Awarding Policy

Date approved:	23/05/2025	Date policy will take effect:	23/05/2025	Date of Next Review:	23/05/2028
Approving Authority:	Academic Council				
Responsibility:	Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Registrar				
Consultation undertaken:	Academic Quality Sub-committee (AQSC)				
Supporting documents, procedures & forms of this policy:	Not applicable.				
Reference(s)	• Policy on the Design and Approval of Programmes; • Guidelines for Design of Part-Time Programmes; • Micro-credentials Policy; • Assessment and Standards; • Continuous Assessment Procedures; • Assessment and Learning Policy; • Examination and Assessment Policy and Procedure; • Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures; • External Examiner Duties and Procedures; • Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Practice.				
Expiry Date of Policy (if applicable)	Not applicable				
Audience:	Public – accessible to anyone				
Category:	Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification				

Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Description
1	30/04/2021	Academic Council	• Policy approved for the first time with amendments.
2	23/02/2024	Academic Council (AC:DOC:191:08:01)	• Policy amended to include QQI titling convention for minor, special-purpose and supplemental classes of awards.
3	20/06/2024	Academic Council (Meeting No. 194)	• Structured Masters degrees reclassified as research masters.

4	27/09/2024	Academic Council (Meeting No. 195)	• Updates to QQI award standards adopted as DkIT award standards:
			  o Adoption of integrated award standards for Business (NFQ Levels 5-9);
			  o Integrated Award Standards for Early Learning and Care (NFQ Levels 5-8);
			  o Integrated Award Standards for Ore-Higher Education Foundation Awards for International Students (NFQ Level 5 & NFQ Level 8).
			
			• Minor updates to formatting and web addresses.

5	21/02/2025	Academic Council (Meeting No. 197) (AC:DOC:197:05:04)	• Changes to Table 2 to include non-major awards of 5 ECTS credits. Part of a number of policy changes relating to micro-credentials.
6	23/05/2025	Academic Council (Meeting No. 199)	• Policy amended to include Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) recommendation on the titling of Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental awards for statutory awarding bodies (following outcome of QQI consultation with the sector, 21st February 2025).

Contents

Purpose of Policy

- This policy details Dundalk Institute of Technology's policy in relation to the awards it makes/confers.

- This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Policy on the Design and Approval of Programmes and Guidelines* for *Design of Part-Time Programmes* and the Micro-credentials Policy (https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html) (See references on policy coversheet).

Application and Scope

- This policy applies to all students and staff at Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Context-Designated Awarding Body (DAB)

- Following the enactment of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019 (referred to as the Act subsequently) (http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2019/act/32/enacted/en/html), Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) has become a *Designated Awarding Body or DAB*. A Designated Awarding Body is a body with the authority in law to make awards and to whom the 2012 (http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/28/enacted/en/html) and subsequent amended 2019 Acts apply.

- When an award is granted by Dundalk Institute of Technology as a Designated Awarding Body (DAB) it must:

  o Ensure that each award made is recognised within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) including those awards made on behalf of linked providers. The requirement for DkIT to comply with the NFQ is set out in Section 43 of the Act.

  o Ensure that learners enrolled on programmes leading to awards recognised within the NFQ acquire the standard of knowledge, skill or competence associated with the level of that award.

  o Establish procedures for the certification of awards and maintenance of learner and award records. These procedures shall have regard to:

    ▪ Award level, award class and type in the NFQ, including references to the total credit value of the award.

    ▪ Other such references that facilitate the implementation of the NFQ, such as the European Diploma Supplement (EDS).

National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

- The NFQ (National Framework of Qualifications) (Figure 1) is a framework for the development, recognition and award of qualifications in Ireland which encompasses all

awards for all aspects of education and training. It is a framework through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way.

