



Qualifications and Curriculum Authority



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QUALIFICATIONS,
CURRICULUM &
ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY
FOR WALES



Rewarding Learning

For learners, parents, teachers, tutors, trainers, careers advisers and employers

The National Qualifications Framework

Helping learners make informed decisions

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) sets out the levels against which a qualification can be recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It helps learners make informed decisions about the qualifications they want to pursue, by comparing the levels of different qualifications and identifying different progression routes.



The accreditation of qualifications makes sure they are of a high quality and that they meet the needs of learners and employers.

Changes to the NQF

In 2004 we started the process of revising the NQF so that it could recognise qualifications more precisely. To achieve this, we increased the number of levels in the NQF from five to nine.

The current levels 4 to 8 (previously levels 4 and 5) broadly compare to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), which covers qualifications provided by universities and other higher education institutions.

The increase in levels does not change the number of qualifications available or a qualification's content.

From January 2006 qualifications will be awarded against the new NQF levels. (Higher-level NVQs and related qualifications will continue to be awarded against the previous NQF levels.)

The NQF today

All accredited qualifications are awarded an NQF level. If a qualification shares the

same level as another qualification, they are broadly similar in terms of the demand they place on the learner. However, qualifications at the same level can still be very different in terms of content and duration.

The NQF now comprises nine levels (entry level to level 8). Entry level and levels 1 to 3 did not change. Levels 4 and 5 were divided into five levels.

The table over the page shows a selection of individual qualifications and how they appear in the current NQF. It also highlights how the current levels broadly compare to the FHEQ levels.

More information

Visit *openQUALS* – a website comprising all accredited qualifications in the NQF:
www.qca.org.uk/openquals

In 2006-8 the regulatory authorities will trial arrangements for a unit and qualifications system underpinned by credit. The outcomes of the trial will inform future developments.

See below for contact information.

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The NQF and the FHEQ

National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	
Previous levels (and examples)	Current levels (and examples)
5 Level 5 NVQ in Construction Management † Level 5 Diploma in Translation	8 Specialist awards
	7 Level 7 Diploma in Translation
4 Level 4 NVQ in Advice and Guidance † Level 4 National Diploma in Professional Production Skills Level 4 BTEC Higher National Diploma in 3D Design Level 4 Certificate in Early Years	6 Level 6 National Diploma in Professional Production Skills
	5 Level 5 BTEC Higher National Diploma in 3D Design
	4 Level 4 Certificate in Early Years
3 Level 3 Certificate in Small Animal Care Level 3 NVQ in Aeronautical Engineering A levels	
2 Level 2 Diploma for Beauty Specialists Level 2 NVQ in Agricultural Crop Production GCSEs Grades A*-C	
1 Level 1 Certificate in Motor Vehicle Studies Level 1 NVQ in Bakery GCSEs Grades D-G	
Entry Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy	

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
D (doctoral) Doctorates
M (masters) Masters degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
H (honours) Bachelor degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
I (intermediate) Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees and higher national diplomas
C (certificate) Certificates of higher education

† Revised levels are not currently being implemented for NVQs at levels 4 and 5