

FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Further education and training (FET) embraces education and training which occurs outside the general education and higher education and training systems, and which provides vocationally focussed learning, based on the needs of individuals. It is characterised by flexible modes of delivery, and built upon modular/unit systems that provide opportunities for credit accumulation. The FET sector also seeks to provide education and training that reflects national, regional and sectoral skills needs, and to facilitate social inclusion and accessibility.

FET programmes are offered by a wide range of public and private providers. These include the state training agency, FÁS, which offers training courses suited to the needs of individuals seeking employment, employees wishing to improve their skills, and those training as crafts persons. Other state agencies provide training to meet particular sectoral needs such as BIM (Bord Iascaigh Mhara), which provides training for careers in the seafood industry, and Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, which provides further education and training courses in horticulture, agriculture, forestry and equine studies. FET programmes are also offered by small training centres, vocational education committees (VECs), schools and colleges of further education and

training, by private companies and professional bodies, and in community and adult education centres. In 2001, under the Qualifications Act, the state established a single awarding body to make and quality assure FET awards: the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). As a result, most publicly funded FET programmes, and a significant volume of privately funded FET programmes lead to FETAC awards, which are included at Levels 1 to 6 of the NFQ. Since its establishment in 2001, FETAC has awarded over 750,000 awards.

FETAC makes both major (large volume awards in terms of credit and learning outcomes) and non-major awards¹ (minor, supplemental and special purpose awards) in the NFQ. Major FETAC awards at levels 1-5 on the NFQ refer to the level of the award and are titled as Certificates: e.g. Level 1 Certificate, Level 2 Certificate. The named award signals specific details of the nature of the award: e.g. Level 1 Certificate in Communications. The major further education and training award at NFQ Level 6 is referred to as the Advanced Certificate. It is distinguishable from the Higher Certificate (see higher education and training awards, pg 24) at the same level by its learning outcomes. It is important to note that a FETAC Advanced Certificate-Craft is awarded upon completion of an apprenticeship, which is the recognised means by which people are qualified to become craftspersons² in Ireland. A transcript of all results is issued by FETAC with the major award certificate, listing the learner's certification history.

FETAC also make smaller, non-major awards which are classed as component, specific purpose and supplemental awards. An example of a component named award would be, for instance, a Component Certificate in Word Processing. There are no supplemental awards made by FETAC at Levels 1, 2 and 3 of the NFQ. Non-major awards, particularly component awards, may contribute towards the accumulation of credit for major awards.

The full directory of FETAC awards is available at the following link:

¹ Information on types of awards is set out in the section on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), p. 32

² The system of apprenticeship and the Advanced Certificate-Craft award is described on page 19 below.

http://www.fetac.ie/link_pages/Awards_link_page.htm

1. Further Education and Training Awards

Level 1 and Level 2 Certificates (NFQ Level 1, NFQ Level 2) and minor and special purpose awards at the same level

Awards made by: Further Education and Training Award Council (FETAC)

Level 1 and 2 Certificates are designed to meet the needs of learners, both young and old, including those with intellectual and other disabilities, adults returning to training, and learners with few or no previous qualifications, including those within the workforce. These awards provide certification for learners who may progress to higher levels and also for those whose principal achievements rest at these levels. Each certificate comprises a number of components, most often in basic literacy and numeracy, which the learner can achieve at their own pace and accumulate over time towards one of the named certificates above. Examples of awards at Levels 1 and 2 include the Level 1 Certificate in Communications (major) and the Level 2 Certificate in General Learning (major).

Level 3 Certificate (NFQ Level 3) and minor and special purpose awards at the same level Awards made by: Further Education and Training Award Council (FETAC)

The Level 3 Certificate enables learners to gain recognition for, specific personal skills, practical skills and knowledge, basic transferable skills, the enhancement of individual talents and qualities and achievements and learning relevant to a variety of progression options. Examples of awards at Level 3 would include the Level 3 Certificate in Keyboard and Computer Skills (major) and the Component Certificate (minor award) in Computer Literacy.

Level 4 Certificate (NFQ Level 4) and minor, special purpose, and supplemental awards at the same level

Awards made by: Further Education and Training Award Council (FETAC)

The Level 4 Certificate enables learners to gain recognition for the achievement of vocational and personal skills, knowledge and understanding to specified standards, the enhancement of individual talents and qualities and the achievement and learning relevant to a variety of progression options, including employment at an introductory vocational level, and programmes leading to a Level 5 Certificate. Examples of Level 4 awards would include the Level 4 Certificate in Horticulture (major); the Level 4 Certificate in Pharmacy Sales (major); and the Component Certificate in Child Development and Play (minor).

