

UK Vocational Qualifications

Changes to the NQF

The three regulatory authorities have updated the National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland as part of a review of regulatory arrangements. (The three regulatory authorities are QCA, ACCAC and CCEA).

From 1 September 2004, the number of levels in the NQF has increased from six to eight helping to link the framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ).

The NQF is designed to help with career progression and act as a guide to learners to make informed decisions about their training needs.

It aims to:

- promote access, motivation and achievement in education and training, strengthening international competitiveness
- promote lifelong learning by helping people to understand clear progression routes
- avoid duplication and overlap of qualifications while making sure all learning needs are covered
- promote public and professional confidence in the integrity and relevance of national awards.

The following table provides an indication of the new and previous NQF and FHEQ

National Qualifications Framework		Framework for Higher Education Qualification levels (FHEQ)
Original levels	Revised levels	
5 Level 5 NVQ Level 5 Diploma	8 Specialist awards	D (doctoral) doctorates
	7 Level 7 Diploma	M (masters) masters degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
4 Level 4 NVQ Level 4 Diploma Level 4 BTEC Higher National Diploma Level 4 Certificate	6 Level 6 Diploma	H (honours) bachelors degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
	5 Level 5 BTEC Higher National Diploma	I (intermediate) diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees, higher national diplomas

	4 Level 4 Certificate	C (certificate) certificates of higher education
3 Level 3 Certificate Level 3 NVQ A levels		
2 Level 2 Diploma Level 2 NVQ GCSEs Grades A*-C		
1 Level 1 Certificate Level 1 NVQ GCSEs Grades D-G		
Entry Entry Level Certificate in Adult Literacy		

The use of levels in the NQF is to indicate the generally comparable outcome of an award but does not indicate that different awards share purpose, content and outcomes.