- The NFQ is a system of levels for relating different qualifications (i.e. awards) to one another. These levels are described in terms of general (non-subject-specific) indicators of a person's knowledge, skill and competence; that is, standards for their learning achievements.
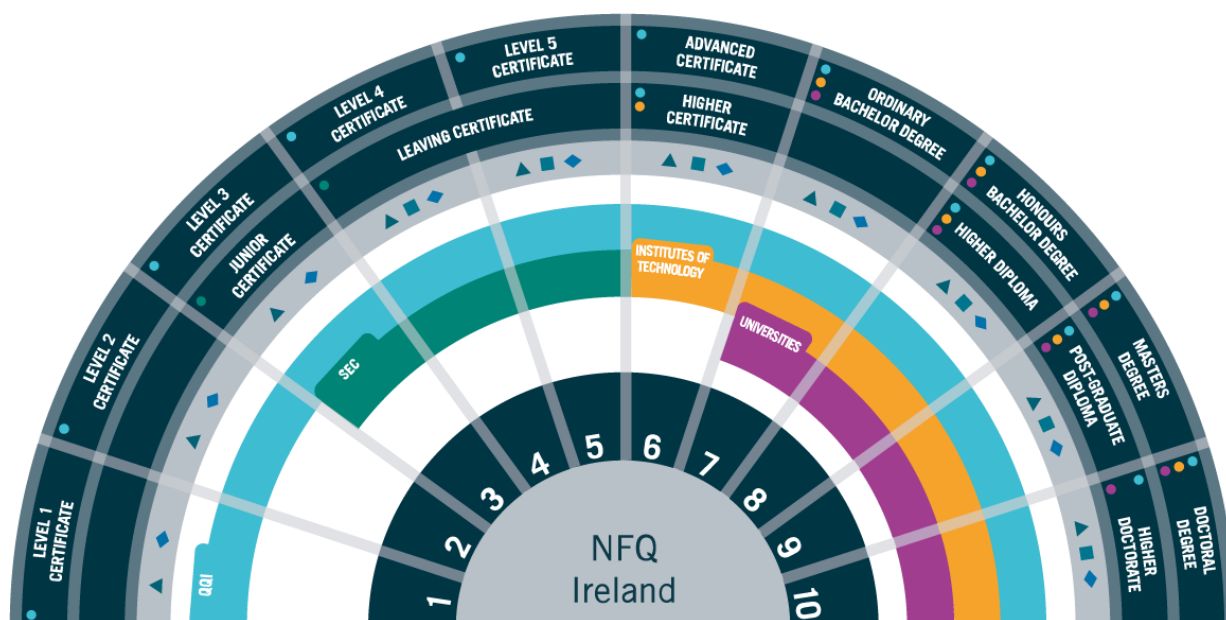

*Figure 1: National Framework of Qualifications (*https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications*)*

Award Classifications

- Awards at DkIT are classified as Major Awards and Non-major Awards. Non-major Awards is the collective term for awards with a smaller volume and more narrow learning outcomes than Major awards. There are three categories of Non-major award: Minor, Special-purpose and Supplemental (Table 1).

Award Classification	Description
Major	A major award is the principal class of award made at a level.
Minor	Minor awards provide recognition for learners who achieve a range of learning outcomes, but not the specific combination of learning outcomes required for a major award. This recognition will have relevance in its own right. Minor awards may facilitate credit or exemptions towards other awards of DkIT and/or external academic professional bodies.
Supplemental	Supplemental awards are for learning which is additional to a previous award. It is designed for education and training with respect to an occupation or profession and may be for updating of education and/or professional development.
Special-Purpose	A special purpose award is made for specific, relatively narrow purposes (e.g. legislative, regulatory, economic, social or

	personal learning requirements). They may or may not contain learning outcomes from a major award.

Table 1: Award Classifications

European Credit Transfer Accumulation System (ECTS)

- The volume of learning associated with an award is specified using the European Credit Transfer Accumulation System (ECTS) (https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en). ECTS credits represent learning based on defined learning outcomes and their associated workload.

