

Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply **2022**



Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply 2022

A report compiled by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in
SOLAS on behalf of the National Skills Council

November 2022

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List of Abbreviations

CSO	Central Statistics Office
I/ECDL	International/European Computer Driving Licence
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IAASA	Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority
ICT	Information Communications Technology
n.e.c.	Not elsewhere classified
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PLSS	Programme and Learner Support System
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SSBL	Social Science, Business and Law
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

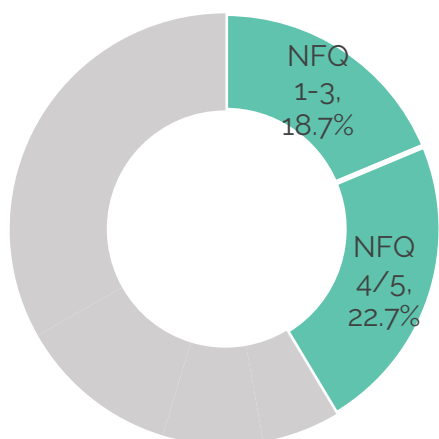
Summary

Potential supply of skills from further and higher education in Ireland

135,600	The number of awards made across the FET and higher education system in 2020, up 7% on last year* . Excluding non-QQI FET awards, the number of awards was also 7% higher than in 2016.	
7,400 Science awards	Science made up 5% of awards in 2020	+3% compared to 2019*
		+19% compared to 2016
11,900 ICT awards	ICT made up 9% of awards in 2020	+43% compared to 2019*
		+52% compared to 2016
10,200 Engineering awards	Engineering made up 8% of awards in 2020	+13% compared to 2019*
		+36% compared to 2020
3,100 Construction awards	Construction made up 2% of awards in 2020	+12% compared to 2019*
		+49% compared to 2020

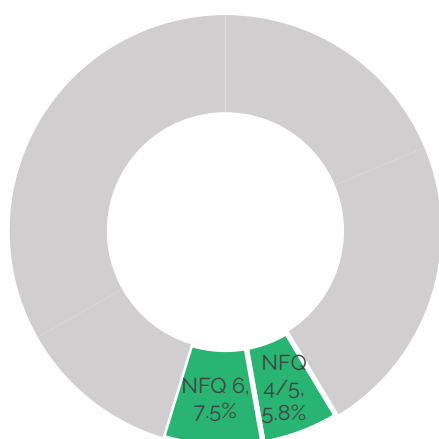
43,200 SSBL awards	Social science, business and law (SSBL) made up 32% of awards in 2020	+18% compared to 2019*
		+20% compared to 2016
22,900 Health & welfare awards	Health/welfare made up 17% of awards in 2020	-5% compared to 2019*
		-7% compared to 2016
12,900 Arts/humanities awards	Arts/humanities made up 10% of awards in 2020	-6% compared to 2019*
		-16% compared to 2016
8,100 Education awards	Education made up 6% of awards in 2020	+4% compared to 2019*
		+29% compared to 2016
4,300 Agriculture awards	Agriculture made up 3% of awards in 2020	-3% compared to 2019*
		-8% compared to 2016
8,400 Services awards	Services made up 6% of awards in 2019	+3% compared to 2019*
		-16% compared to 2016
<p>*Note: the 2019-2020 change includes non-QQI FET awards from the SOLAS/ETBI PLSS; as this data is not available prior to 2018, the 2016-2020 changes are based on QQI-FET & HE and HEA awards data only.</p>		

Education profile of adults (20 years+) by level, Q2 2022



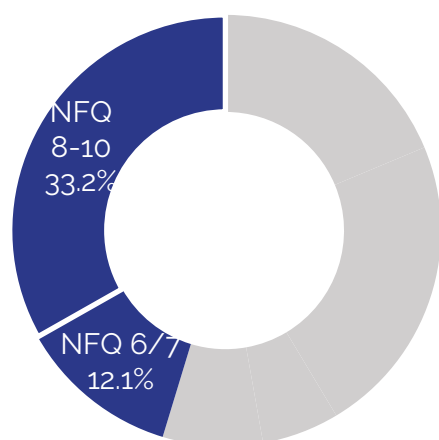
Second Level Education

- 18.7% of Ireland's adult population held at most a level 3 qualification; persons at this level are concentrated in the older age cohorts with 424,400 (62%) aged 60+ years.
- 22.7% held a Leaving Cert or equivalent (NFQ level 4/5)



Further Education and Training

- 13.2% of Ireland's 20+ year-olds held FET qualifications, representing 484,700 persons
- There was a fairly even gender breakdown of FET holders at NFQ level 4-6, with 49% male and 51% female.
- For most age cohorts, the share of FET qualification holders was similar, ranging from 9% of 20+ year olds to 16% for many of the older cohorts.



Third Level (NFQ 6-10)

- Approximately one third of Ireland's adults aged 20 years or over held a third level qualification at level 8 or higher
- A further 12% held qualifications at levels 6/7
- At NFQ levels 8-10, there were more females (54%) than males (46%), and award holders were typically younger, with 45% aged 20-39 years old.

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

Excludes not stated

1. Introduction

This report, *Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply 2022*, is the 16th in a series of annual reports produced by the SLMRU aimed at monitoring the potential supply of skills to the labour market from Ireland's education and training system. Not all education and training graduates will enter the labour market: some may remain in education for further studies, travel abroad, or not enter the labour market due to family commitments or other reasons. Others may already be in the workforce and therefore do not represent a new supply of skills. Bearing in mind these caveats, the analysis of the education/training outputs by level and field presented here is an overview of how Ireland's education and training systems can contribute to meeting the skills needs of the economy. For this reason, this report also provides an analysis of the skills profile of Ireland's adult population.

Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply serves as a companion publication to the National Skills Bulletin, where the focus is on the demand for skills in Ireland. When taken together, these two reports provide a comprehensive summary of the demand and supply of skills in Ireland.

This report is comprised of two separate parts. Sections 1-12 examine the number of awards made to learners in Ireland's further and higher education and training system. Following a summary of total awards made in the Overview section, the awards are then analysed by field of learning and NFQ level (where applicable).

Section 13 and 14 focus on the existing skills profile of (a) the adult population and (b) recent graduates, drawing on data from Ireland's Labour Force Survey (CSO).

Data used in this report

Further education and training (FET) data was obtained from two sources. QQI-FET data is from Quality and Qualifications Ireland's awards database. Only major awards are included as those in receipt of other award types may receive more than one award in any given year. While SOLAS/ETBs are the largest provider types, other providers include Teagasc, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, among others. All QQI-FET data is from 2020.

Other FET data is from the SOLAS/ETBI Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS). It excludes learners in receipt of QQI awards as these were already included in the QQI-FET data. The PLSS is a relatively new system with a full data set available from 2018 only. Therefore the 'Other FET' category does not figure in the five-year time series analyses in this report. The data reported here is for 2021 (the latest available).

While some of the awards included in the '**Other FET**' category have been placed on other countries' National Qualifications Frameworks (e.g. UK-based awards) and can, as a result, be referenced to the Irish NFQ, other FET awards in this category are not aligned to any European framework; these awards, in this report, are referred to as 'non-aligned FET'.

Third level data was also obtained from two sources. **Third level (HEA)** data is from the Higher Education Authority's Student Record System. It includes awards made to learners at each of Ireland's universities (including the technical universities), institutes of technology, and colleges (e.g. RCSI, NCAD and St. Angela's). HEA data in this report spans the five-year period 2015/16 to 2019/2020.

QQI-HE data was obtained from Quality and Qualifications higher education awards data (excluding those made to learners at institutes of technology, which are already included in the HEA data). This data represents the major awards made to learners at private, independent colleges, including Griffith College, Dublin Business School, Hibernia College. It should be noted that these colleges also make awards through other awarding bodies (e.g. UK awarding bodies) for which data is unavailable. All QQI-HE data is from 2020.

In terms of awards, this report also includes data in relation to persons obtaining qualifications from **professional bodies** including the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA) and the Irish Tax Institute.

European comparison data is from the EU database, Eurostat and provides the share of third level graduates by discipline for each EU country as well as the employment rates of persons by education attainment level.

Labour Force Survey data is from the Central Statistics Office and, in the report, focuses on the educational profile of adults in Ireland. It looks at the educational attainment level of adults aged 20 years and over, as well as a subset of this cohort (recent graduates).

In this report, the term **graduate** refers to any individual who has completed a programme, regardless of education level. For example, an upper secondary school graduate refers to a person who has completed second level education and/or obtained a Leaving Certificate qualification or equivalent.

Data Classifications

Education levels

The two main classifications used to analyse **education levels** in this report are Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and UNESCO's International System of Education Classification (ISCED) levels of education. The NFQ describes the level of the award obtained on successful completion of a relevant programme, while ISCED levels of education refers to the level of the programme. Table A1 in the Appendix details the award types at each NFQ level, as well as the programmes in the education system that typically prepare learners for such awards.

Fields of education and training

ISCED fields of learning classifications are also used in the analysis. For ease of reading, some field names have been shortened. In addition, in instances where numbers are particularly small, some fields have been grouped. Column 1 of Table 1.1 shows the broad fields of learning according to the ISCED classification, along with an example of specific subjects covered in these areas. Column 2 (Grouped/Abbreviated Fields) shows the fields of education and training that were grouped for the analysis of education awards data.

Table 1.1 ISCED fields of education and training

ISCED field 2013	Grouped/Abbreviated Fields
STEM subjects	
Science & mathematics e.g. biological & biomedical sciences	Science
ICT e.g. computer science	ICT
Engineering, manufacturing & construction e.g. civil engineering	Engineering, manufacturing & construction
Health, vet and agriculture subjects	
Health & welfare e.g. healthcare assistant	Health
Agriculture, forestry & veterinary e.g. agricultural science	Agriculture & vet
Other subjects	
Social sciences journalism & information e.g. economics, psychology	Social science, business and law (SSBL)
Business, administration & law e.g. accounting, sales	
Generic programmes & qualifications e.g. literacy training, Leaving certificate,	Generic etc.
Interdisciplinary programmes (infrequently used)	
Education e.g. primary teaching	Education
Arts & humanities e.g. graphic design, English	Arts, etc
Services e.g. professional cookery, culinary arts, hairdressing, security	Services

2. Awards overview

2.1 Awards

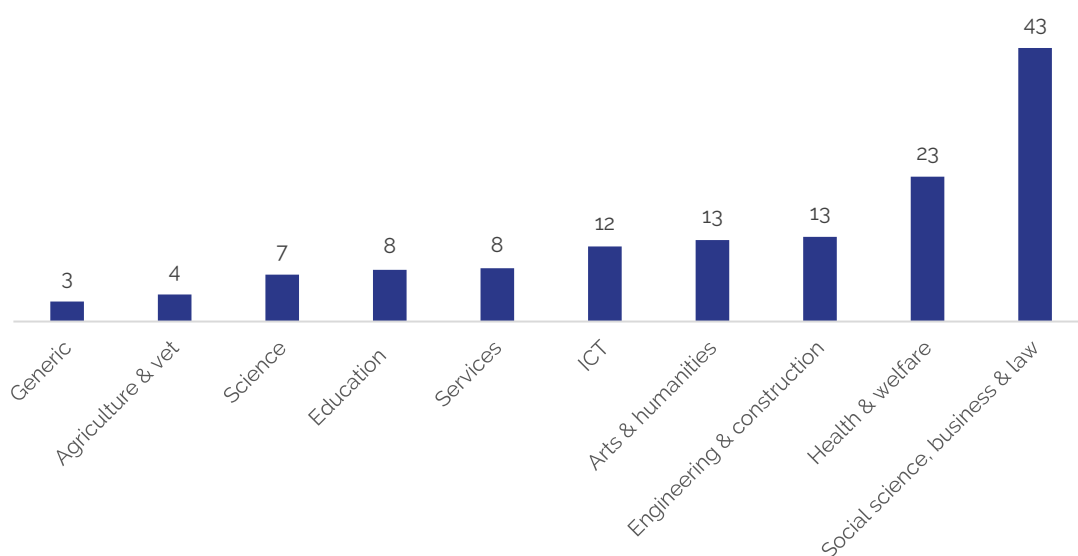
How many awards were made in 2020?

In 2020, approximately 135,600 awards were made in Ireland's further and higher education and training systems. This number comprises learners gaining awards or qualifications in the FET sector (both QQI and non-QQI awarding bodies), the third level sector (both HEA-aided and non-HEA-aided institutes) and through selected professional bodies (e.g. accountancy).

In what fields of learning were most awards made?

As in preceding years, the highest number of awards were made to learners who had studied programmes in the social science, business and law field, followed by the health and welfare field (Figure 2.1). Combined these two fields accounted for almost 66,100 awards, representing nearly one half (49%) of all awards made in 2020. STEM subjects (i.e. science, ICT and engineering etc.) made up more than 32,600 awards (or 24% of the total).

Figure 2.1 Further & higher education awards and prof. qualifications by field (000s), 2020*



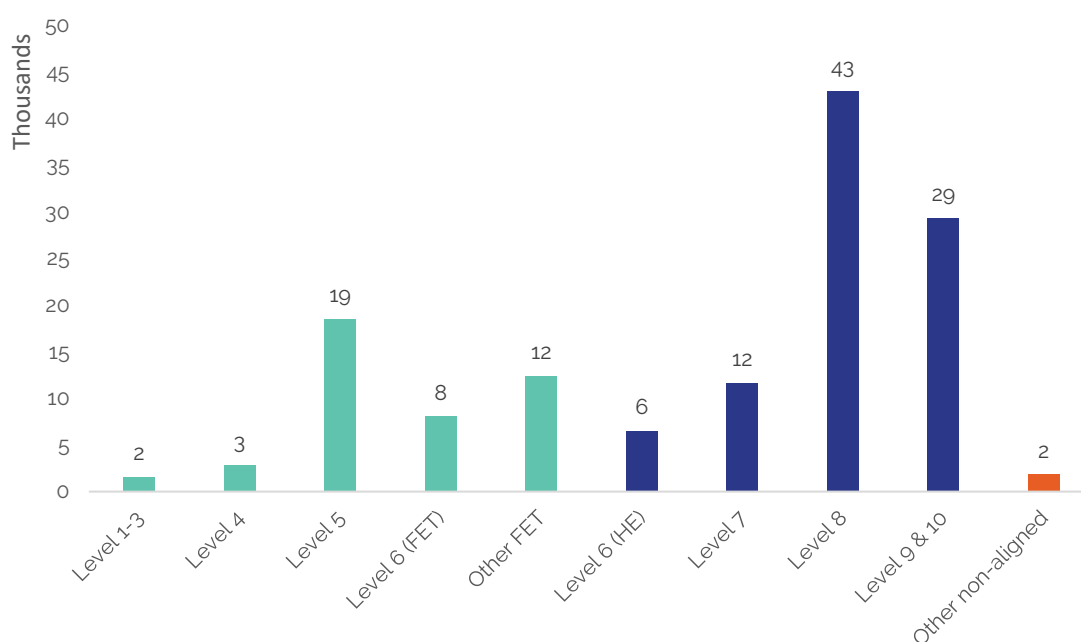
Source: HEA, QQI (FET & selected HE), SOLAS, IAASA and Irish Tax Institute

*SOLAS (PLSS) data is from 2021

At what levels were awards made in 2020?

Figure 2.2 shows the number of awards made by NFQ level in 2020. Third level awards at levels 6-8 on the NFQ accounted for almost half (45%), the vast majority of which (nearly 43,000) were at level 8, typically for honours bachelor degrees. Awards at levels 9 and 10 made up more than a further fifth (22%). FET awards, the majority of which were either on or aligned to the NFQ, made up almost a third (32%). Other non-NFQ-aligned qualifications (e.g. from professional bodies) made up 1%.

Figure 2.2 Awards (000s) by NFQ level and NFQ level 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS, IAASA, Irish Tax Institute

*PLSS (SOLAS) data refers to the year 2021

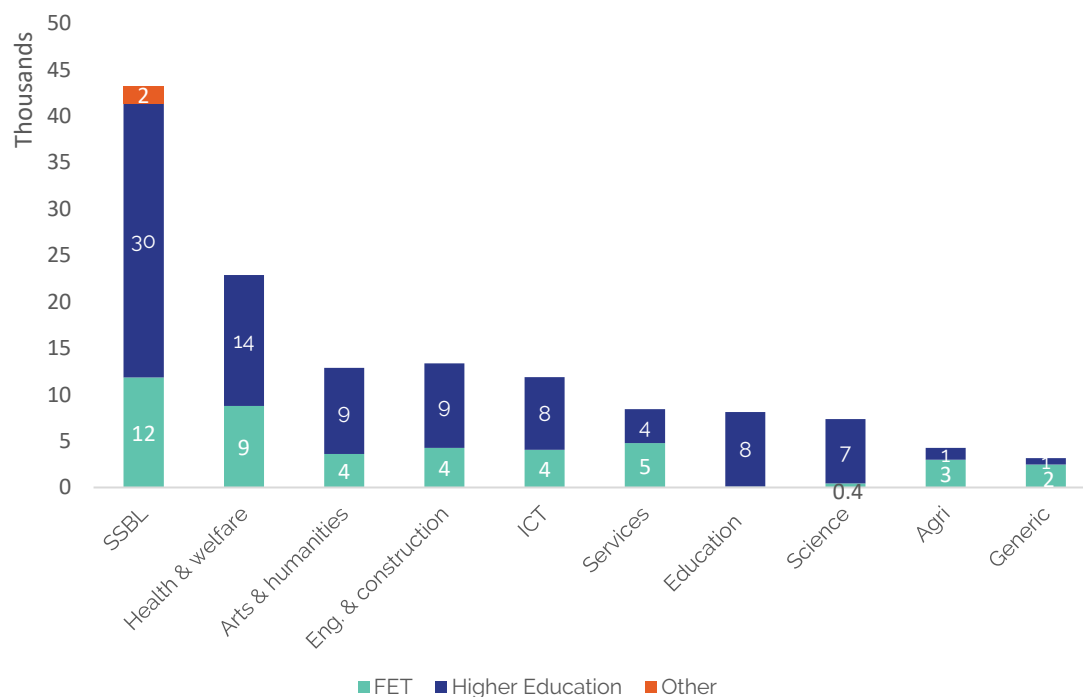
Awards by field and provider sector

Figure 2.3 shows the number of awards made by field and provider sector (e.g. FET, HE). At almost 11,850, the largest number of FET awards (NFQ and non-aligned awards (i.e. other FET)) was for social science, business and law programmes, followed by health and welfare, with almost 8,800 awards. Similarly, in the higher education sector (NFQ 6-10), the largest number of awards were made in social science, business and law (with over 29,500 awards) and health and welfare (approximately 14,100 awards).

While for most fields of learning, higher education awards outnumbered FET awards, the number of FET awards was higher for three fields: generic programmes, agriculture and

vet, and services, where FET sector awards accounted for 78%, 71% and 57% of all awards made in these fields, respectively. The other category refers to professional awards, which relate to social science, business and law awards only.

