

## **Agreement for alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and quality assurance of the qualifications of Ofqual recognised awarding organisations, awarded to learners in the Republic of Ireland**

### **Joint communication from Ofqual and the NQAI**

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)<sup>1</sup> and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)<sup>2</sup> are pleased to publish a revised agreement for the alignment and quality assurance of the qualifications of Ofqual recognised awarding organisations, awarded to learners in the Republic of Ireland, with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

In May 2008, alignment arrangements for the qualifications offered in the Republic of Ireland by awarding organisations recognised by Ofqual were launched on a pilot basis. As a result, the awards of 14 Awarding Organisations were aligned with the NFQ. For Ofqual and the NQAI, there are a number of principles and objectives underpinning the decision to continue with this alignment process post its pilot phase. These are set out in the revised agreement. A number of the fundamental objectives are reproduced below:

- to put in place a process that is consistent with the importance placed by Ofqual and the NQAI on the transferability of qualifications across jurisdictions and of associated learner achievements, and to support mutual objectives around improved access, transfer and progression arrangements;
- to acknowledge the benefits for all parties engaging with the qualifications system, not least learners and employers, in ensuring that standards of awards are maintained regardless of jurisdiction;

---

<sup>1</sup> Ofqual is the independent regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England, and of vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. Ofqual co-operates with the regulators in Wales (DCELLS) and Northern Ireland (CCEA for qualifications other than VQs) for the purposes of regulating awarding organisations which operate in the three countries.

<sup>2</sup> NQAI is responsible for developing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications in the Republic of Ireland and related policies on access, transfer and progression.

- to operate from the premise that quality assurance will be applied by recognised awarding organisations to awards aligned with the Irish NFQ, in a manner that is consistent with that administered in the home country by Ofqual;
- to be consistent with the quality conventions administered in the home country i.e., the layers of quality oversight that are expected to operate between a provider, an awarding organisation and an external party; and,
- to ensure that clear and accurate information on the relationship of awards with the NFQ is available to providers and learners so that they can make informed decisions regarding provision and attainment of qualifications.

The current agreement follows consultation with awarding organisations, and is a result of detailed discussions between Ofqual and the NQAI. The interests of learners in the Republic of Ireland undertaking programmes leading to the awards of awarding organisations, and the assured quality of these awards, is at the centre of this revised agreement. It aims to retain a number of elements which operated successfully as part of the pilot alignment arrangements, and to strengthen others.

Awarding Organisations seeking to align their qualifications under this alignment agreement are referred to the document “Supplementary Information for Awarding Organisations”. This document and others, including the applications forms, are available on the NQAI website at: [www.nqai.ie/AlignmentofUKAwards2011.html](http://www.nqai.ie/AlignmentofUKAwards2011.html)

Any matters not addressed in this guidance document may be referred in the first instance to: Sean O’Reilly, NQAI, +353 1 887 1503 or [soreilly@nqai.ie](mailto:soreilly@nqai.ie).

The NQAI and Ofqual may issue additional joint communications during the course of the implementation of this alignment agreement.