

## **Referencing programmes leading to awards which have been aligned with the NFQ and communicating the status of such awards to learners in Ireland**

### **Protocols for Education and Training Providers**

#### **Purpose of these protocols**

As an education and training provider, you have engaged with an Awarding Organisation which has aligned awards with the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) under the *Agreement for alignment and quality assurance of the awards of Ofqual recognised Awarding Organisations, awarded to learners in the Republic of Ireland, with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)*.<sup>1</sup>

These protocols aim to explain the alignment of awards with the NFQ and provide you with a simple explanation of how to reference the NFQ in promotional and marketing material relating to the programmes you provide which lead to aligned awards in your communications with learners.

In addition, this document advises you as to how to reference programmes leading to awards which are not aligned with the NFQ.

These protocols may be amended or further protocols may be issued at a later date, in keeping with the principles underpinning the alignment process.

#### **The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and background to the Alignment of Qualifications with the NFQ**

The Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) has been in place since 2003. The NFQ is designed for the development, recognition and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill and competence acquired by learners. The NFQ consists of 10 levels from basic learning to Doctoral awards. For more detailed information on the NFQ please see our website [www.nfq.ie](http://www.nfq.ie).

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.nqai.ie/documents/AlignmentAgreementMarch2011.pdf>

The awards made by statutory Irish awarding bodies are included in the NFQ. There are a number of Awarding Organisations from other jurisdictions which make awards following programmes undertaken by learners in Ireland. A process has been put in place to facilitate the alignment of such awards with the NFQ. In order for these awards to be aligned with the NFQ, a number of requirements must be fulfilled, including *inter alia* a requirement for quality assurance in the home jurisdiction which is external to the awarding body itself.

Under the Alignment Agreement with Ofqual, Ofqual has undertaken to regulate Awarding Organisations party to the Agreement and their provision in Ireland in a manner consistent with how it regulates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. As a result, the awards made by Awarding Organisations party to the Agreement can be aligned with the NFQ.

Information regarding the alignment process is available at:

<http://www.nqai.ie/AlignmentApplications.html>

### **Which Awarding Organisations have aligned awards with the NFQ?**

A full list of Awarding Organisations and the awards that have been aligned with the NFQ is publicly available at <http://www.nqai.ie/AlignmentReports.html>. Click on the Awarding Organisation link to see the report on the alignment of awards of that particular organisation. Details regarding the awards which have been aligned with the NFQ are contained in the reports, as well as the dates from which alignment came into effect.

## **What are my responsibilities with regard to informing learners if I am providing programmes which lead to awards that are aligned with the NFQ?**

It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that learners are provided with clear and unambiguous information regarding the status and associated progression opportunities of awards that are aligned with the NFQ.<sup>2</sup>

It is expected that with regard to the programmes leading to awards that have been aligned with the NFQ you provide the following information to learners on your promotional and marketing material –

- The title of the programme;
- The duration of the programme;
- The award made if the programme is successfully completed;
- The Awarding Organisation making the award if the programme is successfully completed;
- The status of the award i.e. that the award in question is aligned with the NFQ; and
- The Irish NFQ level at which the award is aligned.

In general, the suggested wording for referencing aligned awards is the following:

“Award X is aligned with level Y of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)”

Please note that these protocols pertain to alignment information; it is a condition of alignment that other kinds of information concerning access, transfer and progression, the recognition of prior learning and credit should also be provided to learners.

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<sup>2</sup>Section 10.3 of the Alignment Agreement; and also consistent with the NQAI’s *Policies, actions and procedures for access, transfer and progression for learners* <http://www.nqai.ie/docs/publications/10.pdf>

## **What are my responsibilities to learners if I am providing programmes which lead to awards that are not aligned with the NFQ?**

If you are offering a programme leading to an award which is not aligned with the NFQ, it is expected that you provide the following information to learners –

- The title of the programme;
- The duration of the programme;
- The award made if the programme is successfully completed; and
- The Awarding Organisation making the award if the programme is successfully completed.

*It is essential that the provider ensures that there is no reference to an Irish NFQ level in the promotional material relating to the programme or the award when the award is not aligned with the NFQ.<sup>3</sup>*

## **Why does information regarding alignment of awards with the NFQ need to be conveyed to learners in Ireland?**

In order to ensure that learners understand how the NFQ can help them to make decisions about their education and training, it is important that learners fully understand the status of the awards to which their programmes lead. For this reason, it is important that education and training providers convey information regarding the alignment of awards with the NFQ to learners.

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<sup>3</sup>The only situation when a Framework level should be included on the programme /award information is when the award is included in the UK Framework (NQF or QCF) but the award has not been aligned with the NFQ. It should be clear as to which qualifications framework the level is referring.

## **What logos or graphics can I use on my marketing material and certification relating to aligned awards?**

The “Framework diagram” illustrates the NFQ, its levels and award-types and can be included in your marketing material to illustrate how the aligned awards fit within the Irish education and training system. Please email [info@nqai.ie](mailto:info@nqai.ie) if you require a softcopy version of the Framework diagram to use in your promotional material.

The diagram should not be altered or customised for use in promotional activities without prior permission from the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

Awarding Organisations and providers are not entitled to use the logo of the NQAI, or that of any future amalgamated body in any marketing materials or documentation associated with aligned awards, nor are they entitled to refer to a particular relationship between the Awarding Organisation and the NQAI e.g. that the Awarding Organisation or the award is approved/regulated by the NQAI.

## **Are there examples of how education and training providers can reference alignment with the NFQ in promotional material?**

A number of examples of how to reference programmes leading to aligned and non-aligned awards are given below.

If you require further information or would like to check whether the information you are providing to learners regarding aligned/non-aligned awards is appropriate, please email [info@nqai.ie](mailto:info@nqai.ie).

### **Example 1 – Aligned award**

#### ***Sample programme and award information on provider’s website/prospectus***

Programme Title: (Awarding Organisation) Level 3 Diploma in X

Programme Duration: 1 year

Award Title (if different from programme title): As above

Awarding Organisation: Example Awarding Organisation

Irish NFQ Level: Level 3 (Awarding Organisation) Diploma in X is aligned with Level X of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

### **Example 2 – Aligned Award**

#### ***Sample programme and award information on provider’s website/prospectus***

Programme Title: (Awarding Organisation) Certificate in X

Programme Duration: 1 year

Award Title (if different from programme title): (Awarding Organisation) Level 1 Certificate in X

Awarding Organisation: Sample Awarding Organisation

Irish NFQ Level: Level 1 Certificate in X is aligned with Level X of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

**Example 3 – Non-Aligned Award (*not recognised by Ofqual*)\***

***Sample programme and award information on provider’s website/prospectus***

Programme Title: Introduction to X

Programme Duration: 6 months

Award Title (if different from programme title): Certificate in X

Awarding Organisation: X Awarding Organisation

\* **Note** – No reference is made to a level.

**Example 4 – Non-Aligned Award (*recognised by Ofqual*)**

***Sample programme and award information on provider’s website/prospectus***

Programme Title: (Awarding Organisation) Level 2 Diploma in X

Programme Duration: 1 year

Award Title (if different from programme title): As above

Awarding Organisation: X Awarding Organisation

Level: This award is included at Level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) / Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.