Figure 2.3 Awards (000s) by provider sector and field of learning, 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS, IAASA, Irish Tax Institute

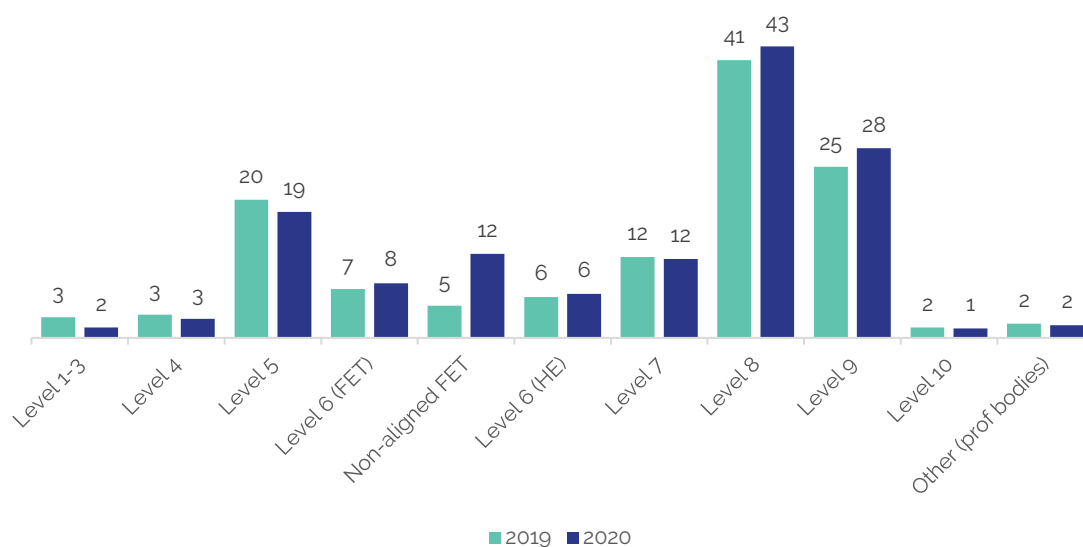
*Some FET data from PLSS (SOLAS) refers to the year 2021

What has changed compared to one year ago?

Changes by NFQ level

Between 2019 and 2020, the number of awards made across the FET, higher and professional education sectors rose by 7%, or nearly 9,200 additional awards (Figure 2.4). The growth was driven almost equally by increases of 4,600 (+12%) and 4,800 (+6%) additional awards respectively in the FET and higher education sectors. In FET, the growth was mostly due to an additional 7,600 awards in the non-NFQ aligned FET category, which more than offset a 12% decline in the number of QQI-FET major awards. In relation to higher education, the number of awards at levels 8 and 9 increased by approximately 2,000 and 2,700 awards respectively.

Figure 2.4 Awards (000s) by NFQ level, 2019 and 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS, IAASA, Irish Tax Institute

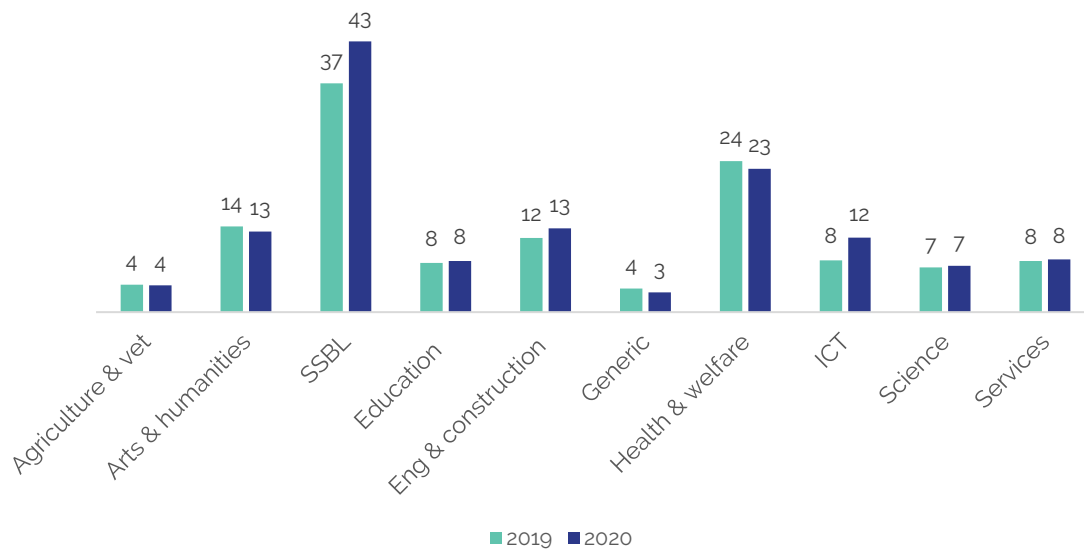
*PLSS (SOLAS) data refers to the year 2021

Changes by field of learning

Despite the 7% increase that occurred between 2019 and 2020, the number of awards decreased for four fields: generic programmes and health and welfare had the largest absolute declines, with falls of approximately 1,300 and 1,200 awards respectively (Figure 2.5). Smaller decreases occurred for arts/humanities and agriculture and veterinary programmes.

However, increases in the remaining fields far exceeded these declines; the growth was particularly strong, in absolute terms, for social science, business and law (SSBL) where there were almost 6,700 additional awards year-on-year (a rise of 18%). The ICT field had the second largest increase, with nearly 3,600 additional awards (representing a 43% growth, due mostly to additional awards in the Other FET category (+2,400) and level 9/10 awards (+873). This was followed by engineering and construction, which increased by 13% (an additional 1,500 awards approximately).

Figure 2.5 Awards (000s) by field 2019 and 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS, IAASA, Irish Tax Institute

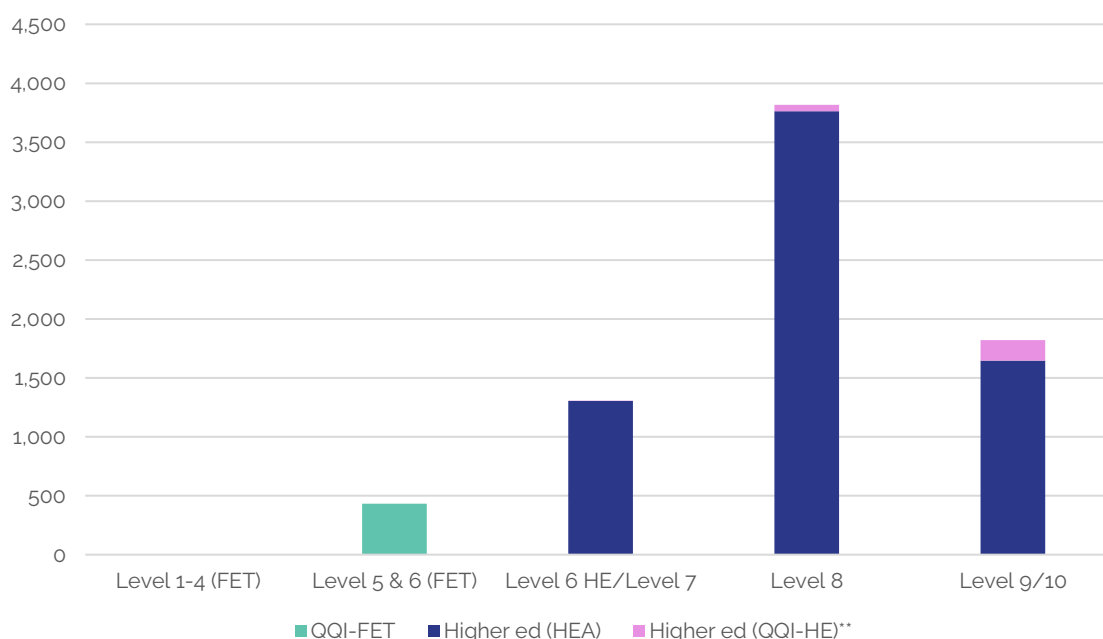
*PLSS (SOLAS) data refers to the year 2021

3. Science Awards

How many awards were made in the science field in 2020?

- There were nearly 7,400 awards in science-related subjects in 2020 (Figure 3.1).
- This field accounted for 5% of all awards in 2020.
- Science awards are concentrated in the higher education sector, with 94% of all awards made in 2020 at levels 6-10; the FET sector accounted for just 6%, one of the smallest shares observed across all fields of learning, except the education field.
- The highest number of awards were made at NFQ level 8 (slightly more than 3,800 awards), accounting for over half of all awards made in this field.
- With 353 awards in 2020, science subjects accounted for the largest number of PhDs awards; (the next highest number of awards was 281, issued for those who studied programmes in social science, business and law).

Figure 3.1 Awards in science by NFQ level and sector, 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

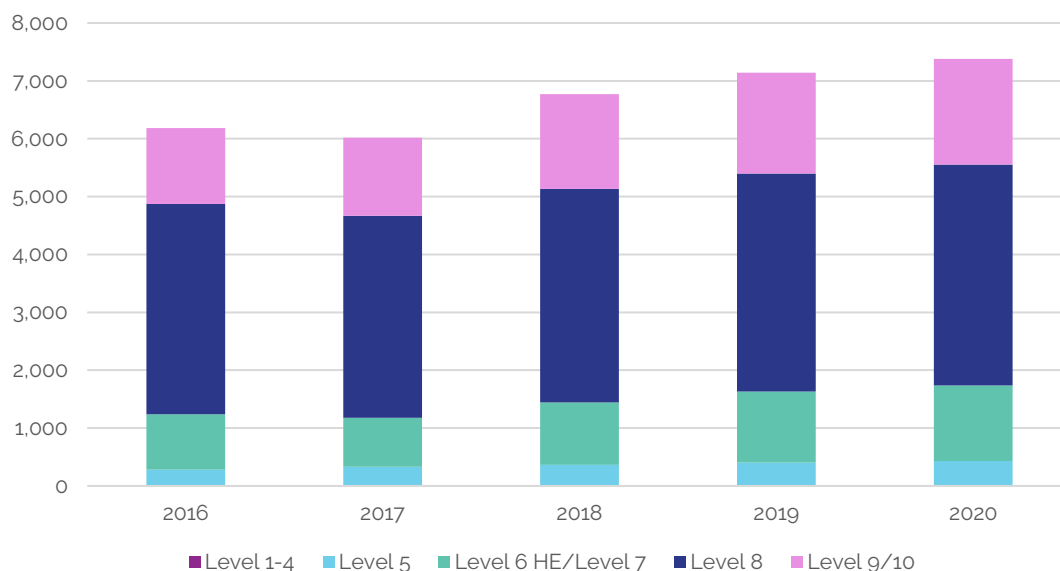
*Excludes 7 Other FET awards

**Higher ed (QOI-HE) awards include only major awards made to learners at private, independent colleges and other non-HEA aided institutions.

How does this compare to preceding years¹?

- Between 2016 and 2020, the number of science awards grew by almost one fifth (19%), amounting to nearly 1,200 additional awards (Figure 3.2).
- The largest increases were at level 9/10 (just over 500 additional awards) and level 6 HE/level 7 (almost 350 awards).
- The number of FET awards also grew strongly, albeit from a small base, due to the increases at level 5, where the number of awards increased by 53%, going from approximately 280 in 2016 to 430 in 2020; the growth was due primarily to an increased number of awards for laboratory techniques (137 extra awards over the period 2016-2020).
- Between 2019 and 2020, the number of science awards rose by 3% (238 extra awards).

Figure 3.2 Awards in science related subjects by NFQ level and year, 2016-2020*



Source: HEA, QQI

*Level 1-4 comprised fewer than 5 awards in 2017 and 2020

¹ This analysis excludes PLSS data, for which a comparable time series is unavailable (PLSS was fully rolled out from 2018). PLSS data represents a negligible share of awards for the science field of learning.

How do the 2020 awards breakdown by detailed field?

Biological, environmental & related sciences: With more than 3,900 awards in 2020, biological, environmental and related sciences accounted for just over one half of all science awards (Table 3.1). Of these, approximately 1,200 were for programmes in **medical, biomedical and pharmaceutical-related** areas, which was similar to the preceding year.

Physical sciences: chemistry made up almost one half of the 1,750 awards in the physical sciences, with almost 400 for pharmaceutical related areas. Physics courses led to approximately 300 awards (mostly at level 8) and earth sciences (e.g. marine or geosciences) courses led to 169 awards. Between 2019 and 2020, the number of awards in physical sciences increased slightly (60 more awards), but there was little change in the numbers in physics and chemistry

Maths and statistics: this included over 204 awards in data analytics related areas, most of which were at level 9; the number of maths and statistics awards increased each year between 2016 and 2020, with 2020 levels nearly 60% greater than in 2016.

Table 3.1 Science awards by sector, NFAQ level and detailed field, 2020*

2020 awards	FET		Higher Education			Total
	NFAQ 5	NFAQ 6 (HE)	NFAQ 7	NFAQ 8	NFAQ 9/10	
Biological, environmental & related, of which		560	505	1,958	895	3,918
Biology		**	134	625	118	888
Biochemistry		31	76	393	168	668
Physical sciences, of which		72	158	1,168	352	1,750
Chemistry		55	104	490	186	835
Physics		**	**	196	78	317
Maths and statistics		**	**	574	386	968
Other science not further defined	431		**	62	**	508
QQI -HE			1	55	175	231
Total awards	431	637	669	3,817	1,821	7,375

Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

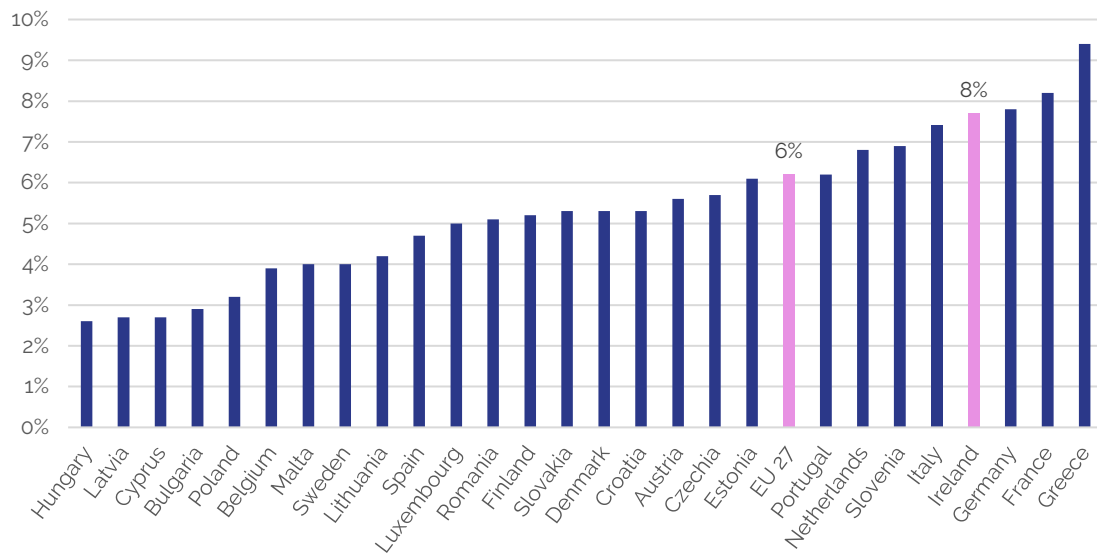
*Excludes a small number (<10) of non-QQI awards made to learners in the FET sector.

**The number of higher education awards in these fields are <30 and are not included for confidentiality reasons

How does Ireland compare internationally in terms of the share of third level graduates in this field?

Ireland's share of third level graduates who had studied science subjects was the 4th highest in the EU, at 8%, above the EU 27 average of 6% (Figure 3.3). Ireland's strong performance in science is due in part to a higher than average share of graduates in biological sciences (including biochemistry).

Figure 3.3. Science graduates as a share of total third level graduates, 2020



Source: Eurostat (date extracted 12.09.2022)

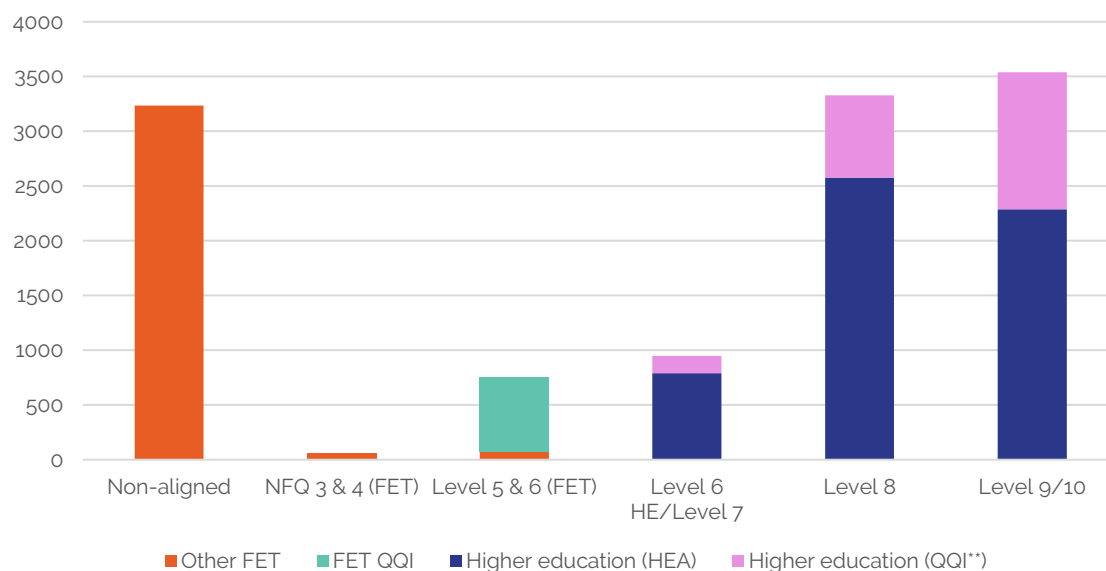
4. ICT Awards

How many awards were made in the ICT field in 2020?

In order to avoid over-estimating the potential supply of skills to ICT occupations (as outlined in the National Skills Bulletin), some FET awards (e.g. ECDL and basic MS Office awards) were deemed to be more relevant to the social science, business and law field and are therefore excluded from the analysis of ICT awards data in this section.

- There were almost 11,900 awards in ICT-related subjects in 2020, nearly 2,200 of which were QQI higher education made to learners in colleges outside the HEA-aided sector (Figure 4.1).
- This field accounted for nearly 9% of all awards in 2020.
- ICT awards were concentrated at the higher end of the National Framework of Qualifications, with over half (58%) of the total in this field made at levels 8-10.
- The non-QQI FET category included awards from CompTIA, CISCO, Microsoft, among others.
- Not included in these numbers were over 200 special purpose and minor awards made in the non-HEA aided sector. Of these three quarters were for data analytics.

