

# QUALIFICATIONS EXPLAINED

## England, Wales & Northern Ireland

	NQF (National Qualifications Framework) and FHEQ (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications)							QCF (Qualifications and Credit Framework)			
ENTRY LEVEL	Entry Level Certificates	Essential Skills						Foundation Learning	QCF Award 1-12 Credits	QCF Certificate 13-36 Credits	QCF Diploma 37+ Credits
LEVEL 1	GCSEs D-G	Key Skills			14-19 Diplomas	Welsh Baccalaureate	NVQs	BTEC Qualifications			
LEVEL 2	GCSEs A*-C			Apprenticeships							
LEVEL 3	A Level										
LEVEL 4	Certificate of Higher Education										
LEVEL 5	Foundation Degrees	Ordinary Bachelors Degrees	Diploma of Higher Education	HNC/HND							
LEVEL 6	Honours Degree	Graduate Certificate and Diploma									
LEVEL 7	Masters Degree	Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma									
LEVEL 8	Doctorates										



National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)
<p><u>Entry Level Certificates</u> Entry Level Certificates for students who may not be quite ready to complete a GCSE or equivalent qualification. They are designed to improve confidence and build skills. There are over 100 subjects to choose from and can be in a variety of settings. Candidates will complete a portfolio of evidence and will be assessed through tests and practical, written and oral assignments. Entry Level Certificates are designed to lead students on to a related qualification at Level One.</p> <p><u>Essential Skills</u> Essential Skills allow people to improve their abilities in Maths, English and in using computers.</p> <p><u>Key Skills</u> Key Skills are a set of 6 qualifications that are commonly required for the workplace and to get on in education and training. The main key skills are: communication, application of number and information and communications technology (ICT). The wider key skill subjects are working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving. Candidates are assessed by a portfolio of evidence and for the three main key skills by way of an exam as well.</p> <p><u>GCSEs A*-G</u> GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) are the traditional qualification for 14-16 year olds and are available in a range of approximately 60 subjects. Students are assessed through exams and some form of internal assessment, such as written work, artwork, experiments, etc. Results are given in traditional A*-G grades; if a student achieves an A*-C grade they have achieved a level 2 qualification.</p> <p><u>A Levels</u> Advanced levels focus on traditional subject areas and study skills. They are usually taken by 17-19 year olds and there are currently approximately 80 subject areas. They normally take two years to complete full time, but can also be done part time. 'AS' (Advanced Subsidiary) Levels are the first half of 'A' Levels and are a qualification in their own right. Students are assessed by exam and written assignment. Results are given in traditional A*-E grades.</p> <p><u>Apprenticeships</u> Apprentices work alongside other employees and earn a wage, whilst developing job specific skills and knowledge. Apprentices may attend college on a day release basis to work towards a qualification. Apprenticeships normally take between one and four years to complete and are available for anyone 16 years and older. There are currently over 190 different apprenticeships, which can lead on to further training or a full time job on completion. Apprenticeships are a framework of qualifications; including, as a minimum, an NVQ, a technical certificate and key skills.</p> <p><u>14-19 Diploma</u> Diplomas are new qualifications for 14-19 year olds and allow exploration of a range of subject areas before committing to a career. Study normally takes place over two years and includes both classroom study and more practical aspects, including work experience. Students completing a Diploma can go on to further study, including university courses or apprenticeships or on to a career. By 2011 there will be 17 diploma subject areas, with the Diploma in Public Services being the most relevant to the Justice sector.</p> <p><u>Welsh Baccalaureate</u> The Welsh Baccalaureate is a qualification for 14-19 year olds, combining skills in personal development with traditional qualifications, such as A Levels, NVQs, etc. It provides students with broader experience and skills that are valued by employers and universities. The emphasis is on learning by doing throughout the qualification.</p> <p><u>NVQ</u> NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) are competence based qualifications based on National Occupational Standards (NOS), which are assessed in the workplace. Candidates demonstrate their competence against the NOS that are relevant to their role and are assessed through observation and compilation of a portfolio of evidence. Candidates are deemed either competent or not yet competent and these qualifications can lead on to further work-based assessments or higher education.</p>	<p><u>Certificate of Higher Education</u> Similar to an HNC, a Certificate of Higher Education is an academic rather than vocational qualification and usually take one year's full time study to complete.</p> <p><u>Foundation Degree</u> Foundation degrees combine academic study and workplace experience. They are designed to provide students with the skills that employers are looking for, or can lead to further academic study. Students can convert their Foundation Degree to a full Honours Degree with a further year of study. They can be completed in the workplace, by distance learning or online and usually take 2 years full time to complete. Assessment takes place in the workplace and also by way of written assignments and exams, sometimes a final dissertation will have to be completed. Students either 'pass' or 'fail' foundation degrees, although some offer 'distinction' as a grade. They can lead to further HE study or a job.