

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and
The New Zealand Qualifications Authority



The Compatibility of Qualifications in Ireland and New Zealand



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MATAURANGA O AOTEAROA

Údarás Náisiúnta
Cáilíochtaí na hÉireann
National Qualifications
Authority of Ireland



Joint Foreword by New Zealand and Ireland

Kei ngā rangatira e kawē nei i te mātauranga puta noa i te ao, tēnā koutou katoa.

To all the chiefly people who carry the basket of knowledge throughout the world, we salute you.

Trí choinneal a shoilsíonn gach dorchacht: fírinne, nádúr agus eolas

Three candles which illumine every darkness: truth, nature and knowledge.

The Compatibility of Qualifications in Ireland and New Zealand sets out the findings of the joint project between the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). This project aims to improve the basis on which Ireland and New Zealand recognise each other's qualifications.

NZQA and NQAI value the opportunity to work in partnership with one another to develop global human capital through leadership in the field of qualifications recognition policy. The joint project provides a systems-level opportunity for NZQA and NQAI to:

- fulfil their respective roles of ensuring that New Zealand and Irish qualifications are accepted as credible and robust nationally and internationally
- contribute to government and education sector priorities by increasing international understanding, comparability and recognition of New Zealand and Irish qualifications for both study and employment
- assist the mobility of learners and skilled workers by increasing their confidence that their qualifications and periods of study undertaken in New Zealand and Ireland will be recognised.

The development and implementation of qualifications recognition agreements between countries is not new. What is new in this joint project is the negotiation of the recognition of qualifications based on the compatibility of national qualifications framework level descriptors, qualifications definitions and non-outcomes criteria (entry and credit requirements and progression opportunities). This report provides a snapshot of how such an agreement is negotiated.

The report also contributes to the development of the strategic approach to qualifications recognition being promoted in the context of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, the Bologna Process, and the European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning.

NZQA and the NQAI undertake to continue to collaborate with each other to further develop the improved approach to qualifications recognition.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

Greetings to you all.

Beirigí bua agus beannacht,

May you prosper.



Karen Poutasi
NZQA Chief Executive



Jim Murray
NQAI Chief Executive

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Abbreviations

Common abbreviations that occur throughout the text are explained below:

ECTS	European Credit Transfer System Accumulation System
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awarding Council
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awarding Council
ITPQuality	Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality
Irish NFQ	Irish National Framework of Qualifications
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NZ Register	New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Summary

Note: From July 2010 the New Zealand Qualifications Framework became the single repository of New Zealand qualifications replacing the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (KiwiQuals) and the National Qualifications Framework.

Aim

This report sets out the findings of the joint project undertaken by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to improve the basis on which they recognise each other's qualifications. The approach to enhancing the basis for improved recognition of qualifications includes comparisons of the national qualifications frameworks of the two countries (see Appendix A and Appendix B). Decisions relating to the recognition of qualifications in each country will be informed by the compatibility statements contained in this report but will not be confined to these statements.

Structure

Part 1 describes:

- the international context, purpose and implications of the joint project
- how Ireland and New Zealand worked together to negotiate the agreed compatibility of the Level 7–10 qualifications in the Irish National Framework of Qualifications and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications.¹

In Part 2 the comparisons of the Irish and New Zealand qualification systems are set out as responses to the “criteria and procedures”. The criteria and procedures have been adapted from those used by Bologna Process member states when verifying the compatibility of their national qualifications frameworks with the European meta-framework, the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area commonly referred to as the Bologna Framework.²

The responses to Criterion and Procedure 1 and Criteria and Procedures 3 to 7 include comparisons of the legal requirements, the policies and the quality assurance requirements of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (Irish NFQ) and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (NZ Register). The response to Criterion 2 contains the comparisons of the Level 7–10 degree qualifications in the Irish NFQ and the NZ Register. The response also includes conclusions on the mapping of Levels 1 to 6 of the Irish NFQ and the NZ Register.

After the main text there are appendices supplying supporting information, a glossary of terms, and selected sources of information for New Zealand and Ireland.

Main messages

Following are the main messages based on the findings of the joint project. The joint project's findings were agreed by national reference groups and the international experts to the joint project.

Comparing national qualifications frameworks

A national qualifications framework is a particular model for describing a nation's quality-assured qualifications, based on the concept of “learning outcomes”. National qualifications frameworks serve to describe different learning paths and clarify how qualifications within a national system relate to each other, thus promoting learner mobility within the country.

The development and implementation of national qualifications frameworks has evolved over two decades, and they are increasingly being used to assist with the recognition of qualifications internationally. Having qualifications described in terms of learning outcomes enhances the recognition process, as previously recognition relied heavily on input factors such as programme duration. Qualifications frameworks are now proliferating rapidly under the impetus of globalisation. The joint New Zealand Ireland project represents a desire by both countries to consider the recognition implications of exploring the compatibility of qualifications in the two countries.

The Irish NFQ and the NZ Register are learning outcomes-based national qualifications frameworks. This means that the levels of the frameworks and the definitions of qualifications that sit at the levels are described in terms of the knowledge, skills and competences the learner gains as an outcome of completing the qualification. Although the Irish and New Zealand frameworks happen each to have 10 levels, direct correlation to numeric levels was not sought. The upper levels have been found to be broadly compatible both content-wise and numerically; the lower levels are less compatible.

This common national policy base (ie, both countries have national qualifications frameworks) has provided the opportunity for Ireland and New Zealand to recognise each other's qualifications in terms of the compatibility of the levels on which they are placed in the frameworks. Guided by the Bologna Process criteria for verification of compatibility, the NZQA and the NQAI have included the level descriptors and the qualifications definitions of the Irish NFQ and the NZ Register in the compatibility exercise, as well as the non-outcomes criteria (ie, the entry and credit requirements and the progression opportunities).

¹ The NZ Register has the function of what other countries call a national qualifications framework. From July 2010 the New Zealand Qualifications Framework became the single repository of New Zealand qualifications replacing the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (KiwiQuals) and the National Qualifications Framework www.nzqf.govt.nz

² Please see the Glossary for explanations of various terms used and the names of the main organisations.

The term “broadly compatible” is used because, although each country has particular traditions and approaches to awarding qualifications, the outcomes of qualifications (or what the learner is able to do as a result of gaining the qualification) can be deemed compatible or similar. When comparing qualifications there may not be an exact match across some descriptors, but by utilising a scale of strong, moderate or weak compatibility, a conclusion can be reached as to the overall compatibility of outcomes. This “best fit” approach is consistent with the Bologna Process criteria.

The agreement on compatibility undertaken in this project represents the implementation, by New Zealand and Ireland, of a global recognition policy based on the qualifications frameworks model as it is now agreed in the European region and as it may be utilised by, and extended to, countries outside the region. The agreement of compatibility confirms that qualifications frameworks are of great benefit to learners in facilitating fair recognition of their qualifications in other countries.

The agreement also confirms the usefulness of national qualifications frameworks in enabling governments to improve their recognition processes by interrogating each other’s systems, based on common policies and protocols, and enables them to benefit from the lessons learnt. For New Zealand in particular, as a country outside the European Union but an important exporter of education, it provides an impetus to strengthen global recognition of New Zealand qualifications.

The joint project has confirmed that the inclusion of comparisons of national qualifications frameworks level descriptors and qualification definitions improves the basis on which qualifications are recognised in Ireland and New Zealand.

The joint project found that although comparisons of national qualifications frameworks level descriptors and qualification definitions were broadly compatible, the arrangements for progression opportunities in New Zealand and Ireland are not similar for certain qualifications. The Convention on Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (1997), known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention,³ provides a solution for this issue.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention ensures that qualifications in host countries are recognised in a similar manner as they are in the country in which the qualification was gained.

Compatibility of the Level 7–10 degree qualifications

Decisions relating to the recognition of degree qualifications in each country will be informed by compatibility statements but will not be confined to these statements. Such decisions will also be made having regard to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and existing understandings of the qualifications, including progression opportunities, within and between each country.

It is agreed that:

- the Level 7 New Zealand bachelor degree and the Level 7 Irish ordinary bachelor degree are broadly compatible⁴
- the Level 8 New Zealand bachelor honours degree and the Level 8 Irish honours bachelor degree are broadly compatible

- the Level 9 New Zealand master’s degree and the Level 9 Irish master’s degree are broadly compatible
- the Level 10 New Zealand doctoral degree and the Level 10 Irish doctoral degree are broadly compatible.

Compatibility of Level 7–9 certificates and diplomas

It is agreed that:

- the above statements on the compatibility of the degree qualifications do not necessarily imply that certificates and diplomas sitting at the same level (Levels 7–9) of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ are broadly compatible – such certificates and diplomas have not been included in this compatibility exercise and will continue to be recognised on a case-by-case basis
- further work may be undertaken at a later stage to verify the compatibility of the full range of qualifications (certificates and diplomas) at Levels 7–9 of the Irish NFQ and the NZ Register.

Review of conclusions

It is agreed that each country will retain the capacity to test inferences, conclusions, inconsistencies in frameworks or level allocations that have arisen out of this compatibility exercise in the future, without prejudice.

Note on Levels 1–6 qualifications

Technical work on the mapping of Levels 1–6 of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ was completed as phase 2 of the project. Findings indicate that ongoing implementation of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ is required to improve the compatibility between frameworks at these levels.

Lessons learnt

Following is a summary of the lessons learnt concerning the use of national qualifications frameworks as the basis for international qualification recognition and negotiating country-to-country agreements on qualification compatibility.

National qualifications frameworks

The qualifications authorities of New Zealand and Ireland acknowledge that the inclusion of comparisons and the analysis of national qualifications framework level descriptors and definitions in qualifications recognition processes improves and consolidates the basis for the recognition of qualifications. However, it is likely to take time for the improved qualifications recognition processes to be implemented.

National qualifications frameworks are dynamic instruments that require continuous review and revision. The joint project confirms the need for ongoing implementation of the Irish NFQ and the NZ Register, as identified in other reports and contexts.

³ Ireland ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 2003; New Zealand followed in 2008.

⁴ Refer to note on page 12

A framework of qualifications having the same number of levels as another framework of qualifications does not imply compatibility of the two frameworks. In the case of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ, both frameworks consist of 10 levels but compatibility across all 10 levels was not established.

National qualifications frameworks provide an opportunity to develop descriptors of learning outcomes. Ongoing refinement of the common language of descriptors is required to ensure that the intent and content of the learning outcomes is easily understood by all users, including learners, employers and qualifications assessors.

It is important that all qualifications on national frameworks of qualifications have their own associated qualifications definitions, learning outcomes and non-outcomes criteria (ie, entry and credit requirements and progression opportunities). It should not be inferred that all qualifications that sit at the same level on a framework are identical.

The European meta-frameworks – the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (commonly referred to as the Bologna Framework) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning – were useful formal reference points when considering the compatibility of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ level descriptors. For example, the fact that the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning does not include a descriptor similar to the Irish NFQ descriptor “competence insight” is a reasonable basis upon which to consider the absence of this kind of descriptor in the NZ Register as not being critical to compatibility.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention and the associated explanatory notes formed a useful reference to support the judgements of compatibility and substantial differences.

Negotiating country-to-country agreements

Successful negotiation of country-to-country agreements requires good professional working relationships. The initial face-to-face meeting of the Joint Working Group was an important first step in developing a collegial approach and enabled both countries to collaborate easily.

The joint project was arranged in two phases. Phase 1 compared Levels 7–10 and phase 2 compared Levels 1–6. The comparison of the level descriptors, qualifications definitions and non-outcomes criteria was shared by NQAI and NZQA. NZQA compared Levels 7 and 8 and the NQAI compared Levels 9 and 10; draft reports were shared and agreed. In retrospect, it may have been helpful for both countries to compare all of the level descriptors, qualification definitions and non-outcomes criteria. This might have allowed more focus on the transition levels.

Internet-based communication, in particular video conferencing, was a useful way of conducting “face-to-face” meetings and helping to manage opposing time zones and annual calendars.

Part I Introduction

1.1 Overview

Increasingly for higher education the rapid pace of globalization requires new instruments for global recognition of qualifications. Overnight, students are wanting internationally portable qualifications: school leavers in Hamburg Germany or Florida USA will want firstly to study their degrees in places like NZ or Australia, and they will want to take this degree to get a job in the UK or maybe Hong Kong.⁵

Dr Judy Forsyth paints a picture of the rapidly emerging demands of learners for improved approaches to the global recognition of qualifications. In response, governments and economic regions all over the world are introducing national qualifications frameworks as a basis on which to negotiate the value of qualifications. As an indication of the strength of this policy response, 23 nations became involved in a recent major OECD⁶ project on qualifications systems, including New Zealand and Ireland as key team leaders. This work has been an important source of information on the structure, role and function of qualifications frameworks.⁷

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) are collaborating in a joint project to improve the basis on which they recognise each other's qualifications. The partnership offers unique opportunities to benefit the mobility of learners and skilled workers by increasing their confidence that their qualifications and periods of study will be recognised in New Zealand and Ireland respectively. This report sets out the outcomes of the joint project.

