

Further Education and Training (FET) Progression to Higher Education (HE)

Transitions Reform Working
Paper – June 2020

**Resource B: Profile of QQI CAS Awards for
FET Progression to HE**

This note sets the main features of QQI CAS (Common Awards System) major awards at level 5, the award typically used as a basis for progression to higher education. Further details are available at <https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=awards>

Structure, credit value and grading:

QQI CAS major awards at level 5 have a credit value of 120 Further Education credits which typically comprises completion of 8 components. One credit signifies an investment of 10 hours of effort for the average learner – in practice, this means that a major award can be achieved on the basis of a successful completion of a one-year full-time programme.

Each major award has an award specification which sets out the overall structure and credit requirements in the form of mandatory and elective pools of components/minor awards. Guidance for the design of CAS major awards is set out in Appendix 1.

In general, for Level 5 major awards, the structure comprises:

- vocationally specific components (60-75 credits);
- work experience or work practice (15 credits)
- generic skills (e.g. communication, team-working, customer service) (15 credits)
- related areas of learning (minimum of 15 – 30 credits).

The remaining credit value of 15 can be obtained by using relevant component(s) from level 5. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from either level 4 or level 6.

Each component is graded- Pass, Merit or Distinction. The major award is also graded as - Pass, Merit or Distinction - based on the grades achieved in the component awards

Purpose:

The award specification sets out the intended purpose of the award – the case of major awards these are usually designed to meet workplace, vocational and progression into higher education. For example, the purpose of the nursing studies award (5M4349) is *‘to enable the learner to acquire the knowledge, skill, and competence to work under supervision in a variety of hospital and other healthcare settings and or to progress to further and or higher education and training’*. The purpose of the Business Studies award (5M2102) is *‘to enable the learner to acquire the knowledge, skill and competence to work independently and under supervision in a range of business sectors and contexts and or to progress to further and or higher education and training.’*¹

Learning Outcomes:

¹ https://www.qqi.ie//sites/docs/AwardsLibraryPdf/5M2102_AwardSpecifications_English.pdf

Each major award contains a statement of learning. See Box 1 below for the example of Nursing Studies. The learning outcomes are specified for its individual components².

Box 1: Major Award 5M4349 Nursing Studies - Statements of Knowledge, Skill and Competence

Learners will be able to:

Knowledge

Breadth Demonstrate a broad knowledge relating to the role, responsibility care and wellbeing of clients within the whole lifespan and in a variety of care settings

Kind Demonstrate a knowledge of theoretical concepts and abstract thinking pertaining to nursing practice with significant depth in certain areas

Know How & Skill

Range Demonstrate a broad range of practice, research, interpersonal and caring skills in order to provide holistic care to a wide range of client groups in a range of care settings

Selectivity Evaluate and utilise information to plan, develop and implement appropriate care strategies in a variety of care settings

Competence

Context Demonstrate knowledge, skills and attitude within a range of varied and specific practices in accordance with accepted professional guidelines and practice

Role Contribute under supervision to planning implementing and evaluation processes in providing holistic client-centred care safely and effectively

Learning to Learn

Take responsibility for own learning in a structured context

Reflect on personal practice to inform self understanding and personal development.

Insight Reflect on personal practice to inform self understanding and personal development.

Programmes:

Programmes leading to QQI awards are submitted to QQI (previously FETAC) for validation. This process ensures that programmes meet the relevant award standards and QQI (previously FETAC) assessment policy. FETAC validated some programmes as ‘shared programmes’ which means that shared programme may be offered by a number of approved providers (or centres within them) e.g. FE colleges in ETBs. A new QQI validation policy came into force in 2018 and is progressively being rolled out to all providers.

² See for example, the learning outcomes for anatomy and physiology; a component of Nursing Studies major award <https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/AwardDetails?awardCode=5N0749>

The award specifications for the top five QQI CAS major awards presented by applicants for entry through the CAO process in 2018 are attached set out in Appendix 2.

