



Dearbhú Cáilíochta  
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann  
Quality and  
Qualifications Ireland

# QQI AWARDS STANDARDS.

Entrepreneurship  
Core Competence

December 2023





# Foreword

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 requires QQI to ‘determine the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired, and where appropriate, demonstrated, by a learner before an award may be made by the Authority’. QQI award standards are based on the level indicators and award type descriptors of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and are governed by QQI Policy for the Determination of Award Standards.

Based on systematic engagement with subject matter expertise and public consultation, award standards for certain broad fields of learning were developed for QQI awards at level 1-4 on the NFQ. These standards represent an elaboration of the generic descriptors of the NFQ. They should facilitate experts in particular fields of learning to create the link between their programmes’ intended learning outcomes and the NFQ. Each award standard is cumulative, the statements of knowledge, skill and competence at NFQ levels 2, 3 and 4, build on the attainment of standards at lower levels, which are not necessarily reproduced at the higher level(s). The implementation and use of these standards is subject to QQI Policy and Criteria for the Validation of Programmes and QQI Policy for the Making of Awards. Whenever an award standard changes, programmes must be updated and validated against the new standards.

These standards are not programme specifications. It is through these, however, that the relationship between a programme, its component parts and the NFQ should be evident. The standards are a reference point and a point of comparison against which individual programmes may be justified.

They are intended to provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with a particular field of learning. In designing programmes, providers must take cognisance of the standards for specific fields of learning where they generally relate to the programme being developed. It is, however, recognised that there is a significant growth in multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary programmes; there are emerging fields of learning; and in addition, within each field there is the vast spectrum of programmes possible based on a wide range of purpose. In this context, it is not possible to have a standard, or multiple standards, that cater for the complete range of programmes possible. It is therefore expected that the standards for specific fields of learning will be used as reference points for the design of programmes. In designing programmes, providers can draw from more than one standard.

In drafting the standards every effort has been made to ensure that they will provide for flexibility and variety in the design of programmes and therefore encourage innovation within an overall agreed framework. It is not expected that all programmes will include every learning outcome identified in a standard. It is, however, expected that many programmes will include learning outcomes that are not included in the relevant standard.

When designing a programme, each learning outcome in the standard should be considered. Where departure from these is necessary, it should be justified in the context of the specific orientation of the programme and other facts pertaining to it. Each programme provider should be able to demonstrate how the design and content of its own programmes has been informed by the standard.

The level descriptors of the Framework, the award type descriptors and consequently the standards for the specific fields of learning are divided into three different types of learning outcomes - knowledge, skill and competence. These strands are further subdivided into eight sub-strands. Each strand/sub-strand is important. The relative weighting of each strand in a programme will vary from programme to programme. The weighting will be determined by many factors, including for example, the practical nature of a programme, or otherwise.

Each strand/sub-strand should be addressed appropriately in every programme. Where a programme is multidisciplinary or inter-disciplinary in nature, the use of more than one standard may be necessary. In such cases, the scope, depth and balance of knowledge, skill and competence should be attended to.

The titles of awards made by QQI on foot of these award standards shall be consistent with QQI Policy on the Making of Awards with an exception in the case of major awards where the named award stem shall have the following form: 'Level X Certificate in Lifelong Learning in' [specialisation].

These standards are determined by QQI under section 49(1) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012.