Figure 4.1 Awards in ICT by NFAQ level and sector 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

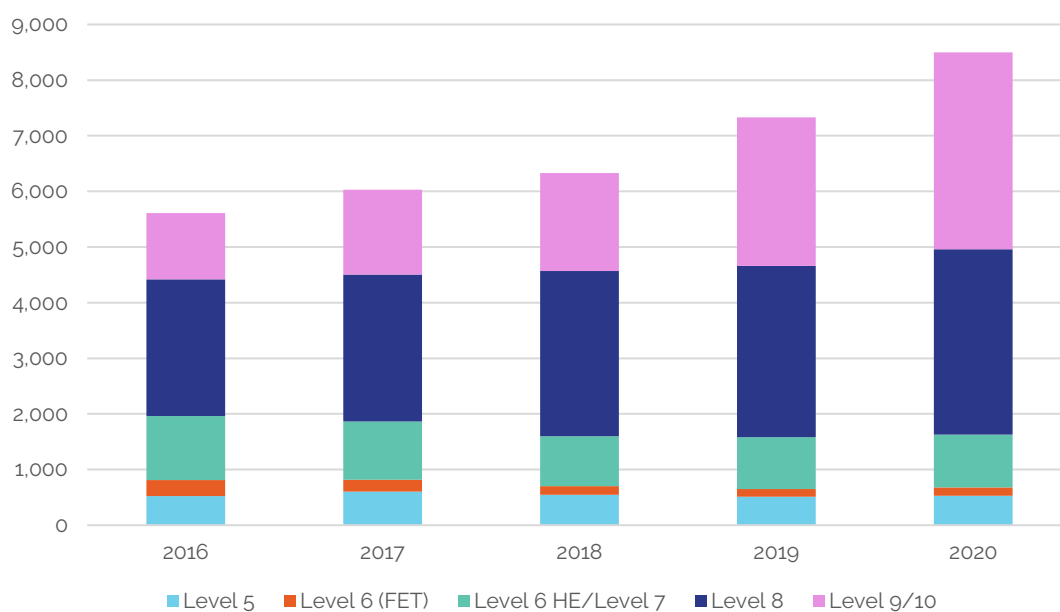
*Other FET awards data is from 2021

**Higher education (QQI) awards include only major awards made to learners at private, independent colleges and other non-HEA aided institutions.

How does this compare to preceding years²?

- Between 2016 and 2020, the total number of ICT awards rose by more than a half (or more than nearly 2,900 additional awards) (Figure 4.2); 55% of this growth was due to increases in major awards made by QQI-HE to learners at private, independent, third level colleges; the highest rate of growth was at levels 9/10, which increased by over 2,300 awards between 2016-2020.
- Compared to 2016, the number of ICT FET awards appears to have fallen by more than 100, although this fall was partly due to a greater shift towards non-QQI and industry awards in the FET sector in more recent years (not illustrated in Figure 4.2).
- Compared to 2019, the total number of ICT awards also grew strongly by nearly 1,200 awards (or 16%), with increases across most NFQ levels, particularly at levels 8 and 9.
- The overall growth between 2019 and 2020 for this field was even stronger (+43%) when non-QQI awards from the FET sector are included mostly due to a strong increase (nearly 2,400 additional awards) in the number of non-NFQ aligned FET awards (not illustrated in the graph).

Figure 4.2 ICT awards by NFQ level 2016-2020



Source: HEA; QQI

² This analysis excludes PLSS data, for which a comparable time series is unavailable (PLSS was fully rolled out from 2018).

How do the 2020 awards breakdown by detailed field?

- At 3,478 in 2020, the highest number of ICT awards was for **software development subjects**, with 60% at level 8 or above (Table 4.1); the number of software development awards made in higher education grew each year over the period 2016-2020, amounting to almost 1,000 additional awards, an increase of 70%.
- Between 2019-20, there was a strong increase in non-QQI awards in ICT, particularly for database/network administration (e.g. CompTIA) related programmes (more than 900 additional awards).

Within ICT, a number of specific areas of direct relevance to the skills needs of the economy cannot be identified by ISCED sub-fields alone. The following subject areas were identified by course titles and appear in the data across more than one detailed field.

- **Security:** there were approximately 950 security related awards in 2020 (e.g. cyber security, cybercrime etc) in the further and higher education sector.
- **Games:** there were 168 awards for games development and animation in higher education; in addition, classified in the arts/humanities field, there were a further 127 FET awards for gaming or animation.
- **Artificial intelligence:** there were 325 awards in higher education in 2020.
- **Data analytics:** there were over 1,600 awards for courses in data analytics, with the vast majority made to learners at private independent third level colleges. In addition, there were approximately 200 data analytics awards also captured in the mathematics and statistics field of learning, examined in Section 3.

Table 4.1 ICT awards by sector, NFQ level and detailed field, 2020*

2020 awards	FET				Higher Education				Total
	NFQ 3-4	NFQ 5	NFQ 6	Non-aligned	NFQ 6	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	
Computer use		25		966	**	82	206	**	1,312
Database/network design & admin		247	75	1,062	**	102	138	224	1,865
Software development, etc		277	117	712	67	206	1,101	998	3,478
Other	56	3	13	496	83	228	1,131	1,035	3,045
QQI-HE					**	131	752	1,253	2,165
Total awards	56	552	205	3,236	200	749	3,328	3,539	11,865

Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

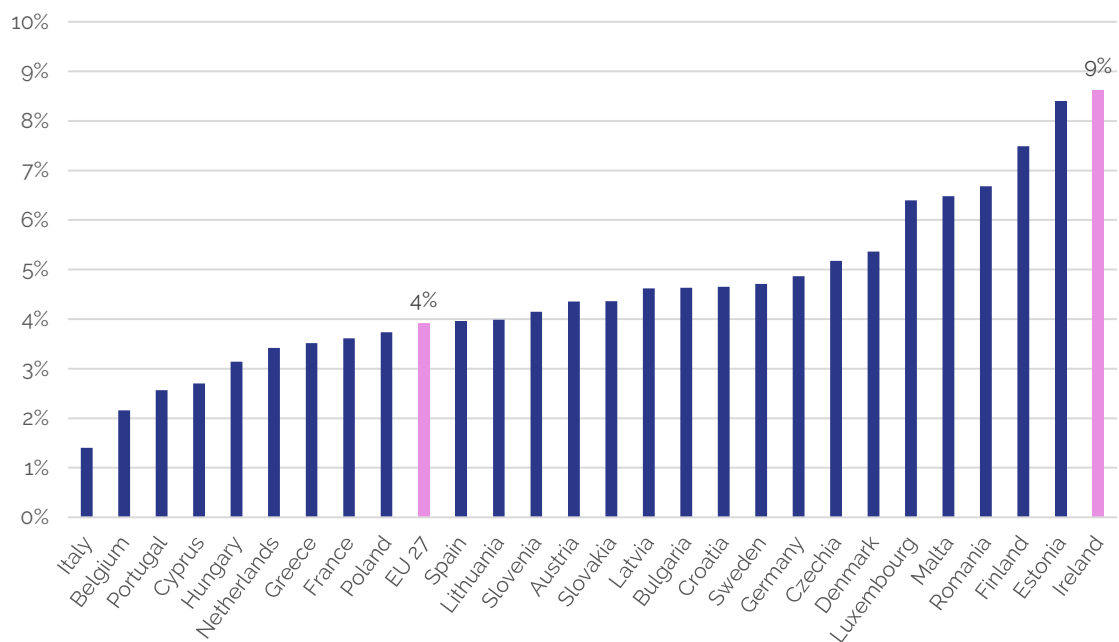
*Other FET awards refer to the year 2021

**The number of HEA awards was less than 30 and has been suppressed for confidentiality reasons

How does Ireland compare internationally in terms of the share of third level graduates in this field?

In 2020, 9% of third level graduates in Ireland had studied ICT related subjects, the highest share in the EU 27 countries (Figure 4.3). Ireland's share of ICT graduates was more than twice that of the EU 27 average (4%).

Figure 4.3 ICT graduates as a share of third level graduates in EU 27 countries, 2020



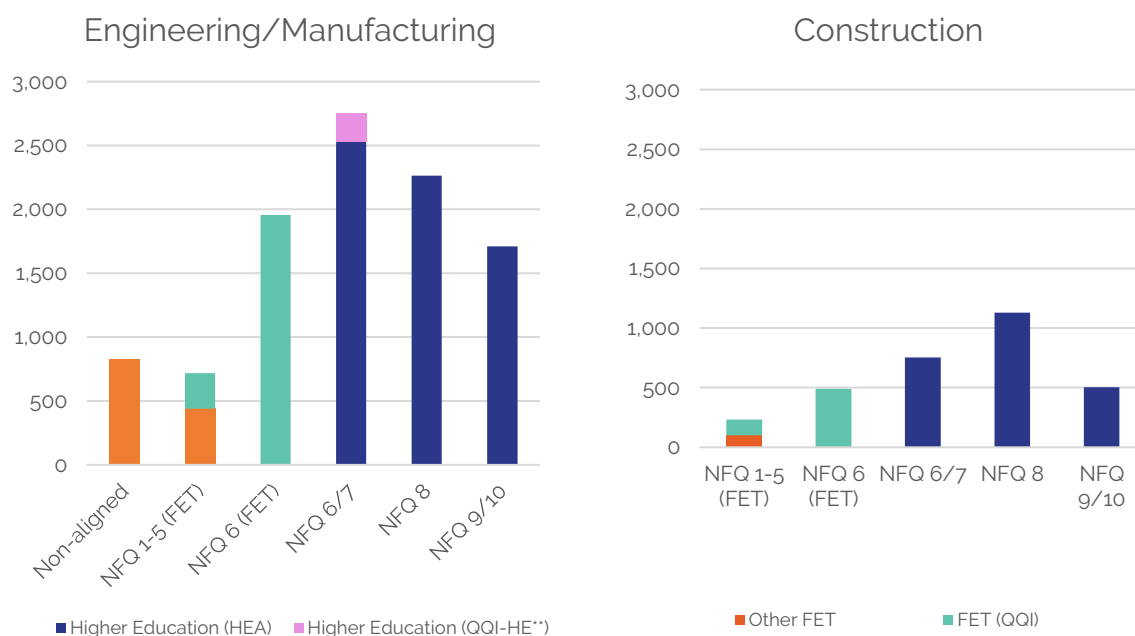
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 12.09.2022)

5. Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction Awards

How many awards were made in the engineering, manufacturing and construction field in 2020?

- There were nearly 13,400 awards in engineering, manufacturing and construction related fields in 2020, with over 10,200 (77%) in engineering/manufacturing and 3,100 (23%) in construction (Figure 5.1).
- This field accounted for 10% of all awards made in 2020.
- At nearly 3,400 awards, level 8 accounted for the largest number of awards in this field; nonetheless, in the engineering subfield, level 6/7 awards outnumbered level 8 awards; level 6/7 awards outnumber level 8 in only one other field (services).
- This field also had the largest number of level 6 FET awards. In fact, engineering, manufacturing and construction accounted for nearly one third of all level 6 FET awards made in 2020, mostly due to the number of qualifying apprentices achieving craft awards (e.g. electrical, carpentry, motor mechanics, plumbing, etc.).

Figure 5.1 Awards in engineering, manuf. & construction by NFQ level, 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI & SOLAS /ETBI

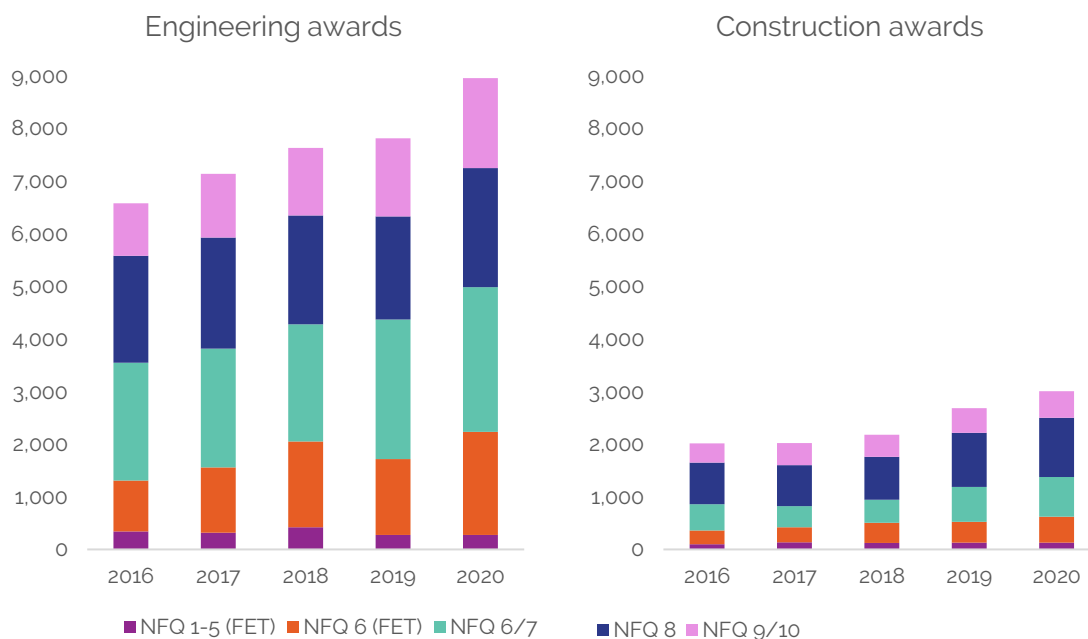
*Other FET awards data is from 2021; excludes levels where the total number of awards made was five or less.

**Higher education awards include approximately 200 level 7 major awards made by QQI to learners at private, independent colleges and other non-HEA aided institutions.

How does this compare to preceding years³?

- Between 2016 and 2020, the number of engineering, manufacturing and construction awards rose by over a third, 39%, representing an additional 3,378 awards (Figure 5.2). An increase at FET level 6 (1,214 additional awards) and levels 9/10 (856 additional awards) accounted for over 60% of the total rise in awards.
- Compared to 2019, there was a 14% increase in the number of awards in 2020 (an additional 1,474 awards).
- **Engineering/manufacturing sub-field:** between 2019 and 2020, the number of engineering/manufacturing awards rose by 15% (over 1,100 additional awards), especially at FET level 6 which saw an increase of 36% (515 awards); when the 'Other FET' data is included (not illustrated in the graph), the total increase in awards amounted to 1,200, or 13%.
- **Construction sub-field:** between 2019 and 2020, the number of construction awards grew by 12% (over 300 additional awards); the increases were observed across most NFQ levels (6 and above), with the highest growth rate in FET level 6 (24%, almost 100 awards); the 'Other FET' awards data did not change significantly over the period.

Figure 5.2 Awards in engineering/manuf. & construction by NFQ level, 2016-2020



Source: HEA, QQI

³This analysis excludes PLSS data, for which a comparable time series is unavailable (PLSS was fully rolled out from 2018).

How do the 2020 awards breakdown by detailed field?

Engineering/manufacturing:

- Of the 10,200 awards made in engineering and manufacturing related fields, the largest detailed field was mechanics, with 2,100 awards; about half of these were made to learners in the FET sector, in particular to those who had taken courses leading to industry certification rather than QQI awards (i.e. within the non-NFQ aligned FET category), almost all of which were for welding and related subjects.
- Combined the electrical and electronic engineering subfields accounted for over 3,200 (or 32%) of all engineering awards; electrical engineering was dominated by craft-electrical awards (FET NFQ level 6), made to 949 qualifying apprentices (i.e. electricians), the highest number in several years and nearly double that observed in 2019 (when there were 499 qualifying electricians); electronic engineering awards were concentrated in the higher education sector.

Construction:

- **Civil and building engineering** made up nearly 900 awards at levels 8-10; while the number of awards had been declining until recently, gains made in 2018 and 2019 were repeated in 2020, when the number of awards rose by more than 70, to reach their highest levels in several years; nearly 280 awards were made in higher education for **quantity surveying**, the highest number over the period 2016-2020.
- **Architecture and town planning**: there were over 600 architecture related awards in 2020; of these, over 171 awards were made to learners on RIAI accredited programmes⁴, almost on a par with 2019 levels, and 22% higher than in 2016.

Table 5.1 Engineering/manuf. & construction awards by NFQ level & detailed field, 2020*

2020 awards	FET				Higher Education				Total
	NFQ 3 & 4	NFQ 5	NFQ 6	Non-aligned	NFQ 6	NFQ 7**	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	
Engineering & manufacturing, inc	336	382	1,951	826	622	2,132	2,263	1,711	10,223
Chemical					65	102	122	249	538
Electricity & energy	202	4	1,056	17	49	99	158	123	1,708
Electronic	13	6	79	15	125	584	553	145	1,520
Mechanics & metal	4	22	357	666	47	372	518	118	2,104
Food processing	9	0	0	0	124	35	224	131	523
Construction, inc	70	162	495	31	219	535	1,129	505	3,146
Architecture etc	15	32	27	5	***	***	317	190	604
Civil & building eng.	55		281	26	213	488	699	196	1,958
Total awards	406	544	2,446	857	841	2,667	3,392	2,216	13,369

Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

*Other FET awards refer to the year 2021

**Includes 221 QQI-HE (private) awards in Engineering at level 7

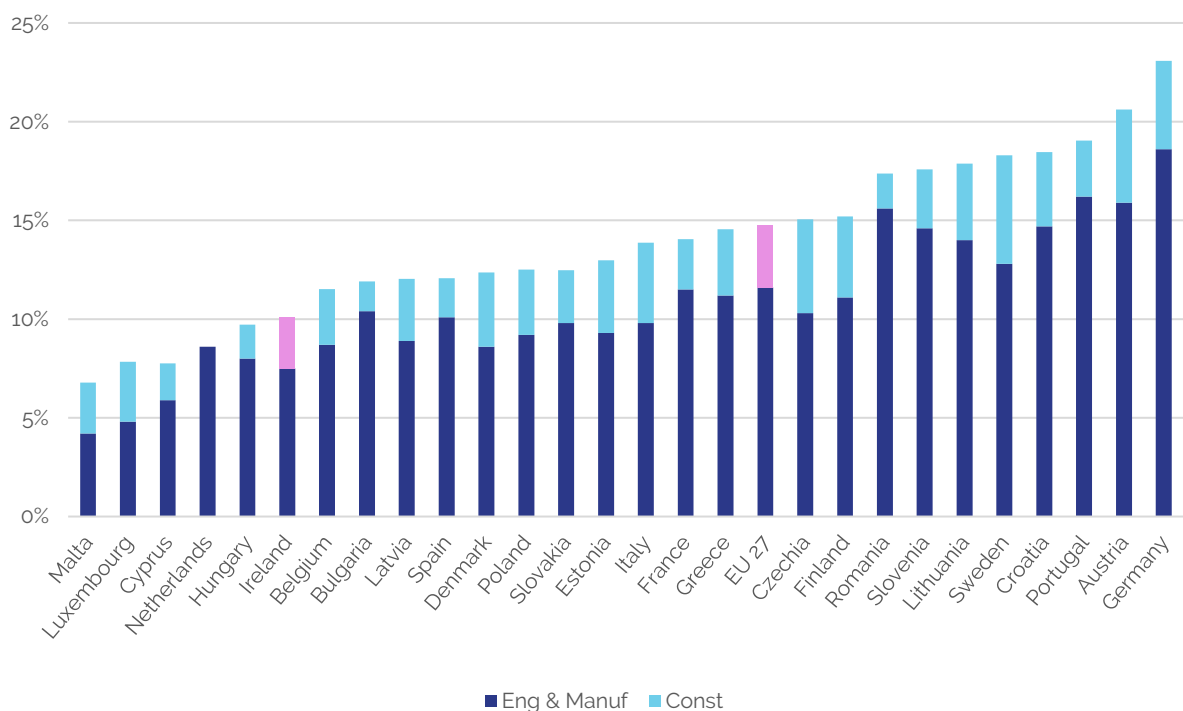
***The number of HEA awards was less than 30 and has been suppressed for confidentiality reasons

⁴ <https://www.riai.ie/careers-in-architecture/education/accredited-programmes>; TU Dublin, UCD, UL, WIT and CIT/UCC

How does Ireland compare internationally in terms of the share of third level graduates in this field?

