



Technical & professional qualifications quarterly bulletin 2020 Q4 Northern Ireland

Background information

Reporting Date: October to December 2020 (Quarter 4)

Publication Date: 12th March 2021

Information about the statistics

Purpose

This release presents information on the number of certificates issued for qualifications regulated by CCEA Regulation, other than GCSE, AS and A level. It covers certificates issued during October to December 2020 (Quarter 4).

Data tables accompanying this release show the number of awards broken down by type of qualification, level of qualification, and sector subject area. The data tables include details of the top 20 qualifications and top 50 awarding organisations in relation to the number of certificates issued. Comparisons in this release are mainly made with data from the same quarter of the previous year and the 12-month period up to the end of the same quarter of the previous year. This is because of seasonal changes in the number of certificates issued over the year.

Covid-19

In March 2020, the Minister for the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) announced that examinations in schools and colleges due to take place in summer 2020 would be cancelled in order to help fight the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The ministerial direction stated that learners taking vocational and technical qualifications, used for progression, should receive results where possible in summer 2020, through receiving calculated grades, in order to allow them to progress to further education, training or employment.

The approach for qualifications that require the assessment of occupational competency and/or a licence to practice, was adaptation of the assessment or delivery model as the starting point. Where adaptation was not safe to meet employers' requirements the approach was to delay assessments.

In referring to the data, it should be noted that the certification activity in NI continues to be affected by the ongoing covid pandemic. This should be considered when comparing data for this quarter against previous quarters.

Geographical coverage

The data cover qualifications regulated by CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland.

Only certifications reported from centres in Northern Ireland are reported here.

Description

Since May 2016 CCEA Regulation has been the regulator for all qualifications and assessments in Northern Ireland. This bulletin includes data on Technical & Professional (Vocational) qualifications awarded in Northern Ireland.

Regulated qualifications are classified into different qualification types with an associated level, which is indicative of the level of demand. Table 1 below shows the current levels for each type of qualification and the relationship between them. Level 3 is of a similar level of demand, but not necessarily the same size, as an A level, and level 2 is of a similar level of demand as a GCSE at grade C or above.

On 1 October 2015, the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) requirements were withdrawn. From that date, the QCF type no longer exists. However, for administrative reasons, until the new system was introduced in summer 2016, awarding organisations could still use the QCF type on the system for new qualifications when no other type was appropriate, and so the QCF type persists in the data. A full list of qualification types is displayed below.

Qualification type	Current levels
English for speakers of other languages	Entry Level, Levels 1, 2 and 3
Entry Level	Entry Level
Free-standing mathematics qualification	Levels 1, 2 and 3
Functional skills	Entry Level, Levels 1 and 2
GCE A level	Level 3
GCE AS qualification	Level 3
GCSE (9 to 1)	Level 1/2
GCSE	Level 1/2
Higher Level	Levels 4 to 8
Key skills	Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4
NVQ	Levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
'Other general' qualification	Levels 1, 1/2, 2 and 3
Occupational qualification	Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4
Project	Levels 1, 2 and 3
QCF	Entry Level, Levels 1 to 8
Vocationally related qualification	Entry Level, Levels 1 to 8

Table 1 The levels of study of qualification types

This release presents data on regulated technical & professional qualifications highlighted in blue in table 1 above.

Data source

Information on qualifications (covering title, type, awarding organisation, sector subject area and level) is taken from the [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#), which gives information on regulated qualifications and recognised awarding organisations in England and Northern Ireland.

Data on the number of certificates awarded are sent by awarding organisations to Ofqual. Ofqual sends CCEA Regulation, data on all certificates awarded in Northern Ireland centres.

Limitations

Data are collected at the earliest point available, which is the first day of the next reporting period. This reduces the time between the activity and reporting on the activity.

CCEA Regulation cannot guarantee the number of certificates submitted is correct and there may be systematic bias when the information is supplied, although awarding organisations are expected to provide the correct data. CCEA Regulation and Ofqual compare the data over time and check for systematic issues. The figures reported in this release reflect the certificates issued by awarding organisations at the time of data collection.

Large percentage movements in data may not be significant if based on relatively small numbers of certifications. Because of this percentages will not be given or charted for values which have a denominator of fewer than 50.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance procedures are carried out as explained in the [Quality Assurance Framework for Statistical Publications](#) published by Ofqual to ensure the accuracy of the data on which this publication is founded.

Publication may be deferred if the statistics are not considered fit for purpose.

Published data

The [data underlying these statistics](#) are published alongside this statistical release at 9.30am on the day of release.

Revisions

Once published, data on the number of certificates issued for any qualification are not usually subject to revision, although subsequent releases may be revised to insert late data or to correct an error. Qualifications may also be re-categorised to a different type, level, sector subject area or awarding organisation. In some cases, data may be amended to reflect the new categorisation.

Confidentiality and rounding

Non-zero values less than 5 are denoted ~0 to prevent identifying individuals. No other figures are rounded.

Status

These statistics are classified as Official Statistics.

Glossary

Definitions of important terms used in this release are [available online](#).

Useful links

The dataset accompanying this release is available separately.

Feedback

We welcome your feedback on our publications. Should you have any comments on this statistical release and how to improve it to meet your needs please contact us at ccearegulation@ccea.org.uk

We wish to make our publications widely accessible. Please contact us at ccearegulation@ccea.org.uk if you have any specific accessibility requirements.

This publication is available at ccea.org.uk/regulation

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