This project is taking place in a dynamic context: 2010 is the target year for many countries to introduce qualifications frameworks under their European Union / European Commission commitments. Implementation is a huge challenge. This joint project, between two countries with substantial experience of qualifications frameworks, is an early exemplar of many to come in which countries with a common policy commitment will be collaborating to explore the compatibility of their frameworks to support global qualifications recognition.

1.2 What is new?

Countries working in partnership to negotiate qualifications recognition agreements is not new. What is new in this joint project is the use of national qualifications frameworks, the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (the Irish NFQ) and the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (the NZ Register),⁸ to negotiate the compatibility of qualifications for international recognition. National qualifications frameworks offer a common language of learning outcomes, within which learning is usually described in terms of levels of knowledge and skills gained from the qualification, regardless of particular institutional, workplace or experiential pathways and the types of qualifications individual countries may offer.

In the context of country-to-country agreements, national qualifications frameworks are instruments for recognising qualifications that focus directly on the compatibility of the learning outcomes achieved. Formerly these judgments were determined by the procedure through which the qualification was earned, such as institutional regulations for entry requirements, course length and content, and staff qualifications.

1.3 Implications

Ireland has played, and continues to play, a key role in the development and implementation of the two European meta-frameworks: the three-cycle Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (commonly referred to as the Bologna Framework) for degree qualifications, and the eight-level European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning, which includes all qualifications. These meta-frameworks have been designed as translating and negotiating instruments for countries developing national qualifications frameworks.

The Bologna Framework is deemed to be compatible with Levels 6–8 of the European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning. Bologna Process member states are committed to developing national qualifications frameworks for higher education and verifying their compatibility with the Bologna Framework by 2012. European Union member states are committed to developing national qualifications frameworks and referencing these to the European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning by 2010. Ireland verified the compatibility of its NFQ with the Bologna Framework in 2006 and referenced it to the European Qualifications Framework for Life Long Learning in 2009.

⁵ Dr Judy Forsyth, international expert to the project, presentation to the New Zealand Reference Group, 13 August 2009.

⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

⁷ OECD (2007). Qualifications systems: Bridges to lifelong learning. http://www.oecd.org/document/20/0,3343,en_2649_39263238_38465013_1_1_1_1,00.html

⁸ The NZ Register has the function of what other countries call a national qualifications framework. From July 2010 the New Zealand Qualifications Framework became the single repository of New Zealand qualifications replacing the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (KiwiQuals) and the National Qualifications Framework www.nzqf.govt.nz

New Zealand is not a member of the Bologna Process or the European Union. This report on the compatibility of qualifications in Ireland and New Zealand suggests that there is a relationship between the bachelor, master's and doctoral qualifications at Levels 7–10 of the NZ Register and the respective cycles and levels of the Bologna Framework and the EQF to which the Irish NFQ has been formally aligned. However, this project does not fulfil the protocols necessary to formally align the NZ Register with the Bologna Framework nor the EQF.

1.4 Approach

A Joint Working Group of officials from NQAI and NZQA facilitated the joint project and provided guidance. In March 2008 the Joint Working Group members, Jim Murray and Carmel Kelly (NQAI) and Prue Wilson and Kathy Maclaren (NZQA), met in Dublin to establish a working relationship and to develop a process and timeline of milestones for the project. NQAI and NZQA agreed that the joint project would be carried out in two phases. Phase 1 would establish the compatibility of Levels 7–10 of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ; phase 2 would establish the compatibility of Levels 1–6 of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ, and would be carried out on completion of phase 1.

The joint project adapted Bologna Process criteria and procedures,⁹ which guide Bologna Process member states in verifying the compatibility of their national qualifications frameworks with the Bologna Framework. The criteria and procedures were adapted to reflect the country-to-country nature of the joint project and are set out at the end of Part 1.

In May 2008 the project brief was agreed and documents to support the comparison of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ level descriptors, qualifications definitions and non-outcomes criteria were exchanged. Draft reports were exchanged in October 2008, January 2009, and September, October, November and December 2009. Internet-based communication was used to assist cross-border communication, and opposing annual calendars and time zones.

1.5 International experts

Dr Judy Forsyth, former Executive Officer, Australian Qualifications Framework, and Sjur Bergan, Head of the Department of Higher Education and History Teaching, the Council of Europe, agreed to advise the Joint Working Group as international experts to the joint project. They provided comments on the draft reports as they were developed. The valuable contributions to the report made by Gerard Madill, formerly of Universities Scotland, were also appreciated.

1.6 Consultation processes

NQAI used existing consultation processes for awarding and quality assurance bodies to discuss and disseminate project findings. NZQA established a national consultation group and processes (see Appendix C).

1.7 Criteria and procedures

To guide and assist the process of mapping the NZ Register qualifications to the Irish NFQ qualifications, the criteria and procedures were adapted from those used by countries to verify the compatibility of their national qualifications frameworks with the Bologna Framework¹⁰. The criteria and procedures are set out below.

1. The New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications and the bodies responsible for their development are designated by the national ministries with responsibility for education and training. Their responsibilities are clearly defined and published and they shall agree the compatibility of Levels 7 to 10 degree qualifications on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the level descriptors, qualification definitions and non-outcomes criteria (ie, the entry and credit requirements and the progression opportunities) of the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.
3. The New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the system of credit allocation is compatible.
4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications are transparent.
5. The national quality assurance systems for tertiary education in New Zealand refer to the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the national quality assurance systems for higher education in Ireland refer to the Irish National Framework of Qualifications. The agreed compatibility of Levels 7 to 10 degree qualifications includes the stated agreement of the quality assurance bodies in New Zealand and Ireland.
6. The agreement of compatibility process shall involve international experts and agreed compatibility of levels 7 to 10 of the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications will be referenced in relevant publications and disseminated appropriately.

⁹ Established in the report of the Bologna Framework Working Group adopted by the European Ministers for Higher Education at Bergen, 2005. http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Bergen/050503_General_rep.pdf

¹⁰ Verification of compatibility of Irish National Framework of Qualifications with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area: Final report (2006). http://www.nqai.ie/publication_nov2006.html

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Part 2 Responses to Criteria and Procedures

Part 2 gives the joint project's responses to the criteria and procedures given at the end of Part 1, which were used as the basis for comparing the national qualifications frameworks of New Zealand and Ireland.

2.1 Criterion and Procedure 1

1. The New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications and the bodies responsible for their development are designated by the national ministries with responsibility for education and training. Their responsibilities are clearly defined and published and they shall agree the compatibility of Levels 7 to 10 degree qualifications on the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.

Introduction

Both the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ, and the bodies responsible for their development, are designated or authorised by national ministries with responsibility for higher education. The NZQA's functions and responsibilities are set out in the Education Act 1989.¹¹ The NQAI's functions and responsibilities are set out in the Qualifications (Education and Training Act) 1999.¹²

Both the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ are outcomes-based 10-level qualifications frameworks that cover the initial stages of learning at Level 1 to the most advanced learning at Level 10.¹³ Both frameworks describe the quality-assured qualifications that belong to the education system in each country. In order to be included on the NZ Register or the Irish NFQ, qualifications must undergo and satisfy a rigorous quality assurance process.

New Zealand

NZQA must act in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi because it is a Crown entity. The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding document of New Zealand. It establishes the relationship between the Crown and Māori as tangata whenua (indigenous people) of New Zealand. NZQA acts in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi by ensuring the NZ Register supports Māori to achieve educational success as Māori. Qualifications have been developed that specifically recognise Māori pedagogy, knowledge and skills. Māori qualifications reflect the NZ Register level descriptors and qualifications definitions. These qualifications range from Level 1 to Level 10.

The NZ Register¹⁴ is a comprehensive database of all nationally endorsed¹⁵ and local¹⁶ quality-assured qualifications (that are 40 credits or above) from tertiary education organisations¹⁷ and secondary schools in New Zealand. All qualifications quality assured by a recognised approval and accreditation body are automatically included on the NZ Register. The qualifications on the NZ Register build sequentially, moving from Level 1 certificates up to the most advanced Level 10 doctoral degrees.

However, as shown below, there are several types of qualification that sit at Levels 7–9 because they share the same learning outcomes. The qualification types are as follows:

- certificates at Levels 1 to 7
- diplomas at Levels 5 to 7
- bachelor degrees and graduate diplomas and certificates at Level 7
- bachelor honours degrees and postgraduate diplomas and certificates at Level 8
- master's degrees and postgraduate diplomas and certificates at Level 9
- doctoral degrees at Level 10.

Ireland

Under legislation NQAI is required "to establish and maintain a framework ... for the development, recognition and award of qualifications in the State based on standards of knowledge, skill and competence", and to "establish policies and criteria on which the framework of qualifications will be based."

The Irish NFQ was developed by NQAI in consultation with stakeholders and launched in October 2003. It is a 10-level framework which captures all learning, from the very initial stages to the most advanced. Qualifications achieved in school, further education and training, and in higher education and training, are all included in the framework. Each of these qualifications is quality assured, and every provider delivering programmes that lead to qualifications in the framework is also quality assured.

The Irish NFQ includes award types of different classes, including the large or "major" awards. Qualifications are also awarded for smaller learning achievements, which are known in the Irish NFQ as minor, special purpose and supplemental awards.

¹¹ http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM175959.html?search=ts_act_education+Act+1989&sr=1

¹² [http://www.nqai.ie/Qualifications%20\(Education%20and%20Training\)%20Act,%201999.pdf](http://www.nqai.ie/Qualifications%20(Education%20and%20Training)%20Act,%201999.pdf)

¹³ This does not mean that they automatically align. See the Summary, "Main messages", page 5

¹⁴ <http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz>

¹⁵ Nationally endorsed qualifications are developed by recognised standard-setting bodies and are endorsed by the relevant bodies.

¹⁶ Local qualifications are developed by providers, including universities.

¹⁷ Tertiary institutions include universities, institutes of technology, polytechnics, private training establishments and wānanga. Wānanga are tertiary institutions characterised by teaching and research that maintains, advances, and disseminates knowledge, develops intellectual independence, and assists the application of knowledge regarding āhuratanga Māori (Māori tradition) according to tikanga Māori (Māori custom).

Sixteen major award types have been established for the Irish NFQ as follows:

- level 1 certificate at Level 1
- level 2 certificate at Level 2
- level 3 certificate at Level 3
- junior certificate at Level 3
- level 4 certificate at Level 4
- level 5 certificate at Level 5
- leaving certificate at Levels 4 and 5
- advanced certificate at Level 6
- higher certificate at Level 6
- ordinary bachelor degree at Level 7
- honours bachelor degree at Level 8
- higher diploma at Level 8
- master's degree at Level 9
- postgraduate diploma at Level 9
- doctoral degree at Level 10
- higher doctorate at Level 10.

Each of these 16 major award types has a descriptor associated with it, which describes the purpose, level, volume, learning outcomes, progression, transfer and articulation associated with it. Each of the award types is understood to be different to the other award types in an Irish context, and to have value and relevance for the labour market and progression to further learning opportunities.

Access to employment of different kinds is generally accepted across society with different levels and major award types of higher education awards. This is underpinned in research undertaken annually by the Higher Education Authority, which tracks the first destination (in employment or further learning) of graduates. It is also worth noting that the Bologna Declaration¹⁸ established that the degree awarded after the first cycle will also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. In this regard, the research referred to above verifies such relevance.

2.2 Criterion and Procedure 2

2. There is a clear and demonstrable compatibility between the level descriptors, qualification definitions and non-outcomes criteria (ie, the entry and credit requirements and the progression opportunities) of the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications.

Introduction

The process for establishing a clear and demonstrable compatibility between the level descriptors and the qualification definitions of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ is set out in Appendix E.

Conclusions

Compatibility of the Level 7 New Zealand bachelor degree and the Irish ordinary bachelor degree

Based on analysis of the level descriptors, qualification definitions and non-outcomes criteria of the Level 7 bachelor degree in the NZ Register; and the level indicators, award-type descriptors and non-outcomes criteria of the Level 7 ordinary bachelor degree in the Irish NFQ (see Appendix E, Tables E1 – E3), it has been found that:

- the level descriptors, qualification definition/award-type descriptors and non-outcomes entry requirements are broadly compatible
- there is a substantial difference in some non-outcomes criteria, specifically in relation to credit allocations and progression opportunities:
 - in New Zealand, a significant proportion of Level 7 bachelor degrees (nearly 40%) have more than 180 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) equivalent credits allocated to them, whereas in Ireland all Level 7 ordinary bachelor degrees have 180 credits allocated to them
 - in New Zealand, a Level 7 bachelor degree holder might have direct entry to a master's programme, whereas in Ireland this is typically not the case
- a significant number of New Zealand Level 7 bachelor degrees are accepted as meeting the standard for entry into particular professions, including teaching for primary and secondary education.

Level 7 conclusions

- It is agreed that the Level 7 New Zealand bachelor degree and the Level 7 Irish ordinary bachelor degree are broadly compatible.
- It is agreed that recognition of the above-named qualifications in each country will be informed by the compatibility statements above but will not be confined to these statements. Such decisions will also be made having regard to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention¹⁹ and existing understanding of the qualifications, including progression opportunities, within and between each country.

