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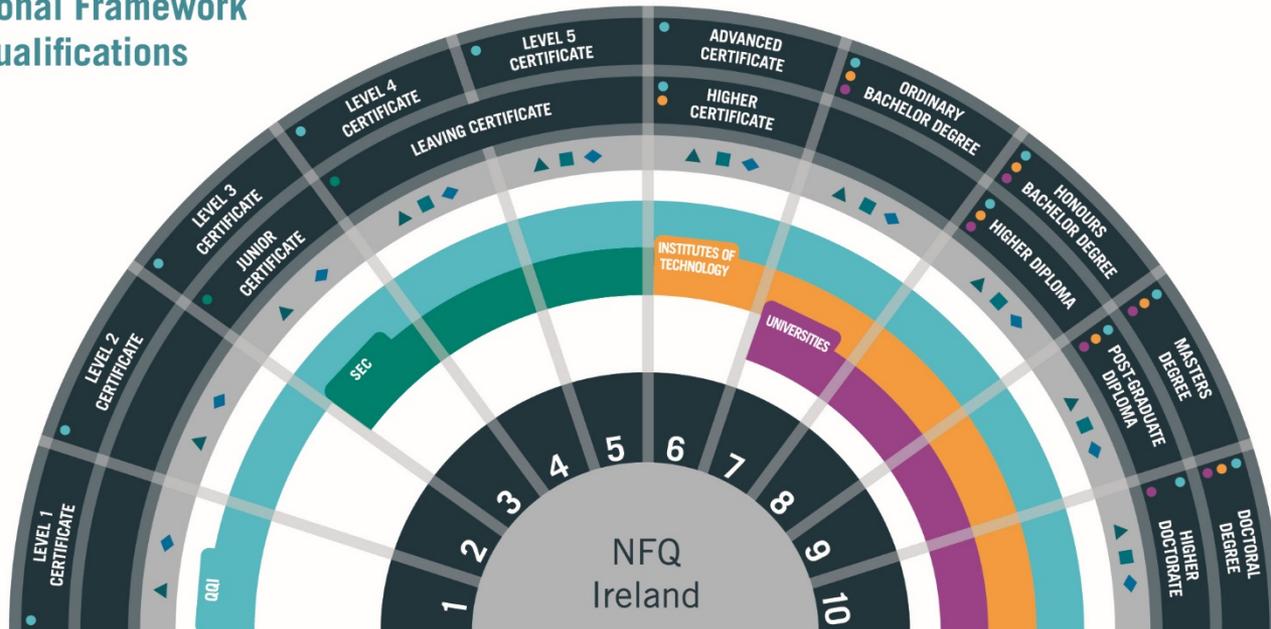
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Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

# Learning Outcomes Implications for policy and practice

**3<sup>rd</sup> Policy Forum**  
**21 June 2018**  
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## National Framework of Qualifications



### AWARDING BODIES

- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) makes awards in further and higher education and training
- SEC - State Examinations Commission (*Department of Education and Skills*)
- Institutes of Technology
- Universities

### AWARDS IN THE FRAMEWORK

There are four classes of award in the National Framework of Qualifications:



- Major Awards:** named in the outer rings, are the principal class of awards made at a level
- Minor Awards:** are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award
- Supplemental Awards:** are for learning that is additional to a Major Award
- Special Purpose Awards:** are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement



For further Information consult: [www.nfq.ie](http://www.nfq.ie) [www.QQI.ie](http://www.QQI.ie)

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# Roles and Responsibilities

| Role  | Responsibility |
|---|----------------|
| Develop/maintain <b>policies</b> on:<br>Quality Assurance, Determining Standards,<br>Making Awards and Programme Validation | QQI            |
| Develop and publish award standards<br>(learning outcomes)  | QQI            |
| Use the award standards (learning<br>outcomes) to guide/inform programme<br>development                                     | Provider(s)    |
| Submit programme for validation   | Provider(s)    |
| Evaluate and validate programmes  | QQI            |
| Deliver programme and assess learners   | Provider(s)    |
| Submit learner results for certification  | Provider(s)    |
| Make Award  | QQI            |





# Learning Outcomes - relationships



| 2003 NFQ<br>(Grid of Level Indicators)   | 2008<br>VET/FET Standards<br>(Intended Learning Outcomes)   | 2016<br>Programme<br>Learning Outcomes                 | 2016<br>Module<br>Learning Outcomes                 | Assessment of<br>MIMLOs' and<br>MIPLOs'<br>(Achieved Learning Outcomes) |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Knowledge</b><br><i>Breadth</i><br><b>Knowledge</b><br><i>Kind</i><br><b>Know-How &amp; Skill</b><br><i>Range</i><br><b>Know-How &amp; Skill</b><br><i>Selectivity</i><br><b>Competence</b><br><i>Context</i><br><b>Competence</b><br><i>Role</i><br><b>Competence</b><br><i>Learning to Learn</i><br><b>Competence</b><br><i>Insight</i> | Common Award System (most used)<br>NFQ 1-6<br><br>Professional Award Type Descriptors (used for apprenticeships)<br>NFQ 5-9 | Minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs') | Minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs') |   |



