



**Generic titling and mapping of non-major awards accredited by the
National University of Ireland**

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The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) was established to develop and map the access, transfer and progression pathways for students engaged at all levels of education in Ireland. Within the NFQ, there are two main categories of awards (or qualifications): major and non-major. Each award level is determined by a range of knowledge, skill and competence articulated through learning outcomes. Award level descriptors assigned to NUI qualifications (major awards) of the NFQ are contained in Appendix 1(i). The university sector is principally concerned with programmes leading to major awards placed on the NFQ: Levels 8 and 10 but there exists a small number of major awards placed on the NFQ: Levels 6 and 7. These tend to be associated with access routes to higher education, exit routes from honours degree programmes or qualifications that have been discontinued (i.e. legacy awards).

In 2006, the universities and the NQAI agreed qualification titles and award-type descriptors for non-major awards (and associated credit ranges) in the university sector. It was agreed generally that the title *Certificate* would be used for awards attributed less than 60 credits and *Diploma* would be used for awards of 60 credits or more. Non-major awards were also subdivided into different award types: minor, special purpose and supplemental awards (see appendix 1(ii)).

Similar to the University's policy of non-proliferation of degree titles (for major awards), it is proposed that generic titling, similar to that adopted by the NUI constituent universities (see appendix 1(iii)), be applied to non-major awards approved by Senate.

The titling of non-major awards is proposed as follows:

NUI Award Title	Award-type	NFQ: Level	Credit weighting
NUI Certificate	Minor	6, 7, 8	< 60 credits (typically < 30)
NUI Diploma	Minor	6, 7, 8	60 – 120 credits
Postgraduate Certificate	Minor	9	30 – 40 credits
	Supplemental	9	
Professional Certificate	Special Purpose	6, 7, 8, 9	< 60 credits (typically < 30)
Professional Diploma	Special Purpose	6, 7, 8, 9	60 – 120 credits

Appendix 1

(i) Award level descriptors assigned to NUI qualifications (major awards) of the NFQ¹

Level 10: Doctoral degrees

‘Learning Outcomes at this level relate to the discovery and development of new knowledge and skills and delivering findings at the frontiers of knowledge and application. Further outcomes at this level relate to specialist skills and transferable skills required for managing such as the abilities to critique and develop organizational structures and initiate change.’ (NQAI, 2003, p. 21)

Level 9: Masters degrees / Postgraduate Diplomas

‘Learning outcomes at this level relate to the demonstration of knowledge and understanding which is the forefront of a field of learning. The outcomes relate to the application of knowledge, understanding and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar contexts related to field of study. The outcomes are associated with an ability to integrate knowledge, handle complexity and formulate judgments. Outcomes associated with this level would link with employment as a senior professional or manager with responsibility for the work outputs of teams.’ (NQAI, 2003, p. 20)

Level 8: Honours Bachelor degrees / Higher Diplomas

‘Innovation is a key feature of learning outcomes at this level. Learning outcomes at this level relate to being at the forefront of a field of learning in terms of knowledge and understanding. The outcomes include an awareness of the boundaries of the learning in the field and the preparation required to push back those boundaries through further learning. The outcomes relate to adaptability, flexibility, ability to cope with change and ability to exercise initiative and solve problems within their field of study. In a number of applied fields the outcomes are those linked with the independent, knowledge-based professional. In other fields the outcomes are linked with those of a generalist and would normally be appropriate to management positions.’ (NQAI, 2003, p. 20)

Level 7: Ordinary Bachelor degrees

‘Learning outcomes at this level relate to knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles in a field of study and the application of those principles in different contexts. This level includes knowledge of methods of enquiry and the ability to critically evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. The outcomes include an understanding of the limits of the knowledge acquired and how this influences analyses and interpretations in a work context. Outcomes at this level would be appropriate to the upper end of many technical occupations and would include higher technicians, some restricted professionals and junior management.’ (NQAI,

¹ NQAI (2003), *Outline National Framework of Qualifications – Determinations made by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland*, http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/public_resources/Nat_qual_authority.html, p. 20.

2003, p. 20)

Level 6: NUI Diplomas²

‘Learning outcomes 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.’ (NQAI, 2003, p. 20)

(ii) Award-type Descriptors contained in the NFQ which have been agreed between the universities and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)

- **Major Awards** are the principle class of awards made at each level, e.g. Honours Bachelor degree (NFQ Level 8) or Masters degree (NFQ Level 9). The learning outcomes associated with these major award-types include many of the sub-strands of knowledge, skills and competence appropriate to the level and should be coherently planned to meet the aims and objectives of the award. Awards of a major-award type will provide learners with the options of (i) progressing to higher-level awards, (ii) transferring to other awards at the same level or (iii) gaining direct transition to employment.

Note: Where a major award is offered at an exit point, e.g. Postgraduate Diploma when exiting a Masters degree, then a separate set of learning outcomes should be included for this programme.

- **Minor Awards** provide recognition for learners who achieve a range of learning outcomes but not the specific combination of volume of learning outcomes required for a major award. The associated learning outcomes of these awards form a component part of the learning outcomes of a major award.
- **Special Purpose Awards** are stand-alone awards and recognise a specific or relatively narrow range of learning outcomes.
- **Supplemental Awards** recognise learning that is additional to a major award and could, for example, relate to the updating of knowledge or skills, or to continuing professional development.

(iii) Designated Titling of NUI Qualifications

The NUI Senate’s policy of non-proliferation of degree title should continue to be adopted for new programmes with the usage of titles such as the BA, MA, BSc and MSc continuing to be regarded as generic titles.

It is proposed to extend this policy of non-proliferation of qualification titles to include new programmes leading to non-major awards.

² At present the Higher Certificate is the only major award title associated with Level 6 and the NUI is engaged in consultation with the NQAI regarding the award-type and award titling of the NUI Diploma