¹⁸ Bologna Declaration (1999): is a pledge by 29 countries to reform the structures of their higher education systems in a convergent way.

¹⁹ Each country shall recognise qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless it can show that there are substantial differences between its own qualifications and the qualifications for which recognition is sought. Recognition of a higher education qualification issued in another country shall have one or more of the following consequences: “- access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations and preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as candidates from the country in which recognition is sought; – the use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which recognition is sought; – in addition, recognition may facilitate access to the labour market.” http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/LRC_en.asp

- Ireland has acknowledged that there is an apparent inconsistency in the treatment of both the ordinary bachelor degree (Level 7) and the honours bachelor degree (Level 8) as first-cycle qualifications compatible with the Bologna first-cycle descriptor. While the compatibility of both has been demonstrated in terms of the comparison of learning outcomes, the first-cycle ordinary bachelor degree qualification does not typically give access to programmes leading to second-cycle qualifications.²⁰

Compatibility of the Level 8 New Zealand bachelor honours degree and the Irish honours bachelor degree

Based on analysis of the level descriptors, qualification definitions and non-outcomes criteria of the Level 8 bachelor honours degree in the NZ Register, and the level indicators, award-type descriptor and non-outcomes criteria of the Level 8 honours bachelor degree in the Irish NFQ (see Appendix E, Tables E5–E7), it has been found that the:

- Level 8 New Zealand bachelor honours degree level descriptors and the Level 8 Irish NFQ level indicators are broadly compatible, where the New Zealand level descriptors exist
- qualification definition of the New Zealand bachelor honours degree and the award-type descriptor for the Irish honours bachelor degree are broadly compatible
- entry and credit requirements and the progression opportunities are similar for the New Zealand bachelor honours degree and the Irish honours bachelor degree.

Level 8 Conclusions

- It is agreed that the New Zealand bachelor honours degree and the Irish honours bachelor degree are broadly compatible.
- It is agreed that recognition of the above-named qualifications in each country will be informed by the compatibility statements above but will not be confined to these statements. Such decisions will also be made having regard to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and existing understanding of the qualifications, including progression opportunities, within and between each country.
- Ireland has acknowledged that there is an apparent inconsistency in the treatment of both the ordinary bachelor degree (Level 7) and the honours bachelor degree (Level 8) as first-cycle qualifications compatible with the Bologna first-cycle descriptor. Although the compatibility of both has been demonstrated in terms of the comparison of learning outcomes, the first-cycle ordinary bachelor degree qualification does not typically give access to programmes leading to second-cycle qualifications.²¹

Compatibility of the Level 9 New Zealand master's degree and the Irish master's degree

Based on analysis of the level descriptors, qualification definitions and non-outcomes criteria of the Level 9 NZ Register master's degree and the level indicators, award-type descriptor and non-outcomes criteria of the Level 9 Irish NFQ master's degree (see Appendix E, Tables E7–E8), it has been found that the:

- Level 9 New Zealand master's degree level descriptors and the Level 9 Irish NFQ level indicators are broadly compatible
- qualification definition of the New Zealand master's degree and the award-type descriptor for the Irish master's degree are broadly compatible
- entry and credit requirements and the progression opportunities are similar for the New Zealand master's degree and the Irish master's degree.

Level 9 conclusions

- It is agreed that the New Zealand master's degree and the Irish master's degree are broadly compatible.
- It is agreed that recognition of the above-named qualifications in each country will be informed by the compatibility statements above but will not be confined to these statements. Such decisions will also be made having regard to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and existing understanding of the qualifications, including progression opportunities, within and between each country.

Compatibility of the Level 10 New Zealand doctoral degree and the Irish doctoral degree

Based on analysis of the level descriptors, qualification definitions and non-outcomes criteria of the Level 10 NZ Register doctoral degree, and the level indicators, award-type descriptor and non-outcomes criteria of the Level 10 Irish NFQ doctoral degree (see Appendix E, Tables E9–E10), it has been found that the:

- Level 10 New Zealand doctoral degree level descriptors and the Level 10 Irish NFQ level indicators are broadly compatible
- qualification definition of the New Zealand doctoral degree and the award-type descriptor for the Irish doctoral degree are broadly compatible
- entry and credit requirements and progression opportunities are similar for the New Zealand doctoral degree and the Irish doctoral degree.

²⁰ Verification of compatibility of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (2006), p. 6. <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/VerificationofCompatibility220609.pdf>

²¹ Verification of compatibility of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (2006), p. 6. <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/VerificationofCompatibility220609.pdf>

Level 10 conclusions

- It is agreed that the New Zealand doctoral degree and the Irish doctoral degree are broadly compatible.
- It is agreed that recognition of the above-named qualifications in each country will be informed by the compatibility statements above but will not be confined to these statements. Such decisions will also be made having regard to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and existing understanding of the qualifications, including progression opportunities, within and between each country.

Compatibility of Level 7–9 certificates and diplomas

- Levels 7–9 of both the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ contain qualifications other than those described above. For example, the higher diploma is included at Level 8 of the Irish NFQ and the postgraduate diploma is included at Level 9 of the Irish NFQ, while postgraduate diplomas and certificates are registered at Level 8 on the NZ Register.
- It is agreed that the above statements on the compatibility of the degrees do not necessarily imply that certificates and diplomas sitting at the same level (Levels 7–9) of the NZ Register and Irish NFQ are compatible. Such certificates and diplomas will be recognised on a case-by-case basis.
- It is agreed that further work may be undertaken at a later stage to verify the compatibility of the full range of qualifications (certificates and diplomas) at Levels 7–9 of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ.

Review of conclusions

It is agreed that New Zealand and Ireland will retain the right to test the inferences, conclusions, inconsistencies or level allocations in the NZ Register and Irish NFQ that have arisen out of the joint project in the future without prejudice.

Note on Levels 1–6 qualifications

Technical work on mapping Levels 1–6 of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ was completed as phase 2 of the project. The findings indicate that ongoing implementation of the NZ Register and Irish NFQ is required to improve the compatibility between frameworks at these levels. Incompatibilities between qualification levels of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ relate specifically to the positioning of secondary school qualifications and vocational qualifications.

The New Zealand National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) sit at Levels 1–3 of the NZ Register. The Irish junior and higher leaving certificates sit at Levels 3–5 of the Irish NFQ. The New Zealand trade and advanced trade qualifications sit at Levels 4 and 5 of the NZ Register and professional qualifications sit at Level 6. The Irish Advanced Certificate – Craft sits at Level 6 of the Irish NFQ.

Ireland and New Zealand will keep each other informed as each country further implements its frameworks from Levels 1 to 6.

2.3 Criterion and Procedure 3

3. The New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the system of credit allocation is compatible.

Introduction

The NZ Register and the Irish NFQ are learning outcomes-based qualifications frameworks. Both New Zealand and Ireland have established national credit guidelines/requirements for qualifications based on notional learning time.

New Zealand

The NZ Register and learning outcomes

New Zealand legislation (see Criterion 1) requires NZQA to oversee the setting of standards for qualifications in secondary schools and in post-secondary school education and training.

In 1994 the Ministerial Tertiary Lead Group recommended to the Minister of Education that registration onto the single harmonised qualifications framework requires that degrees and postgraduate qualifications be specified in terms of learning outcomes and objectives.²² The recommendation was confirmed by *The Tertiary Action Group Report*, which stated that a learning outcome is used to describe an activity, or set of activities, that a person has been assessed as able to carry out against stated assessment criteria. The focus is on what a person is able to do as a result of undertaking the programme to complete the qualification.²³

The strands of learning in the NZ Register Levels 1–7 level descriptors are:

- process: carry out processes that (skills strand)
- learning on demand: employing (recall and understanding of knowledge strand)
- responsibility: applied (ability to apply the skills in terms of directed or self-directed activity).

The strand of learning in the NZ Register Levels 8–10 level descriptors is:

- involves knowledge and skills that enable the learner to.

The level descriptors are included in the NZ Register policy,²⁴ which states that for each qualification on the Register there must be a statement of learning outcomes. There is no standardised way of expressing these learning outcomes. The NZ Register sets out the requirements for the learning outcomes.²⁵

22 A single harmonised framework: Report of the Ministerial Tertiary Lead Group (1994), Wellington: The Group, p. 6.

23 Tertiary Action Group report (1996), Wellington: New Zealand Qualifications Authority, p. 10.

24 <http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz/publications/index.html>

25 <http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz/about/outcomestements.html>

The NZ Register and credit requirements

The quality assurance requirements under the Education Act 1989 and the NZ Register provide the foundation and structure for credit recognition and transfer. The NZ Register provides the basis for consistent credit recognition and transfer by New Zealand education providers.²⁶

The *Tertiary Action Group Report* set out generic definitions of credits for the national qualifications framework, and these are used by the NZ Register. They include:

- time spent learning
- time taken to practise outcomes
- time taken to gather and provide evidence for assessment purposes
- time taken to be assessed in all the outcomes in required contexts.

Notional learning time is expressed in credits. In New Zealand, 1 credit is equivalent to 10 notional learning hours. The typical learner will complete 120 credits in a one-year, or two-semester, full-time course of study, so that 120 credits equal two semesters of full-time study.

The NZ Register policy outlines the minimum credit requirements for qualification titles (Levels 7–10) for quality-assured qualifications on the NZ Register.²⁷ The credit requirements for degree qualifications at Levels 7–10 are set out in the comparison tables in Appendix E.

Ireland

The Irish NFQ and learning outcomes

The Irish NFQ is required by law to be based on learning outcomes. Section 7 of the Qualifications Act requires NQAI “to establish and maintain a framework ... for the development, recognition and award of qualifications in the State based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence”. Under section 8, NQAI is required to “establish policies and criteria on which the framework of qualifications shall be based”.

In its *Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications (2003)*²⁸, NQAI determined that award standards are the expected outcomes of learning for all education and training. They concern the knowledge, skill and competence that are expected from the learner who is to receive an award. They cover both general standards (for a level in the Irish NFQ or an award type) and the specific standards for named awards in particular subjects or fields of learning. A full description of the learning outcomes approach in the Irish NFQ, and the underlying concepts, is available in *Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications*.

The descriptors for the level indicators and major award types in the Irish NFQ are based on strands and sub-strands of learning outcomes, as follows:

- knowledge: breadth and kind
- know-how and skill: range and selectivity
- competence: context, role, learning to learn and insight.

The descriptors for the major award types are included in Appendix 4 of the NQAI's determinations document.²⁹ Irish higher education awarding bodies have agreed to use the descriptors of the higher education award types as the descriptors of the awards they make.

The Irish NFQ and links to credit systems

Following the establishment of the Irish NFQ, NQAI, in partnership with education and training stakeholders, proceeded to develop a national approach to credit within the context of the general approach to access, transfer and progression. A twin track approach was pursued – one for further education and training, the other for higher education and training – because at the time the direction on credit was more clearly signposted for higher education and training within the context of the Bologna Process and the general acceptance and use of the ECTS.

Since that time, however, the Irish awarding body Further Education and Training Awarding Council (FETAC) has been working on the development of a credit system for further education and training in the context of its ongoing work on developing its Common Awards System. The Common Awards System, and the associated credit arrangements, applies to FETAC awards at Levels 1–6 of the Irish NFQ, but does not apply to the school awards (the junior certificate and leaving certificate) included at Levels 3–5 in the Irish NFQ.

At present, as is the case generally in Europe, there are no immediate plans to develop a credit system for general education within the school sector. The following paragraphs outline developments with regard to credit in higher education and training and further education and training.

Credit and higher education and training

In 2004 NQAI's Technical Advisory Group on Credit (Higher Education Track) published a set of *Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of a National Approach to Credit in Irish Higher Education and Training*.³⁰ These principles and operational guidelines have been adopted by NQAI. The operational guidelines recommend that a typical credit volume or credit range be established for each major award type from Levels 6 to 9 in the Framework in line with existing ECTS conventions and current practice in the Irish higher education and training system, as follows:

- Level 6 higher certificate = 120 credits
- Level 7 ordinary bachelor degree = 180 credits
- Level 8 honours bachelor degree = 180–240 credits
- Level 8 higher diploma = 60 credits
- Level 9 master's degree (taught) = 60–120 credits
- Level 9 postgraduate diploma = 60 credits.

Irish doctoral degrees and master's degrees (by research) do not usually have credit values assigned to them. However, master's degrees (by research) typically have a two-year duration, which would equate to an appropriate number of credits. Institutional practice for assigning credit to professional doctorates differs. National discussions on developing a possible credit range for doctorates, which could include professional doctorates, are at

26 <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications/creditpolicy.pdf>

27 <http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz/publications/index.html>

28 http://www.nqai.ie/publication_oct2003b.html

29 http://www.nqai.ie/publication_oct2003c.html

30 http://www.nqai.ie/publication_nov2004.html

an early stage. All Irish higher education and training awarding bodies are operating within these arrangements.