## AWARD STANDARDS – ENTREPRENEURSHIP (CORE COMPETENCE) AT NFQ LEVELS 1 TO 4

<b>Purpose</b>	<p>The purpose of this broad award standard is to enable design of a variety of programmes enabling the learner to develop the relevant entrepreneurship knowledge, skill and competence.</p> <p>‘Entrepreneurship competence refers to the capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas, and to transform them into values for others. It is founded upon creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, taking initiative and perseverance and the ability to work collaboratively in order to plan and manage projects that are of cultural, social or financial value.’*</p> <p>Please note that the above standard is aligned to the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. This particular competence relates specifically to the “Core Competence in Entrepreneurship” European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, <i>Key competences for lifelong learning</i>, Publications Office, 2019. <a href="https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/291008">https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/291008</a></p>
<b>Context</b>	<p><b>Knowledge</b></p> <p>Entrepreneurship competence requires knowing that there are different contexts and opportunities for turning ideas into action in personal, social and professional activities, and an understanding of how these arise. Individuals should know and understand approaches to planning and management of projects, which include both processes and resources. They should have an understanding of economics and the social and economic opportunities and challenges facing an employer, organisation or society. They should also be aware of ethical principles and challenges of sustainable development and have self-awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p><b>Skill</b></p> <p>Entrepreneurial skills are founded on creativity which includes imagination, strategic thinking and problem-solving, and critical and constructive reflection within evolving creative processes and innovation. They include the ability to work both as an individual and collaboratively in teams, to mobilize resources (people and things) and to sustain activity. This includes the ability to make financial decisions relating to cost and value. The ability to effectively communicate and negotiate with others, and to cope with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk as part of making informed decisions is essential.</p> <p><b>Competence</b></p> <p>An entrepreneurial attitude is characterised by a sense of initiative and agency, pro-activity, being forward-looking, courage and perseverance in achieving objectives. It includes a desire to motivate others and value their ideas, empathy and taking care of people and the world, and accepting responsibility taking ethical approaches throughout the process.’*</p> <p>*EU Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, Official Journal of the European Union, 2018 <a href="https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/rec/2018/9001/oj">C_2018189EN.01000101.xml (europa.eu)</a></p>

**Note: The indicators at each level build on the skills from the previous one.**

The outcomes at each NFQ level include those of all the lower levels in the same sub-strand unless stated otherwise.



## KNOWLEDGE

NFQ	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Knowledge breadth	Elementary knowledge	Knowledge that is narrow in range	Knowledge moderately broad in range	Broad range of knowledge
Knowledge kind	Demonstrable by recognition or recall	Concrete in reference and basic in comprehension	Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements	Mainly concrete in reference and with some elements of abstraction or theory
Core competence	The learner should be able to show the following:	The learner should be able to show the following:	The learner should be able to show the following:	The learner should be able to show the following:
<b>Methods for generating ideas</b>	Awareness of opportunities to turn ideas into action.	Basic general knowledge of opportunities to turn ideas into action.	Knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to turn ideas into action</li> <li>• ways to help create ideas.</li> </ul>	Knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• different situations and opportunities to turn ideas into action</li> <li>• ways to help create ideas in personal and professional activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding entrepreneurial competences</b>		Basic understanding of economic opportunities.	Basic understanding of social and economic opportunities and awareness of how these happen.	General understanding of social and economic opportunities and awareness of how these happen.
<b>Understanding the impact of innovation</b>	Basic awareness that different groups may have different needs.	Awareness that innovations have changed society.	General knowledge of how innovations change and affect society and the environment, including sustainability principles.	General knowledge and understanding of how innovations affect society and the environment, including sustainability principles.



<b>Understanding value of ideas for others</b>	Basic awareness of how an idea or opportunity can create value for others.	Awareness of how an idea or opportunity can create value for others.	General knowledge of how an idea or opportunity can create value for others in a limited range of situations.	General knowledge and understanding of how an idea or opportunity can create value for others in different situations.
<b>Protection of an idea(s)</b>		Basic awareness that ideas and innovations can be protected by certain rights.	General awareness of how ideas and innovations can be protected by certain rights (for example, copyrights, patents, licences).	General knowledge of how ideas and innovations can be protected by certain rights.
<b>Ideas into action</b>		Awareness of the material, non-material and digital resources needed, to turn ideas into action.	Knowledge of the material, non-material and digital resources needed, to turn ideas into action.	General knowledge and understanding of how to manage the material, non-material and digital resources needed to turn ideas and opportunities into action.