In 2020, the share of third level graduates who had studied engineering, manufacturing or construction related subjects was 10%, which was below the EU 27 average of 15% (Figure 5.3). The comparatively low share of graduates in this field was due to lower than average shares for engineering and manufacturing fields (7.5% for Ireland, compared to 11.6% for the EU 27); the share of construction related graduates, at 2.6% in contrast, was almost at the EU 27 average of 3.2%.

Figure 5.3 Engineering & construction graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2020



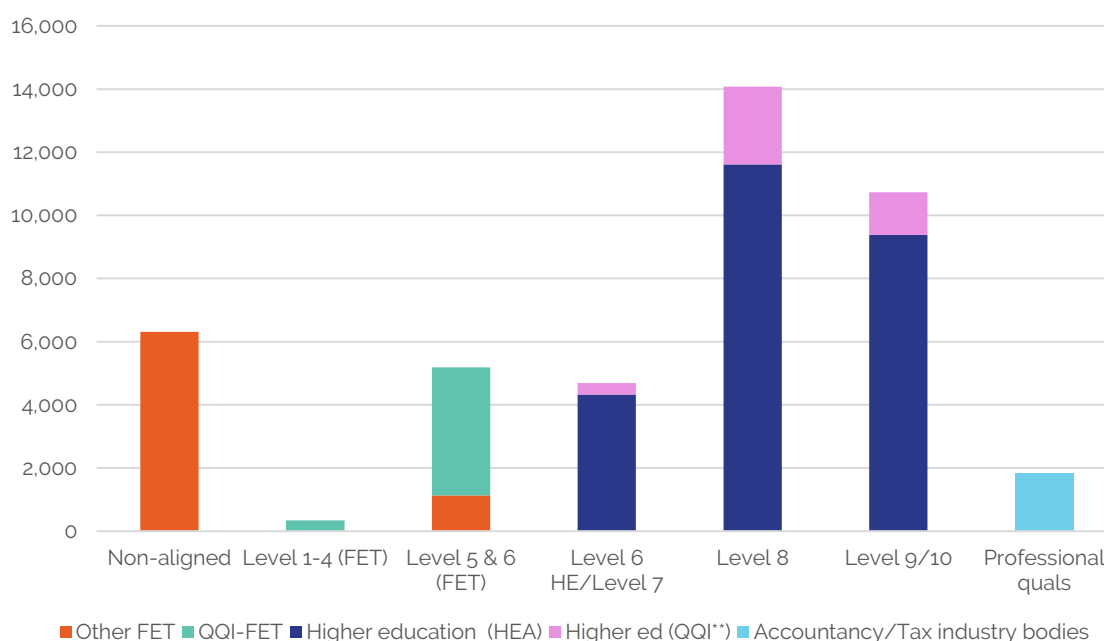
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 12.09.2022)

6. Social Science, Business & Law Awards

How many awards were made in the SSBL field in 2020?

- There were nearly 43,200 awards in social science, business and law (SSBL) related subjects in 2020 (Figure 6.1).
- This field is the largest field in terms of the number of awards made, making up 32% of all awards in 2020.
- Over one half (57%) were made at level 8 or above (nearly 25,000 awards).
- With almost 4,200 QQI-HE awards in 2020, private, independent third level colleges made up a tenth of all awards in this field.
- Over a quarter of SSBL awards were in the FET sector, making up nearly 11,850.⁵
- Approximately 1,800 individuals obtained qualifications through professional bodies (i.e. accountancy and tax qualifications).

Figure 6.1 Social science, business & law awards by NFQ level and sector, 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI, IAASA, Irish Tax Institute

*Other FET awards data is from 2021

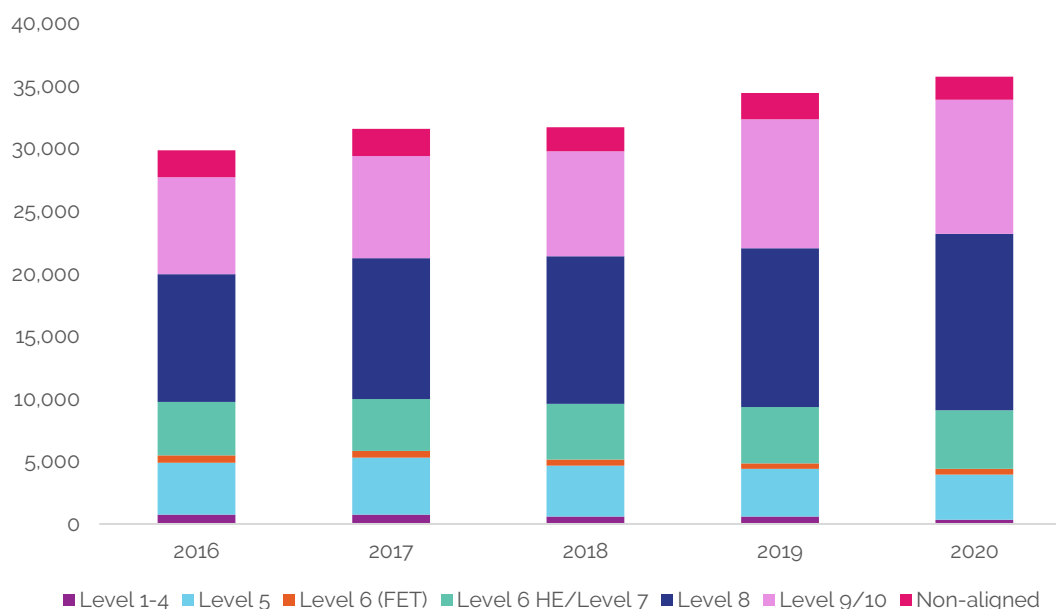
**Higher ed (QQI-HE) awards include only major awards made to learners at private, independent colleges and other non-HEA aided institutions.

⁵ The Other FET sector includes approximately 3,600 learners on programmes leading to ECDL and basic MS Office certification; awards made to these learners are categorised in the SOLAS/ETBI PLSS as ICT awards in line with the ISCED field of learning classification. However, for the purposes of this report, we have reclassified them to include them in the SSBL broad field and the 'secretarial and office work' detailed field. This prevents a situation where these 3,600 awards may otherwise be counted as potential skills for ICT related occupations.

How does this compare to preceding years⁶?

- Between 2016 and 2020, the number of SSBL awards grew strongly by 20% (almost 5,900 additional awards), as shown in Figure 6.2.
- The number of SSBL awards increased by 4% between 2019 and 2020 (just over 1,300 awards), although the growth was even stronger (at 18%) when non-QQI FET awards are included (not illustrated in the graph).
- The increases in awards made in this field were due to rises in the number of people gaining awards in higher education, particularly at level 8 (+11%, when compared to 2019).
- In the FET sector, the number of QQI awards declined by approximately 1,100, when compared to 2016, with a fall observed across each NFQ level (or group of levels); FET-QQI awards also fell between 2019 and 2020, albeit by a smaller amount (almost 450 awards); however, when PLSS data is included, the total number of FET awards (QQI plus non-QQI) was more than 4,900 higher in 2020 than in 2019, an increase of 71%; a large share of this increase related to additional learners gaining awards in the secretarial work field (e.g. ECDL programmes).
- The number of learners gaining qualifications from professional bodies (accountancy and taxation) decreased by 13% (or 265 individuals) in 2020 compared to 2019 (non-aligned category in Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2. Social science, business & law (SSBL) awards by NFQ level 2016-2020



Source: HEA, QQI

⁶This analysis excludes PLSS data, for which a comparable time series is unavailable (PLSS was fully rolled out from 2018).

How do the 2020 awards breakdown by detailed field?

- With nearly 9,400 awards, **management and administration** was the largest detailed field, accounting for a fifth of the total SSBL awards. Most were in the higher education sector, particularly at postgraduate level (NFQ 9).
- **Secretarial and office work awards** made up almost 5,300 awards and were made almost exclusively in the FET sector; approximately 1,200 of these awards were made in business or office administration (NFQ 5 and 6), with most of the remainder being for digital skills (e.g. text processing) made in the non-aligned FET category.
- **Accounting/tax** related awards made up nearly 2,800 awards, with a further 1,840 qualifiers through professional bodies, to give a total of 4,600 awards in 2020; in addition, there were approximately 1,000 awards categorised within the broader business, administration and law field that were made to learners who had studied for honours bachelor degrees in commerce (e.g. BComm and BComm international qualifications) although not all BComm graduates go on to train as accountants.
- There were approximately 600 awards in economics (all from the higher education sector); however, as many learners opt to study economics as part of an arts degree (and therefore not captured in this field of learning), this number is likely to be the minimum number of awards for economics.
- SSBL had the highest number of learners achieving awards that were neither on nor aligned to the NFQ at over 6,300, which represented 15% of all SSBL awards.

Table 6.1 Social science, business and law awards by NFQ level and detailed field, 2020

2020 awards	FET				Higher Education				Prof. bodies	Total
	NFQ 1-4	NFQ 5	NFQ 6	Non-aligned	NFQ 6	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10		
Social sciences & journalism, inc		951	7	0	109	328	2,771	1,908		6,074
Economics						**	348	261		612
Psychology					74	**	634	576		1,366
Business, admin & law	340	2,911	1,320	6,316	1,538	2,349	8,840	7,475		31,089
Accounting & tax			645	611	31	223	785	465		2,760
Finance				23		**	302	605		937
Management & admin		222	518	1,593	607	1,259	1,852	3,315		9,366
Marketing		96		488	56	214	862	833		2,549
Secretarial***	258	1,307	74	3,601	**	**				5,258
Sales	82	49			137	80	68	145		561
Law		195			37	75	1,514	608		2,429
QQI -HE awards					66	301	2,468	1,351		4,186
Social sciences, & journalism					4	58	251	91		404
Business & admin					62	243	2,217	1,260		3,782
Professional (accounting + tax)									1,840	1,840
Total awards	340	3,862	1,327	6,316	1,713	2,978	14,079	10,734	1,840	43,189

Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI, IAASA and Irish Tax Institute

*Other FET awards refer to the year 2021

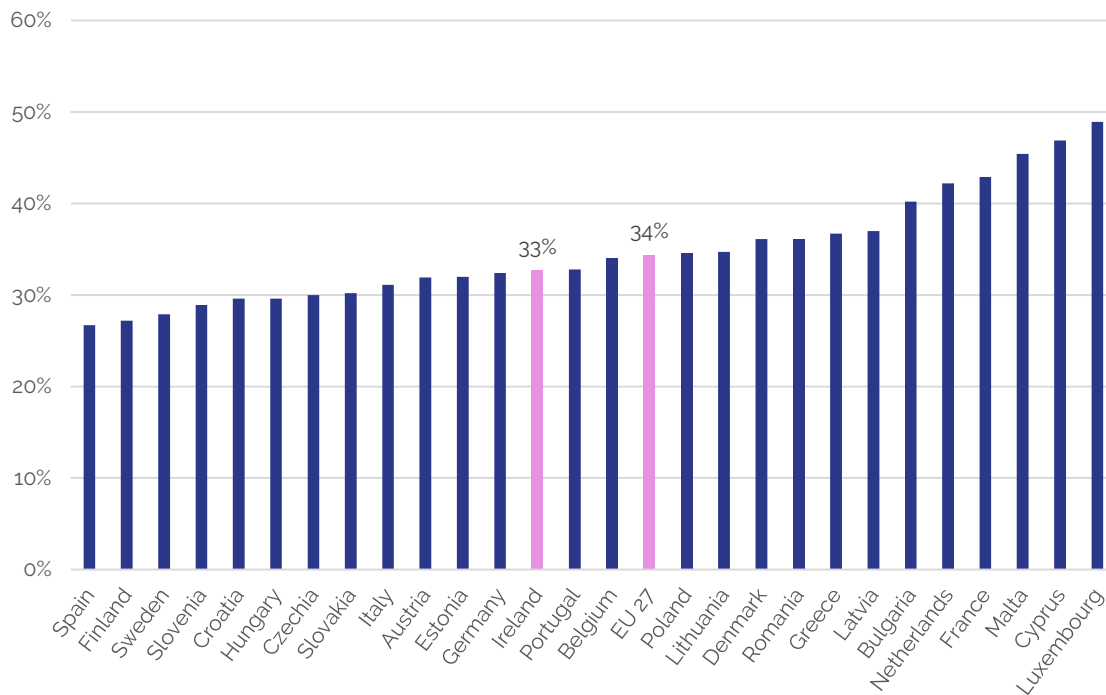
**The number of HEA awards was less than 30 and has been suppressed for confidentiality reasons

***Includes approximately 3,600 learners from the ICT field, which were recategorized for the purposes of this report in the SSBL field (Secretarial and office work) to avoid overestimating the potential supply of skills to ICT occupations.

How does Ireland compare internationally in terms of the share of third level graduates in this field?

In the year 2020, the total share of social science, business and law graduates in Ireland was 33%, only marginally lower than the EU 27 average of 34% (Figure 6.3). Out of the 27 EU countries, Ireland was ranked in 15th position, with 14 countries having a higher share of SSBL graduates amongst all third level graduates.

Figure 6.3 SSBL graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2020



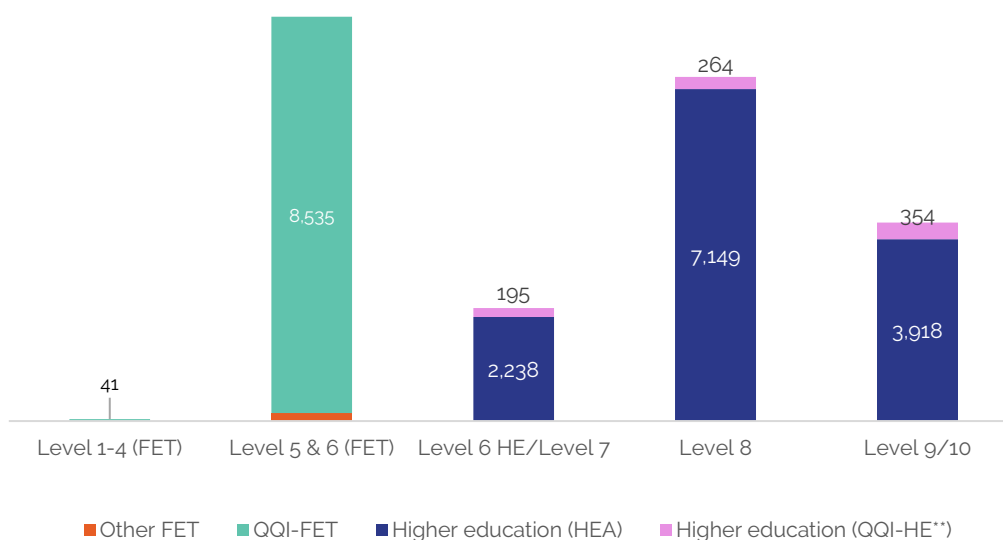
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 12.09.2022)

7. Health and Welfare Awards

How many awards were made in the health & welfare field in 2020?

- There were 22,900 awards in health and welfare subjects in 2020 (Figure 7.1).
- With 17% of total awards in 2020, the health and welfare field was the second largest field in terms of numbers of awards made; only social science, business and law had a higher share at 32%.
- In 2020, the highest number of awards in this field, at more than 7,400, was at level 8 (e.g. nursing, medical or therapy programmes), followed by level 5, at nearly 7,000 awards (e.g. childcare, healthcare support, and nursing studies).
- Of the postgraduate awards (typically NFQ 9/10), more than 250 were for PhDs.
- Almost all awards in this field were either on or aligned with the NFQ; most FET awards were made by QQI-FET, although nearly 180 were made by other awarding bodies (e.g. BTEC Health and social care award) and were aligned to the NFQ via other National Qualification Frameworks⁷.

Figure 7.1 Awards in health and welfare, by NFQ level, 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE & SOLAS

*Other FET awards data is from 2021. It excludes 25 non-aligned awards.

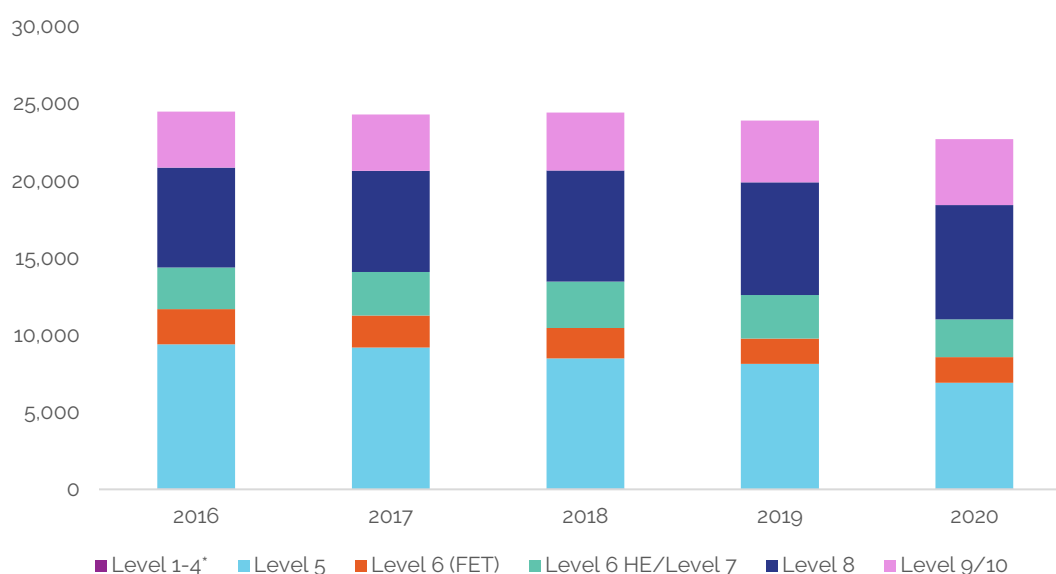
**Higher ed (QQI-HE) awards include only major awards made to learners at private, independent colleges and other non-HEA aided institutions.

⁷ <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Qualifications%20can%20Cross%20Boundries%202019.pdf>

How does this compare to preceding years⁸?

- Between 2016 and 2020, the number of health and welfare awards fell by almost 1,800, or 7% (Figure 7.2).
- Similarly, there was a decrease of 5% (approximately 1,200 awards) in 2020 compared to 2019.
- The year-on-year decline between 2019 and 2020 was due to a fall in the number of learners achieving awards at NFQ levels 5, 6/ 7, and to a lesser extent level 10; the fall was greatest for awards such as healthcare support and health service skills (level 5); the declines at level 6 (HE)/level 7 were due, in part, to falls in areas such as paramedical/medical technology and social care subjects.
- In contrast, between 2019 and 2020, there were increases at levels 8 (+2%) and particularly at level 9 (+6%, or nearly 250 additional awards).
- The number of awards made to learners at private, independent, third level colleges also grew; most of the growth related to counselling and psychotherapy awards, although there was a strong rise in the number of postgraduate awards in pharmaceutical business related areas, which exceeded 200 awards in 2020.

Figure 7.2. Health and welfare awards by NFQ level 2016-2020



Source: HEA; QQI-FET & QQI-HE

^{*}Awards at levels 1-4 amounted to fewer than 50 in each year.

⁸ This analysis excludes PLSS data, for which a comparable time series is unavailable (PLSS was fully rolled out from 2018).

How do the 2020 awards breakdown by detailed field?

There was a relatively even breakdown of health and welfare awards in this broad field, with approximately 48% for health related studies (e.g. medical and nursing) and 52% for welfare related subjects (e.g. social work, childcare etc).