Credit and further education and training

FETAC's Credit, Accumulation and Transfer System was initially devised in 2005 as part of the Common Awards System. At that time credit ranges were established for all FETAC award types at Levels 1–6. The intention was to refine these ranges further in the context of named awards as more clarity emerged on the optimum credit values for further education and training. Further information on the credit system for further education and training is available in the *National Report for Referencing of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)*.³¹

2.4 Criterion and Procedure 4

4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications are transparent.

Introduction

New Zealand and Ireland have comprehensive and transparent policies and procedures for the inclusion of qualifications in the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ.

New Zealand

Under section 253(1) of the Education Act 1989, NZQA is required to establish policies and criteria related to the registration of private training establishments (PTEs), and the approval of courses of study and training at PTEs and other institutions. It is also stated that before establishing policies and criteria, NZQA will consult with the appropriate relevant quality assurance bodies.

The NZQA Board ensures that NZQA carries out its legislative functions. NZ Register policy sets out the quality assurance arrangements and general registration criteria requirements for providers to include qualifications on the NZ Register.³² NZQA has criteria for approval and accreditation of courses leading to degrees and related qualifications (which includes the gazetted criteria³³) for the inclusion of awards on the NZ Register.³⁴

Legal recognition of qualifications on the NZ Register

All qualifications on the NZ Register are formally recognised. The New Zealand quality-assured qualifications awarded by New Zealand qualification-granting institutions – NZQA, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) and the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee – are included on the NZ Register. The quality assurance arrangements for the registration of qualifications on the NZ Register are set out in the NZ Register policy.

Policies and procedures for international qualifications recognition

Under section 253(1)(h) of the Education Act 1989, NZQA is:

to maintain effective liaison with overseas certifying and validating bodies, in order to recognise overseas educational and vocational qualifications in New Zealand and to achieve recognition of New Zealand educational and vocational qualifications overseas.

Qualifications granted to learners in New Zealand by qualification-granting organisations based in other countries are not included on the NZ Register. If a student wishes to use these qualifications for entry into another course, these qualifications are assessed by NZQA's Qualifications Recognition Services business unit for comparability to a qualification award type and level on the NZ Register. The Qualifications Recognition Services' criteria for assessment include verification of the institution's accreditation status, legal authority to award qualifications in the home country, external quality assurance in the home country, and verification of the qualification.³⁵

Former (historical) qualifications

When it was set up in August 2003 all existing qualifications were placed on the NZ Register. During the implementation phase (August 2003 to December 2006) qualifications were closed if they were no longer being offered. All closed qualifications are on the database and can be accessed by NZQA and the other quality assurance bodies, but are not for public view. NZQA is starting work to show closed or historical qualifications that meet the requirements of the NZ Register.

Delegations

Under section 254(5) of the Education Act 1989, NZQA may delegate its power to consent to the award of a qualification described as a degree to any body referred to in section 260(2) (other than the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee) (see Criterion 5 for quality assurance of qualifications).

Ireland

Under section 8 of the Qualifications Act, NQAI is required to "establish policies and criteria on which the framework of qualifications shall be based." The initial Irish NFQ policies and criteria have been adopted by the NQAI and published in 2003 as *Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications*.³⁶ Chapter 6 of these policies sets out the process for the inclusion of awards in the Framework as follows.

- *It is the role of NQAI to determine the level indicators and the award-type descriptors. These will form the basis for the setting of standards for named awards by the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council and the Dublin Institute of Technology.*
- *In relation to school and university awards, the aim is that the level indicators and the award-type descriptors in the framework will be developed in a way that will facilitate the inclusion of these.*

31 <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/EQFReferencingReportfinalJune2009.pdf>

32 <http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz/publications/index.html>

33 The gazetted criteria are the seven criteria for course approval and accreditation that all providers must meet.

34 <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/applications/registration/index.html>

35 <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-international/international/index.html>

36 http://www.nqai.ie/publication_oct2003b.html

Accordingly, Irish school and further and higher education and training awarding bodies are now using the descriptors of the award types as the descriptors of the awards they make, and it is up to them to have processes in place for their own award making. These are detailed further in the material provided in relation to Criterion 5 (below).

Policies for inclusion in, or alignment with, the NFQ of awards not already recognised in the NFQ

NQAI has also adopted policies and criteria for inclusion in, or alignment with, the NFQ of the awards (or the learning outcomes associated with them) of certain awarding bodies that are not already recognised through the NFQ under section 8 of the Qualifications Act.³⁷ These make provision for the recognition through the Irish NFQ of:

- the awards of Irish bodies, which make awards on a statutory basis (where the body's awards are not yet in the Irish NFQ and where the awards cannot be withdrawn) – this category would include awards made by bodies who make awards on an Irish statutory basis other than those of the State Examinations Commission, the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, the universities, the Dublin Institute of Technology and any institution with authority delegated from an awards Council to make awards. Examples of such bodies would include the Honorable Society of King's Inns and the Law Society of Ireland. To date, no awards made by bodies classifiable under this category have been included in the Irish NFQ.
- The learning outcomes associated with the awards of certain Irish bodies that do not make awards on a statutory basis, but that recognise the attainment by learners of learning outcomes in a formal way associated with the legal regulation of the operation of a profession or of a professional title by such bodies. Examples of such bodies whose awards have received recognition through the Irish NFQ include the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ireland and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.
- The awards of certain bodies from outside the state which make awards in Ireland, such as bodies whose awards have been aligned with the Irish NFQ, include the Scottish Qualifications Authority, City and Guilds and the Open University.³⁸

Awards made to learners in Ireland by awarding bodies based in other countries are not included in the Irish NFQ, but they may be formally aligned. The policy provides for the alignment of such awards on the basis of best fit of learning outcomes to levels or award types in the Irish NFQ. Criteria include legal authority to make the awards in the home country, inclusion in the national framework or equivalent in the home country, and external quality assurance in the home country, which is also applied to the awards made in Ireland. NQAI and FETAC review applications for the alignment of vocational and further education and training awards under this process. In relation to higher education and training awards, the alignment process is overseen by NQAI and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC).

Existing and former (legacy) awards

As the Irish NFQ is progressively implemented, many existing awards will no longer be granted. Furthermore, many learners hold Irish awards that were part of former systems and have already ceased to be made. It is necessary to map these existing and former awards (sometimes referred to as "legacy" awards) onto the Irish NFQ so that holders of such awards are not disadvantaged. The general policy approach for the inclusion of legacy awards is set out in *Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications* (pp. 43–45).³⁹

The task of working out the placement of existing and former awards is well advanced. NQAI has agreed to the placement of a range of existing and former awards with FETAC (January 2005), HETAC (March 2004), the Dublin Institute of Technology (March 2005) and the Department of Education and Science (May 2005).⁴⁰ A general approach for the placement of the legacy awards of the universities was agreed in early 2009, and the aim is to implement it throughout 2009/10.

Framework implementation and impact study

NQAI has completed a study on the implementation and impact of the Irish NFQ and the associated policies for access, transfer and progression for learners.⁴¹

2.5 Criterion and Procedure 5

5. The national quality assurance systems for tertiary education in New Zealand refer to the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications and the national quality assurance systems for higher education in Ireland refer to the Irish National Framework of Qualifications. The agreed compatibility of Levels 7 to 10 degree qualifications includes the stated agreement of the quality assurance bodies in New Zealand and Ireland.

Introduction

New Zealand and Ireland have national quality assurance systems that reference the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ, respectively. The report on the compatibility of Levels 7–10 has been agreed by the bodies responsible for quality assurance in the higher education and training sector named below.

New Zealand

NZQA sets the overarching policy for the quality assurance of qualifications and the tertiary education organisations that provide them. New Zealand has three quality assurance bodies:

- NZQA, which is responsible for approving all qualifications outside of universities, including national qualifications, and qualifications developed by private training establishments, wānanga, institutes of technology and polytechnics, and government training establishments

37 <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/finalPoliciesandCriteriaforauthorityjune08.pdf>

38 <http://www.nqai.ie/AlignmentofUKawards.html>

39 http://www.nqai.ie/publication_oct2003b.html

40 http://www.nqai.ie/framework_pub_may2005.html

41 <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/FISReportFINALsept2009.doc>

- ITPQuality, which approves qualifications at Level 7 and below for the institutes of technology and polytechnics under delegated authority from NZQA
- the Committee on University Academic Programmes, a standing committee of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee, which approves all university qualifications.

Together these three quality assurance bodies are responsible for all quality-assured qualifications in New Zealand. All three quality assurance bodies use the same criteria to quality assure qualifications. NZQA shares quality assurance responsibilities for schools with the Education Review Office.

Responsibilities for quality assurance

The responsibilities for the quality assurance of qualifications in the higher education and training sector and secondary schools are as follows.

- NZQA is responsible for the quality assurance of all national qualifications and the delivery of education and training outside the universities (Education Act 1989).
- The universities have legislated responsibility for the delivery of quality assurance, overseen by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee.
- NZQA sets the overarching policy for the quality assurance of qualifications and the tertiary education organisations that provide them.
- NZQA delegates quality assurance functions to the Institute of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality) for qualifications at Level 7 and below.
- NZQA shares quality assurance responsibilities for schools with the Education Review Office.

Quality assurance in tertiary education and training

From September 2009 the New Zealand tertiary education and training sector has been implementing an evaluative approach to quality assurance. The new approach seeks to support the development and enhancement of a quality culture in tertiary education organisations, and to create an environment in which evidence and accountability are valued and autonomy is earned. The changes strengthen:

- the focus on learner achievement and outcomes for learners
- the use of evidence to improve outcomes for learners, business and communities
- accountability through a tertiary education organisation being able to demonstrate that what it is doing is effective.

This quality assurance approach has three key components: self-assessment by the tertiary education organisation, external evaluation and review by a quality assurance body,⁴² and course approval and accreditation and private training establishment registration.

The changes signal that performance and quality, as they relate to outcomes for learners and other stakeholders, are important areas of shared concern for all in tertiary education. The changes will be reflected in:

- the activities that a tertiary education organisation undertakes to self-assess or review the quality of what it does (self-assessment)
- the investment engagement between tertiary education organisations and the body responsible for funding them, the Tertiary Education Commission
- quality assurance bodies' external quality review processes and judgements (external evaluation and review).

Course approval and accreditation remain key quality assurance processes. These processes include the following.

- *Registration* is required of any private training establishment or "other" tertiary education provider that wishes to receive government funding, or offer approved courses or courses longer than three months to international students. (Universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics, and wānanga do not need to be registered because they are established under the Education Act 1989.)
- *Approval* against the gazetted criteria (see Criteria and Procedure 4) is required for any qualification that is to be funded, or offered to international students.
- *Accreditation* of a tertiary education organisation is required for the delivery of each approved qualification.

Quality assurance in the university sector

The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee undertakes its quality assurance functions via the Committee on University Academic Programmes,⁴³ which is one of its standing committees, and the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, which is an independent unit established by the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee but accountable to a separate board. Both the Committee on University Academic Programmes and the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit are subject to regular external audit. The Audit Unit is audited against the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education standards.

The Audit Unit, established in 1993, is responsible for the quality assurance of all university activities related to academic quality. It discharges this function via a process of institutional self-assessment and five-yearly external review by independent auditors. The process parallels that being developed for the non-university sector. The Audit Unit also has a responsibility to disseminate and promote good practice.

The Committee on University Academic Programmes is responsible for academic programme quality and matters that might have an impact on that quality. The Committee reviews, and approves, all new programme proposals and amendments, accredits universities to offer programmes, and formally reviews the programmes it has approved. These processes are based on peer review, which includes all universities and in some cases other external bodies (eg, professional bodies, international universities). The Committee also considers such matters as admission standards, credit transfer, portability of qualifications, professional standards, employability of graduates, and non-academic policies that might have an impact on the quality of academic delivery or achievement (eg funding policies).

⁴² New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) or Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality (ITPQuality)

⁴³ Membership of the Committee on University Academic Programmes includes representatives from all universities plus the New Zealand Tertiary Students' Union.

NZQA consults with the Committee on University Academic Programmes in determining criteria for validating university qualifications ("the gazetted criteria") and for setting the University Entrance Standard. Nominated representatives from the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee and New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit contribute to various working groups convened by NZQA.

Inter-Institutional Quality Assurance Bodies Consultative Group

The Inter-Institutional Quality Assurance Bodies Consultative Group is made up of representatives from the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee, the Committee on University Academic Programmes, the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit, ITPQuality and NZQA. The purpose of the Group is to provide a forum for discussing matters of mutual interest. This group is a key enabler for developments in quality assurance policies across the tertiary education sector:

Quality assurance arrangements in secondary schools

NZQA and the Education Review Office are jointly responsible for the quality assurance of secondary schools. NZQA is responsible for managing national assessment for secondary school qualifications. It ensures that secondary schools have systems in place that enable students to access qualifications and good assessment practices for teachers and students.

The Education Review Office reviews education delivery in the compulsory schooling sector. It reviews how schools implement the Curriculum, the quality of teaching and learning, school leadership and governance, compliance, and health and safety issues. The Education Review Office publishes reports on the findings of school reviews.

