



Qualifications Explained

There are many different types of qualifications available and which are offered through schools, colleges, universities, employers and distance learning providers. Trying to put a value on your learning can be a difficult but important task, especially if you need it to achieve a particular goal. It is vital you check that any qualification you are about to take is accredited and given a value by somebody other than the provider of the course- unless you're doing something purely as a hobby or a way of relaxing.

If you are looking into distance learning, there are many valuable courses online with high quality providers. However, there are a significant number of online courses that are not accredited. Take the time to find out more before parting with any cash. If you are in any doubt at all, please contact us at Careers Guernsey for advice careersguernsey@gov.gg or check our information on [Distance Learning](#) at www.careers.gg

Here are a few things that should help you with your qualification research.

Regulated qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are in either the:

- **Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)** or the
- **Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)**

Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are grouped into levels within these frameworks, from Entry Level to Level 8. Each will be of a certain size. Higher Education courses begin at Level 4.

Qualification Level: Levels indicate the difficulty and complexity of the knowledge and skills associated with any qualification. There are eight levels supported by three 'entry' levels. Most qualifications will be at a single level, but some, such as GCSEs, can span more than one. (Grades 9-4/A*-C=Level 2. Grades 3-1/D-G=Level 1)

Qualification Size: Size refers to the estimated total amount of time it could typically take to study and be assessed for a qualification. This can be anything from a matter of hours to several years of study and different students can take different amounts of time to study for the same qualification. Size is given in terms of '**Total Qualification Time**'. The part of that time typically spent being taught or supervised, rather than studying alone, is known as '**Guided Learning Hours**'.

The level and size of qualifications are used in education and work to compare different qualifications. The framework also shows how one qualification can lead on to other higher levels of qualifications. You can check if a qualification is regulated and what level it is at <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/>



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Examples of some qualifications are listed in the frameworks below. For full details, check <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/> to see if a qualification is registered and what size and level it is.

Level	Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) Examples	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Examples
8	Vocational Qualifications Level 8	Doctorate (PhD)
7	Advanced Professional awards, certificates and diplomas at Level 7	Master's Degree Post Graduate Certificates and Diplomas
6	Advanced Professional awards, certificates and diplomas at Level 6	First Degree (Bachelor's) Graduate Diplomas Open University Level 3 courses
5	Professional awards, certificates and diplomas at Level 5	HND Foundation Degree Diploma of Higher Education Open University Level 2 courses
4	Professional awards, certificates and diplomas at Level 4 City and Guilds/NVQs at Level 4	HNC Certificate of Higher Education Open University Level 1 courses
3	A Levels *Vocational awards, certificates, and diplomas at Level 3 International Baccalaureate Diploma/Certificates Work specific City and Guilds/NVQs and apprenticeships Access to Higher Education Diploma Art Foundation Diploma Year Zero/Foundation Year Courses	*Vocational awards, certificates and diplomas at Entry to Level 3 may include those awarded and accredited by BTEC, CACHE, UAL, WJEC, VTCT, NCFE, AQA, ASDAN plus others.
2	GCSEs grades 9-4/A*-C *Vocational awards, certificates and diplomas at Level 2 Work specific City and Guilds/NVQs and apprenticeships Skills for Life Functional Skills at Level 2	
1	GCSEs grades 3-1/D-G *Vocational awards, certificates and diplomas at Level 1 Work specific City and Guilds/NVQs and apprenticeships Skills for Life Functional Skills at Level 1	
Entry Levels 1-3	*Entry Level awards, certificates and diplomas Functional Skills at Entry Levels Foundation Learning at Entry Levels	