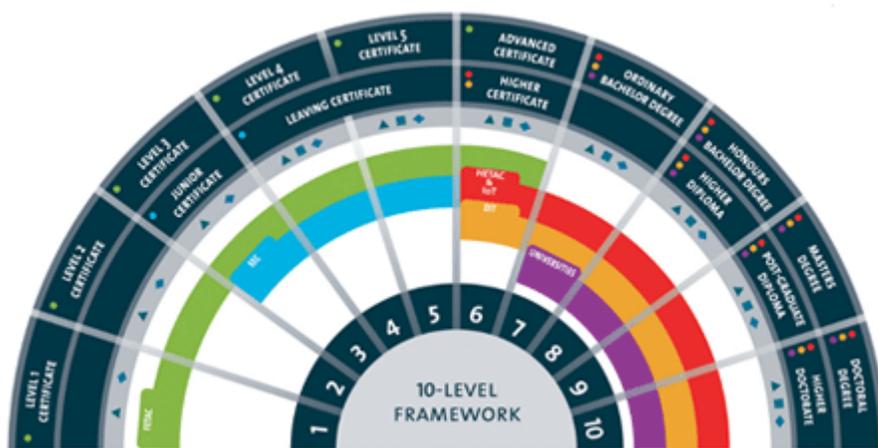


## THE IRISH NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS (NFQ)

The Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is the single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements in Ireland may be measured and related to each other, and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards. It was developed by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) in consultation with stakeholders and launched in October 2003.

The NFQ is a system consisting of 10 levels, which collectively capture further, higher and schools awards in Ireland. There are overarching level indicators at each level of the Framework with associated sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competence appropriate to the achievement of an award at each of these levels. These indicators are expressed in terms of learning outcomes. The NFQ is diagrammatically represented below:



### 7.1 Awards in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

There are two overall types of award in the Framework: Major and Non-Major. Each of the major award-types has a descriptor associated with it, which describes its purpose, level, volume, learning outcomes, progression, transfer and articulation.

### 7.1.1 Major Awards

The following table provides an overview of the major awards referenced throughout this profile, the level of these awards on the National Framework of Qualifications and the associated awarding body. The table reflects the situation as at 31 July 2009.

| NFQ Level    | NFQ Major Award-Types                   | Awarding Body                   |
|--------------|---|---------------------------------|
| NFQ Level 1  | Level 1 Certificate                     | FETAC                           |
| NFQ Level 2  | Level 2 Certificate                     | FETAC                           |
| NFQ Level 3  | Level 3 Certificate                     | FETAC                           |
|              | Junior Certificate                      | State Examinations Commission   |
| NFQ Level 4  | Level 4 Certificate                     | FETAC                           |
|              | Leaving Certificate                     | State Examinations Commission   |
| NFQ Level 5  | Leaving Certificate                     | State Examinations Commission   |
|              | Level 5 Certificate                     | FETAC                           |
| NFQ Level 6  | Advanced Certificate                    | FETAC                           |
|              | Higher Certificate                      | HETAC/IOTs/DIT                  |
| NFQ Level 7  | Ordinary Bachelor Degree                | HETAC/IOTs/<br>DIT/Universities |
| NFQ Level 8  | Honours Bachelor Degree; Higher Diploma | HETAC/IOTs/<br>DIT/Universities |
| NFQ Level 9  | Masters Degree; Post-Graduate Diploma   | HETAC/IOTs/<br>DIT/Universities |
| NFQ Level 10 | Doctoral Degree; Higher Doctorate       | HETAC/IOTs/<br>DIT/Universities |

**Note:** All Institutes of Technology make awards to at least Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualification under Delegated Authority from the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC).

### **7.1.2 Non-major awards**

- There are three types of non-major award recognised through the Framework. These awards capture smaller pieces of learning and are characterised as follows:

- *Minor awards* recognise partial completion of the outcomes of a Major Award. Minor awards may be combined with other learning outcomes towards the achievement of a major or special purpose award. Minor award-types may contribute towards the accumulation of credit for major award-types.
- *Supplemental awards* recognise learning that is additional to a Major Award. Programmes leading to such awards may be described as refresher, updating or continuing education and training. In some cases there may be regulatory requirements for such awards in order for learners to retain a license to practice granted in respect of the initial award. Supplemental awards are not at a higher level than the initial award.
- *Special purpose awards* recognise relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement. Such certification may be a component of a broader award in some part of the field of construction, but it has a standalone function also. Special-purpose awards may provide a basis for transfer into more broadly-based major awards at the same level and thus progression on to higher level awards, or they may provide direct progression to further narrowly-based special-purpose awards.

### **7.2 Legacy Awards**

The NFQ introduced a number of new awards to the Irish education and training system and discontinued the awarding of some others. It has been necessary to map all former

awards (sometimes referred to as 'legacy' awards) onto the NFQ, so that holders of such awards are not disadvantaged. The general policy approach to the placement of 'legacy' awards on the NFQ is set out in *Policies and Criteria for the Establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications*, pp. 43-5 and available here: [http://www.nqai.ie/publication\\_oct2003b.html](http://www.nqai.ie/publication_oct2003b.html)

The task of placing existing and former awards on the NFQ is well advanced. The Authority 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). A general approach for the placement of the legacy awards of the universities was agreed in early 2009 and is currently being implemented.