Ireland

From the outset NQAI and education and training stakeholders identified quality as one of the fundamental values and principles upon which the Irish NFQ would be based. As custodian of the Irish NFQ and its values, the NQAI engages with all the awarding bodies, education and training providers and regulatory authorities involved in quality assuring awards, and the associated provision, in order to promote a consistent and internationally recognised quality culture across the system.

This task is greatly facilitated by the fact that the different sectoral quality assurance systems share significant common features. All of these systems – whether in the schools sector, in further education and training or in higher education and training – are enabled by underpinning national legislation and, since the advent of the Irish NFQ in 2003, a shared interest in supporting the implementation of the Irish NFQ. A partnership approach between the awarding bodies, the providers of education and training and the regulatory authorities operating in each sector is also much in evidence, which not only facilitates the acceptance and smooth operation of the sectoral quality assurance systems themselves, but also provides important forums for disseminating information on the Irish NFQ and how it can be integrated into the quality assurance systems.

Other enablers that are shared across the sectors include practitioner networks and, increasingly, international quality reference points. The key features of the existing arrangements and their interaction with the Irish NFQ are summarised below.

Quality assurance arrangements in higher education and training

There are three systems in place for quality assurance in each of the following sub-sectors of Irish higher education and training:

- universities and their associated colleges
- institutes of technology and providers within the independent sector (the HETAC sector)
- Dublin Institute of Technology.

The impact of the Irish NFQ on quality assurance has been particularly marked in relation to higher education and training, where national and international developments have brought about increased co-operation among the quality community. This is most evident in the establishment of the Irish Higher Education Quality Network in 2003, for which NQAI acts as the permanent secretariat.

The Network has brought together key players in quality assurance: provider representatives, student representatives, quality assurance agencies and the Department of Education and Science. Under the aegis of the Network,⁴⁴ the principal national stakeholders have worked collaboratively to promote a shared quality culture across the system. The Network provides a forum for discussing quality assurance issues and for the dissemination of good practice in quality assurance among practitioners and policy makers. It also endeavours, where appropriate, to develop common national principles and approaches to quality assurance in Irish higher education and training.

Concern with "whole-system" quality assurance in Irish higher education and training is also informed and driven by international policy developments, particularly in relation to the Bologna Process. The emergence of the Bologna Framework in 2005, for example, and the related requirement that Bologna member states should not only develop their own national qualifications frameworks but also verify the compatibility of their national qualifications frameworks with the Bologna Framework, has been particularly significant in this regard.

One of the criteria for verifying the compatibility of national qualifications frameworks with the Bologna Framework is that the national quality assurance systems for higher education refer to the national qualifications framework and be consistent with the quality assurance developments within the Bologna Process. Ireland was one of the first countries to self-certify the compatibility of the Irish NFQ with the Bologna Framework, a task that was completed in November 2006. All of the higher education quality systems were found to have referenced the Irish NFQ, and the four quality assurance agencies formally agreed with the self-certification report.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ www.iheqn.ie

⁴⁵ http://www.nqai.ie/interdev_bologna.html

As part of these broader international quality assurance developments, three of the four statutory external quality assurance agencies for higher education and training in Ireland – HETAC, NQAI and the Irish Universities Quality Board – have undergone external reviews and successfully demonstrated their compliance with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*⁴⁶. The full set of documentation pertaining to these reviews – self-evaluation reports, external panel reports, agency responses and considerations of reviewing bodies – has been published.⁴⁷

Quality assurance arrangements within the HETAC sector

HETAC has responsibility for the external quality assurance of programmes of higher education and training provided by institutions/providers within the HETAC sector. Its role includes the registration of new providers of higher education and training programmes and subsequently monitoring the institutional quality assurance procedures. These are established by institutions in agreement with HETAC.

HETAC has also used its powers under the Qualifications Act to delegate authority for making awards to institutes of technology. The power to make awards at Levels 6–9 in respect of taught programmes has been delegated to all of the institutes of technology. Delegated authority to award research degrees (Level 9 and 10) is restricted and discipline specific. Some institutes of technology have delegated authority to make awards at Levels 9 and/or 10 in specific disciplines. The HETAC quality assurance processes include provider registration, programme accreditation, provider monitoring and institutional reviews.

Quality assurance arrangements within the university sector

The universities are in the process of completing implementation of the Irish NFQ. In December 2005 NQAI and the registrars of the Irish universities agreed on a policy approach to completing implementation of the Irish NFQ in the university sector. The approach focuses on including the universities' sub-degree and other smaller awards in the Irish NFQ and sets out an agreed basis and process for their inclusion. The majority of these awards were included on an agreed basis in September 2008.⁴⁸

Under Section 35 of the Universities Act 1997, Irish universities must undertake internal quality assurance reviews and publish the findings of such reviews. Also, in agreement with the Higher Education Authority, they must participate in external, quality assurance reviews at least once every 10 years. NQAI has a consultative role with the Higher Education Authority in relation to the latter body's quality assurance review role for the universities (Qualifications Act, section 40[5]).

The Irish Universities Quality Board was established in 2002 to support and promote a culture of quality in the Irish university sector and independently evaluate the effectiveness of quality processes in Irish universities, as required by the Universities Act 1997. In 2004 the Irish Universities Quality Board and the Higher Education Authority jointly commissioned the European University Association to undertake the first cycle of institutional quality reviews of the seven Irish universities.

In October 2007 the Irish Universities Association and the Irish Universities Quality Board, both members of the Irish Higher Education Quality Network, published *A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities: Concerted Action for Institutional Improvement*.⁴⁹ This publication updates the 2003 Conference of Heads of Irish Universities publication *A Framework for Quality in Irish Universities: Meeting the Challenge of Change*.⁵⁰ The publication was updated in the light of the adoption of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*⁵¹ and following the recommendations arising out of the European Universities Association review.

Quality assurance arrangements in the Dublin Institute of Technology

The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) has incorporated the Irish NFQ into its quality assurance procedures. NQAI exercises certain functions in relation to the quality assurance procedures of the DIT. Under the Qualifications Act there is a requirement for the DIT to put quality assurance procedures in place and to agree those procedures with NQAI. NQAI and the DIT agreed on an initial set of procedures in June 2002. The DIT adopted a revised *Quality Enhancement Handbook* in June 2006 which, among other things, extends its quality assurance policies and procedures to non-academic departments. These revised procedures were agreed with NQAI in January 2007,⁵² and contain a formal statement of their compatibility to the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*. They also note the DIT's agreement with the verification of the compatibility of the Irish NFQ with the Bologna Framework.

Role of the Higher Education Authority (HEA)⁵³

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland. The HEA has wide advisory powers throughout the whole of the third-level education sector. It is the funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and a number of designated higher education institutions.

The HEA also plays a key role in facilitating educational access for those who are disadvantaged socially, economically and culturally, and for mature students and students with a disability who are under-represented in higher education, through the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education, which was established in the HEA in 2003.

46 <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/Standards-and-Guidelines-for-QA.pdf>

47 HETAC review (concluded 2005): http://www.nqai.ie/award_hetac_rev.html; Qualifications Authority review (concluded 2007): http://www.nqai.ie/about_quality.html; IUQB review (concluded 2008): <http://www.iuqb.ie/info/quality-review-of-iuqb2.aspx>

48 http://www.iaa.ie/publications/documents/publications/2003/Report_6.pdf For institutional lists of the university awards included in 2008: <http://www.nqai.ie/awardsframework.html#higher>

49 http://www.iuqb.ie/info/iuqb_publications.aspx?article=174bd944-3893-4a53-84a1-a438a2fdedd8

50 http://www.iaa.ie/publications/documents/publications/2003/Report_6.pdf

51 <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/Standards-and-Guidelines-for-QA.pdf>

52 http://www.nqai.ie/award_dit_pol.html

53 For further information on the Higher Education Authority's role see www.heai.ie.

The maintenance and continuous improvement of quality in higher education is a key priority for the HEA, which exercises statutory functions in this regard under the Universities Act 1997.

Quality assurance arrangements in further education and training

The Qualifications Act requires that all providers of further education and training programmes leading to FETAC awards must establish procedures to quality assure their programmes and agree these procedures with FETAC. FETAC has taken a three-pronged approach to quality assurance, through the implementation of policies and procedures for provider registration, programme validation, and monitoring.

All providers offering FETAC awards are required to have a quality assurance system agreed by FETAC through provider registration. To do this, a provider will need to be able to demonstrate its capacity to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of the programmes and services it offers to learners. Providers who demonstrate this capacity for quality may register with FETAC and offer its awards at Levels 1–6 of the Irish NFQ. FETAC has published guidelines on provider quality assurance, *Quality Assurance in Further Education and Training: Policy and Guidelines for Providers*.⁵⁴ Since January 2005 all providers who want to register with FETAC for the first time must do so through the agreement of their quality assurance procedures with FETAC, and providers already offering FETAC awards had to apply for agreement of their quality assurance procedures with FETAC by the end of December 2006.⁵⁵

Quality assurance arrangements in schools

The two school awards, the junior certificate and leaving certificate, were included in the Irish NFQ on an agreed basis between NQAI and the Department of Education and Science, the State Examinations Commission and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in 2003. A succinct account of the placement and rationale behind it, and the subsequent implementation and impact of the Irish NFQ in the sector, is available in the schools sector's input to the Framework Implementation and Impact Study, which is available on the NQAI website.⁵⁶

2.6 Criterion and Procedure 6

6. The agreement of compatibility process shall involve international experts and agreed compatibility of Levels 7 to 10 of the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications, and the Irish National Framework of Qualifications will be referenced in relevant publications and disseminated appropriately.

New Zealand and Ireland

Dr Judy Forsyth, former Executive Officer, Australian Qualifications Framework, and Sjur Bergan, Head of the Department of Higher Education and History Teaching, the Council of Europe, advised the Joint Working Group as international experts to the joint project. They provided comments on the draft reports as they were developed.

The agreed compatibility of Levels 7–10 of the NZ Register and the Irish NFQ will be referenced in relevant publications and disseminated appropriately. NZQA and NQAI are the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) and the National Information Centres (NIC) in their respective countries. In New Zealand the title of the NIC is the National Education Information Centre. The reports will be circulated to the ENIC/NARIC networks and to NIC.

⁵⁴ http://www.fetac.ie/qa/Policy_and_Guidelines_on_Provider_QA_v1.3.pdf

⁵⁵ For the list of quality assured providers see: <http://www.fetac.ie/qa/ProviderQAList.htm>

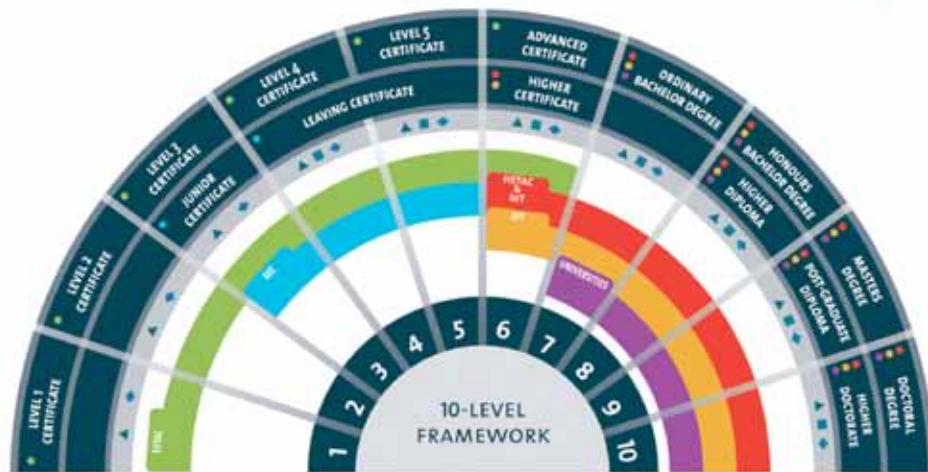
⁵⁶ <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/SchoolsNCCAreportSept2008.pdf>. See also above pp. 17–8.

Appendices

Appendix A: The Irish National Framework of Qualifications

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS

Údarás Náisiúnta
 Cúilíochtaí na hÉireann
 National Qualifications
 Authority of Ireland



AWARDING BODIES

- **FEAC** - Further Education and Training Awards Council
- **SEC** - State Examinations Commission (Department of Education & Skills)
- **HEAC** - Higher Education and Training Awards Council
- **IAF** - Institute of Technology (under direct management of the State Examinations Commission)
- **IT** - Dublin Institute of Technology
- **Universities**

AWARDS IN THE FRAMEWORK

There are four types of award in the National Framework of Qualifications.

- ▲ **Major Awards** are the principal class of awards made at a level
- ▲ **Minor Awards** are for partial completion of the resources for a Major Award
- ▲ **Supplemental Awards** are for learning that is additional to a Major Award
- ▲ **Special Purpose Awards** are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement



For further information consult: www.nqai.ie www.nfq.ie www.qualrec.ie

B

Appendix B: The New Zealand qualification types and levels

Level	Naming sequence
10	Doctorates
9	Masters Degrees
8	Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates, Bachelors Degrees with Honours
7	Bachelors Degrees, Graduate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates
6	Diplomas
5	
4	
3	Certificates
2	
1	

C Appendix C: National consultation groups

New Zealand

In New Zealand, key tertiary sector stakeholder representatives formed the New Zealand Reference Group. The Group included representatives of the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality, wānanga, Private Training Establishments Forum and the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations.