Entry to higher education:

Learners seeking to enter higher education institutions on the basis of QQI awards typically apply through the CAO. Typically, Level 5 major awards are accepted for first time entry and Level 6 major awards may be accepted for first time entry and advanced entry (some HEIs use the CAO for the latter). Applicants identify the FET awards that they wish to be considered for entry - many submit both minor and major awards and awards that are below Level 5

Following the June certification period, when results are submitted to QQI for certification, each applicant is scored by QQI according to the agreed HEI Scoring Scheme. Secure data files are submitted to CAO in mid June.

In 2018, some 15 000 learners applied to the CAO indicating that they wished to have a QQI award considered for entry. Of that c.15 000, a significant number may not achieve the required major award at Level 5.

The table below lists the top 10 QQI CAS major awards presented by applicants to the CAO in 2018.

QQI major Award	Number of applicants
5M4349 Nursing Studies	1363
5M2102 Business Studies	611
5M2181 Applied Social Studies	550
5M5146 Sports, Recreation and Exercise	488
5M2009 Early Childhood care and Education	470
5M4468 Community Health	371
5M4339 Healthcare Services Support	361
5M3807 Laboratory Techniques	326
5M2768 Animal Care	307
5M0529 Software Development	272
5M2468 Business Administration	235
5M3114 General Studies	233
5M1985 Art	227
5M1984 Art, Crafts and Design	176

Appendix 1 Guidance for the design of QQI CAS Major Awards NFQ Levels 4-6

Credit:

Credit distribution at levels 4, 5 and 6			
Major award credit construct	Level 4 90 credits	Level 5 120 credits	Level 6 120 credits
Specific vocational minor awards - Named minors - Pools	40-50	60-75	60-75
Generic Skills Pool 1 = people skills Pool 2 = work related Pool N = if appropriate	30	30	30
Residue credit	10	30-15	30-15

Applied construct for the design of named Level 4 major awards		90 Credits	
Vocationally Specific	Identify 4 to 5 minors (default credit value =10) related to the named award comprising: a) Named minors b) Pool(s) of elective minors ¹	40 - 50	
Generic Skills	Mandatory ²	Communications (15) Work Experience (15) or Work Practice (15)	30
	Select pool for inclusion if vocationally appropriate to named award	Maths pool Mathematics (10) Functional Maths (5) IT pool Information Technology Skills (10) Computer Applications(10) Word Processing (10) Spreadsheet Methods (10) Database Methods (10) Desktop Publishing (10) People Skills pool Personal and Interpersonal Development (10) Personal Effectiveness (10) Teamworking (10) Customer Service (10) Conceptual skills pool Problem Solving Skills (10) Constructive Thinking Skills (10)	0-20
Residue ³	The remaining credit can be obtained by using one or more relevant components from level 3, 4, or 5	10-20	
Credit Total		90	

¹ Minor awards to be included based on their relevance to the named major award

² Communications **and** Work Experience **or** Work Practice are mandatory requirements for Level 4 Major Awards

³ In some instances a named award may not specify a residue

Applied construct for the design of named level 5 major awards			120 Credits
Vocationally Specific	Identify a minimum of 4 components (default credit value = 15) related to the named award comprising: a) Named minors b) Pool(s) of elective minors ¹		60-75
Generic Skills	Mandatory	Work Related Work Experience (15) Work Practice (15) People Skills Communications (15) Personal Effectiveness (15) Teamworking (15) Customer Service (15)	15 15
	Select pool for inclusion if vocationally appropriate to named award	Maths pool Mathematics (15) Statistics (15) IT pool Word Processing (15) Spreadsheet Methods (15) Database Methods (15) Desktop Publishing (15) Internet (15) Conceptual skills pool Problem Solving (15) Constructive Thinking Skills (15)	0 -45
Residue²	The remaining credit can be obtained by using one or more relevant components from level 4, 5 or 6		15-30
Credit Total			120