# NFQ Level Synopsis



| NFQ  | NFQ 5 (EQF 4)  | NFQ 6 (EQF 5)  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Knowledge</b><br><i>Breadth</i><br><b>Knowledge</b><br><i>Kind</i><br><b>Know-How &amp; Skill</b><br><i>Range</i><br><b>Know-How &amp; Skill</b><br><i>Selectivity</i><br><b>Competence</b><br><i>Context</i><br><b>Competence</b><br><i>Role</i><br><b>Competence</b><br><i>Learning to Learn</i><br><b>Competence</b><br><i>Insight</i> | <b>Learning outcomes</b> at this level include a broad range of skills that require some theoretical understanding. The outcomes may relate to engaging in a specific activity, with the capacity to use the instruments and techniques relating to an occupation. They are associated with work being undertaken independently, subject to general direction. | <b>Learning outcomes</b> at this level include a comprehensive range of skills which may be vocationally-specific and/or of a general supervisory nature, and require detailed theoretical understanding. The outcomes also provide for a particular focus on learning skills. The outcomes relate to working in a generally autonomous way to assume design and/or management and/or administrative responsibilities. Occupations at this level would include higher craft, junior technician and supervisor. |



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# Evolution

- 2008 – introduction of Common Award System (CAS)
  - NFQ 1-6 (EQF 1-5)
  - Prescribed structure, credit values
  - High level learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence for overall qualification)
  - Detailed learning outcomes (subject level)
  - Introduction of programme validation (this was new step in VET/FET)
- 2018 commencing review of CAS



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# Evolution

- 2014-Professional Award Type Descriptors
- NFQ 5-9 (EQF4-8)
- Occupational/professional focus
- **Professional** in this context means there is
  - A stable occupational group requiring special training for membership;
  - A community of practice; and
  - Ethical and technical standards for practice
- Currently used for apprenticeships
- Provider designs programme
  - No given structure other than level, credit value
- Assessment
  - broad statements to be interpreted by provider related to individual programme context



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# Setting Award Standards

- Award standards are required before QQI can validate a programme of education and training leading to the award.
- Standards Development Group
  - Community of practice/FET providers/HET providers
  - Industry/sectoral representatives
- Agree Terms of Reference
- Standards drafted (**learning outcomes**)
- Consultation on draft standards
- Publication of approved standards
- Review of standards
- Governance process – Policy and Standards Committee



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# Programme and Module Learning Outcomes

- **MIPLO/MIMLO introduced with 2016 new policy and criteria for programme validation**
- **Minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs)** – Identify what the learner is expected to know, understand, and/or be able to demonstrate in order to be successful on the programme and achieve certification
- **Minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs)** – For each module, identify the red line/threshold outcomes to be achieved and evidenced by a learner achieving certification



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# Programme and Module Learning Outcomes

- Devised by the provider for
  - programmes leading to CAS awards
  - apprenticeship programmes
- Case study on MIPLO/MIMLO for CAS programmes by Further Education Support Service([www.fess.ie](http://www.fess.ie))
  - explored process, learning, issues
- Apprenticeships – QQI has a dedicated Apprenticeship Quality Assurance Manager to support providers





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- To what extent is the implementation of the learning outcomes approach based on an explicit conceptual perspective?
  - Origin = NFQ (2003 – international research, consultation)
  - Implementation in VET
    - By QQI
      - Through CAS (2008 onwards)
      - Broader approach via PATD (2014 onwards)
    - By providers
      - Programme development (2008-2015 module learning outcomes)
      - Programme development (2015...MIPLO/MIMLO – checked during programme validation)





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- What is your conceptual point of departure?
  - NFQ levels – constructivist
  - CAS award specifications – depends on level and award e.g. NFQ L1-3 mostly constructivist, L4-6 more strategic/instrumental
  - In apprenticeships leans towards strategic/instrumental





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- Which are the strengths, which are the weaknesses?
  - Strengths
    - Stability of the NFQ
    - Learning Outcomes in CAS standards can vary in number and detail depending on requirements e.g.
      - Broad (art, design)
      - Some detail (business)
      - Very detailed (agriculture)
    - Learning outcomes in PATD reflect broad NFQ approach
      - Have occupational/professional focus related to specific programme context
  - Weaknesses
    - Implementation of CAS shows some unintended consequences e.g. time required to review standards, provider reliance on prescribed standards, assessment issues
    - PATD – unknown as yet





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- How do you address the tension between ‘learning outcomes as result-oriented, measurable and objective’ and ‘learning outcomes as process-oriented, open to negotiation and only partly measurable’?
  - Recognise both approaches may be needed and have a role
  - Focus on learner profile/programme context



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- Which are the factors positively/negatively influencing the use of learning-outcomes in governance and policy making?
  - Ireland is learning outcome friendly
  - Policies need to be user friendly
  - Implementation takes time
  - VET sector has undergone a lot of change so many issues to deal with
  - QQI
    - Reviewed some CAS standards, learning from this
    - Consulted on how to review CAS standards – changed approach





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- Which are the factors positively/negatively influencing the use of learning outcomes for teaching and learning?
  - Case study indicates:
    - Providers have licence to interpret award specifications learning outcomes when it comes to creating MIPLOs & MIMLOs, while ensuring consistency with the QQI award standards
    - Benefit if providers have reflected on their own philosophy of education and training in relation to the programme
    - Importance of up-to-date subject-matter expertise
    - Learner-centred approach
    - Team approach to MIPLO/MIMLO development is recommended

Common interpretations needed: QQI, developers, evaluators, validation panels



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- How can international cooperation on the definition and use of learning outcomes be strengthened?
  - Peer learning activities
  - Enhancement activities
  - Try to ensure common language understanding



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Thank you  
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