Members

Dr Jan Cameron	Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), University of Canterbury
Professor Sheelagh Matear	Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Lincoln University
Sue Wohlmuther	Academic Registrar and Manager Planning, Manukau Institute of Technology
Judith Brown	Director, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality
Aneta Wineera	Raukawa Crown Liaison, Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa
Professor Patricia Johnston	Head of Graduate School, Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī
Dr Mike Roberts	Academic Director, AIS St Helens
Liz Hawes	Co-President, New Zealand Union of Students' Associations, 2008
Sophia Blair	Co-President, New Zealand Union of Students' Associations, 2009

Ireland

The consultation group that advised on this project comprised the following experts:

Members

John Hammond	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
Barbara Kelly	Further Education and Training Awards Council
Bryan Maguire	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
Lewis Purser	Irish Universities Association

D Appendix D: Comparison process

The NZ Register and the Irish NFQ are learning outcomes-based national qualifications frameworks. The levels of the frameworks are expressed as learning outcome statements. Learning outcome statements are statements of the knowledge, skills and competencies that a learner has on completion of a qualification. Qualifications at each level of outcomes-based national qualifications frameworks represent the learner's achievement of the framework level descriptor learning outcomes as they are embodied in the programmes that lead to the qualification.

Compatibility of the level descriptors

The most transparent way of establishing clear and demonstrable links between national qualifications frameworks is to establish the compatibility of the level descriptors. Comparisons were made of the Levels 7–10 NZ Register level descriptors and the Irish NFQ level indicators.

The comparisons focused on how closely the descriptors match in content and intent. The closeness of the match is expressed in statements of weak, moderate or strong compatibility. The term "compatibility" is used in the Bologna Process verification of national qualifications frameworks with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The sets of descriptors are set out in tables with a statement of weak, moderate or strong compatibility (see Appendix E).

Compatibility of qualifications definitions

Because qualifications sit at various levels of national qualifications frameworks, it is logical that if level descriptors of national qualifications frameworks are shown to be compatible, then the various award types or qualifications allocated to those levels within each framework will be compatible. A comparison has been made of the NZ Register Levels 7–10 degree qualification definitions and the Irish NFQ degree qualification award-type descriptors. The comparisons of the qualifications definitions are set out in tables, with a statement of weak, moderate or strong compatibility (see Appendix E). Comparisons are not made of the certificates and diplomas at Levels 7–9.

Compatibility of non-outcomes criteria

Qualifications also have non-outcomes criteria, which are concerned with access, progression and the credit requirements of qualifications. A comparison has been made of the Levels 7–10 NZ Register and Irish NFQ non-outcomes criteria using the language of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (that of similarity or difference). The core principle of the Lisbon Recognition Convention relates to the recognition of individual international qualifications unless substantial difference is established. Non-outcomes criteria are specifically mentioned in the Lisbon Recognition Convention articles and the explanatory notes on substantial difference.

The comparisons of the sets of non-outcomes criteria are set out in tables with a statement of similarity or difference (see Appendix E). Statements of compatibility note that judgements of similarity and difference are based on typical arrangements. Non-outcomes criteria are applied in different ways by different institutions in each country.

Referencing the European meta-frameworks

Ireland has formally verified compatibility of (in other words, referenced) the Irish NFQ with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). Any alignments between the Irish NFQ and other national qualifications frameworks will imply alignments of those national qualifications frameworks with the FQ-EHEA and the EQF. For example, the Irish NFQ Levels 7 and 8 qualifications are aligned with EQF Level 6 and the FQ-EHEA first cycle.

This report on the compatibility of qualifications in Ireland and New Zealand suggests that there is a relationship between the bachelor, master's and doctoral qualifications at Levels 7–10 of the NZ Register and the respective cycles and levels of the FQ-EHEA and the EQF to which the Irish NFQ has been formally aligned. However, this project does not fulfil the protocols necessary to formally align the NZ Register with the FQ-EHEA or the EQF. New Zealand may, in the future, conduct work to align New Zealand's degree qualifications with the FQ-EHEA and the EQF.

Appendix E: Comparison tables: Levels 7–10 NZ Register and Irish NFQ

The comparisons of the Level 7–10 degree and doctorate qualifications level descriptors and qualification definitions are set out in tables with judgements of weak, moderate or strong compatibility. The comparisons of the non-outcomes criteria are set out in tables and they are compared using the language of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: that of similarity and difference.

Table E1: Comparison of Level 7 New Zealand level descriptors and the Irish level indicators

Level 7 NZ Register level descriptors	Level 7 Irish NFQ level indicators	Weak/moderate/strong compatibility
<p>Learning on demand: employing</p> <p>knowledge of a major discipline with areas of specialisation in depth</p>	<p>Knowledge – breadth</p> <p>Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>Both sets of descriptors focus on a command and mastery of knowledge in broad and specialised areas of knowledge.</p>
<p>Learning on demand: employing</p> <p>the analysis, transformation and evaluation of abstract data and concepts</p> <p>the creation of appropriate responses to resolve given or contextual abstract problems.</p>	<p>Knowledge – kind</p> <p>Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>The Irish NFQ refers to learner recognition of the level of their knowledge, and understanding of how new knowledge is generated and evidenced in the ability to combine concepts from across a wide variety of areas.</p> <p>The NZ Register refers to the creation of ideas, including those that are new to the learner, through analysis and transformation of information at an abstract level, and to judgement and creation of solutions to given or contextual problems.</p> <p>Both sets of descriptors suggest a level of synthesis of previously acquired abilities that are integrated, and new abilities generated.</p>
<p>Process: carry out processes that</p> <p>require a command of highly specialised technical or scholastic and basic research skills across a major discipline</p>	<p>Know-how and skill-range</p> <p>Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study.</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>Both sets of descriptors focus on processes/skills that have a high level of complexity in a specialist area.</p> <p>The Irish NFQ defines the types of skills as technical, creative and conceptual.</p> <p>The NZ Register defines types of skills as technical, scholastic and basic research.</p>

Level 7 NZ Register level descriptors	Level 7 Irish NFQ level indicators	Weak/moderate/strong compatibility
<p>Process: carry out processes that</p> <p>involve the full range of procedures in a major discipline</p> <p>are applied in complex, variable and specialised contexts.</p>	<p>Know-how and skill-selectivity</p> <p>Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes.</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>Both sets of descriptors focus on the exercise of significant judgement, evidenced by choosing a full range of skills in complex and variable contexts.</p> <p>The Irish NFQ descriptor relates to workplace functions and includes supervisory functions.</p> <p>The NZ Register descriptor gives broader areas of application, with more specific contexts noted in the <i>Responsibility:applied</i> descriptor below.</p>
<p>Responsibility: applied</p> <p>in planning, resourcing and managing processes</p> <p>within broad parameters and functions.</p>	<p>Competence – context</p> <p>Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>Both sets of descriptors focus on the learner using knowledge and skills independently in non-routine functions in variable contexts.</p>
<p>Responsibility: applied</p> <p>with complete accountability for determining, achieving and evaluating personal and/or group outcomes</p>	<p>Competence – role</p> <p>Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>Both sets of descriptors focus on the learner being accountable for determining and achieving personal and group outcomes, and for being accountable for the structure, management and output of the work of others, including work and learning.</p>
	<p>Competence – learning to learn</p> <p>Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>The Irish NFQ separately addresses the learner being able to successfully self-direct learning and participate in group learning.</p> <p>The NZ Register addresses the learner's ability to carry out self-directed learning and effective participation in groups in the <i>Responsibility:applied</i> sub-strand, with complete accountability for determining, achieving and evaluating personal and/or group outcomes.</p>
	<p>Competence – insight</p> <p>Express an internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others.</p>	<p>Moderate compatibility</p> <p>The development of insight is not specifically addressed at Level 7 of the NZ Register. Insight is concerned with the learner making judgements and taking responsibility and is implicit in the NZ Register level descriptor sub-strands <i>Learning on demand</i> and <i>Responsibility:applied</i>.</p>

Table E2: Comparison of the qualification definitions of the New Zealand bachelor degree and the Irish ordinary bachelor degree

NZ Register bachelor degree learning outcomes	Irish NFQ ordinary bachelor degree (award-type J) descriptors	Weak/moderate/strong compatibility
Demonstrate knowledge and skills related to the ideas, principles, concepts, chief research methods and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject (or subjects, in the case of a double degree or a double major)	Knowledge – breadth Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas.	Strong compatibility Irish NFQ: specialised knowledge range of areas. NZ Register: demonstrate knowledge and skills of a recognised major subject (or subjects, in the case of a double degree or a double major).
Demonstrate knowledge and skills related to the ideas, principles, concepts, chief research methods and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject (or subjects, in the case of a double degree or a double major)	Knowledge – kind Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas.	Strong compatibility Both sets of descriptors refer to the learner recognising what they know and learning how to gain new knowledge (for them) in a subject area.
Demonstrate knowledge and skills related to the ideas, principles, concepts, chief research methods and problem-solving techniques of a recognised major subject (or subjects, in the case of a double degree or a double major)	Know-how and skill-range Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study.	Strong compatibility Both sets of descriptors refer to the application of a range of skills. Irish NFQ: specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools NZ Register: demonstrate knowledge and skills related to the ideas, principles, concepts, chief research methods and problem-solving techniques.
Demonstrate the skills needed to acquire, understand and assess information from a range of sources	Know-how and skill – selectivity Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes	Moderate compatibility Both sets of descriptors refer to knowing which skills to use. The Irish NFQ refers to taking responsibility for carrying out judgements or processes.
Demonstrate intellectual independence, critical thinking and analytic rigour.	Competence – context Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts.	Strong compatibility Both sets of descriptors refer to the application and command of knowledge in contexts new to the learner. Irish NFQ: utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts NZ Register: demonstrate intellectual independence, critical thinking and analytic rigour.
Demonstrate communication and collaborative skills.	Competence – role Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work	Moderate compatibility Both refer to working successfully with others. The Irish NFQ has a greater requirement for accountability determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes and supervisory responsibility. This is a step up from the NZ Register's collaborative skills.
Demonstrate intellectual independence; demonstrate communication and collaborative skills	Competence – learning to learn Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group	Strong compatibility Both sets of descriptors refer to the capacity for intellectual independence, where the learner recognises what they know and learns how to gain new knowledge (for them) in a subject area. Both refer to collaborative learning.
Demonstrate communication and collaborative skills: demonstrate intellectual independence, critical thinking and analytic rigour.	Competence – insight Express an internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others	Moderate compatibility Both sets of descriptors refer to making considered judgements and acting collaboratively.

Table E3: Comparison of the New Zealand bachelor degree and Irish ordinary bachelor degree: non-outcomes criteria

Entry requirements		
New Zealand bachelor degree	Irish ordinary bachelor degree	Similar or substantial difference
<p>Entry to a programme of study leading to a bachelor degree builds upon prior study, work or experience and is open to those who have met the specified entrance requirements. They are typically school leavers.</p> <p>A distinctive characteristic approach to tertiary admission is set out in section 224(3) of the Education Act 1989, where admission restrictions do not apply to students 20 years or over.</p>	<p>Entry to a programme leading to an ab-initio ordinary bachelor degree is typically for school leavers and those with equivalent qualifications. In addition, there are one-year add-on ordinary bachelor degree programmes for holders of the higher certificate.</p>	<p>Similar</p> <p>Entry is typically for school leavers who meet prior requirements.</p>
Credit requirements		
New Zealand bachelor degree	Irish ordinary bachelor degree	Similar or substantial difference
<p>Bachelor degree = minimum of 180 ECTS credits from Levels 4–7, a minimum of 36 ECTS credits at Level 7, and a maximum of 10 ECTS credits at Level 4. Some bachelor degrees, in professional fields, may require 240 ECTS credits.</p>	<p>Ordinary bachelor degree = 180 ECTS credits.</p> <p>A minimum of 60 ECTS credits must be at the level of the award in the Irish NFQ: typically 120 ECTS credits at Level 6 and 60 ECTS credits at Level 7; alternatively, 60 ECTS credits at Level 6 and 120 ECTS credits at Level 7.</p>	<p>Substantial difference</p> <p>The minimum number of ECTS credits is the same: 180. However, the Irish NFQ requires a much higher number of ECTS credits at Level 7: 60 as opposed to the NZ Register 36 ECTS credits.</p>
Relation to other qualifications/progression opportunities		
New Zealand bachelor degree	Irish ordinary bachelor degree	Similar or substantial difference
<p>A person who holds a bachelor degree may be able to enrol for the postgraduate diploma or the master's degree.</p>	<p>Progression to a programme leading to an honours bachelor degree (award type K).</p> <p>Progression internationally to some second cycle (ie, FQ-EHEA master's degree programmes).</p>	<p>Substantial difference</p> <p>The holder of an Irish Level 7 ordinary bachelor degree does not have direct access to a master's degree programme, as is the case of the NZ Register Level 7 bachelor degree. The holder of an Irish ordinary bachelor degree is required to do another year of study.</p> <p>The holder of an Irish ordinary bachelor degree may be admitted to an Irish master's degree when they also have relevant work experience in the cognate area.</p>

Table E4: Comparison of the Level 8 New Zealand level descriptors and the Irish level indicators

Level 8 NZ Register level descriptors <i>Involves knowledge and skills that enable a learner to:</i>	Level 8 Irish NFQ level indicators	Compatibility: weak/moderate/strong
Provide a systematic and coherent account of the key principles of a subject area.	Knowledge – breadth An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning.	Strong compatibility Both sets of descriptors refer to knowledge of the theory concepts, method/key principles of a major area of study.
Provide a systematic and coherent account of the key principles of a subject area.	Knowledge –kind Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s).	Moderate compatibility Implicit in the NZ Register level 8 descriptor providing a systematic and coherent account of the key principles of a subject area is that the learner will have the Irish NFQ descriptor outcome of detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s).
Undertake self-directed study, supervised research and/or scholarship in a subject area, demonstrating intellectual independence, analytic rigour and effective communication.	Know-how and skill – range Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity.	Strong compatibility Both descriptors refer to the ability to undertake guided research. The Irish descriptor refers to the components of research in both professional and technical contexts. The NZ Register level descriptor refers to effective communication.
	Know-how and skill – selectivity Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing.	
	Competence – context Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision-making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts.	
	Competence – role Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups.	
	Competence – learning to learn Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically.	
	Competence – insight Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others.	

Table E5: Comparison of the qualification definitions of the New Zealand bachelor honours degree and the Irish honours bachelor degree

NZ Register bachelor with honours degree learning outcomes	Irish NFQ honours bachelor degree (award type 'K') descriptors	Weak/moderate/strong compatibility
Engage in self-directed learning and advanced study	<p>Knowledge – breadth</p> <p>An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning</p>	<p>Strong compatibility.</p> <p>Both descriptors refer to a high level of complex knowledge.</p>
	<p>Knowledge – kind</p> <p>Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)</p>	
Demonstrate the ability to identify topics for original research, plan and conduct research, analyse results and communicate the findings to the satisfaction of subject experts	<p>Know-how and skill – range</p> <p>Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity</p>	<p>Strong compatibility.</p> <p>Both descriptors refer to mastery of specialised skills to conduct research.</p>
	<p>Know-how and skill – selectivity</p> <p>Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing.</p>	
Demonstrate intellectual independence, analytic rigour, and the ability to understand and evaluate new knowledge and ideas.	<p>Know-how and skill – context</p> <p>Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision-making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts.</p>	<p>Strong compatibility.</p> <p>Both descriptors refer to a high level of conceptual thinking, making judgements in complex contexts.</p>
	<p>Competence – role</p> <p>Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups.</p>	
	<p>Competence – learning to learn</p> <p>Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically.</p>	
	<p>Competence – insight</p> <p>Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others.</p>	

Table E6: Comparison of the non-outcomes criteria of the New Zealand bachelor honours degree and the Irish honours bachelor degree

Entry requirements		
New Zealand bachelor honours degree	Irish honours bachelor degree	Similar or substantial difference
<p>Entry to honours study is normally based on achievement of above average performance in the credits that are relevant to the proposed honours study, or in some subject areas entry is typically for school leavers.</p> <p>Where the honours degree is a 240 ECTS credits or more programme, it must provide an exit point at the end of the study that meets the requirements for a bachelor degree</p>	<p>Entry to a programme leading to an honours bachelor degree is typically for high-achieving school leavers or holders of equivalent qualifications.</p> <p>In addition, there are typically programmes of one-year duration leading to an honours bachelor degree for holders of an ordinary bachelor degree.</p>	<p>Similar</p> <p>In Ireland and New Zealand there are two pathways to Level 8 honours degrees.</p> <p>Ireland: High-achieving school leavers enter an honours bachelor degree. Holders of ordinary bachelor degrees undertake a further year of study to gain an honours bachelor degree.</p> <p>New Zealand: Typically school leavers enter bachelor honours degrees in specific disciplines, such as law, architecture and engineering. Holders of a bachelor degree undertake a further year of study to gain a bachelor honours degree.</p>
Credit requirements		
New Zealand bachelor honours degree	Irish honours bachelor degree	Similar or substantial difference
<p>240 ECTS credits (or more) bachelor honours degree or a discrete 60 ECTS credits degree following a bachelor degree, with a research component that represents at least 15 ECTS credits at Level 8</p> <p>Where the honours degree is a 240 ECTS credits (or more) programme, it must provide an exit point at the end of the study that meets the requirements for a bachelor degree.</p>	<p>180–240 ECTS credits</p> <p>A minimum of 60 ECTS credits must be at Level 8. For a 180 ECTS credits award: 60 ECTS credits at Level 6, 60 ECTS credits at Level 7, 60 ECTS credits at Level 8. For a 240 ECTS credits award typically: 60 ECTS credits at Level 6, 60 ECTS credits at Level 7 and 120 ECTS credits at Level 8; or 120 ECTS credits at Level 6, 60 ECTS credits at Level 7 and 60 ECTS credits at Level 8.</p>	<p>Similar</p> <p>The range of ECTS credits for the Irish honours bachelor degree is broader at 180–240. However, the minimum number of ECTS (60 ECTS credits) at Level 8 is the same.</p>
Progression opportunities		
New Zealand bachelor honours degree	Irish honours bachelor degree	Similar or substantial difference
<p>The bachelor honours degree gives entry to a Level 9 master's degree programme or to Level 10 doctoral studies.</p>	<p>Progression to: programmes leading to higher diploma (award type L). Progression to programmes leading to master's degree or postgraduate diploma (award types M or N).</p> <p>Entry to a programme leading to a doctorate is typically for holders of an honours bachelor degree. The general model is that a holder of an honours bachelor degree with a high classification (1st class honours or 2.1) enters initially onto a master's research programme, and transfers to a doctoral programme after one year on the master's research programme.</p>	<p>Similar</p> <p>Ireland: The holder of an honours bachelor degree gains entry to a higher diploma at Level 8 or a master's degree or postgraduate diploma at Level 9. Information provided by NQAI states that entry to a programme leading to a doctorate is typically for holders of an honours bachelor degree, who register in master's research programmes and transfer to a doctoral programme after one year.</p> <p>New Zealand: The holder of a bachelor honours degree may directly enter a doctorate programme.</p>

Table E7: Comparison of the New Zealand Level 9 level descriptors and the Irish Level 9 level indicators

NZ Register Level 9 descriptors, master's degree qualification definitions and CUAP guidelines <i>Involves knowledge and skills that enable a learner to:</i>	Irish NFQ Level 9 level descriptors	Compatibility: weak/moderate/strong
show evidence of advanced knowledge about a specialist field of enquiry or professional practice	Knowledge – breadth A systematic understanding of knowledge at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning	Strong compatibility Both sets of descriptors refer to advanced knowledge in a specialised field.
demonstrate mastery of sophisticated theoretical subject matter, including the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity	Knowledge – kind A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning	Strong compatibility Knowledge at forefront of field and implied mastery.
carry out research using appropriate methods of investigation and analysis	Know-how and skill – range Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry	Strong compatibility Research skills are identified in both descriptors.
apply that knowledge, understanding, and problem-solving ability in new or unfamiliar environments engage in rigorous intellectual analysis, criticism and problem solving	Know-how and skill – selectivity Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques	Strong compatibility The ability to apply complex skills in new and unfamiliar environments is referred to in both.
work independently and apply knowledge to new situations	Know-how and skill – context Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill-defined contexts	Strong compatibility The ability to work independently is referred to in both sets of descriptors.
	Competence – role Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity	
	Competence – learning to learn Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development	
	Competence – insight Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them	

Table E8: Comparison of the non-outcomes criteria of the New Zealand master's degree and the Irish master's degree

Entry requirements		
New Zealand master's degree	Irish master's degree	Similar or substantial difference
<p>For a 120 ECTS credits masters degree: a bachelor degree or equivalent.</p> <p>For a master's degree of fewer than 140 ECTS credits, normally the minimum entry qualification is a bachelor honours degree or a postgraduate diploma.</p>	<p>Entry to a programme leading to a taught master's degree is typically for holders of honours bachelor degrees. Also, in some cases, entry to such programmes can be permitted for those with ordinary bachelor degrees or equivalent who have some relevant work experience. Furthermore, in some cases, entry to such programmes is permitted for people with extensive work experience.</p> <p>Entry to a programme leading to a research master's degree is typically for holders of honours bachelor degrees, typically with a high classification attained – first- or second-class honours.</p>	<p>Similar</p> <p>Entry in both countries is typically for holders of bachelor honours degrees.</p>
Progression opportunities		
New Zealand master's degree	Irish master's degree	Similar or substantial difference
<p>A person who holds a master's degree that includes a substantial component of research may be considered for admission to a programme of advanced study and/or original research leading to a doctoral degree.</p>	<p>Progression to programmes leading to doctoral degrees, or another master's degree or to a postgraduate diploma</p>	<p>Similar</p> <p>The master's degree in both countries allows access to doctoral degree programmes.</p>
Credit		
New Zealand master's degree	Irish master's degree	Similar or substantial difference
<p>60–120 ECTS credits</p> <p>(minimum of 20 credits at Level 9, the remainder at Level 8)</p>	<p>60–120 ECTS credits</p>	<p>Similar</p> <p>Credit ranges are the same in both countries.</p>

Table E9: Comparison of the New Zealand Level 10 level descriptors and the Irish Level 10 level indicators

NZ Register Level 10 descriptors, doctoral degree qualification definitions and CUAP guidelines <i>Involves knowledge and skills that enable a learner to:</i>	Irish NFQ level 10 level descriptors	Compatibility: weak/moderate/strong
provide an original contribution to knowledge through research or scholarship, as judged by independent experts, applying international standards.	<p>Knowledge – breadth</p> <p>A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of learning.</p> <p>Knowledge – kind</p> <p>The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers.</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>Both descriptors place a strong emphasis on original research being the basis of achieving a doctoral qualification.</p> <p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>Both concur that the work undertaken during the doctoral programme should make a significant contribution to knowledge in the field researched.</p>
Involves a sustained, rigorous and systematic approach to the relevant body of knowledge, undertaken through experimentation, archival work, or other appropriate means.	<p>Know-how and skill – range</p> <p>Demonstrate a significant range of principal skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials which are associated with a field of learning; develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials.</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>Both descriptors emphasise significant efforts utilising a range of skills and approaches.</p>
Advances knowledge through the discovery and codification of new information or the development of further understanding about existing information. Often characterised by fruitful new topics for investigation and unexpected uses for its findings.	<p>Know-how and skill – selectivity</p> <p>Respond to abstract problems that expand and redefine existing procedural knowledge.</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>Both descriptors refer to dealing with abstract problems and the discovery of new topics for investigation.</p>
	<p>Know-how and skill – context</p> <p>Exercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts.</p>	
Its findings must be open to scrutiny and formal evaluation by others in the field, and this may be achieved through publication or public presentation.	<p>Competence – role</p> <p>Communicate results of research and innovation to peers.</p> <p>Competence – learning to learn</p> <p>Engage in critical dialogue; lead and originate complex social processes.</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>Both descriptors concur that the findings of the doctoral research should be evaluated by experts in the field and should be open to critical dialogue.</p>
	<p>Competence – insight</p> <p>Learn to critique the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.</p>	<p>Strong compatibility</p> <p>The Irish descriptors' broader focus of applying knowledge to particular contexts and reflecting on and leading action to change social norms are not specified in the New Zealand descriptors. However, a similar outcome can be inferred from the New Zealand descriptors in the idea of research generating fruitful new topics for investigation and generating unexpected uses for its findings.</p>

Table E10: Comparison of the non-outcomes criteria of the New Zealand doctoral degree and the Irish doctoral degree

Entry requirements		
New Zealand doctoral degree	Irish doctoral degree	Similar or substantial difference
Entry to a programme leading to a doctoral degree is typically for holders of bachelor honours degrees (first- or second-class division) or master's degrees.	<p>Entry to a programme leading to a doctoral degree is typically for holders of honours bachelor degrees. The general model is that the holder of an honours bachelor degree with a high classification enters initially onto a masters research programme, and transfers on to a doctoral programme after one year on the master's research programme.</p> <p>Entry to a programme leading to a research master's degree is typically for holders of honours bachelor degrees, typically with a high classification attained – first- or second-class honours.</p>	<p>Similar</p> <p>Entry requirements are very similar in both countries.</p>
Credit		
New Zealand doctoral degree	Irish doctoral degree	Similar or substantial difference
A doctorate requires at least 120 ECTS credits worth of advanced research at Level 10. The guidelines of the CUAP indicate that typically a doctorate has a value of 180 ECTS credits.	Irish doctoral degrees do not usually have a credit value assigned to them. However, emerging practice on professional doctorates provides for a typical model of 180 ECTS credits.	<p>Similar</p> <p>Credit specifications for doctorates are similar in both countries.</p>

Glossary

accreditation (New Zealand): the status awarded when an organisation has shown it is capable of delivering an approved course on the National Qualifications Framework.

achievement standards (New Zealand): broad descriptions of the expected learning outcomes of school curriculum subjects.

approval (New Zealand): the process providers must follow for the quality assurance of courses and programmes.