¹ Minor awards to be included based on their relevance to the named major award

³ In some instances a named award may not specify a residue

Applied Construct for the design of named level 6 major awards		Credits
Vocationally Specific	Identify 4 components (default 15 credit value) related to the named award comprising: a) Named minors b) Pool(s) of elective minors ¹	60-75
Generic Skills	Mandatory Work Related Work Experience(15) Work Practice(15) Personal and Professional Development (15) People Skills Communications (15) Team Leadership (15) Leadership (15) Customer Service (15)	15 15
	Select pool for inclusion if vocationally appropriate to named award Maths pool Mathematics (new) IT pool Word Processing (15) Spreadsheet Methods (15) Database Methods (15) Conceptual skills pool Problem Solving (15) Constructive Thinking (15)	0-45
Residue²	The remaining credit can be obtained by using one or more relevant components from level 4, 5 or 6	15-30
Credit Total		120

¹ Minor awards from the elective pools are chosen on the basis of their relevance to the named major award

² In some instances a named award may not specify a residue

Appendix 2

Award Specifications for the top five QQI level 5 major awards presented by applicants using the CAO applications process in 2018

1. QQI award 5M4349 Nursing Studies

Code	Title	NFQ Level	Credit Value
All of the following component(s)			
5N0749	Anatomy and Physiology	5	15
5N1279	Human Growth and Development	5	15
5N4325	Nursing Theory and Practice	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N2705	Care Provision and Practice	5	15
5N2770	Care Skills	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N0690	Communications	5	15
5N0972	Customer Service	5	15
5N1367	Teamworking	5	15
5N1390	Personal Effectiveness	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N1356	Work Experience	5	15
5N1433	Work Practice	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N0758	Care Support	5	15
5N1207	Occupational First Aid	5	5
5N1370	Social Studies	5	15
5N1652	Intellectual Disability Studies	5	15
5N1764	Child Development	5	15
5N1765	Child Health and Well Being	5	15
5N1794	Safety and Health at Work	5	15
5N2006	Nutrition	5	15
5N2668	Exercise and Fitness	5	15
5N2706	Care of the Older Person	5	15
5N2746	Biology	5	15
5N3734	Infection Prevention and Control	5	15
5N3737	Caring for Children in Hospital	5	15
5N3746	Maternity Care Support	5	15
5N3767	Operating Department Care Skills	5	15

5N3769	Palliative Care Support	5	15
5N3773	Recovery in Mental Health	5	15

The remaining credit value of 15 can be obtained by using vocationally relevant component(s) from level 5. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from either level 4 or level 6.

5	15
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2. QQI Major Award 5M2102 Business Studies

Code	Title	NFQ Level	Credit Value
A minimum credit value of 30 from the following component(s)			
5N1348	Accounting Manual and Computerised	5	15
5N1350	Applied Economics	5	15
5N1400	Marketing Practice	5	15
5N1610	Business Administration Skills	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N0690	Communications	5	15
5N0972	Customer Service	5	15
5N1367	Teamworking	5	15
5N1390	Personal Effectiveness	5	15
5N1951	Entrepreneurial Skills	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N1356	Work Experience	5	15
5N1433	Work Practice	5	15
A minimum credit value of 30 from the following component(s)			
5N0765	Intercultural Studies	5	15
5N0783	Database Methods	5	15
5N0785	Desktop Publishing	5	15
5N1351	Behavioural Studies	5	15
5N1354	Bookkeeping Manual and Computerised	5	15
5N1358	Word Processing	5	15
5N1364	Digital Marketing	5	15
5N1369	eBusiness Studies	5	15
5N1383	Financial Services	5	15
5N1389	Information and Administration	5	15
5N1394	Legal Practice and Procedures	5	15
5N1421	Taxation	5	15
5N1422	Text Production	5	15
5N1546	Payroll Manual and Computerised	5	15
5N1611	The Internet	5	15
5N1619	Retail Selling	5	15
5N1623	French	5	15
5N1624	German	5	15
5N1626	Italian	5	15
5N1627	Polish	5	15
5N1628	Russian	5	15
5N1629	Slovak	5	15
5N1630	Spanish	5	15
5N1631	Irish	5	15
5N1632	English as a Second Language	5	15
5N1794	Safety and Health at Work	5	15
5N1977	Spreadsheet Methods	5	15
5N2066	Statistics	5	15

5N2072	International Trade Practice	5	15
5N2091	Business Law	5	15
5N2100	Insurance	5	15

The remaining credit value of 30 can be obtained by using vocationally relevant component(s) from level 5. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from either level 4 or level 6.

