

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETION OF THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT

What is the Diploma Supplement?

The Diploma Supplement (DS) is a joint initiative of UNESCO-CEPES, the Council of Europe and the European Commission. In 1996, a working group was established in order to “to examine...the introduction...of a European administrative annex to the diploma, the aim being to facilitate transparency and recognition in States other than in which they were dispensed” .Since then, the Diploma Supplement has been identified as one of the key instruments of transparency and recognition, and is referenced in conventions and policy documents, including the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Bologna Process. It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued, and successfully completed by the student named on the parchment associated with the Diploma Supplement. It should be free from any value-judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. **The Diploma Supplement is not a Curriculum Vitae, or a substitute for the original qualification. Furthermore, it does not guarantee recognition of the qualification.**

Following adoption of the Diploma Supplement by the Council of Europe in 1999, it has been adopted as part of national legislation in many countries. Since 1999, there have been significant developments within higher education, notably, the development of joint degrees and transnational or cross-border higher education provision. Other significant progress includes the development of external quality assurance and/or accreditation and the introduction, within the European Higher Education Area, of national and overarching qualifications frameworks. The Diploma Supplement has been incorporated into the Europass portfolio of documents established by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers in 2004.

In September 2003, Ministers with responsibility for higher education met in Berlin to review the progress made by States party to the Bologna Process. The resultant statement (more commonly referred to as the Berlin Communiqué) set the objective that “every student graduating as from 2005 should be receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. It should be issued in a widely spoken European language.” The Ministers further called for “Institutions and employers to make full use of the Diploma Supplement, so as to take advantage of the improved transparency and flexibility of the higher education degree systems, for fostering employability and facilitating academic recognition for further studies.”

The National Steering Group on the Bologna Process

In 2002, the Department of Education and Science established a National Steering Group on the Bologna Process designed, in the first instance, to prepare an agreed position in the run-up to the Berlin Conference. In December 2003, the steering group developed a National Template for the Diploma Supplement by adapting the model recommended by the Council of Europe and UNESCO to the Irish Higher Education and Training System. The group agreed that certain elements of the Diploma Supplement required a national perspective. However, it was agreed that the National Template, within certain parameters, would be subject to adaptation within each Higher Education Institution.

In late 2007, the National Steering Group was re-established by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland to support implementation of the Diploma Supplement and to manage changes to the National Guidelines and/or National Template used for completing the Diploma Supplement. The Steering Group is comprised of representatives of the following bodies:

Collaborative Higher Education Information Management (An Cheim)

Department of Education and Science (DES)

Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC)

Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)

Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA)

Institutes of Technology Ireland (IoTI)

Irish Universities Association (IUA)

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQA)

What changes have impacted on the 2003 National Guidelines and National Template?

The group met on a number of occasions during 2008 and 2009. The group considered that a review of the existing National Guidelines and National Template was necessary as a result of changes in Irish and European higher education and training since 2003. The impact of legislative changes and the deepening implementation of both the National Framework of Qualifications and the Bologna process require changes to be made to the National Guidelines available to support Higher Education and Training Institutions responsible for issuing the Diploma Supplement. However, it is important to note that the group considered that any changes to the format and presentation of the National Template document should be minimal.

Principles Governing the Development of the Diploma Supplement template

The Steering Group considered it very important to establish some principles for their work at the outset. The Diploma Supplement is viewed as but one tool as the holder interacts with other stakeholders. For the employer, it is an additional document which forms part of the Curriculum Vitae and is part of an interview process. Alternatively, for the Registrar, it assists in the determination of the nature of the qualifications held by the prospective post-graduate. The Diploma Supplement does not guarantee, for example, recognition of the qualification held, or offer any judgement on the course of education.

In the first instance, it is designed to elaborate for employers, details (learning outcomes modules, grades etc) of the qualification secured by the student. It is important to emphasise that the Diploma Supplement is not intended to replace any validation or verification procedures which the employers may pursue. The level of security with the form is minimal, with the student's name and identifiers being printed on each page of the document. However, there is no difficulty should institutions wish to develop additional security features. Secondly, it will provide Registrars in Higher Education and Training Institutions with academic details in order to assess the appropriateness of the qualification for further study e.g. undergraduate to post-graduate studies. The overriding principle in the work of the group was to ensure that the document should be simple, easy to complete and bring added value to the stakeholders.

When should the Diploma Supplement be issued?

It is recommended that the Diploma Supplement should be issued to graduates within four weeks of the presentation of the parchment.

Who should be issued with the Diploma Supplement?

All graduates who have completed a programme of learning based on a minimum of 60 ECTS credits should be issued with a Diploma Supplement automatically.