Bologna Declaration (1999): is a pledge by 29 countries to reform the structures of their higher education systems in a convergent way. It proposed a European Higher Education Area in which students and graduates could move freely between countries, using prior qualifications in one country as acceptable entry requirements for further study in another.

Bologna Process: a process that aims to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010. The Bologna Declaration of June 1999 put in motion a series of reforms to make European higher education more compatible and comparable, more competitive, and more attractive for Europeans and for students and scholars from other continents. Reform was needed for Europe to match the performance of the best performing systems in the world, notably the United States and Asia. The three priorities of the Bologna Process in terms of structural reform are: the introduction of the three-cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate), quality assurance, and recognition of qualifications and periods of study. Further information about the Bologna Process is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html

Committee on University Academic Programmes (New Zealand): The Committee on University Academic Programmes is responsible for academic programme quality and matters that might have an impact on that quality. The Committee reviews, and approves, all new programme proposals and amendments, accredits universities to offer programmes, and formally reviews the programmes it has approved.

Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region (1997) (the Lisbon Recognition Convention): a convention that aims to facilitate the recognition of qualifications granted by one party in another party. It provides that requests should be assessed in a fair manner and within a reasonable time. The recognition can only be refused if the qualification is substantially different from that of the host country, and the onus is on its educational institution to prove that it is. See: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Summaries/Html/I165.htm>

Council of Europe: comprising 47 member states, the Council seeks to develop throughout Europe common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals. The Council of Europe is responsible for the European Cultural Convention, which came into force in 1955 and has since been ratified by 49 states. Membership of the Bologna Process requires that a country be a party to the European Cultural Convention as well as commit to the goals of the Bologna Process. See: <http://www.coe.int/>

credit recognition and transfer (New Zealand): the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications provides a common credit currency, a levels system, learning outcomes and subject classification system for all qualifications quality assured in New Zealand. The Register therefore provides a basis for credit recognition and transfer. See: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications/creditlevels/policy.pdf>

Crown entity (New Zealand): an organisation that forms part of New Zealand's state sector; established under the Crown Entities Act 2004, a unique umbrella governance and accountability statute. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown_entities

entry: entry into a programme of education or training.

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System: a student-centred system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme. The objectives are preferably specified in terms of the learning outcomes and competencies to be acquired. See: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/index_en.html

European Higher Education Area: the overarching aim of the Bologna Process is to create a European Higher Education Area that promotes mobility, attracts students and staff from Europe and other parts of the world, and is internationally competitive. It aims to do this by facilitating greater comparability and compatibility between the diverse higher education systems and institutions across Europe and by enhancing their quality. See: http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/Bologna_booklet.pdf

European Network of National Information Centres: for academic recognition and mobility. This Network was established in 1994 by merger of the previously separate Council of Europe and UNESCO networks. It is served jointly by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and has just over 50 member states. See: <http://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx?s=n&r=g&d=about#ENIC>

European Qualifications Framework: a common European reference framework which links countries' qualifications systems together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. It has two principal aims: to promote citizens' mobility between countries and to facilitate their lifelong learning. See: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/eqf08_en.pdf

Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics Quality: approves qualifications at Level 7 and below under delegated authority from NZQA.

Kiwiquals (New Zealand): the KiwiQuals website is the public face of the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (the Register). It is a searchable database of every quality-assured qualification in New Zealand. It provides overseas and New Zealand users with in-depth, reliable, useful information and the tools to search quickly and easily. See: <http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz/about/index.html>

Level descriptors: these describe the levels of increasing complexity of the knowledge, skills and competencies of national qualifications frameworks in the form of learning outcomes.

National Academic Recognition Information Centres: an initiative of the European Commission, created in 1984. The network aims at improving academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study in the member states of the European Union, the European Economic Area countries and the associated countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus. The network is part of the European Union SOCRATES/Erasmus programme, which stimulates the mobility of students and staff between higher education institutions in these countries. See: <http://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx?s=n&r=g&d=about#ENIC>

national certificate (New Zealand): a qualification on the New Zealand National Qualifications Framework that recognises skills and knowledge that meet nationally endorsed standards (unit and achievement standards). National certificates are usually registered between Levels 1 and 4 and require a minimum of 40 credits at or above the level at which the qualification is registered. See: NZ Register for more details.

national diploma (New Zealand): a qualification on the New Zealand National Qualifications Framework that recognises skills and knowledge that meet nationally endorsed standards (unit and achievement standards). National diplomas are registered between Levels 5 and 7. The top 72 credits define the level at which the qualification can be registered, and at least 120 of all credits contributing towards the qualification must be at level 4 or above.

national qualifications frameworks: qualifications frameworks developed by individual countries. For general information regarding national qualifications frameworks in Europe, see: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/ql/ql.asp>

New Zealand Register of Quality Assured

Qualifications: this has the function of what other countries call a national qualifications framework.

New Zealand Union of Students' Association: a federation of student associations and the largest student body in the country. The Association advocates for the common and collective concerns of students at universities and polytechnics. <http://www.students.org.nz/index.php?page=12>

New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee: a committee comprising university vice-chancellors that is responsible for the final approval and quality assurance of university qualifications.

open entry (New Zealand): refers to the ability of students in New Zealand who are 20 years or older to enter university without examination.

polytechnics and institutes of technology: a polytechnic or institute of technology is characterised by a wide diversity of continuing education, including vocational training, that contributes to the maintenance, advancement and dissemination of knowledge and expertise and promotes community learning; and by research, particularly applied and technological research, that aids development. (section 162(4)(b)(ii) Education Act 1989)

private training establishment (New Zealand): a non-state-owned organisation, registered with NZQA, that provides post-school education and training; often known as a PTE.

programme: a programme of study.

provider (New Zealand): an individual or organisation supplying education and/or training and/or assessment services; includes schools, polytechnics, private training establishments, government training establishments, wānanga and workplaces.

qualification developer (New Zealand): any organisation or agency responsible for developing qualifications.

Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Framework): under the Bologna Process, each participating country is expected to have developed a national framework of qualifications by 2012. In addition to the development of national frameworks, an overarching Framework for the Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (or Bologna Framework) has been implemented. The rationale for the Bologna Framework is to provide a mechanism to relate national frameworks to each other to enable international transparency, international recognition of qualifications and international mobility of learners and graduates. The Bologna Framework consists of three cycles, known as the first, second and third cycles. See: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/ql/overarching.asp>

qualifications frameworks: see national qualifications frameworks.

quality assurance arrangements: a collective term for activities used to ensure that business is carried out effectively and efficiently.

quality assurance standards: (a) defined learning outcomes, together with performance or assessment criteria, examples of their interpretation and application, and associated quality assurance processes (see also unit standards and achievement standards); (b) defined organisational or systems criteria, together with performance indicators.

quality assured: applies to a qualification that is approved by any of the recognised quality assurance bodies.

registration of establishments (New Zealand): a process for ensuring that a private or government training establishment is able to provide a sound and stable learning environment. Establishments are required to be registered before they can be accredited.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation):

a United Nations agency that promotes international collaboration on culture, education and science.

unit standards (New Zealand): these generally apply to trade and vocational qualifications and can be recognised in a number of fields (eg, the business and service sector). Unit standards have specific identifiable outcomes.

university (New Zealand): a university is characterised by a wide diversity of teaching and research, especially at a higher level, that maintains, advances, disseminates and assists the application of knowledge, develops intellectual independence, and promotes community learning (from section 162(b)(iii) Education Act 1989). In New Zealand, a provider must be established as a university by Act of Parliament and accredited to offer programmes.

Selected Sources of Information

New Zealand

New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications documents

Legislation

New Zealand Education Act 1989:

http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM175959.html?search=ts_act_education+Act+1989&sr=1

Section 253 sets out the functions of NZQA:

http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM186208.html?search=ts_act_education+Act+1989

NZQA documents

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (1994). *A single harmonised framework: Report of the Ministerial Tertiary Lead Group*. Wellington: The Group.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (1996). *Tertiary action group report to the Board of the New Zealand qualifications Authority on the implementation of a harmonised qualifications framework*. Wellington: New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2007). *The New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications*. <http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz/publications/index.html>

Other

New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (2009). *Committee on University Academic Programmes Functions and Processes 2009-2010*. http://www.nzvcc.ac.nz/files/Final_09_2_.pdf

Qualification definition learning outcome requirements: <http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz/about/outcomestatements.html>

Quality assurance information

Documents

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2002). *Supporting learning pathways, credit recognition and transfer policy*. <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications/creditchpolicy.pdf>

New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2009). *An evaluative approach to quality assurance*. <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/>

Web pages

NZQA qualification titles and credit requirements: <http://www.kiwiquals.govt.nz/publications/index.html>

Registration, course approval, and accreditation to deliver a course: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/applications/registration/index.html>

Organisational self-assessment: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/sa/index.html>

External evaluations and review: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/eer/index.html>

The process for international assessment of qualifications: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-international/international/index.html>

Ireland

NFQ documents

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2003). *Determinations for the Outline National Framework of Qualifications*. http://www.nqai.ie/publication_oct2003c.html

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2003). *Policies and criteria for the establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications*. http://www.nqai.ie/publication_oct2003b.html
<http://www.nqai.ie/docs/framework/policies/polandcrit.pdf>

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2003). *Policies, actions and procedures for access, transfer and progression*. http://www.nqai.ie/publication_oct2003a.html
<http://www.nqai.ie/docs/framework/policies/atp.pdf>

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2004). *Policies and criteria for minor, special purpose and supplemental award-types*. http://www.nqai.ie/framework_policies_criteria.html

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2005). *Additional policies and criteria established for the placement of existing and former awards in the National Framework of Qualifications*. http://www.nqai.ie/framework_policies_criteria.html

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2006). *Verification of compatibility of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*. <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/EQFReferencingReportfinalJune2009.pdf>

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2006; updated 2008). *Policies and criteria for the inclusion in, or alignment with, the national framework of qualifications of the awards of certain awarding bodies*. <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/finalPoliciesandCriteriaforauthorityjune08.pdf>

Framework implementation and impact study documents

Framework implementation and impact study: Report of study team (2009).

<http://www.nqai.ie/documents/FISreportFINALsept2009.doc>

The documentation associated with this review is available at:
http://www.nqai.ie/framework_study.html

Quality assurance documents

National quality assurance policies and procedures

Department of Education and Science: whole school evaluation:
<http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?pcategory=32818&ecatogery=35645&language=EN>

FETAC provider quality assurance and registration: <http://www.fetac.ie/qa/default.htm>

HETAC quality assurance policies, including institutional review and monitoring: <http://www.hetac.ie/publications.cfm?slID=44>

NQAI/DIT:
<http://www.dit.ie/services/academicregistrar/quality/handbook>

Universities

A framework for quality in Irish universities: Concerted action for institutional improvement (2007).

http://www.iuqb.ie/info/iuqb_publications.aspx?article=174bd944-3893-4a53-84a1-a438a2fdedd8

Institutional review of Irish universities handbook (2009).
<http://www.iuqb.ie/info/iriu.aspx>

Reviews of quality assurance agencies

Further Education and Training Awards Council (concluded 2008): http://www.nqai.ie/award_fetac_rev.html

Higher Education and Training Awards Council (concluded 2005): http://www.nqai.ie/award_hetac_rev.html

Irish Universities Quality Board (concluded 2008): <http://www.iuqb.ie/info/quality-review-of-iuqb2.aspx>

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (concluded 2007): http://www.nqai.ie/about_quality.html

Irish Higher Education Quality Network publications

Principles of good practice in quality assurance: Quality improvement for Irish higher education and training.
<http://www.iheqn.ie/publications/default.asp?NCID=154>

Principles for reviewing the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures in Irish higher education and training.
<http://www.iheqn.ie/publications/default.asp?NCID=154>

European policies and guidelines

A European Common Quality Assurance Framework, produced by the Technical Working Group on Quality in VET in the context of the ENQA-VET work programme prior to 2008:
http://www.enqavet.eu/downloads/TWG_A_European_Common_Quality_Assurance_Framework.pdf

Referencing of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) (2009).
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[http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_3edition%20(2).pdf)

Recognition of prior learning and credit documents

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2004). *Principles and operational guidelines for the implementation of a national approach to credit in Irish higher education and training* (first published 2004; printed 2006).
<http://www.nqai.ie/docs/framework/policies/principles%20and%20oper%20guidelines%20green.pdf>

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2005). *Principles and operational guidelines for the recognition of prior learning* (2005). http://www.nqai.ie/framework_policies_criteria.html

OECD (2008). *Thematic review and collaborative policy analysis: Recognition of non-formal and informal learning – Ireland country note.* <http://www.nqai.ie/documents/finalcountrynoteI.pdf>