SISK
SOCIETY OF CHARTERED SURVEYORS IRELAND
SOLAS
SOLAS TRAINING CENTRE(S)

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STEWARTS CARE IRELAND

TEAGASC

NATIONAL FORUM FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER
EDUCATION

TIPPERARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

TRINITY ACCESS PROGRAMME

WATERFORD AND WEXFORD EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

WHITEHALL COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION