

## Contextual Information for Using Apprenticeship Statistics

The scope of the apprenticeship programme can be found in the policy publication “[Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships](#)” (published June 2015), which sets out the future direction for a new apprenticeship system that will form a key part of the wider education and skills landscape. It will better match the needs of young people, employers and the wider economy. Apprenticeships will provide a high quality parallel route to the traditional academic pathway, with opportunities for professional education and training that will facilitate progression to sustained employment or further education.

In advance of full implementation of the Department’s apprenticeship strategy, a number of level 3 apprenticeship pilots have been taking place across the six Further Education (FE) colleges since academic year 2015/16. The primary purpose of the pilots has been to test the development of new curriculum which meets the needs of learners, employers and the wider economy.

Please be aware that contextual information about Northern Ireland and the FE services provided is available to read while using statistics from this publication. This includes information on the current and future population, structures within the FE system, and the vision for FE services as well as targets. This information is available at the following links:

[Contextual information regarding Northern Ireland](#)

[Contextual information regarding FE sector](#)

[Contextual information regarding Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland](#)

### The Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ)

The Office of Qualifications, Assessment and Examinations (OFQUAL) and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ensure qualifications and examinations offered by awarding organisations are of an appropriate quality and standard. OFQUAL regulates GCSEs and A levels in England, and a wide range of vocational/professional and technical qualifications in England. CCEA regulates GCSE, A Levels, vocational/professional and technical qualifications, including Essential Skills in Northern Ireland. The qualifications verified by OFQUAL and CCEA reside on a register of regulated qualifications (RRQ).

OFQUAL is independent of Government ministers and reports directly to Parliament in Westminster. CCEA is a non-departmental public body reporting to the Department of Education and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland.

Links to both organisations’ websites can be found below:

<http://ofqual.gov.uk/>

<http://www.ccea.org.uk/>

The [Regulated Qualifications Framework \(RQF\)](#) is to help people understand all qualifications and how they relate to each other. Its intention is to improve consistency around how awarding organisations describe the size and challenge, or demand, of the qualifications they offer.

The [European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\)](#) provides a way to compare the level of qualifications across different countries and systems in Europe, making them easy to understand.

### **Higher education qualifications**

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is responsible for the Framework of Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) which covers higher education qualifications from level 4 to level 8. For more information on the FHEQ you should contact the QAA:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk>

In this analysis the terms 'regulated enrolments' or 'regulated courses' are used as short hand to indicate those enrolments on courses which have the potential for individuals to obtain a regulated qualification at the end of it.

### **Comparing levels of qualifications**

Each regulated qualification has a level between entry level and level 8. Entry level is lower than Level 1. Qualifications at the same level are a similar level of demand or difficulty. The content and size of qualifications at the same level may be quite different.

For further information on comparing qualifications across the UK, Ireland and overseas please refer to the link below:

<http://ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-advice/comparing-qualifications/>