</p> <p><u>Diploma of Higher Education/ other Higher Diplomas</u> Are similar to HNDs, usually requiring two years of full time study. Conversion to a degree can normally take place following an additional year of study.</p> <p><u>Ordinary Bachelors Degree</u> Bachelors Degrees allow students to develop a more thorough understanding of a subject and can be completed as a full time, part time or flexible course. Assessment takes the form of written assignments and exams, and sometimes a final dissertation will have to be completed. On completion students receive grades of: first, upper second, lower second, third, pass, fail. If students pass their degree with a third or above, they receive their degree with honours. Bachelors Degrees can lead to a postgraduate qualification or a job.</p> <p><u>Honours Degree</u> See Ordinary Bachelors Degree for details.</p> <p><u>Graduate Certificate and Diploma</u> Are for students who want to update their knowledge or are completed prior to applying for postgraduate study. Students need to have completed degree level study or an equivalent qualification. The certificate usually takes one year to complete full time and the diploma usually takes two years.</p> <p><u>Masters Degree</u> Masters Degrees are academic qualifications that are research based, taught courses or a mixture of the two. This qualification is usually achieved after one years full time study. Students achieve distinction, merit, pass or fail on completion of the degree (although some institutions do not give the merit grade). Some types of Masters degrees prepare you for work in a specific field, others can lead on to a Doctorate.</p> <p><u>Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma</u> These can either be academic or vocational and take 9-12 months to complete. Students normally need to have achieved at least a lower second in their bachelor's degree to complete a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma. Students attend lectures and seminars and produce written assignments. There are a number of possible subjects, and they are usually linked to a specific profession. Students are graded by: distinction, merit, pass, fail and on completion can go on to further postgraduate study or a career.</p> <p><u>Doctorates</u> Doctorates enable students to complete a piece of original research and usually take a minimum of three years to achieve. Students achieve either a pass or fail on completion, although sometimes a distinction will be awarded.</p>	<p><u>Foundation Learning</u> Aims to engage with those who would otherwise leave school without a qualification, or adults with skills gaps. Foundation learning is made up of level one and entry level units and qualifications in the QCF that relate to functional skills, personal &amp; social development and vocational skills &amp; knowledge. The aim of Foundation Learning is to encourage students on to a level 2 apprenticeship, a first full level 2 qualification, a foundation diploma, GCSEs or to independent living and supported employment.</p> <p><u>QCF Qualifications</u> A credit value is assigned to every unit and qualification in the QCF; one credit equals 10 learning hours. Units and Qualifications range from Entry Level to Level 8 and the number of credits completed dictate the size of the qualification achieved. If a student completes up to 12 credits they receive an Award; 13-16 credits achieved provides a Certificate and 37 credits or more provides the learner with a Diploma. By transferring existing qualifications on to the QCF it will allow learners to have a better understanding of the skills and types of qualifications that exist. Learners will also have increased flexibility and choice, allowing them to transfer credits between qualifications, to prevent duplication of learning. The QCF will be fully implemented by 2010.</p> <p><b>Other Qualifications</b></p> <p><u>BTEC Qualifications</u> BTEC qualifications are work related and are available in a wide range of subjects. They are designed to equip you with the skills required for employment in a particular sector and combine theory and practice, often with an element of work based training. Students complete a wide range of activities from gathering a portfolio of evidence, to written assignments and practical activities. Students are graded with a pass, merit or distinction on completion and can go on to further study or a job.</p> <p><u>HNCs/HNDs</u> Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diplomas are work-related higher education qualifications. Unlike degrees that aim to improve a student's knowledge, these qualifications aim to provide skills that can be put into practice in a specific job. HNCs tend to take one year full time to complete, whilst HNDs take two years. Most HNC/HND courses require one A Level or equivalent as an entry requirement and students are graded by: pass, merit and distinction. HNC/HNDs can lead into a career or to further study, which can 'convert' the qualification to a bachelor's degree.</p> <p><u>Other Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs)</u> VRQs are developed by Awarding Bodies and improve knowledge and skills in an area of employment, which can improve job prospects. They are available at all levels of the NQF.</p>