

Bringing the Model Framework and the National Framework of Qualifications Together

Following the introduction of the new ECCE scheme there is now a greater focus on the achievement of accredited childcare/ECCE awards within the sector. It is also recognised that the historical complexity of educational attainment of the workforce in ECCE services in Ireland may present challenges in this regard.

To facilitate practitioners, who are not currently fully qualified, to achieve this status, it is proposed to put in place a **Workforce Development Plan** which will address issues such as access and effective participation in education and training programmes.

A number of key issues have emerged from the research phase of the development of the workforce development plan for the ECCE sector. One such issue is the design and relevance of Education and Training Programmes and the validation of the *Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the ECCE sector* through the cross referencing of it's occupational profiles with the *National Framework of Qualifications*.

The table below shows the results of this cross referencing exercise. It highlights the stages of professional development as laid out within the *Model Framework* and equates each to a specific level on the *National Framework of Qualifications*. It also looks at possible job opportunities at each stage of progression. Cross referencing both frameworks in this way provides us with a valuable tool for the assessment of ECCE training programmes and helps practitioners identify their location in relation to their own stage of professional development.

Basic Practitioner

- **NFQ Level 4** e.g. Student
- The best fit may be to a minor or special purpose award at that level

Intermediate Practitioner

- **NFQ Level 5** e.g. Childcare Assistant / Childcare Worker
- Would generally equate to a major award (e.g. FETAC Level 5 Certificate) while it may also equate to a minor or a special purpose award

Experienced Practitioner

- **NFQ Level 6** e.g. Room Leader/ Assistant Manager
- Would generally equate to, for example, a FETAC Advanced Certificate at Level 6

Advanced Practitioner

- **NFQ Level 7/8** e.g. Childcare Manager/ Childcare Development Officer
- Would equate to at least an Ordinary Bachelor Degree

Expert Practitioner

- **NFQ Level 8/9** e.g. Policy Development/ Research
- Would equate to at least an Honours Bachelor Degree

Acknowledgements

Content of this booklet has been sourced from the following:

- *National Framework of Qualifications* - www.nfq.ie and the *National Qualifications Authority of Ireland* - www.nqai.ie
- *Quality Childcare and Lifelong Learning - Model Framework for Education, Training & Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector* (2002), Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- *Developing the Workforce in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector, Consultation Document* (2009), Minister for Education & Science

Compiled by Kilkenny County Childcare Committee 2009

Information contained in this booklet is correct as of the date of publication. This may be subject to change as a result of the work of the National Awards Standards in ECCE working group whose brief is to develop a set of national standards for awards made in ECCE at all levels of the NFQ. Headed by the NQAI, it is anticipated that the work will take approximately a year to complete.



Kilkenny County
Childcare Committee
Ceiste Céram Léam
Chóras Gll Chathair



Transforming Ireland



Training Paths in Early Childhood Care & Education



Introduction

This brochure summarises the progression routes within Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) Training and provides an outline of the core knowledge areas within ECCE. Drawing on the *National Framework of Qualifications*, *The Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector* and background discussion documents published in support of the national consultation process towards a *Workforce Development Plan*, it provides students with an overview of the various stages of professional development in ECCE and offers a guide to potential career opportunities within the sector.

The National Framework of Qualifications

What?

The National Framework of Qualifications was launched in 2003 and is used to describe the Irish qualifications system. It is a framework of ten qualification levels designed to incorporate awards made for all kinds of learning wherever it is gained. It provides a structure to compare and contrast the level and standard of different qualifications. The NFQ is based on standards of knowledge, skill and competence i.e. what an individual is expected to know, understand and be able to do following successful completion of a process of learning

Why?