Where can I access further details on the Diploma Supplement?

Ireland:

http://www.europass.ie/europass/euro_dip.html

Europe :

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/rec_qual/recognition/diploma_en.html

EXPLANATORY NOTES FOR COMPLETING DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENTS

1. Information identifying the holder of the qualification

- 1.1. Surname(s) as per parchment
- 1.2. First / given name(s) as per parchment
- 1.3. Indicate day, month and year of birth
- 1.4. Provide the institutional identifier. Where the programme of study leads to a joint / transnational award, identifiers for all institutions involved should be included.

2. Information identifying the qualification

- 2.1. Title of qualification (as per parchment) e.g. *Bachelor of Arts (Hons)*. Give the full name of the qualification in the original language(s). In the case of the NUI, this will be in Latin. An English translation should be supplied in brackets. If the qualification is a joint / transnational award this should be stated. Indicate if the award confers any nationally accepted title on the holder e.g. *Doctor, Chartered Engineer etc.* Indicate if the title is protected in law.
- 2.2. Show the main field(s) of study (disciplines). If appropriate, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997) fields of education can be used -
http://www.uis.unesco.org/TEMPLATE/pdf/isced/ISCED_A.pdf
- 2.3. Awards are made by HETAC, Institutes of Technology with delegated authority from HETAC, the DIT and the Universities. In each case, a reference should be made to the legal basis and status of the awarding body. The status of the institution in terms of quality assurance / accreditation should also be indicated:

Example 1: *'The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), a State body established by the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, is the awarding body and quality assurance agency for the Institutes of*

Technology other than the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and other higher education colleges and independent institutions outside the university sector

Example 2: *'University College Dublin – UCD is recognised under state legislation (Universities Act, 1997) to award its own qualifications and has primary responsibility for quality assurance systems in place.'*

Where the programme of study leads to a joint / transnational award, indicate the names of all awarding bodies involved.

- 2.4. This refers to the institution which is responsible for the delivery of the programme. In some cases, this will be different from the awarding body, and if so, this should be indicated here. Institutions should be identified by their more commonly known title, with a reference to the legal basis and status of the institution. If this information is the same as 2.3 above then write *'See section 2.3'*. Where the programme of study leads to a joint / transnational award, indicate the names of all institutions involved in administering studies.
- 2.5. In most cases, this should default to English. However, if a substantial part of a programme is delivered and examined through the medium of another language such as Irish or French, then this should be recorded in this section.

3. Information on the Level of the Qualification

- 3.1. State the award-type and level of the qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications here. Specific reference to the alignment of the qualification to international frameworks should also be clearly indicated and cross-referenced to section 8. The alignment of the National Framework of Qualifications with the cycles of the Bologna process and the European Qualifications can be demonstrated through use of the diagram in section 8 which details the higher education system in Ireland. For example, *'Honours*

Bachelor Degree at NFQ Level 8. See section 8 for referencing to Bologna Cycle and EQF Level' (See Appendix 1)

Where the programme of study leads to a joint / transnational award, reference should be made to its place in the relevant national educational structure of awards, e.g. '*Honours Bachelor Degree - NFQ Level 8 and FHEQ Level 6*'

- 3.2 Indicate the number of ECTS credits associated with the qualification and the indicative duration of the qualification concerned as follows, for example:

For example, 'The qualification consists of at least 240 ECTS credits, 4 years full time study'. However, in order to allow for part-time mode over a number of years, a phrase such as '*part-time mode over a number of years (240 ECTS credits)*' could be used.

- 3.3 The *main options for access requirements include the following:*

Leaving Certificate (NFQ Level 4/5) and/or Matriculation (or comparable)

Further education award – NFQ Level 5/6 (or comparable)

Honours Bachelor Degree – NFQ Level 8 (or comparable)

A cross-reference to information on alignment of the NFQ to both the 'Bologna' Framework and EQF should be made. A phrase such as 'See section 8 for international comparability of access requirements' could be used.

Information on other access routes including Recognition of Prior Learning should be available via a hyperlink .

4. Information on the Contents and results gained.

- 4.1. The mode of study refers to how the programme was undertaken. The options presented here should refer to 'Full-time', 'Part-time' 'Intermittent/sandwich' 'Work based' and 'Distance learning mode', including

placements etc. 'Distance' is understood to embrace e-learning, correspondence etc. Where the programme of study leads to a joint / transnational award, any required periods of study in collaborating institutions should be recorded here.