Nursing & caring: three quarters (75%) of awards in nursing and caring were made in the higher education sector, while one quarter (25%) were in the FET sector; nearly one half of all nursing and caring awards (46%) were made at level 8 (2,259), the minimum level requirement for entry to nursing occupations; a further 1,220 award were made at level 5; captured in a separate detailed field of learning (welfare) were over 2,000 awards in healthcare support.

Childcare and youth work: this detailed field includes awards made to those working (or intending to work) in early years education; at levels 5 and 6, there were over 3,400 awards in the FET sector and almost 1,500 further awards in the higher education sector.

Of note, under a separate field of learning (Education awards – examined in Section 10 of this report), there were nearly 300 level 7 and level 8 awards in early childhood care and education, as well as nearly 900 level 6 awards for leadership/inclusion in early years settings. This brings the total number of early childhood care and education related awards at levels 5-9 across the two broad fields of learning to over 6,000.

Table 7.1 Health and welfare awards by NFQ level and detailed field, 2020*

2020 awards	FET				Higher Education				Total
	NFQ 1-4	NFQ 5	NFQ 6	Non-aligned	NFQ 6	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	
Health, including		1,331	10	25	341	421	5,247	3,499	10,874
Medicine					**	85	1,323	533	1,941
Nursing & caring		1,220			**	56	2,259	1,423	4,958
Dental studies					34	77	97	**	208
Pharmacy		24			99	51	197	228	599
Welfare, including	41	5,657	1,710		349	1,127	1,902	419	11,205
Childcare & youth	41	2,012	1,409		57	523	832	67	4,941
Social work etc.		3,645	301		172	531	1,020	306	5,975
QQI-HE					3	192	264	354	813
Total awards	41	6,988	1,720	25	693	1,740	7,413	4,272	22,892

Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

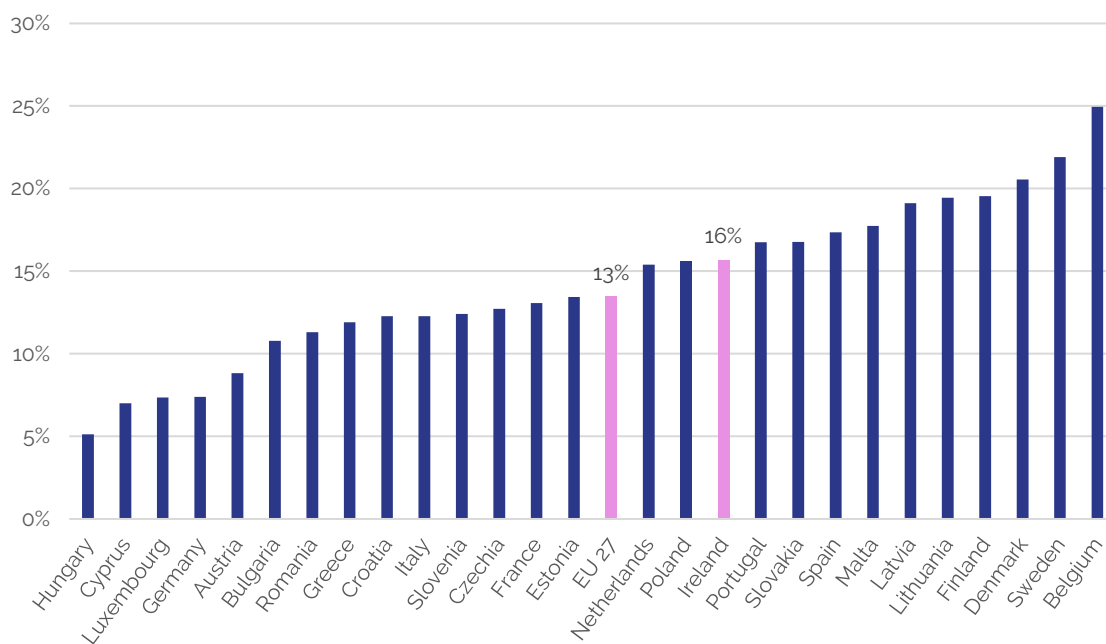
*Other FET awards refer to the year 2021

**The number of higher education awards in these fields are <10 and are not included for confidentiality reasons

How does Ireland compare internationally in terms of the share of third level graduates in this field?

Ireland's share of third level graduates who had studied health/welfare programmes was higher than the EU average, at 16% and 13% respectively, driven mainly by higher shares in nursing and in welfare; Ireland's share of medical graduates was below the EU average. Out of the 27 EU countries, Ireland was ranked in 11th position, with 10 countries having a higher share of health & welfare graduates amongst all third level graduates in 2020.

Figure 7.3 Health and welfare graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2020



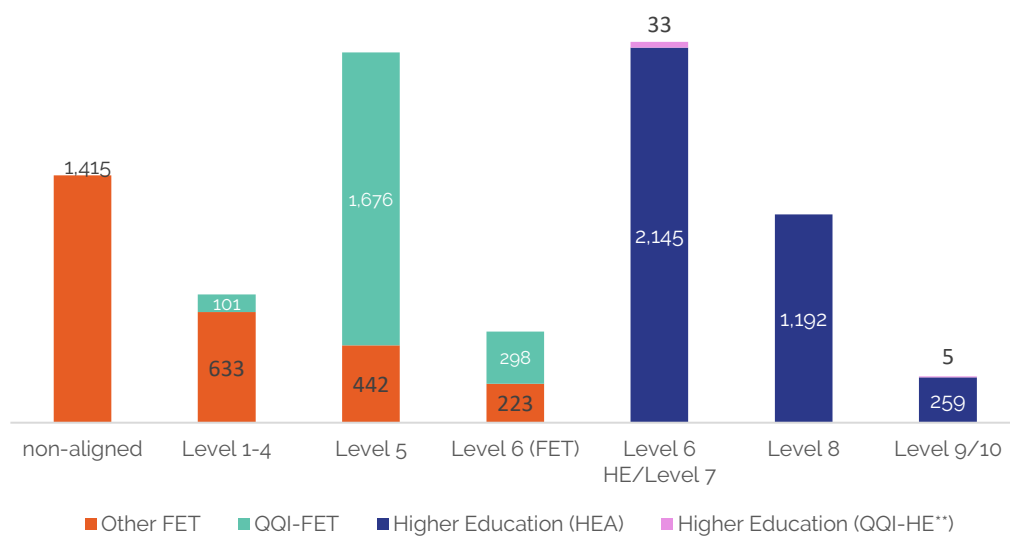
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 12.09.2022)

8. Services Awards

How many awards were made in the services field in 2020?

- There were more than 8,400 awards in services related subjects in 2020, making up 6% of the total in FET and higher education (Figure 8.1).
- There were over 1,400 awards that were neither on nor aligned to the NFQ; these were typically made by industry bodies (e.g. Road Safety Authority, Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council, etc).
- The FET sector accounted for more than half (57%) of services awards; only the agriculture/vet and generic programmes fields had a higher share of FET awards.
- With 2,178 awards, level 6/7 higher education had the largest number of awards, which was closely followed by 2,118 at level 5; these include awards made by QQI and a small number made by other awarding bodies whose qualifications are aligned to the UK's National Qualification's Framework⁹. These awarding bodies include City and Guilds and CIBTAC, among others.
- Along with engineering, manufacturing and construction, the services fields was one of the few fields where level 6/7 awards outnumbered level 8 awards.

Figure 8.1. Awards in the services field of learning NFQ level 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE & SOLAS

*Other FET awards data is from 2021

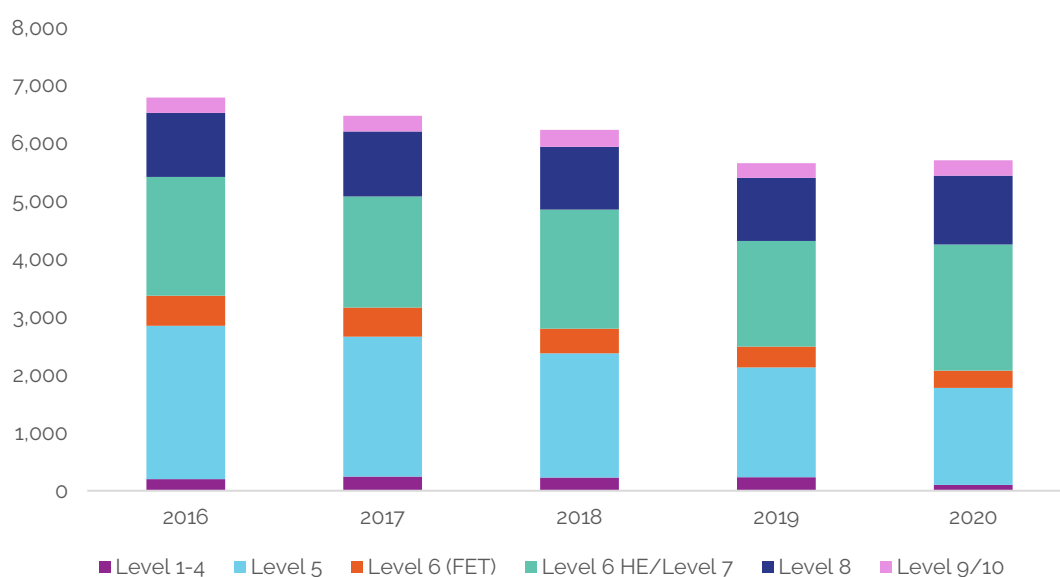
**Higher ed (QQI-HE) awards include only major awards made to learners at private, independent colleges and other non-HEA aided institutions.

⁹ SOLAS assigned an NFQ level to non-QQI awards, based on the document 'Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries'. <https://www.qqi.ie/Downloads/Qualifications%20can%20Cross%20Boundaries%202019.pdf>

How does this compare to preceding years¹⁰?

- Between 2016 and 2020, the number of services awards fell by 16% (or 1,100 fewer awards) – see Figure 8.2.
- Much of the decline observed between 2016 and 2020 was due to a fall in the number of awards at NFQ level 5 (-37% or almost 1,000 awards); the falls were most notable for hair/beauty and sports related awards.
- Declines occurred each year over the period 2016-2019, although there was a slight increase of 1% (almost 50 additional awards) between 2019 and 2020; the 2019-2020 increase was even stronger (+3%, or 244 additional awards) once non-QQI FET data (not illustrated in the graph) is included.
- The increases between 2019-2020 were most notable at NFQ levels 6/7 (+19%) and level 8 (+9%); however most of these gains were cancelled out by the declines in FET at NFQ levels 1-6.
- Not included in Figure 8.2 are approximately 2,700 'Other FET' awards (i.e. non-QQI-FET awards), approximately 200 more than that observed one year earlier.

Figure 8.2 Services awards by NFQ level 2016-2020



Source: HEA; QQI-FET & QQI-HE

¹⁰ This analysis excludes PLSS data, for which a comparable time series is unavailable (PLSS was fully rolled out from 2018).

How do the 2020 awards breakdown by detailed field?

In terms of detailed fields, hotel & catering, followed closely by sports, had the largest number of awards at approximately 1,900 and 1,800 respectively; combined these two detailed fields made up 44% of all services awards in 2020.

- More than half of **sports** awards (56%) were made in the FET sector (mostly at level 5).
- **Hotel & catering** awards were distributed more evenly between the FET and higher education sectors; within higher education just under half (45%) of all hotel & catering awards in 2020 were for culinary related programmes (total of 410 awards), broadly unchanged when compared to 2019 although lower than the 500 awards observed in 2016; in addition there were 236 FET awards (levels 4 and 6), bringing the total of cooking/culinary related awards across FET and higher education to nearly 650 awards.
- **Transport services**: of the non-NFQ aligned FET awards made in this detailed field, over 400 were for driving skills (e.g. HGV, delivery driver) and a further 300 were for forklift operations.
- **Occupational health and safety** awards in the FET sector related primarily to learners on First Aid Responder courses.
- **Security services**: the majority of awards in this field were from the higher education sector; the number of level 6 higher education awards rose from approximately 70 in 2019 to 650 in 2020; this is largely attributed to nearly 550 awards for customs clearance in 2020.

Table 8.1 Services awards by NFQ level and detailed field, 2020*

2020 awards	FET				Higher Education				Total
	NFQ 1-4	NFQ 5	NFQ 6 (FET)	Non-aligned	NFQ 6	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	
Personal services, inc	728	1,995	521	450	417	783	960	144	5,998
Hair & beauty	245	763	202	127					1,337
Hotel, rest & catering	437	241	53	233	278	366	218	42	1,868
Sports	46	707	205	69	59	260	444	49	1,839
Travel, tourism, leisure		284	61	21	80	157	298	53	954
Transport services		31		740	0	47	60	0	878
Security services	6	67		0	647	148	37	33	938
Occupational health & safety		25		225	**	99	135	82	570
Non-HEA(QQI-HE)					9	24		5	38
Total awards	734	2,118	521	1,415	1,073	1,101	1,192	264	8,422

Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

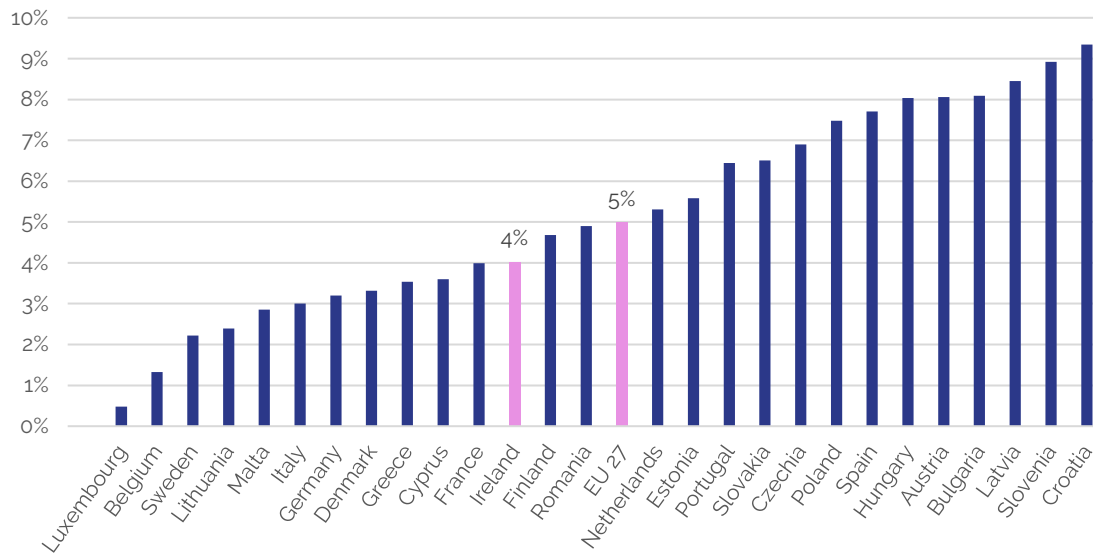
*Other FET awards refer to the year 2021

**Excludes a small number of HEA awards with fewer than 30 awards

How does Ireland compare internationally in terms of the share of third level graduates in this field?

At 4%, the share of third level graduates in Ireland who had studied services-related subjects is slightly lower than the EU 27 average (5%) – see Figure 8.3. While Ireland had the second highest share of hotel & catering graduates (1%) amongst all EU 27 countries (1.2% in Finland), its share in other detailed fields (e.g. sports, travel & tourism, transport services) was lower than the EU 27 average. Out of the 27 EU countries, Ireland was in 16th position in 2020, which was an improvement on its 18th place ranking in 2019.

Figure 8.3 Services graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2020



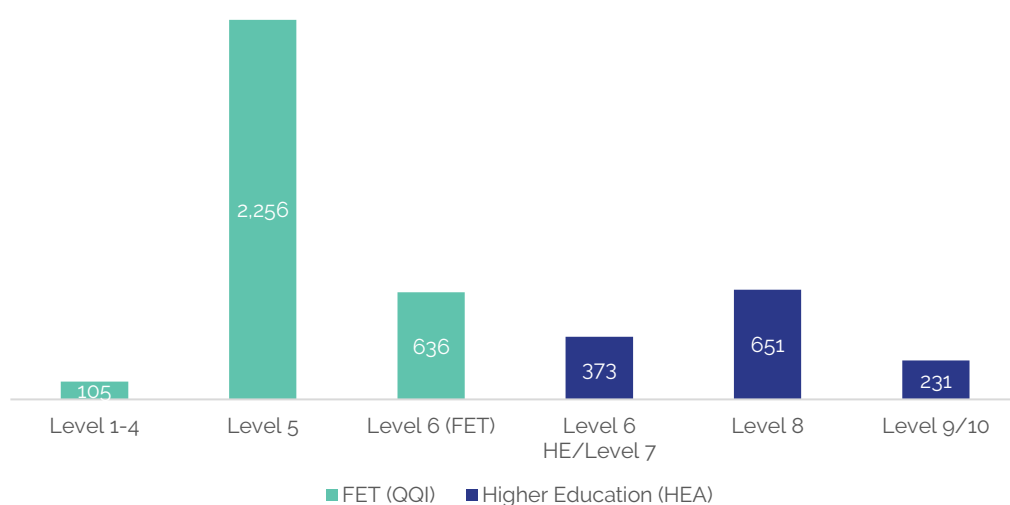
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 12.09.2022)

9. Agriculture & Vet Awards

How many awards were made in agriculture and vet in 2020?

- There were almost 4,300 awards in agriculture/vet related subjects in 2020 (Figure 9.1).
- This field made up just 3% of all awards made in 2020, the second smallest field of learning in terms of awards (after generic programmes).
- As in previous years, the majority of FET awards in this field (1,749 awards, or 58%) were made to learners at TEAGASC centres, rather than those at Education and Training Boards (ETBs); this was the only field of learning where ETBs are not the primary education training provider of FET awards.
- Agriculture/vet awards are concentrated in the FET sector, which accounted for 71% of all awards in this field in 2020; only the generic programmes field had a higher share in FET (at 73%).

Figure 9.1. Agriculture & vet awards by NFQ level, 2020



Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE

Excludes a small number (<10) FET awards in the 'Other FET' category

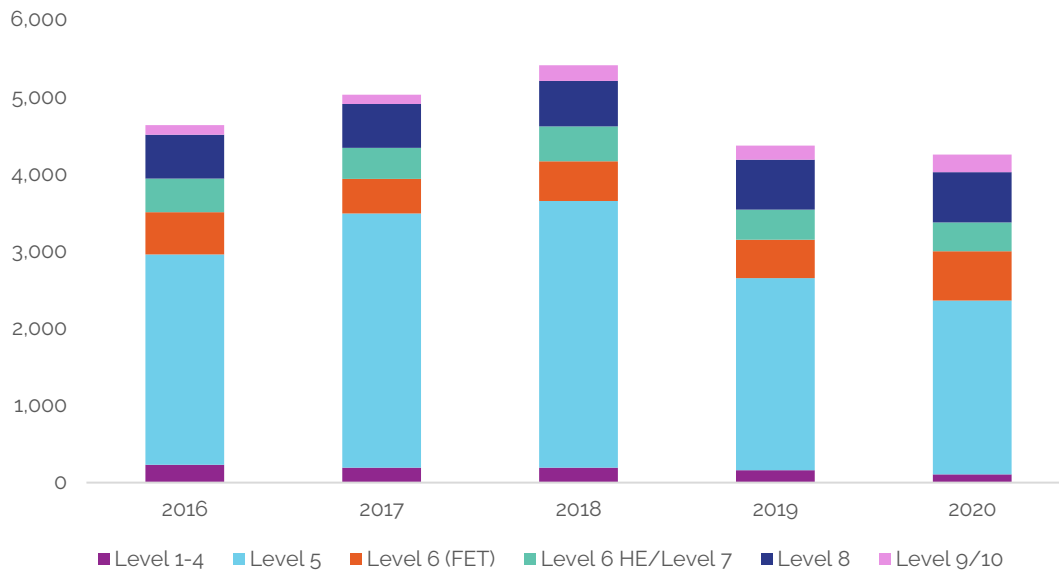
How does this compare to preceding years¹¹?