## KNOWLEDGE

NFQ	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Know-how and skill range	Demonstrate basic practical skills and carry out directed activity using basic tools	Demonstrate limited range of basic practical skills, including the use of relevant tools	Demonstrate a limited range or practical and cognitive skills and tools	Demonstrate a moderate range of practical and cognitive skills and tools
Know-how and skill selectivity	Perform processes that are repetitive and predictable	Perform a sequence of routine tasks given clear direction	Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems	Select from a range of procedures and apply known solutions to a variety of predictable problems
<b>Finding ideas and opportunities</b>	<p>Able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>show curiosity, creativity and proactivity, for example be able to find simple opportunities to help others, make things happen.</li> </ul>	<p>Able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explore new ways to make use of existing resources.</li> </ul>	<p>Able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>show creativity and initiative, including being able to identify and investigate needs in the community and surroundings that have yet to be met.</li> </ul>	<p>Able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>show creativity and initiative, including being able to identify personal, social and professional opportunities to create value in familiar and unfamiliar situations.</li> <li>experiment with different techniques to create different solutions to problems, using available resources in an effective way.</li> </ul>
<b>Problem-solving</b>	With support, solve problems in routine situations.	<p>Able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use problem-solving skills effectively in familiar situations.</li> </ul>	<p>Able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>think critically and use problem-solving skills effectively in familiar situations.</li> </ul>	<p>Able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>think critically and use problem-solving skills to respond effectively to a wide variety of situations</li> <li>solve problems in creative and innovative ways.</li> </ul>



<b>Sustainable development</b>			Able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use resources responsibly and efficiently in a limited range of predictable situations.</li> </ul>	Able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use resources responsibly and efficiently in everyday, predictable situations.</li> <li>use ethical and sustainable thinking to production and consumption processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Promoting an idea</b>		Promote simple ideas and solutions.	Promote the value of an idea.	Promote the value and implications of an idea.
<b>Risk management</b>		Able to consider simple, predictable risks associated with an idea that creates value.	Able to consider the risks associated with an idea that creates value.	Able to consider the risks associated with an idea that creates value, taking into account a variety of factors.
<b>Goal-setting</b>	Under direction, able to set short-term goals.	Under direction, able to set short- and medium-term goals.	With support, able to set goals and work to achieve them.	Able to set goals and work towards achieving them.
<b>Entrepreneurial attitude and transferable skills</b>	Learners should be able to show: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an adaptable, determined, and resilient attitude</li> <li>an openness to asking for help when having problems with tasks.</li> </ul>	Learners should be able to show: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an adaptable, flexible, determined, resilient attitude</li> <li>an awareness that making mistakes while trying new things is part of the process.</li> </ul>	Learners should be able to show: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>persistence when working to reach goals.</li> </ul> They should be able to show the following skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>innovation</li> <li>creativity</li> <li>innovative thinking,</li> <li>teamwork</li> <li>communication skills.</li> </ul>	Learners should be able to show: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a determination to deal with changes in a positive way.</li> </ul> They should be able to show the following skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>critical and innovative thinking,</li> <li>agility</li> <li>communication and presentation skills.</li> </ul>





### KNOWLEDGE

NFQ	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Competence context	Act in closely defined and highly structured contexts	Act in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts	Act within a limited range of contexts	Act in familiar and unfamiliar contexts
			Act in line with principles for sustainability.	Act in line with values and principles for sustainability.

### KNOWLEDGE

NFQ	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Competence role	Act in a limited range of roles	Act in a range of roles under direction	Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogenous groups	Act with considerable amount of responsibility and autonomy
Career-planning competence	The learner should be able to show awareness of basic skills and competences needed for different jobs.	The learner should be able to show awareness of relevant skills and competences needed for different jobs.	The learner should be able to describe personal skills and competences relating to career options.	The learner should be able to show awareness of relevant skills and competences needed for different jobs, including self-employment.



## KNOWLEDGE

NFQ	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Competence learning to learn	Learn to sequence learning tasks; learn to access and use a range of learning resources	Learn to learn in a disciplined manner in a well-structured and supervised environment	Learn to learn within a managed environment	Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a supervised environment
	Show a positive attitude and curiosity about the world.	Explore personal entrepreneurial interests in structured situations.	Act with a positive attitude to the world and imagine new possibilities.	Act with an open and positive attitude to the world and explore new possibilities.

## KNOWLEDGE

NFQ	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
Competence insight	Begin to demonstrate awareness of independent role for self	Demonstrate awareness of independent role for self	Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour	Assume partial responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour
	With support, act in a safe manner in closely defined and highly structured situations.	With some support, act in a safe manner in predictable and structured situations.	Act in a safe and ethical manner in familiar situations. Take care of people and the world while setting goals.	Act in a safe and ethical manner in familiar and unfamiliar situations. Make conscious sustainable choices.



**Dearbhú Cáilíochta  
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann**  
Quality and  
Qualifications Ireland