Award Standards

- The NFQ provides generic Award-Type Descriptors which form the basis of all awards standards at Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT). Award-Type Descriptors are part of the NFQ and all recognised awards must be consistent with one of these descriptors where one has been determined for the award-type.

- Award standards identify the expected outcomes of learning, inclusive of all education and training for a particular award-type. The standards determine the knowledge, know-how and skill, and competence that are expected from the learner who is to receive an award. They include both general standards for a particular award-type and specific standards for named awards in particular subjects or fields of learning. Learners holding awards of the same award-type should have comparable standards of knowledge, skill and competence.

- DkIT has adopted the following award standards in respect of programmes (adopted from the Quality and Qualifications (QQI) Higher Education (HE) Award Standards (https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/qqi-awards/qqi-awards-standards):

  - **Generic Awards Standards:**
    - Generic Major Awards Standards (NFQ Levels 6-10);
    - Generic Standards - Special Purpose, Supplemental and Minor Awards;
    - Professional Award Type Descriptors (NFQ Levels 5-9).
  - Architecture;
  - Architectural Technology;
  - Art and Design;
  - Computing;
  - Counselling and Psychotherapy;
  - Engineering;
  - English Language Teaching;
  - Nursing and Midwifery;
  - Professional Master of Education;
  - LLB and LLM (Provisional);
  - Science;
  - Social Care Work.
  - **Integrated Award Standards:**
    - Early Learning and Care - Awards Standards (NFQ Levels 5-8);
    - Integrated Award Standards for Business (NFQ Levels 5-9);
    - Award Standards for Business User Guide;

- Pre-Higher Education Foundation Awards for International Students (NFQ Level 5 & NFQ Level 8).

- DkIT also adheres to other professional, regulatory and statutory award standards as appropriate to discipline areas.

Awards and Award Titles

- Table 2 provides the awards that are permissible at DkIT.

Major Award	NFQ Level	ECTS Credit Range
Higher Certificate	6	120
Ordinary Bachelor Degree	7	60/180
Honours Bachelor Degree	8	60/180/240
Higher Diploma	8	60 /75
Postgraduate Diploma	9	60
Master's Degree (Taught)	9	75/90
Master's Degree (Research)	9	90 (Structured Masters) 120 to 180 (aligned with Dublin City University)
Doctoral Degree	10	240 to 360 (aligned with Dublin City University)
Minor, Supplemental, Special Purpose [1]	**NFQ Level**	**ECTS Credit Range**
Certificate	6	5 – 90 (Abbreviation: Cert.)
Certificate	7, 8	5 - <60 (Abbreviation: Cert.)
Diploma	7, 8	≥ 60 (Abbreviation: Dip.)
Certificate	9	5 - <60 (Abbreviation: Cert.)
Diploma [2]	9	≥ 60 (Abbreviation: Dip.)
Postgraduate Certificate [3]	9	30

Table 2: DkIT Awards (including NFQ Level and ECTS Credit Ranges)

-

---

[1] **Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) recommendation on the titling of Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental awards for statutory awarding bodies** (QQI, 21st February 2025):

The NFQ level of the award is required to appear on the diploma supplement and academic transcript. This recommendation does not affect awards already conferred.

The question of whether and when the word "professional" may prefix the award stems is under discussion. This recommendation does not address such usage. It is recommended that prefixes that are used by major award types be avoided – e.g., advanced, higher, postgraduate (with diploma), or prefixes that are likely to cause confusion between major award types and non-major awards).

For the avoidance of doubt, use of the "Postgraduate Certificate" stem for minor, special purpose and supplemental awards where the award involves fewer than 60 ECTS is consistent with this recommendation. However, the Postgraduate Diploma stem is reserved in the NFQ for major awards.

[2] There are some in the Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ). Note the Postgraduate Diploma at NFQ level 9 is a major award type and this stem cannot be used for minor, special purpose or supplemental awards.

