



Comparability Studies on Hong Kong Qualifications Framework and Overseas Qualifications Frameworks

The Education Bureau (EDB) of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has conducted a series of comparability studies of Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) and four regional/national qualifications frameworks overseas (overseas QF) since 2014. A summary of the results of the studies is provided for ease of reference.

Objectives and Principles

A common objective of the studies is to establish the comparability of levels of qualifications between HKQF and each overseas QF, which include European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) and Irish National Framework of Qualifications (Irish NFQ). The studies promote better understanding of the qualifications offered under HKQF, European countries, Scotland, New Zealand and Ireland, and facilitate the mobility of learners and labour as well as future discussions on mutual recognition of qualifications between Hong Kong and the corresponding places.

In all of the studies, certain guiding principles have been used to determine the comparability of the levels of QF. While there are variations necessitated by each study, the principles include the following elements in general: clear and transparent policies and roles of the authorities, robust quality assurance processes, and clear links of the levels between frameworks. The comparison tables in this leaflet depict the results in a simplified manner for quick reference. For details on the principles and results of the studies, please refer to the full reports or user guide which are available on HKQF website (www.hkqf.gov.hk).

Coverage, entry level and highest level of the QF in Hong Kong, Europe, Scotland, New Zealand and Ireland

Abbreviation	Levels	Coverage	Entry Level	Highest Level
HKQF	1-7	A local framework implemented in HKSAR covering academic, vocational & professional and continuing education sectors	Lower secondary school qualifications; Foundation Vocational & Professional Education and Training (VPET) qualifications	Doctoral Degree
EQF	1-8	A regional reference framework for European countries to facilitate comparison of qualifications among different European countries	Primary education qualifications	Third Cycle Degrees (Doctoral Degree)
SCQF	1-12	A national framework for Scotland covering schools, colleges, universities and vocational qualifications	Qualifications of basic learning, development and achievement	Doctoral Degree
NZQF	1-10	A national framework implemented in New Zealand covering academic and vocational qualifications	Senior secondary school qualifications	Doctoral Degree
Irish NFQ	1-10	A national framework implemented in Ireland covering school, Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education/training qualifications	Basic VET qualifications	Doctoral Degree

Level-to-level Comparison of HKQF with EQF and Irish NFQ, with Examples of Qualification Types



European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF)	Irish National Framework of Qualifications (Irish NFQ)
8 Third Cycle degrees (Doctoral Degree) / Higher professional qualifications	7 Doctoral Degree	10 Doctoral Degree
7 Second Cycle degrees (Master Degree) / Higher professional qualifications	6 Master Degree / Postgraduate Certificate	9 Masters Degree / Postgraduate Diploma
6 First Cycle degrees (Bachelor Degree) / Higher professional qualifications	5 Bachelor Degree	8 Honours Bachelor Degree
		7 Ordinary Bachelor Degree
5 Short Cycle Higher Education / Higher professional and VET qualifications	4 Associate Degree / Higher Diploma	6 Higher Certificate / Advanced Certificate
4 Upper Secondary General School Leaving Certificates / Upper Secondary VET Certificates	3 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education	5 Leaving Certificate / Level 5 Certificate
3 Secondary Education Certificates / VET qualifications	2 Certificate of Vocational Education	4 Leaving Certificate / Level 4 Certificate
2 Lower Secondary Education Certificates / Basis VET qualifications	1 Foundation Certificate	3 Junior Certificate / Level 3 Certificate
1 Primary Education Certificates / VET qualifications	No Match	2 Level 2 Certificate
		1 Level 1 Certificate

Level-to-level Comparison of HKQF with NZQF and SCQF, with Examples of Qualification Types



New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF)	Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF)	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
10 Doctoral Degree	7 Doctoral Degree	12 Doctoral Degree
9 Master's Degree	6 Master Degree / Postgraduate Certificate	11 Masters Degree / Post Graduate Certificate
8 Bachelor Honours Degree / Postgraduate Certificates	6 Master Degree / Postgraduate Certificate	
7 Bachelor's Degree	5 Bachelor Degree	10 Honours Degree
6 Diplomas / Certificates	4 Associate Degree/ Higher Diploma	9 Bachelors / Ordinary Degree
5 Diplomas / Certificates		5 Bachelor Degree
4 Certificates	3 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education	8 Diploma of Higher Education / Higher National Diploma
3 National Certificate of Educational Achievement Level 3		7 Certificate of Higher Education / Higher National Certificate
2 National Certificate of Educational Achievement Level 2	2 Certificate of Vocational Education	6 Higher / Awards
1 National Certificate of Educational Achievement Level 1	1 Foundation Certificate	5 National 5 / Awards
		4 National 4 / Awards
		3 National 3 / Awards
		2 National 2 / Awards
	No Match	1 National 1 / Awards

Note: the comparisons have been conducted separately for HKQF and each overseas QF one at a time

Who will find this leaflet useful?

Learners

If you plan to study abroad in Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland or other European countries, you can use this leaflet to make a quick comparison of the qualifications in these places and the levels of qualifications that you intend to obtain.

Employers and Businessmen

If you intend to recruit expatriate staff or consider candidates with qualifications obtained in the places covered in the studies, this leaflet may help you better understand the level of these overseas qualifications and what qualifications are comparable to your required levels.

Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) and Tertiary Institutions

If you are going to forge collaboration with institutions and organisations of the above places, this leaflet may facilitate your work in admission, mutual recognition of qualifications, student exchange, internship, credit transfer or exemption by comparing the levels and qualifications between Hong Kong and the relevant places.

For more information about HKQF, the full reports or user guide of the studies, please visit the HKQF website: www.hkqf.gov.hk