The NFQ can help you as a learner to:

- Plan your education & training and career progression
- Compare and contrast qualifications
- Make informed choices about the qualifications you choose
- Recognise the progression routes that may be open to you upon completion, thereby avoiding education and training cul-de-sacs

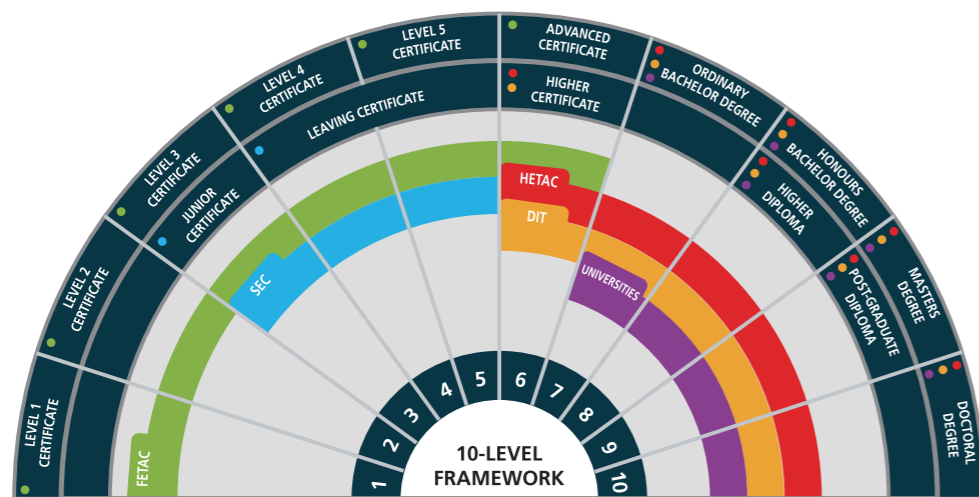
Qualifications included in the NFQ are quality assured

Qualifications included in the NFQ meet nationally agreed standards and are subject to internal and external reviews to ensure they maintain these standards

Qualifications in the NFQ are recognised nationally and internationally and they will retain their value

How?

The fan diagram (below) helps to illustrate the levels on the NFQ, the awarding bodies and the major types of qualifications that are included in the framework. These ten levels capture all learning, from the very initial stages to the most advanced. The NFQ currently has 16 larger or 'major' awards (as seen in the outer part of the diagram). It also includes hundreds of other qualifications awarded for smaller learning achievements. These are known as 'minor', 'special purpose' and 'supplemental' qualifications.



Major Awards are the main class of award made at a level. These include the Leaving Certificate, the Advanced Certificate or the Honours Bachelor Degree

Minor Awards provide recognition for learners who achieve a range of learning outcomes but not the specific combination of learning outcomes required for a major award. These awards allow learners to build up units of learning at their own pace to meet their own needs. An example of such an award is the completion of an individual childcare module e.g. Child Development.

Special Purpose Awards are made for very specific purposes e.g. Fire Safety Training, Manual Handling Training.

Supplemental awards are for learning which is additional to a previous award. They could for example relate to updating and refreshing knowledge or skills or to continuing professional development e.g. Refresher Occupational First Aid Course

The Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the ECCE Sector

It is necessary for the future development of the childcare workforce in Ireland that education and training programmes equip practitioners with the essential skills, knowledge and competencies and promote the core values and dispositions necessary for high quality practice. The Model Framework for Education Training & Professional Development for the ECCE sector (2002) sets out a clear guide for professional development through childcare education and training. The framework identifies six areas of core knowledge and skills within ECCE and outlines each stage of professional development through a proposed occupational profile which directly relates to a person's understanding and knowledge within each of these areas.

Areas of Core Knowledge & Skills:

The wheel diagram below identifies six core knowledge areas of ECCE education as laid out within the Model Framework. Each area is equally important, interdependent and interrelated. They form the basis for the organisation and development of education, training and qualifications for the ECCE professional.



Stages of Professional Development:

The Model Framework also provides an occupational profile based on a persons understanding, gained from both formal training and experience working on the ground, of the above identified core areas of knowledge. The purpose of this profile is to allow those working in the sector to identify clearly where they are located in terms of their own professional development and also to make decisions about and plan for their future professional development within the sector. The diagram below outline this progression within ECCE.