[3] In accordance with QQI's Titling of Minor, Special-Purpose and Supplemental Awards recommendation (effective from 23rd May 2025), the use of the "*Postgraduate Certificate*" stem at NFQ Level 9 is permitted solely in respect of legacy awards that were validated on or before 23rd May 2025. Otherwise, the "*Certificate*" stem at NFQ Level 9 should be used.

- The Academic Council can consider derogations from Schools should Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Body (PRSB) requirements not align with DkIT's permissible awards. Approved derogations will be recorded with the register/listing of awards (see Appendix 1).

- Higher Education and Training (HET) major named awards (what the learner receives; a named award is associated with a level in the NFQ through the award type to which it belongs) shall have the following form (see Table 3):

[Named Award Stem] in [Specialisation] (e.g., Bachelor of Science in Computing)

- The overall length of a named award is limited to 43 characters to ensure that it can be printed clearly on awards parchments. Normally only the award stem names are 'standardised' unless otherwise determined by the relevant award standard. The remainder of the named award is agreed at programme validation.

- DkIT supports greater specificity of award titles but not the proliferation of such titles. Table 3 provides the awards titles that are permissible at DkIT (undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes plus research programmes).

Major Awards		
NFQ Level	Titles of Award Type	Title of Named Award Stem
6	Higher Certificate	Higher Certificate in Arts
		Higher Certificate in Business
		Higher Certificate in Engineering
		Higher Certificate in Science
7	Ordinary Bachelor Degree	Bachelor of Architecture (BA)
		Bachelor of Arts (BA)
		Bachelor of Business (BBS)
		Bachelor of Education
		Bachelor of Engineering (BEng)
		Bachelor of Laws (LLB)
		Bachelor of Music (BMus)
		Bachelor of Science (BSc)
8	Higher Diploma	Higher Diploma in Arts
		Higher Diploma in Business
		Higher Diploma in Education
		Higher Diploma in Engineering
		Higher Diploma in Science
8	Honours Bachelor Degree	Bachelor of Architecture (Honours) (BA)
		Bachelor of Arts (Honours) (BA)
		Bachelor of Business (Honours) (BBS)
		Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) (BComm)
		Bachelor of Design (Honours) (BDes)
		Bachelor of Education (Honours)

		Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) (BEng)
		Bachelor of Laws (Honours) (LLB)
		Bachelor of Music (Honours)
		Bachelor of Science (Honours) (BSc)
		Bachelor of Social Science (Honours)(BSocSc)
9	Postgraduate Diploma	Postgraduate Diploma in Arts
		Postgraduate Diploma in Business
		Postgraduate Diploma in Education
		Postgraduate Diploma in Engineering
		Postgraduate Diploma in Science
9	Master's Degree (Taught)	Master of Architecture (MArch)
		Master of Agricultural Science (MAgrSc)
		Master of Arts (MA)
		Master of Business Administration (MBA)
		Master of Business (MBS)
		Master of Education (Med)
		Master of Education Studies (MEd)
		Master of Engineering (MEng)
		Master of Health Science (MHSc)
		Master of Laws (LLM)
		Master of Science (MSc)
		Master of Social Science (MSocSc)
9	Master's Degree (Structured)	Master of Architecture (MArch)
		Master of Agricultural Science (MAgrSc)
		Master of Arts (MA)
		Master of Business Administration (MBA)
		Master of Business (MBS)
		Master of Education (Med)
		Master of Education Studies (MEd)
		Master of Engineering (MEng)
		Master of Health Science (MHSc)
		Master of Laws (LLM)
		Master of Science (MSc)
		Master of Social Science (MSocSc)
9	Master's Degree (Research)	Master of Arts
		Master of Business (MBuS by Research)
		Master of Engineering (MEng by Research)
		Master of Research (MRes)
		Master of Science (MSc by Research)
10	Doctorate Degree (DCU award)	Doctor of Philosophy

Minor, Supplemental, Special Purpose

NFQ Level	Titles of Award Type	Title of Named Award Stem
6-9	Certificate	Not applicable
7-9	Diploma	Not applicable
9	Postgraduate Certificate	Not applicable

Table 3: DkIT Award Titles

Certification

- Certification is a formal confirmation by an awarding body that the student has demonstrated the knowledge, skill and competence required to achieve a named award.