4.2. Information on the regulations covering the minimum standards required to secure the qualification. The following phrase '*Learner must fulfill all programme learning outcomes in accordance with the assessment regulations of the institution*' could be used. Details of the learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skill and competencies that are associated with the programme can be given here. The reader should also be referred to the institution's website for further information on assessment and minimum standards.

4.3. This table identifies all modules of the programme of study pursued by the individual student. The format should include for each stage of the programme, the module title (indicating whether core or optional in brackets), marks / grade awarded, credit awarded and the ECTS grade. Further information on calculating ECTS grades can be found in the *ECTS Users' Guide and the Diploma Supplement –*
http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/doc/guide_en.pdf.

The use of ECTS grades in the Diploma Supplement is optional

Where the programme of study leads a joint / transnational award, the Diploma Supplement should clearly indicate the institutions and / or study programmes at which the different parts of the degree have been earned.

The Diploma Supplement should include cross-references where multiple diplomas are issued to a learner in respect of a dual award.

4.4. As per the Institution standard, this should detail the grading scheme; with an appropriate notation on the applicability e.g. the overall classification is based on a weighted average of the final two stages. If available, information on grade distribution for the programme can be included.

4.5. This should identify the final classification of the award, if applicable.

5. Information on the Function of the Qualification

5.1 This should identify further academic and/or professional study paths (progression routes) available to the learner as a result of securing this qualification and National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) level.

A cross-reference to information on alignment of the NFQ to the 'Bologna' Framework should be made. A phrase such as 'See section 8 for international comparability of progression opportunities' could be used.

5.2 Give details of any rights to practise, or professional status accorded to the holders of the qualification, in accordance with national legislation. Indicate if the qualification gives access to a 'regulated profession' and the competent authority which allows this. For example, in the case of an Honours Bachelor Degree in Engineering – *'This programme has been accredited by Engineers Ireland as satisfying the educational standard for Ordinary membership of Engineers Ireland and for the title of Chartered Engineer'*

Example 2: *'In Ireland, "architect" is a title regulated by national legislation. The Building Control Act 2007 sets out the requirements for eligibility to register as an architect. This qualification is listed in the relevant annex of Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications, level e and complies with the requirements of Article 46 of that Directive. The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland is the Competent Authority for architects in this State www.riai.ie'*

The Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications should be referred to.

- If the qualification falls under the general system for the recognition of professional qualifications, the level of the degree in terms of article 11 of the Directive should be indicated.

- If the qualification is listed in the Directive 2005/36/EC as giving eligibility for automatic recognition (doctors, nurses responsible for general care, dental practitioners, specialised dental practitioners, veterinary surgeons, midwives, pharmacists and architects), this should be stated.

A link to information on regulated professions and contact details of competent authorities should be provided. The following link to the Department of Education and Science website could be used –

<http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?pcategory=17216&ecategory=28966&language=EN>

6. Additional Information

6.1 There may be instances where it may be appropriate to record the fact that the holder completed, for example, a semester in another institution as part of the course requirements or received Recognition of Prior Learning for access, transfer or a full award and this information can be recorded here.

Where the programme of study leads to a joint / transnational award, additional relevant information on the arrangement / delivery or assessment should be noted here.

6.2 In addition to the Institution's website, other useful websites should be identified here, including Higher Education Authority – www.heai.ie, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland – www.nqai.ie, Department of Education and Science – www.education.ie, Higher Education and Training Awards Council –

www.hetac.ie, Qualifications Recognition – www.qualrec.ie, Irish Universities Quality Board – www.iuqb.ie, Dublin Institute of Technology – www.dit.ie, National Europass Centre – www.europass.ie

7. Certification of the Supplement

- 7.1 The date the Diploma Supplement was issued – not necessarily the same date as per awarding of the qualification.
- 7.2 The name and signature of an appropriate post-holder in the awarding body.
- 7.3 The official post of the certifying individual.
- 7.4 The official stamp / seal / electronic stamp of the awarding body or bodies who provide authentication of the Diploma Supplement.

8. Information on the National Higher Education System

The nationally agreed higher education description in Ireland is available from the Europass website, www.europass.ie in the Diploma Supplement section and is appended to this document (Please see Appendix 1). Where the programme of study leads to a joint / transnational award, information on the higher education description of all countries involved should be available in section 8.

Please note:

- The Europass logo may be used on the Diploma Supplement document.

Appendix 1:

DESCRIPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM IN IRELAND

As at February 2009

The Irish higher education and training system comprises of a range of higher education institutions – Universities, Institutes of Technology, other nationally recognised institutions and independent higher education colleges. The Department of Education and Science maintains a [list of Higher Education institutions](#) in Ireland, which provide higher education and training programmes leading to awards included in the National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ). These institutions offer a wide range of different types and levels of awards. Entry to higher education and training is on a controlled basis with the most common entry point being completion of the Leaving Certificate, a State examination taken at the end of second level education. In recent years, there has been an increase in the availability of alternative access routes into higher education and training.

