



**QQI**

Quality and Qualifications Ireland  
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

# Policy and Criteria for Facilitating the Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications



QQI, an integrated agency for quality and qualifications in Ireland

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# Policy and Criteria for Facilitating the Academic Recognition of Foreign Qualifications

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## 1 SUMMARY

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established in November 2012 by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (the 2012 Act). The 2012 Act sets out the functions of QQI.

This document sets out the QQI policy approach to facilitating the academic recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland through its designation as the Irish ENIC-NARIC centre<sup>1</sup> (European Network of Information Centres; national Academic Recognition Information Centre). This centre will be known as *Naric Ireland*.

QQI's approach to facilitating the academic recognition of foreign qualifications is to provide authoritative advice **online** in the format of non-personalised comparability statements.

QQI policy is developed through a consultative process involving all stakeholders. Details of the policy development process are available on [www.QQI.ie](http://www.QQI.ie). QQI policy is adopted by the Board and implemented by the executive accordingly.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

This policy is of interest to both individual holders of foreign qualifications and those presented with such qualifications. It exclusively refers to the provision of **advice** on the general academic recognition of foreign qualifications. Such advice places the foreign qualification in the context of the Irish education and training system using the national Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) as a reference. General recognition advice provided by QQI is offered as a guide regardless of the proposed use of the qualification.

QQI does *not make recognition decisions*. Formal recognition decisions are made by others including education institutions, professional recognition bodies and employers.

QQI defines a 'foreign qualification' as one obtained outside of the State where QQI has no role in the external quality assurance of the programme leading to the qualification.

This policy acknowledges that national recognition agreements, or other arrangements relating to international qualifications resulting from bilateral country-to-country engagements, may be in operation. QQI respects such agreements.

### 2.1 Policy Context

The NFQ is the central organising feature of the Irish education and training system<sup>2</sup>. Of relevance for this policy is that the NFQ is used to advise on placement (level and award-type where possible) of foreign qualifications in the context of the Irish system. Education institutions, professional bodies or employers may use this advice for providing recognition of foreign qualifications for the purposes of access for the holder of the qualification to continuing education and training or employment.

This policy facilitates individuals' mobility, and in this way supports relevant national and European policies such as those concerning education and labour market mobility.

QQI will work to ensure that national recognition practices will follow the guiding principles of the *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher*

<sup>1</sup> Information on the ENIC-NARIC Network is available at [www.enic-naric.net](http://www.enic-naric.net)

<sup>2</sup> For more information see the [QQI Strategy Statement](#)

*Education in the European Region* (the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC))<sup>3</sup>. As the only legal document of the Bologna Process, this convention underpins the use of both the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). In particular, the LRC subsidiary text on “*Recommendation on the Use of Qualifications Frameworks in the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications*” (June 2013)<sup>4</sup> is followed.

An integral element of this work is the promotion of the recognition and portability of Irish qualifications abroad to build trust and reciprocity in the recognition of qualifications across borders.

## 2.2 Legal Context

The LRC represents the principal international legal document aimed at helping achieve fair recognition of both completed higher education qualifications and qualifications providing access to higher education in the European Region. Ireland ratified this joint Convention of the Council of Europe (CoE) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2004.

Section 9 of the 2012 Act requires QQI to:

Promote, maintain, further develop and implement the NFQ

Co-operate with international bodies on qualifications and quality assurance policies and their implementation. In particular, this includes liaising with awarding bodies outside of Ireland in order to facilitate the international recognition of qualifications achieved in Ireland.

## 2.3 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline QQI’s approach to the provision of general academic recognition advice on foreign qualifications.

# 3 POLICY

QQI’s approach to facilitating the academic recognition of foreign qualifications is to provide authoritative advice online in the format of non-personalised comparability statements. This replaces the policy of providing personalised comparability statements to individual applicants.

QQI has no role in authenticating qualifications nor determining eligibility of an individual for access to work or continuing education. These statements are supported by further information relating to the qualification in question and general links to information of interest on the relevant education and training system.

QQI’s focus will be on researching foreign education and training and qualifications systems to improve the information provided. The aim is to deliver comprehensive coverage of countries with detailed information and comparability advice provided online in an easily accessible database of foreign qualifications for a variety of stakeholders.

QQI will engage with stakeholders presented with foreign qualifications for various purposes. This engagement is aimed at developing recognition policy and practice to

<sup>3</sup> Available at <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=165&CL=ENG>

<sup>4</sup> Available [here](#).

ultimately benefit those individuals seeking recognition of their foreign qualifications in Ireland. In providing advice, QQI will make reference to and raise awareness of the overarching qualifications frameworks in Europe.

Focus will be placed on collaborating with those involved in making recognition decisions. These include providers of further and higher education, professional recognition bodies, government departments and funding bodies, in addition to employers and their representative bodies. This engagement will concentrate on both identifying and helping to meet information needs in providing recognition of foreign qualifications, especially through efficient use of the ENIC-NARIC Network resource. Emphasis will also be placed on gathering information and feedback from those making formal recognition decisions to supplement advice provided by Naric Ireland.

## **4 CRITERIA FOR PROVIDING RECOGNITION ADVICE**

QQI will compare foreign qualifications to qualifications that are placed at a particular level on the NFQ. Recognition advice is offered based on information gained through independent research, compilation of research resources, interaction with ENIC-NARIC Network members and similar agencies in other countries.

The principles of the LRC which have been interpreted by the ENIC-NARIC Network through the European Area of Recognition or EAR Manual<sup>5</sup> guide the evaluation of foreign qualifications. Recognition tools and initiatives such as Qualifications Frameworks, credit and Europass<sup>6</sup> documents are used in the provision of recognition advice. In particular, the status of the awarding body in the country of origin is fundamental to facilitating the recognition of foreign qualifications. QQI provides advice on the academic recognition of a foreign qualification where the qualification is made by a **nationally recognised** awarding body constituting part of the formal education and training system in the country of origin.

### **4.1 Review of Comparability Advice**

Comparability advice may be reviewed when considered necessary. Where changes occur in qualifications systems (either foreign or Irish), comparability advice may be changed. A date will be provided for any changes made. QQI will welcome feedback on recognition advice offered.

## **5 PUBLICATION**

Advice on general academic recognition of foreign qualifications provided by QQI will be provided in the form of comparability statements on its website.

## **6 REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

This policy and QQI's principles and approach to facilitating the academic recognition of foreign qualification will be reviewed two years after the adoption of this policy, or earlier if necessary.

<sup>5</sup> The EAR Manual was endorsed by Education Ministers of the EHEA in the Bucharest Communiqué (2012) and is available on: <http://www.enic-naric.net/ear-manual-standards-and-guidelines-on-recognition.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> More information about Europass can be found at [www.europass.ie](http://www.europass.ie)





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