- Between 2016 and 2020, the number of agriculture and vet awards fell by 8% (almost 400 awards).

¹¹ This analysis excludes PLSS data, for which a comparable time series is unavailable (PLSS was fully rolled out from 2018).

- In absolute terms, the 2016-2020 decline was especially strong at NFQ level 5, where the number of awards fell by 468 (or 17%) – see Figure 9.2; most of the fall was for the 'agriculture' award title.
- Over the period 2019-2020, there was a relatively smaller decline of 3% (just over 100 awards), with FET-QQI level 6 awards increasing by 28% (140 extra awards) and level 9/10 awards going up by 27% (nearly 50 awards).

Figure 9.2. Agriculture and veterinary awards by NFQ level 2016-2020



Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE

How do the 2020 awards breakdown by detailed field?

Two thirds of all awards made in this field were for agriculture related studies; of these almost three quarters (72%) were made in the FET sector. Many of these FET awards are likely to be related to the requirements for Government (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) payments, such as the Young Farmers Scheme, where farmers may receive a payment, provided they meet certain conditions, including holding an education qualification in agriculture.

Veterinary awards in the FET sector related mostly to animal care/science. In higher education, awards were mostly for veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing.

Table 9.1 Agriculture/Vet awards by NQF level and detailed field, 2020

2020 awards	FET			Higher Education			Total
	NQF 1-4	NQF 5	NQF 6 (FET)	NQF 6/7	NQF 8	NQF 9/10	
Agriculture	0	1,535	511	193	449	143	2,831
Horticulture	104	159	73	53	*	*	420
Forestry	0	14	5	*	*	0	51
Veterinary	1	548	47	106	162	85	950
Total awards	105	2,256	636	373	651	231	4,252

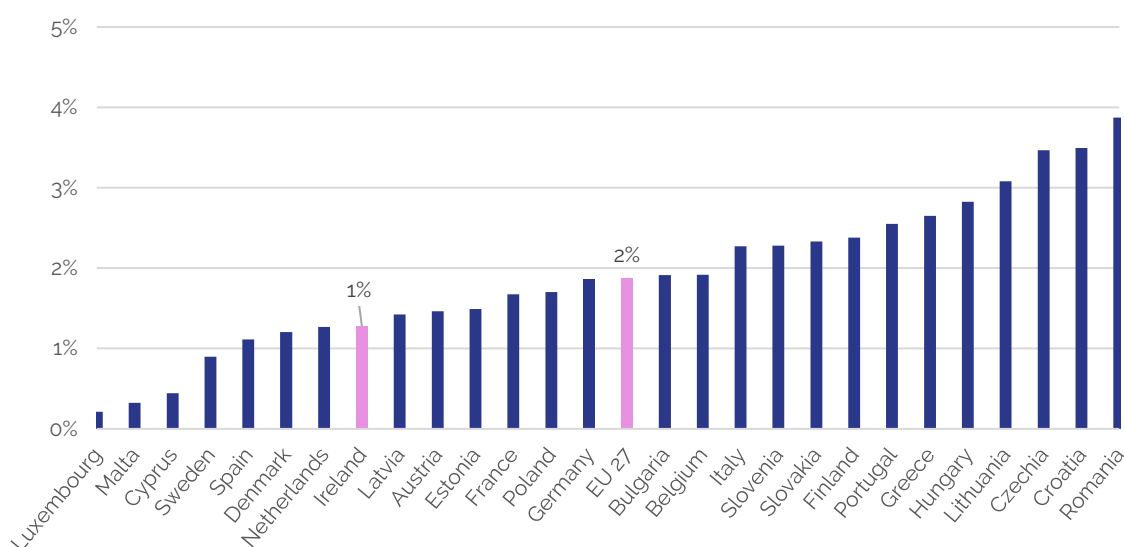
Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

**Excludes a small number of HEA awards where the cell count was <30*

How does Ireland compare internationally in terms of the share of third level graduates in this field?

At just over 1% in 2020, the share of graduates in Ireland who had studied agriculture and vet was one of the lowest in the EU (ranked 20th out of 27 countries), although few countries had high shares in this field: the EU average was 2%, while Romania had the highest share at almost 4% (Figure 9.3).

Figure 9.3 Agriculture & vet graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2020



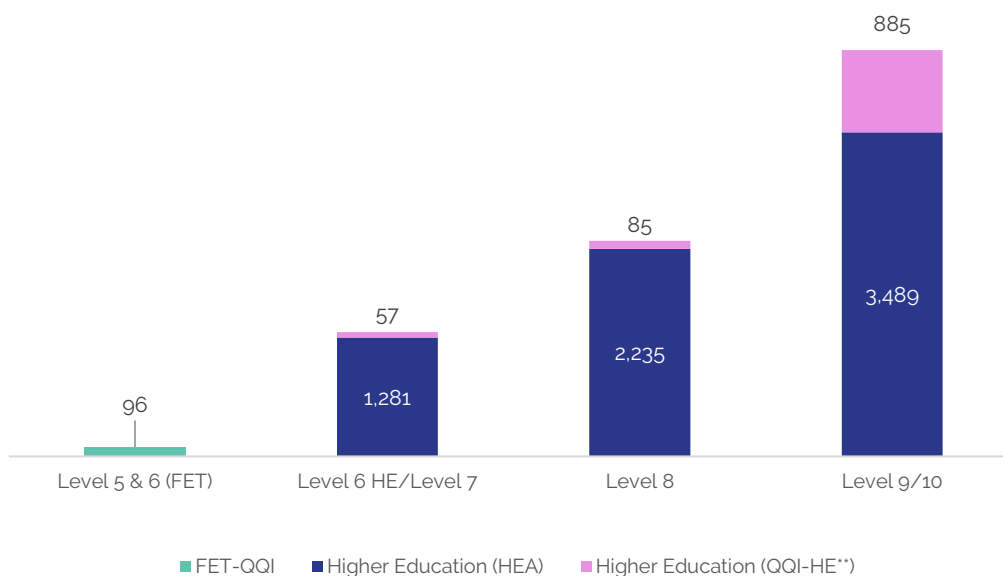
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 12.09.2022)

10. Education Awards

How many awards were made in education in 2020?

- There were over 8,100 awards in education related subjects, making up 6% of all awards made in the FET and higher education sectors in 2020 (Figure 10.1).
- Almost all awards made in this field were higher education awards partly because entry to primary and post-primary teaching occupations requires at least a level 8 qualification. FET awards made to those studying early childhood care and education are mostly categorised in a separate field of learning (health & welfare).
- More than half (54%) of all education-related awards were made at levels 9 or 10, by far the highest share across all fields of learning.
- Almost all education awards were either on or aligned with the NFQ.
- Learners at private, independent colleges accounted for over 1,000 awards in this field, the vast majority at postgraduate level (86%).

Figure 10.1 Awards in the education field of learning, by NFQ level 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI

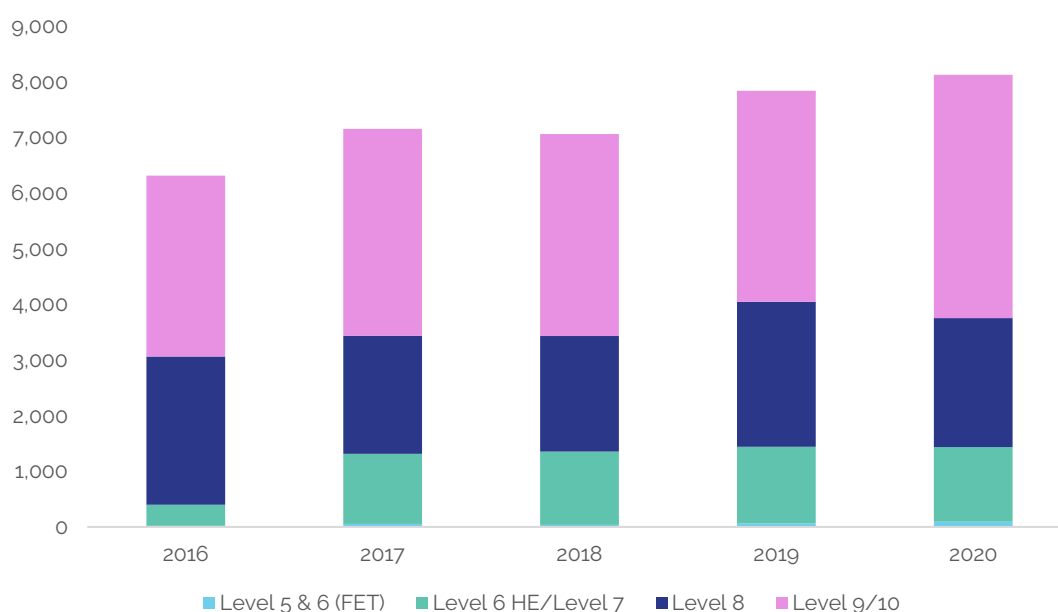
*Other FET awards data is from 2021; excludes a small number (<15) of FET awards in the 'Other FET' category

**Higher ed (QQI-HE) awards include only major awards made to learners at private, independent colleges and other non-HEA aided institutions.

How does this compare to preceding years¹²?

- Between 2016 and 2020, the number of awards in the education field of learning grew by almost 30% (or just over 1,800 awards).
- Almost two thirds of this increase (62%) was due to a rise in the number of level 9/10 awards (by over 1,100 awards); in addition, the number of level 6 HE/level 7 awards also grew strongly (by 960 awards), while level 8 awards fell by 13% (almost 350 fewer awards).
- Between 2019 and 2020, the number of awards increased by 4% (or almost 300 awards); again, the level 9/10 awards showed the highest rate of growth (+15%).
- In terms of sector, the number of QQI higher education awards made to learners at private, independent third level colleges rose by 15% compared to a 2% increase for all awards in the HEA sector; while the FET sector accounted for a relatively small number of awards, there was a 50% increase in the number of level 5 and 6 FET awards between 2019-20 (almost 100 awards in total).

Figure 10.2 Awards in education by NFQ level 2016-2020



Source: HEA, QQI-FET and QQI-HE

¹² This analysis excludes PLSS data, for which a comparable time series is unavailable (PLSS was fully rolled out from 2018).

How do the 2020 awards breakdown by detailed field?

The highest number of awards in 2020 was for the education science field, which included courses in education management/leadership and special needs education. However, classification issues mean that some professional masters in education (teaching qualification) and religious studies awards were also included in this field.

The awards made in the training for **pre-school teachers** sub-field (over 1,100) were all made in the higher education sector and are in addition to the 4,900 early childhood care and education awards (FET and HE) which were captured earlier in this report in the health and welfare section. Most of the level 6 awards in this sub-field were for leadership/inclusion in early years education.

Table 10.1 Education awards by NFQ level and detailed field, 2020*

2020 awards	FET			Higher Education**			Total
	NFQ 5 & 6	Other FET*	NFQ 6 (HE)	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	
Education n.e.c.	56	12	51	205	74	406	804
Education science	40		**	108	89	1,816	2,059
Training for pre-school teachers			883	**	239		1,137
Teacher training without subject specialization				**	1,078	433	1,523
Teacher training with subject specialization				**	755	834	1,590
QQI - HE			2	55	85	885	1,027
Total awards	96	12	942	396	2,320	4,374	8,140

Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

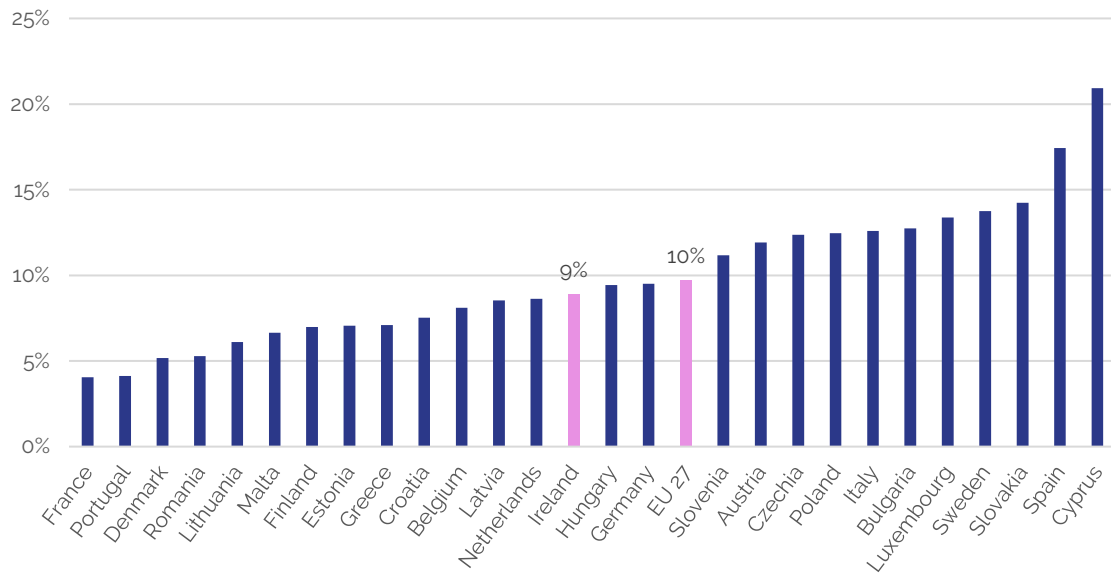
*Other FET awards refer to the year 2021

**Excludes HEA awards where the number of awards was fewer than 30

How does Ireland compare internationally in terms of the share of third level graduates in this field?

At 9% in 2020, Ireland's share of third level graduates who had studied education-related subjects was just below the EU 27 average (10%), ranking 14th highest out of 27 countries (Figure 10.3).

Figure 10.3 Education graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2020



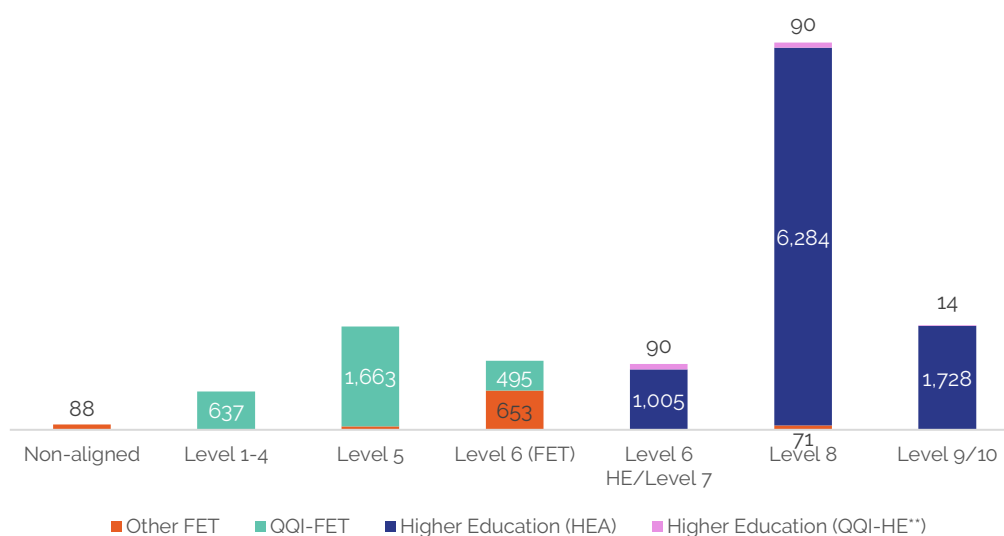
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 12.09.2022)

11. Arts and Humanities Awards

How many awards were made in arts and humanities in 2020?

- There were nearly 12,900 awards in arts and humanities subjects in 2020, accounting for 10% of all FET and higher education awards (Figure 11.1).
- Almost three quarters (72%) of arts and humanities awards were made in the higher education sector, the third highest share (after education and science) across all fields.
- Compared to other fields, arts and humanities had a relatively large share (9%) of awards at FET level 6: only engineering/construction and agriculture had higher shares (at 18% and 15% respectively).
- Unlike most other fields of learning, more than half of level 6 FET awards (57%) were made, not by QQI, but by other bodies (e.g. Pearson) whose awards are aligned to the National Framework of Qualifications, via their inclusion on the UK National Qualifications Framework.
- This field is the only field where learners enrolled in the FET sector obtained higher education awards, although the numbers involved are relatively small (71 awards in 2020); awards were made by non-QQI awarding bodies (e.g. UK universities).

Figure 11.1 Arts & humanities awards by NFQ level and awarding body type, 2020*



Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE & SOLAS

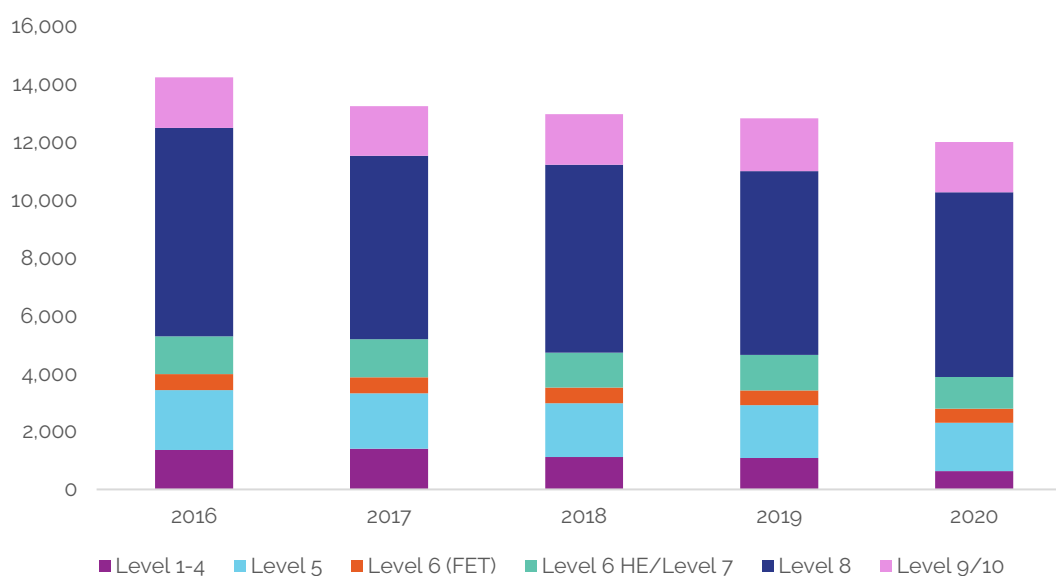
*Other FET awards data is from 2021

**Higher ed (QQI-HE) awards include only major awards made to learners at private, independent colleges and other non-HEA aided institutions.

How does this compare to preceding years¹³?

