



Short cycle HE in a national framework of qualifications: The Irish experience

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Short cycle in Ireland



- Since 1970s, 2 year National Certificate
- Mainly Business, Engineering, Science
- Approx 20% of HE entrants join these programmes
- 60% of entrants graduate (about 6,500 p.a.)
- 63% of graduates progress to bachelors level (typically one more year)
- 75% of entrants aspire to degree

National Framework of Qualifications



- Determined in 2003 by national qualifications authority
- “Single national and internationally accepted entity through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards”
- Specified learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skill and competence

Levels in the Irish framework



- 4/5 completion of upper secondary
- 6 Higher cert & Advanced cert
- 7 Ordinary bachelors degree
- 8 Honours bachelors degree
- 9 Masters degree
- 10 Doctors degree

Note



- Not just three cycles
- Overlap between HE and VET at level 6
- Multiple possibilities for progression and interruption
- Recent development – embedded standards for partial completion of first cycle

Higher Certificate



- New award replacing former National Certificate
- Programmes re-accredited in 2004 (430 approx)
- Standards defined generically and for 4 major fields of study
- Programme specific outcomes determined through accreditation
- 120 ECTS credits, typically giving full exemption towards 180 ECTS bachelors

Linkage to EHEA framework



- Ireland is piloting self-certification of linkage between national and EHEA framework
- Criteria and process spelled out in report adopted in Bergen
- Working group, including international experts, to see project to completion by Autumn 2006
- Will include the short cycle qualification

Short cycle in EHEA framework



- Dublin descriptor for “short cycle higher education within or linked to the first cycle”
- Bergen: “three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications)”

European Qualifications Framework for LLL



- 8 levels
- Draft currently under revision following consultation
- For adoption by the EU & Lisbon Process partners
- Also a framework of frameworks
- National frameworks important

EQF Level 5



- Typical learning situations at this level require that problems are solved in a predetermined learning process. There are many factors some of which interact and therefore change in the context is sometimes unpredictable. Learning is based on experience in a given field that is often specialised. Qualifications at level 5 typically follows completion of a post secondary learning programme, such as apprenticeship together with post programme experience in a related field. High-grade technicians and managers achieve these qualifications that often bridge secondary and tertiary education and training. Higher education qualifications at this level are associated with the 'short cycle' (within the first cycle) of qualifications in the framework developed under the Bologna process and are often supported by advanced textbooks. Learning at this level demands some independence from the learner and is typically achieved through coaching in well-established procedures and knowledge. Quality assurance is largely determined by expert evaluation coupled with institutional procedural requirements. The achievement of qualifications at level 5 provides access to higher education programmes at level 6 (often with some credit exemption), to employment in highly skilled work or to career progression through improved recognition of work capabilities. These qualifications can also provide direct access to job roles requiring managerial duties.

National tasks



- The European structures are ~ in place
- The challenge is to ensure that short cycle learning is appropriately valued within national frameworks
- Engage with consultative structures – argue from EHEA Framework report – good practice for the development of national frameworks (Sect 2.7)

Issues



- Institutional differentiation
 - Learning outcomes
- Relationship with VET
 - Purpose/profile
- Link with first cycle
 - ECTS

References



- Irish framework www.nfq.ie
- “Short-cycle awards in context: A study of developments relating to higher education awards’ structures outside the State” by National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
<http://www.nqai.ie/jointreport.pdf>
- EHEA framework http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf
- EQF http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/consultations_en.html

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