3. QQI Major award 5M2181 Applied Social Studies

Code	Title	NFQ Level	Credit Value
All of the following component(s)			
5N0754	Psychology	5	15
5N0765	Intercultural Studies	5	15
5N1370	Social Studies	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N0690	Communications	5	15
5N0692	Conflict Resolution	5	15
5N1367	Teamworking	5	15
5N1390	Personal Effectiveness	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N1356	Work Experience	5	15
5N1433	Work Practice	5	15
A minimum credit value of 30 from the following component(s)			
5N0758	Care Support	5	15
5N1207	Occupational First Aid	5	5
5N1273	Equality and Disability	5	15
5N1279	Human Growth and Development	5	15
5N1394	Legal Practice and Procedures	5	15
5N1794	Safety and Health at Work	5	15
5N1837	Political Studies	5	15
5N2002	Young People and Society	5	15
5N2176	Substance Use - Issues for Youthwork	5	15
5N2177	Understanding Imprisonment	5	15

The remaining credit value of 15 can be obtained by using vocationally relevant component(s) from level 5. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from either level 4 or level 6.

4. QQI major award 5M5146 Sports, Recreation and Exercise

Code	Title	NFQ Level	Credit Value
All of the following component(s)			
5N2667	Sport and Recreation Studies	5	15
5N2668	Exercise and Fitness	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N0690	Communications	5	15
5N0972	Customer Service	5	15
5N1367	Teamworking	5	15
5N1390	Personal Effectiveness	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N1356	Work Experience	5	15
5N1433	Work Practice	5	15
A minimum credit value of 30 from the following component(s)			
5N1207	Occupational First Aid	5	5
5N1794	Safety and Health at Work	5	15
5N2006	Nutrition	5	15
5N4545	Kinesiology	5	15
5N4646	Adventure Activities	5	15
5N4648	Sports Anatomy and Physiology	5	15
5N4666	Leisure Facility Administration	5	15
5N4667	Leisure Facility Operations	5	15
5N4885	Badminton Coaching	5	10
5N4886	Rugby Coaching	5	10
5N4887	Soccer Coaching	5	10
5N4888	Basketball Coaching	5	10
5N4889	Tennis Coaching	5	10
5N5085	Gaelic Football Coaching	5	10
5N5086	Hurling Coaching	5	10
5N5087	Volleyball Coaching	5	10

The remaining credit value of 30 can be obtained by using vocationally relevant component(s) from level 5. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from either level 4 or level 6.

5. QQI major award 5M2009 Early Childhood Care and Education

Code	Title	NFQ Level	Credit Value
All of the following component(s)			
5N1764	Child Development	5	15
5N1765	Child Health and Well Being	5	15
5N1770	Early Care and Education Practice	5	15
5N1773	Early Childhood Education and Play	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N1356	Work Experience	5	15
5N1433	Work Practice	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N0690	Communications	5	15
5N0972	Customer Service	5	15
5N1367	Teamworking	5	15
5N1390	Personal Effectiveness	5	15
A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)			
5N1207	Occupational First Aid	5	5
5N1279	Human Growth and Development	5	15
5N1370	Social Studies	5	15
5N1394	Legal Practice and Procedures	5	15
5N1763	Approaches to Early Childhood Education	5	15
5N1766	Childminding Practice	5	15
5N1769	Creative Arts for Early Childhood	5	15
5N1775	Equality and Diversity in Childcare	5	15
5N1779	Infant and Toddler Years	5	15
5N1781	School Age Childcare	5	15
5N1786	Special Needs Assisting	5	15
5N2005	Irish for Preschool Services	5	15
5N2006	Nutrition	5	15
5N2396	Children with Additional Needs	5	15

The remaining credit value of 15 can be obtained by using vocationally relevant component(s) from level 5. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from either level 4 or level 6.