- Between 2016 and 2020, the number of awards in arts and humanities declined by 16% (approximately 2,200 fewer awards), the largest, in absolute terms, observed across all fields of learning.
- Most of the 2016-2020 decline occurred in the years 2016-2017 and 2019-2020; the number of awards fell by 7% between 2016-17 (almost 1,000 fewer awards), while there was a 6% decrease between 2019-20 (820 fewer awards).
- The 6% fall that occurred between 2019 and 2020 was due mainly to an 18% decrease in the FET sector (all levels) and a 10% fall at level 6/7 in higher education, although level 8 awards remained relatively stable (almost 20 more awards).

Figure 11 2 Awards in arts and humanities by NFAQ, 2016-2020



Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE

How do the 2020 awards breakdown by detailed field?

- One third (approximately 4,300 awards) were in the arts & humanities n.e.c field, where the subject was unspecified (e.g. Bachelor of Arts or BA (hons) degree) or may span both arts and humanities subjects (e.g. music and English). The majority of these awards (approximately 3,500) were in the higher education sector, 87% of which were at level 8.

¹³ This analysis excludes PLSS data, for which a comparable time series is unavailable (PLSS was fully rolled out from 2018).

- Audio visual and media awards were almost evenly spread across the FET and higher education sectors and included awards for studies in areas such as film & TV, music, radio and media production.
- There were nearly 300 awards in animation related areas, including almost 130 non-QQI awards made to learners in the FET sector.
- There were nearly 220 awards for studies in graphic design across the higher education and FET sectors.
- Almost all awards in humanities related fields (i.e. history, philosophy and languages) were made in the higher education sector.

Table 11.1 Arts and Humanities awards by NFQ level and detailed field, 2020*

2020 awards	FET				Higher Education				Total
	FET 1-4	FET 5	FET 6	Non-aligned*	NFQ 6 (HE)	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	
Arts & humanities n.e.c.	637	167	8		69	84	3,060	288	4,313
Audio-visual & media		657	456		68	157	806	285	2,429
Fashion, interior and industrial design	2	58	73		**	99	393	109	736
Fine, music & performing arts (inc. handicrafts)		838	611	67	**	81	879	241	2,741
History & archaeology					45	48	280	273	646
Philosophy & religion					**	**	69	132	224
Languages (inc acquisition, literature & linguistics)				21	42	263	868	400	1,594
QQI -HE					11	79	90	14	194
Total awards	639	1,720	1,148	88	264	831	6,445	1,742	12,877

Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

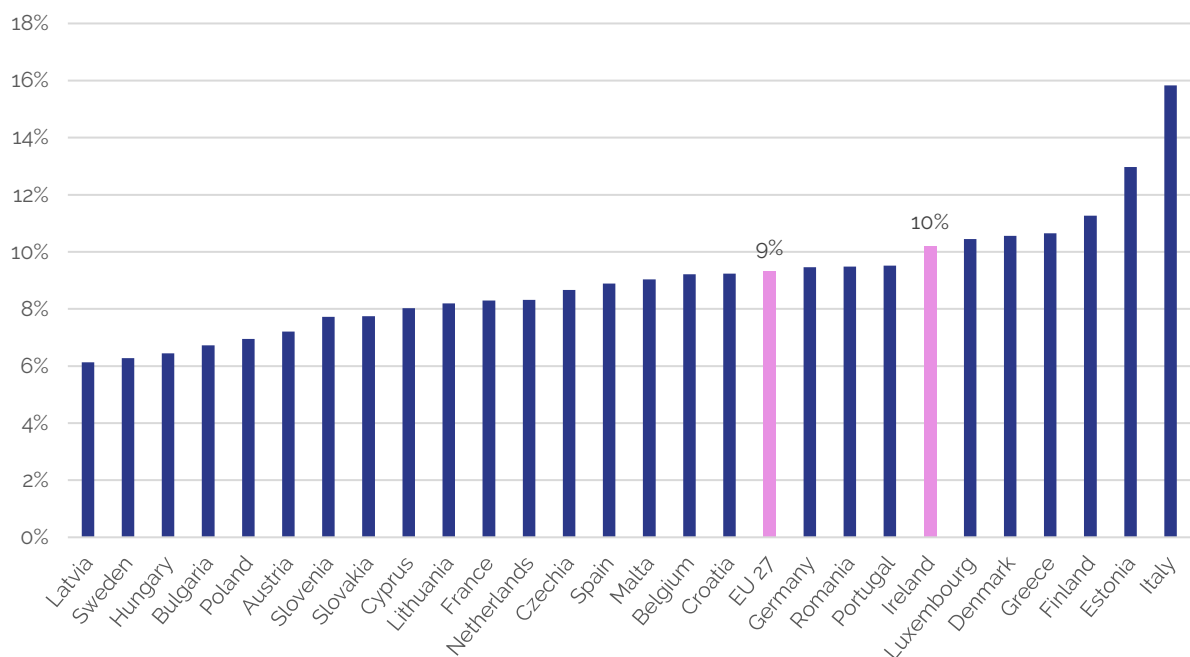
*Other FET awards refer to the year 2021

**HEA awards with fewer than 30

How does Ireland compare internationally in terms of the share of third level graduates in this field?

At 10%, Ireland had the seventh highest share of third level graduates in 2020 who had studied arts and humanities programmes, just above the EU average of 9% (Figure 11.3). Ireland's ranking in terms of its share of graduates in this field compared to other EU countries has fallen in recent years: from sixth in 2019; and third in 2018.

Figure 11.3 Arts/humanities graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2020



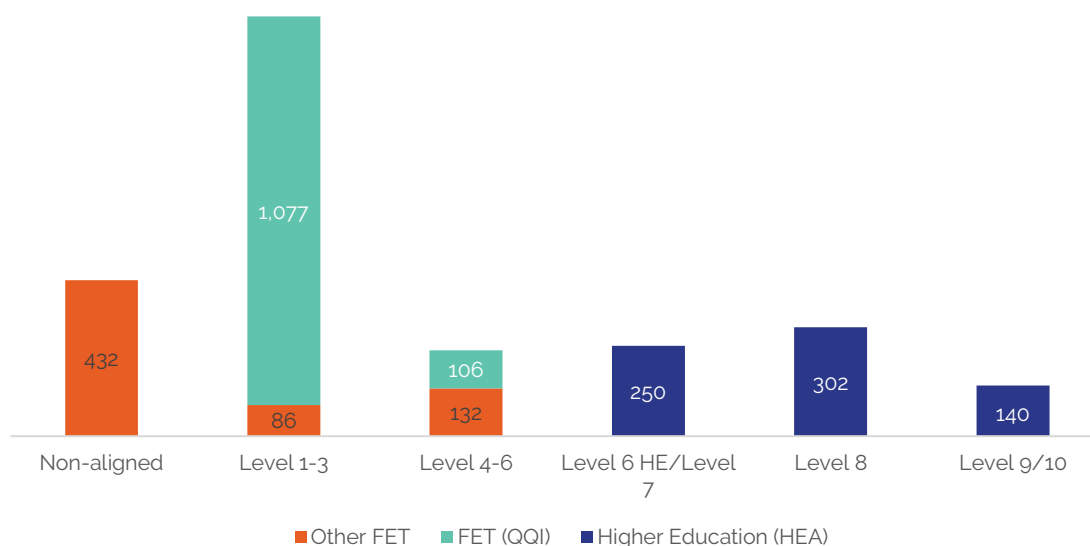
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 12.09.2022)

12. Generic Programmes Awards

How many generic awards were made in 2020?

- The generic programmes field of learning is the smallest field in the FET and higher education system, largely because most education/training programmes beyond the Leaving Certificate have a greater focus on a specific subject or group of subjects (Figure 12.1).
- This field made up 2% of all awards made in 2020, with approximately 3,200 awards; more than one third of awards in this field were made at levels 1-3, followed by a further 28% at levels 4 or 4/5 (i.e. a Leaving Certificate made to learners in the FET sector).
- In FET, QQI-FET awards were for areas such as general learning and employability skills.
- Higher education awards amounted to approximately 700, and included courses such as continuing education access, transition to higher education, creative and cultural entrepreneurship and open learning.

Figure 12.1 Awards in the generic programmes field by NFQ, 2020*



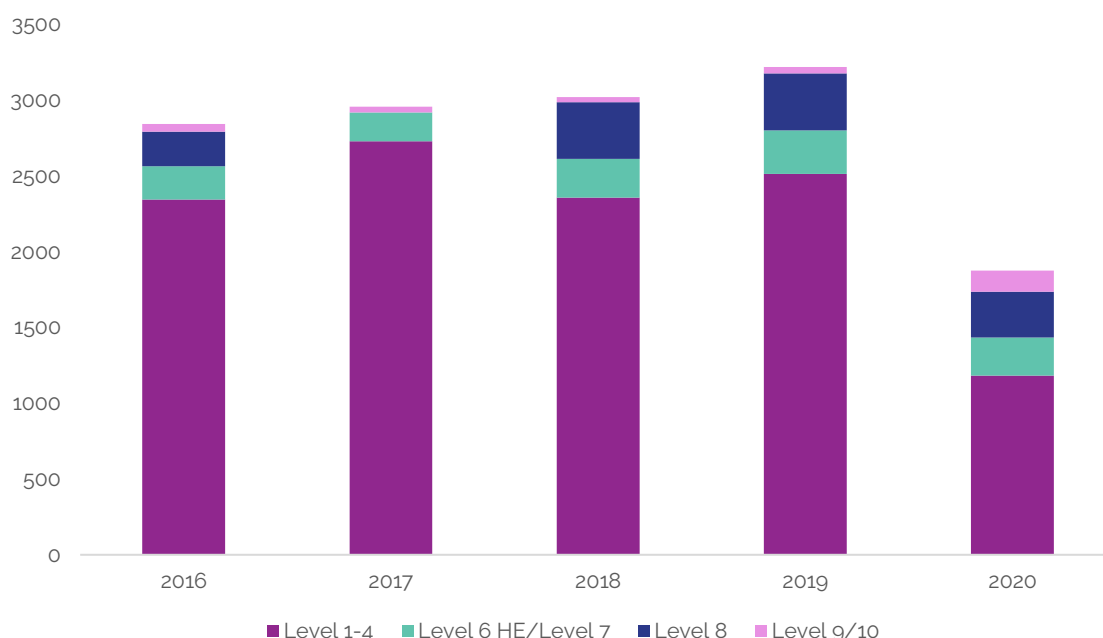
Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS/ETBI

*Data for the Other FET category is from 2021

How does this compare to preceding years¹⁴?

- The number of awards made for generic programmes fell by 34% between 2016 and 2020, with most of the decline occurring between 2019 and 2020.
- Between 2019 and 2020, the number of awards fell by 42% (by almost 1,350 awards), most of which occurred at FET levels 1 to 4 (-53%), with additional falls at level 6 HE/level 7 (-13%) and level 8 (-19%). Level 9/10 was the only NFQ level to see a rise over the two years, albeit with relatively small numbers (nearly 100 more awards); when non-QQI FET awards are included, however, the fall is slightly less stark, at -29%.
- The increase observed in higher education awards may also be due to some field classification issues, with some awards captured under personal skills development that could arguably be categorised elsewhere (e.g. business).

Figure 12.2 Generic programmes awards by NFQ level, 2016-2020



Source: HEA and QQI-FET

International Comparison

The vast majority of EU countries had no third level graduates in this field. In 2020, Ireland was one of only four EU countries to do so. In fact, Ireland accounts for 91% of all EU 27 graduates in this field, with much smaller shares for Czechia, Malta and Lithuania.

¹⁴ This analysis excludes PLSS data, for which a comparable time series is unavailable (PLSS was fully rolled out from 2018).

13. Education profile of adults in Ireland

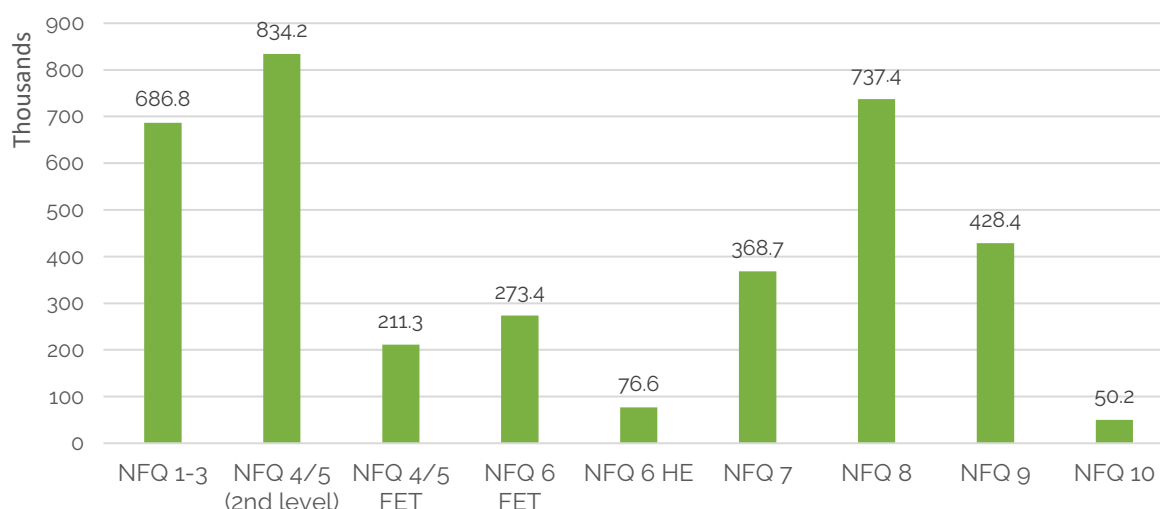
In this section we examine the educational profile of Ireland's adult population, using data from the CSO's Labour Force Survey (LFS). An individual's level of education refers to the highest level of education achieved; if for example a person first qualifies as an electrician (level 6 certificate) and later progresses to achieve an honours bachelor degree (level 8), their level of education is classified as level 8. On the other hand, if a person first achieves an honours degree (level 8) in arts/humanities, but later completes a PLC course in business studies (level 6), their education level is nonetheless captured as being at level 8.

What is the education level of adults in Ireland?

In quarter 2 2022, there were approximately 3.77 million adults aged 20 years and over. Of those who stated their highest level of education (nearly 3.67 million persons),

- approximately 1.52 million people (or 41% of all adults aged 20 or more) held at most second level qualifications; of these, 834,200 held a Leaving Cert or equivalent; of the 686,800 persons holding at most NFQ 3 qualifications, more than half were aged 65 or older)
- FET qualification holders (spanning levels 4-6) accounted for 484,7000 persons (13% of the total age cohort)
- third level qualification holders (spanning levels 6 (HE)-10) made up 1.66 million persons (45%); the largest numbers were at level 8, which had 737,400 persons.

Figure 13. 1 Adults aged 20+ years by highest level of education attained (000s), Q2 2022



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data
Excludes observations where NFQ level is not stated

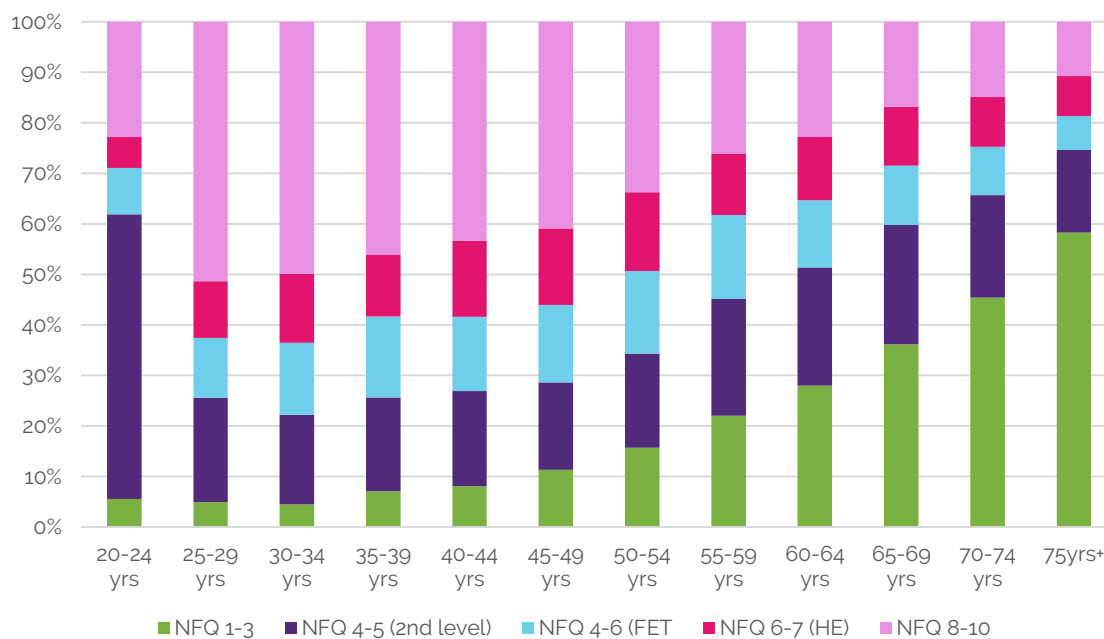
How does the education profile of adults vary by age?

The educational profile of the population differed considerably by age group (Figure 13.2). With the exception of persons aged 20-24 years (for whom full-time education may still be ongoing), the older the age group, the lower the education attainment level. In quarter 2 2022,

- over one half of persons in the 25-29 year-old and 30-34 year-old cohorts held a qualification at level 8 or above; this was more than double the share for those aged 60-64 years, where 22% held level 8 or higher qualifications
- conversely, while 5% of 25-29 year-olds held at most a level 3 qualification (e.g. a Junior Certificate), the share is more than three times higher (16%) for 50-54 year-olds and more than four times higher (22%) for those aged 55-59 years.

Given the educational attainment observed amongst the younger age cohorts, it can be expected that Ireland's educational profile will continue to shift towards the higher levels of the NFAQ in the years to come.

Figure 13.2 Education profile by NFAQ level and age group, Q2 2022



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

Excludes observations where NFAQ level is not stated

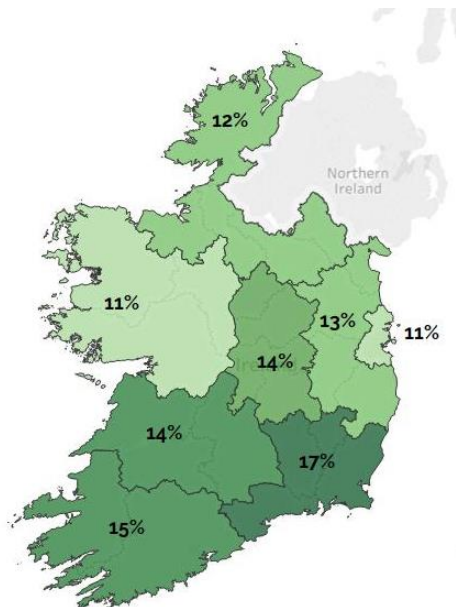
How does the education profile of adults differ by region?

Figures 13.3a and 13.3b show the share of each region's adult population holding FET and higher education qualifications respectively in quarter 2 2022. On average, 13% of adults in Ireland held FET qualifications; however, the share was considerably higher in the South East region (at 17%) and below the national average in Dublin (11%) and the Border region (12%).