Level 5 Certificate (NFQ Level 5) and minor, special purpose and supplemental awards at the same level

Awards made by: Further Education and Training Award Council (FETAC)

The Level 5 Certificate enables learners to develop a broad range of skills, which are vocationally specific and require a general theoretical understanding. They are enabled to work independently while subject to general direction. The majority of certificate/module holders at Level 5 take up positions of employment. They are also deemed to meet the minimum entry requirements for a range of higher education institutions/programmes. Examples of Level 5 awards would include the Level 5 Certificate in Restaurant Operations (major); the Level 5 Certificate in Seafood Processing (major); the Component Certificate in Care of Older People (minor); the Component Certificate in Word Processing (minor).

Advanced Certificate (NFQ Level 6) and minor, special purpose and supplemental awards at the same level

Awards made by: Further Education and Training Award Council (FETAC)

An Advanced Certificate award enables learners to develop a comprehensive range of skills, which may be vocationally specific and/or of a general supervisory nature, and require detailed theoretical understanding. Modules include advanced vocational/occupational skills, enabling certificate holders to work independently or progress to higher education and training. The majority of certificate/module holders at Level 6 take up positions of employment, some of whom may be self-employed. Examples of FET awards at Level 6 would include Advanced Certificate Craft-Electrical (major); Advanced Certificate Craft-Metal Fabrication (major); Advanced Certificate Farm Management (major); Component Certificate in Communications and Personal Development (minor); Component Certificate in Culinary Skills and Standards (minor).

1.1 The Advanced Certificate - Craft³

Apprenticeship is the recognised means by which individuals are trained to become craftspersons in Ireland. The main craft trades have been designated by FÁS, the state employment agency, and come within the scope of the statutory apprenticeships system, which is organised in Ireland by FÁS in co-operation with the Department of Education and Science, employers and unions. The Advanced Certificate is the award received on successful completion of all stages of the apprenticeship and it is made by FETAC. All Advanced Certificate awards are included at Level 6 on the NFQ.

The curriculum for each apprenticeship programme is based on pre-specified standards which are agreed with industry. Apprentices are assessed on a structured ongoing basis throughout their apprenticeship. Modular assessments are carried out during off-the-job training phases, which are held in FÁS training centres or Department of Education and Science approved centres. The assessments incorporate work, standardised practical assessments and theoretical assessments. During the on-the-job training phases of apprenticeships the apprentice's competence is assessed by the employer to pre-specified standards.

³ This award was preceded by the National Craft Certificate which is placed on the National Framework of Qualifications at level 6.

The apprenticeship cycle is deemed to be complete when an apprentice has completed all of the seven alternate on-the-job training and off-the-job phases of his/her apprenticeship, with the minimum timeframe from the date of registration, as well as achieving the qualifying standard throughout his/her apprenticeship. Generally, the duration of an apprenticeship is 4 years. (The Print Media apprenticeship has a duration of 3 years).

1.2 Further Education and Training grading system⁴

Further education and training assessment techniques are often determined nationally; the assessment instruments are devised locally. Each assessment instrument has assessment criteria which detail the range of marks to be awarded for specific standards of knowledge, skills and competence demonstrated by candidates.

FETAC awards are graded and classified as follows:

Awards at NFQ Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 are classified as Successful where a learner has achieved all the outcomes for the award. Awards at Level 4, Level 5 and Level 6 are classified as Pass, Merit or Distinction where a learner has achieved the standards for the award within the grading criteria⁵ as detailed below.

- A Pass is a grade awarded to a learner who has attained the minimum standard. To be awarded a pass grade a learner must have achieved a mark of between 50-64%.
- A Merit is a grade awarded to a learner who has exceeded the minimum requirements. To be awarded a merit grade a learner must have achieved a mark of between 65-79%.

⁴ Information on assessment, including grading and guidelines for providers can be obtained on the FETAC website, <http://www.fetac.ie/assessment/default.htm>

⁵ Grading criteria describe what a learner must attain to achieve a particular grade for an award at a particular level.

- A Distinction is a grade awarded to a learner who has substantially exceeded the minimum requirements. For a learner to be awarded a distinction he/she must have achieved a mark of 80% or over.

When a learner has not achieved the minimum standards for an award the grade is recorded as Referred. For competency based awards or awards with specific legislative requirements regarding levels of competences the assessment will be weighted accordingly and the grading criteria specified in the Award Specification will reflect the minimum standard of achievement required by the learner.

1.3 Credit

FETAC's Credit, Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS) was initially designed in 2005 to complement the NFQ and, in particular, the use of its award-types. The credit values for all FETAC award-types are set by FETAC at a national level. This ensures credit value stability when component awards are accumulated to make up major awards.

1.4 Quality Assurance

As per Section 18 (1) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, all providers of further education and training programmes leading to FETAC awards establish procedures to quality assure their programmes and agree these procedures with FETAC. FETAC has taken a three-sided approach to quality assurance through the implementation of policies and procedures for provider registration, programme validation and monitoring. Since 2005, all providers who wish to register with FETAC for the first time do so through the agreement of quality assurance procedures. Further information on Provider Quality Assurance and Registration is available at the following link: <http://www.fetac.ie/qa/default.htm>.