- The following DkIT policies and procedures assure that students have attained the required standards of knowledge, skill or competence in order to be granted an award (Table 4).

Policy / Procedures	Reference
Assessment and Standards	https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html
Continuous Assessment Procedures	https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html
Assessment and Learning Policy	https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html
Examination and Assessment Policy and Procedure	https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html
Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures	https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html
External Examiner Duties and Procedures	https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html

Table 4: Certification Related Policies and Procedures

- DkIT conforms with sector wide Standards in Award Classifications and Post Award Achievements. Further information can be found in Sections B8 and B9 respectively of Assessment and Standards (see Table 4 for reference).

Award Equivalence

- DkIT shall utilise the following when determining the equivalence of awards:

Qualifications can Cross Boundaries: A guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland	https://qhelp.qqi.ie/learners/qualifications-recognition-advice/comparing-qualifications-in-the-uk-and-ireland/
Awards Made before the Introduction of the NFQ (i.e. Legacy Awards)	https://qhelp.qqi.ie/employers/awards-made-before-the-introduction-of-the-nfq/
NARIC Ireland for academic recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland	https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=recognitions

Award Parchments

- Once an award has been confirmed in accordance with Institute policy and procedures award parchments are issued to students, normally at a formal public conferring ceremony. An education and training award signifies a significant achievement and it is fitting that there be a formal public announcement of all awards made.

- A formal public conferring ceremony is arranged for each cohort of higher education and training (HET) graduands in accordance with DkIT's protocols for conferring (which includes academicals (caps, academic gowns, hoods and epitogues) and the conduct of the conferring ceremonies.

- Parchments are designed to be clear and verifiable and contain security features that reduce the risk of fraud.

- A DkIT parchment will contain the following information:

  - "*The Institute, by virtue of the authority vested in it under Section 36 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 has conferred on [name of graduand] the award of [award title/named award], [award classification] Date of Award.*"

    Irish

    "*De thairbhe an údaráis atá dílsithe di de réir Alt 36 d'Acht um Cháilíochtaí agus Dearbhú Cáilíochta (Oideachas agus Oiliúint) (Leasú) 2019, bronnann an Institiúid ar [name of graduand] An Dámhachtain [award title/named award], [award classification], Dáta Bronnta.*"

  - The classification of awards shall appear on all parchments unless the awards is unclassified.

Europass Diploma

- DkIT awards will be accompanied by a Europass Diploma Supplement (EDS) (https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Europass.aspx).

Exit Awards

- DkIT's policy on Exit Awards can be found at: https://www.dkit.ie/about-dkit/policies-and-guidelines/academic-policies.html.

Posthumous Awards

- DkIT's policy on Posthumous Awards can be found at: https://www.dkit.ie/assets/uploads/documents/Policies-and-Guidelines/Academic-Policies/Admission-Progression-Recognition-and-Certification/Posthumous-Awards-Policy.pdf.

Policy Review

- This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Institute's Policies and Procedures review schedule or as the need arises based on implementation feedback received.

DkIT Award Derogations

Major Award	NFQ Level	ECTS Credits	Department	Programme	Rationale
Higher Diploma	8	90	Nursing, Midwifery and Early Years	*Higher Diploma in Midwifery*	- Midwife Registration Education Post-RGN Programme Standards and Requirements (NMBI, 2017) state: "The academic standard for the programme shall be a higher diploma level, Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)". **AND** "In order to meet the requirements of the European Union Council Directive 2013/55/EU (Appendix A) the programme must be full time training of at least 18 months, which may be expressed in European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits, consisting of at least 3000 hours." - Post RGN Midwife Education programmes in other HEIs are offered at 90 ECTS.