Government Agencies

The Higher Education Authority (www.heai.ie) is responsible for furthering the development and assisting in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education and training, including research. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) (www.nqai.ie) is responsible for establishing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) (www.hetac.ie) is the awarding body and quality assurance agency for the Institutes of Technology, (*other than the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)*) and other higher education and training providers outside the university sector.

Higher Education Institutions

There are seven Universities recognised under State legislation. The Universities make their own awards and validate programmes in institutions recognised by them. They provide programmes of study leading to awards included at NFQ Levels 7-10 and engage in basic and applied research. The Universities have primary responsibility for their own quality assurance systems. They established the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB) (www.iuqb.ie) which has delegated authority as an independent body, to organise the periodic review of the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures in place in the Universities as required by State legislation. The HEA also has a review role in relation to quality assurance procedures in Universities.

There are thirteen Institutes of Technology (IoT) which are designated under State legislation. They provide programmes leading to awards at NFQ Levels 6 - 10. The Institutes of Technology make their own awards at specified levels under delegated authority from HETAC.

The Dublin Institute of Technology ([DIT](#)) has the authority to make its own awards at NFQ Levels 6 - 10. While DIT has primary responsibility for the implementation of quality assurance procedures, the NQAI has a statutory quality review role in relation to these procedures.

Other providers of higher education and training may apply to HETAC for approval of their quality assurance procedures and subsequent validation of their programmes. While such providers have primary responsibility for quality assurance, HETAC has a statutory role in quality assurance monitoring and review. Furthermore, any person may apply to HETAC for an award based on their lifelong learning achievement without reference to a programme of higher education and training.

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) has been incorporated into the awards systems of HETAC, the Institutes of Technology, DIT and the Universities and most programmes are ECTS compatible. ECTS is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes. It aims to facilitate planning, delivery, evaluation, recognition and validation of qualifications and units of learning as well as student mobility.

National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

In terms of higher education and training, the NFQ sets the overall standards for all higher education and training awards. It is the single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured. It also defines the relationship between all education and training awards. It is a 10-level framework based on learning outcomes that are determined by standards of knowledge, skill and competence. Higher education and training awards are at NFQ Levels 6 to 10 and may be made by HETAC, DIT, the Universities and Institutes of Technology with delegated authority. The framework consists of 16 major award types with minor and special purpose awards available at each level and supplemental awards available at NFQ Levels 4 to 10. All awards included in the Framework are underpinned by legislative quality assurance arrangements. The major awards of the NFQ are set out below together with the alignment to the 'Bologna' Framework and the draft alignment to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF):

EQF Level**	EHEA Framework (Bologna)*	National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level	NFQ Major Award-Types
EQF Level 1		NFQ Level 1	Level 1 Certificate
		NFQ Level 2	Level 2 Certificate
NFQ Level 3		Level 3 Certificate; Junior Certificate	
NFQ Level 4		Level 4 Certificate; Leaving Certificate	
NFQ Level 5		Level 5 Certificate; Leaving Certificate	
EQF Level 2			
EQF Level 3			
EQF Level 4			
EQF Level 5	Short Cycle within First Cycle	NFQ Level 6	Advanced Certificate (VET award); Higher Certificate (HET award)
EQF Level 6	First Cycle	NFQ Level 7	Ordinary Bachelor Degree
		NFQ Level 8	Honours Bachelor Degree; Higher Diploma
EQF Level 7	Second Cycle	NFQ Level 9	Masters Degree; Post-Graduate Diploma
EQF Level 8	Third Cycle	NFQ Level 10	Doctoral Degree; Higher Doctorate

‘Bologna’ Framework of Qualifications/European Qualifications Framework

*The Bologna Process, which commenced in 1999, is designed to lead to the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. A central initiative in the process is the adoption of a system

based on three cycles – undergraduate, graduate and doctorate. The NFQ was formally aligned with the 'Bologna' Framework in 2006.

**Running parallel to the Bologna Process is the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning. Ireland completed the process of referencing the National Framework of Qualifications to the EQF in May 2009 (see referencing outcome above). Alignment facilitates the recognition of learning and supports access, transfer and progression for learners.

Please note: Information on the Irish National Higher Education and Training System is provided by the Irish National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC), located at the offices of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, and can be contacted via e-mail, info@qualrec.ie.