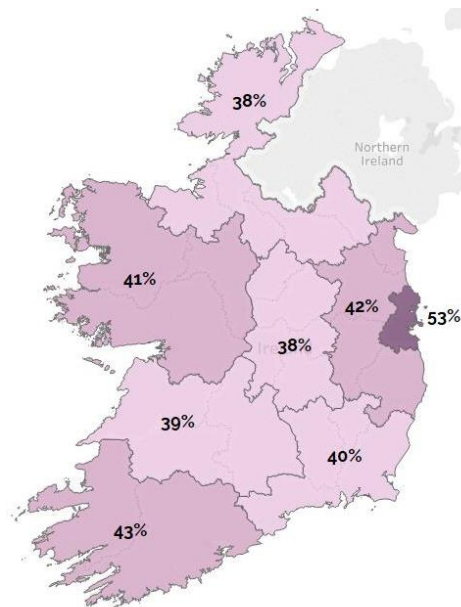
The share of higher education qualification holders was largest in the Dublin Region at 53%, well above the national average of 44%. At 38% each, the Border and Midlands regions had the lowest shares of higher education qualification holders amongst adults.

Figure 13.3 Shares of qualification holders by region, higher education and FET, Q2 2022

a. Share of FET qualification holders



b. Share of higher education qualification holders



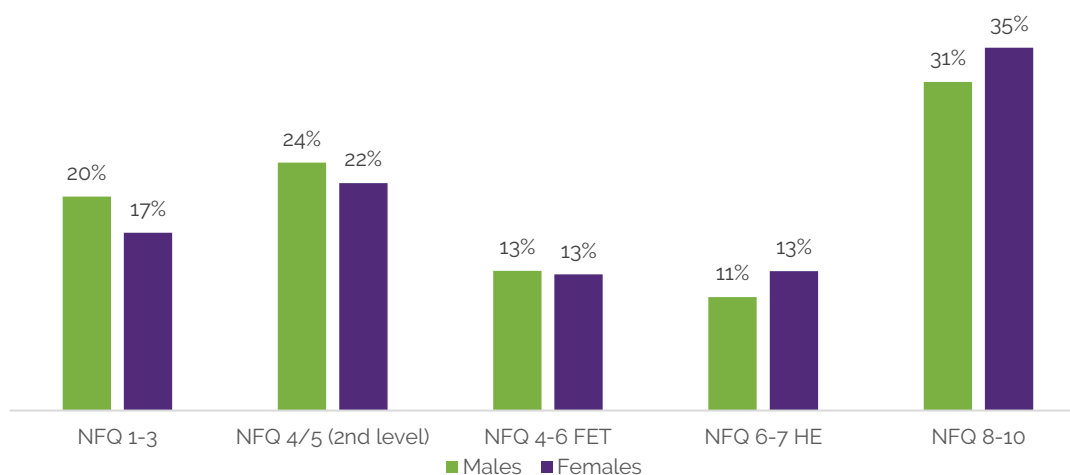
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

How does the education profile of adults vary by gender?

At 48% in quarter 2 2022, the share of females with qualifications at the higher end of the National Framework of Qualifications was greater than that of males (42%). Males, on the other hand, had a higher share with second level qualifications, at 44%; the share for females at this level was 39%.

The share of FET qualification holders for males and females was similar at 13%.

Figure 13.4 Males & females (aged 20+ years) by highest qualification level, Q2 2022



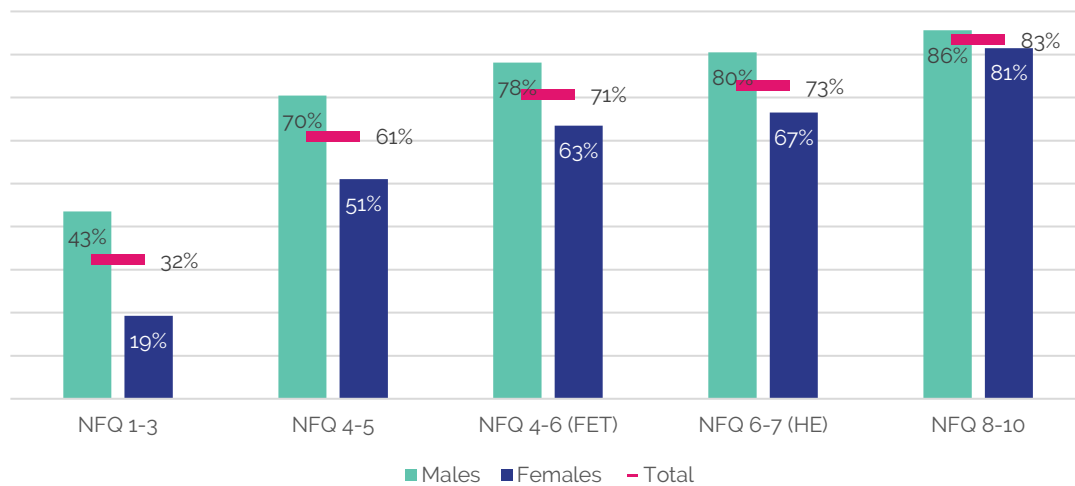
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

Excludes observations where NFQ level is not stated

How does employment vary by NFQ level?

The share of adults in employment increases with NFQ level with the share at NFQ 8-10 at 83% being more than twice as high as those with NFQ 1-3 qualifications (Figure 13.5). Regardless of NFQ level, the shares in employment for males were higher than those of females, although the higher the NFQ level, the smaller the gender gap. At NFQ 8-10, the gender gap was just five percentage points, compared to 24 percentage points and 19 percentage points for those with NFQ 1-3 and NFQ 4/5 second level qualifications, respectively.

Figure 13.5 Labour force participation rates (aged 20+ years) by NFQ level, Q2 2022



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

Excludes observations where NFQ level is not stated

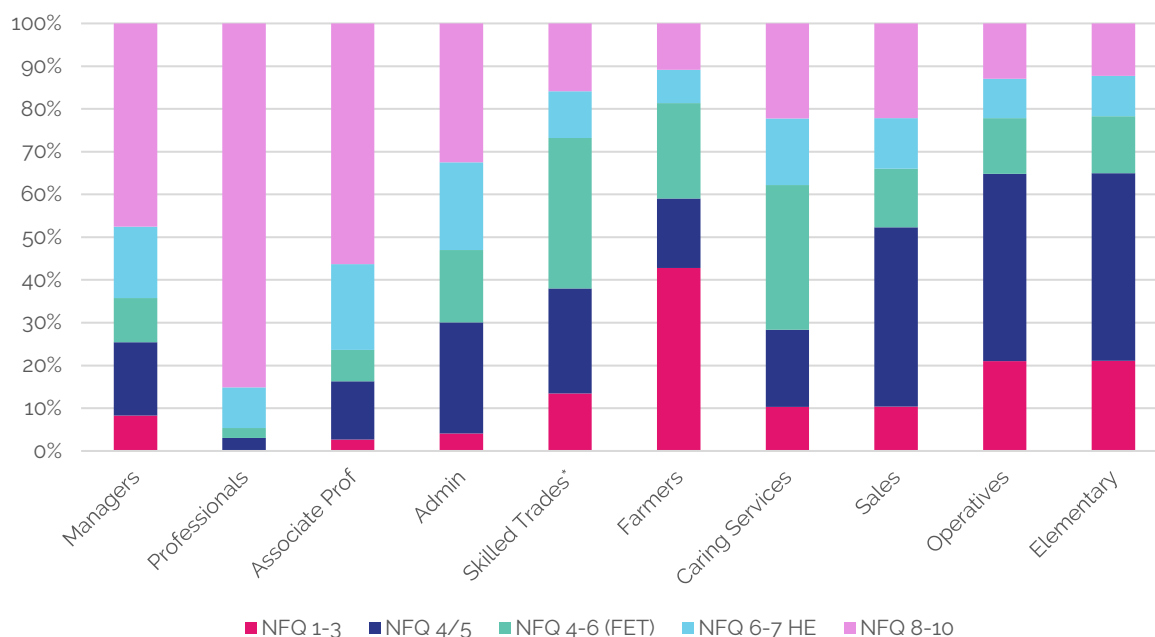
How does the education profile of workers vary by NFQ level?

Figure 13.6 compares employment by NFQ levels across broad occupational groups, although farming occupations have been separated from skilled trades for the purposes of this study.

- More than one half of persons working in managerial, professional, associate professional and administrative occupations held third level qualifications (i.e. NFQ 6-10).
- Conversely, more than one half of those working in farming, sales, operative and elementary occupations held, at most, a Leaving Certificate (i.e. NFQ 4/5); while most of those in these four occupations held level 4/5 qualifications, farmers was the only occupation where the greater share held, at most, a Junior Certificate (42%), which is in part related to the older age profile of farmers (58% were aged 55 years or more compared to a national average of 19%, as outlined in the National Skills Bulletin (SOLAS, 2022)).¹⁵
- The share of FET qualification holders was highest in the skilled trades occupations (e.g. carpenters), followed by caring & personal services occupations (e.g. healthcare assistant, hairdresser), a reflection of the level 5 and level 6 entry requirement typically associated with these occupations.

¹⁵ See national-skills-bulletin-2022.pdf (solas.ie) at www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/3554445a46/national-skills-bulletin-2022.pdf

Figure 13.6 Share of employment by occupation and NFQ level, Q2 2022



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

**Skilled trades occupations exclude farmers*

Excludes observations where NFQ level is not stated

EU comparison: early leavers from education

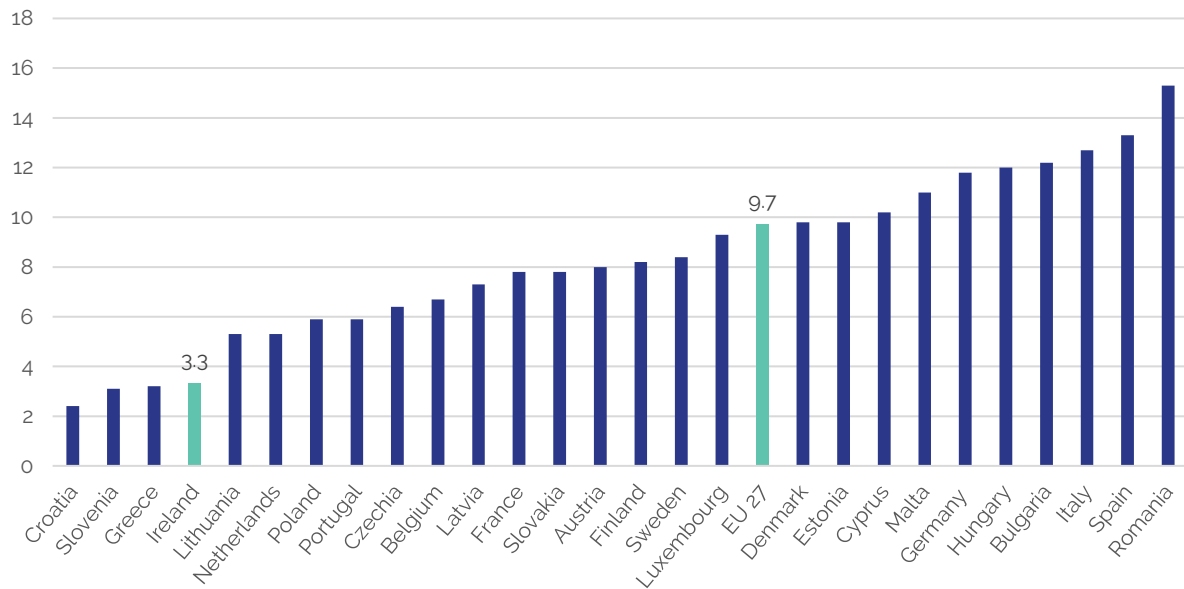
Eurostat (the EU's statistical agency) provides statistics on the education profile and employment status of adults by ISCED level of education.

Early leavers from education are defined as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 years who have attained at most lower secondary education and have not engaged in education or training (Eurostat, 2022)¹⁶. Figure 13.7 shows that Ireland has the fourth lowest rate of early leavers from education and training in the EU. In 2021, Ireland's rate of 3.3% is nearly three times lower than the EU average of 9.7%. Across the EU, early leaving tends to be higher amongst males than females, with the exception of Bulgaria and Romania. In Ireland, the rate for males was 4.4% (while the rate for females was too small to report)¹⁷.

¹⁶ Based on the Eurostat definition of early leavers, there was no involvement in education or training during the four week period before administration of the EU Labour Force Survey.

¹⁷ Data for the previous year 2020 shows that the rate of early leaving in Ireland for males was 5.4% compared to 4.7% for females.

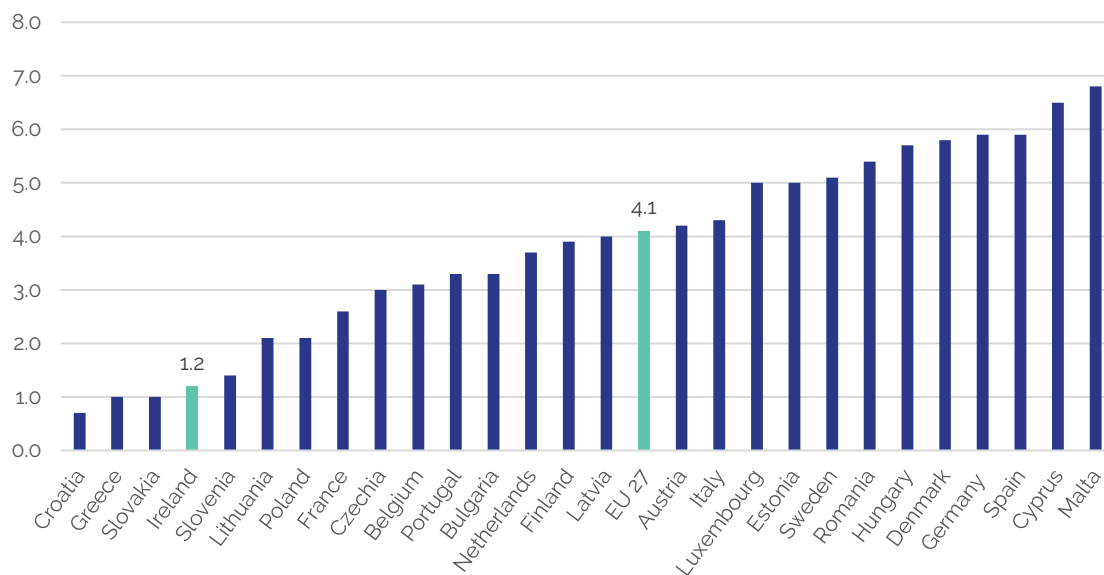
Figure 13.7 Early leavers aged 18-24 years in the population in the EU, 2021



Source: Eurostat (date extracted 02.11.2022)

Figure 13.8 shows that Ireland had a relatively low employment rate of early leavers from education and training compared to the rest of the EU: at 1.2%, Ireland's rate was lower than the EU average of 4.1%, with Ireland ranking fourth lowest in the EU, just ahead of Croatia, Greece and Slovakia.

Figure 13.8 Employment rate of early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24 yrs) in EU 27 countries, 2021



Source: Eurostat (date extracted 02.11.2022)

EU comparison: employment rate by education level

Figures 13.9–13.11 show how the educational profile and employment rates varied by ISCED education level across the EU in 2021; the data refers to 20–64 year olds with one of three broad education attainment levels: those with at most lower secondary educational attainment, those with upper secondary or post-secondary, non-tertiary education attainment, and those with tertiary education attainment. The NFQ levels typically associated with these ISCED education levels are detailed in Table A1 of the Appendix.

Across the EU, the higher the level of educational attainment, the higher the employment rate. On average, 55% of 20–64 year-olds in the EU with at, most, **lower secondary educational attainment** were in employment (Figure 13.9). Ireland's share was slightly lower, at 51%, and well behind countries such as Portugal, the Netherlands and Malta, among others, where the employment rates for persons with this educational attainment were 69%, 67% and 66% respectively.

It is worth noting, however, that Ireland's share of the 20–64-year-old population at this education level was considerably lower than the EU 27 average (20%), at just 11% in 2021. There were only seven EU countries with a lower share of the population with lower secondary or less education, while just three of these have a higher employment rate compared to Ireland (Latvia, Czechia and Lithuania). In absolute numbers, the 11% share in Ireland represents 386,00 people¹⁸, therefore, while the employment rate is comparatively low for those with, at most, lower secondary education, the number impacted in Ireland is also comparatively low.

Figure 13.9 Employment rate and share of population with lower secondary or less education in EU 27 countries (20–64 yrs), 2021

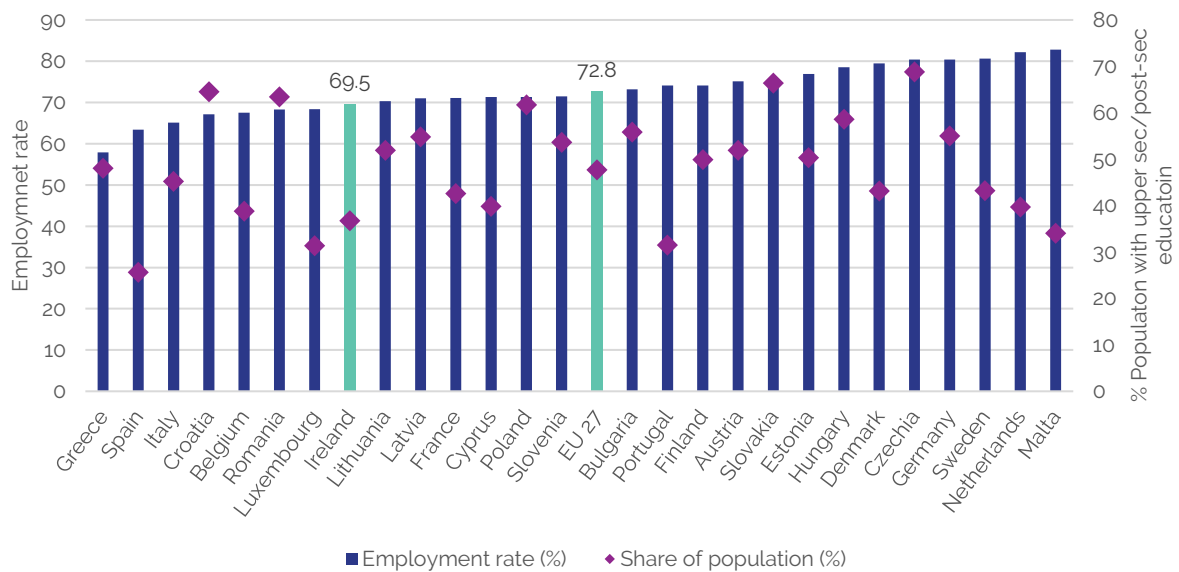


Source: Eurostat (date extracted 02.11.2022)

¹⁸ Refers to the 2021 annual average (source: Eurostat); numbers quoted in Figure 13.1 refer to adults aged 20+ and includes older age cohorts which have larger numbers with at most NFQ 3 qualifications.

As shown in Figure 13.10, on average, 73% of 20-64-year olds in the EU with at **upper secondary/post-secondary, non-tertiary education** (corresponding, for example, to Leaving Cert or FET in Ireland) were in employment. Ireland's share was slightly lower, at 70%. The highest employment rate was observed for Malta and the Netherlands at 83% and 82% respectively. The share of persons in Ireland holding qualifications at this level is below the EU 27 average of 48%, at 37%, which is the fifth lowest in the EU (refers to the 2021 annual average).

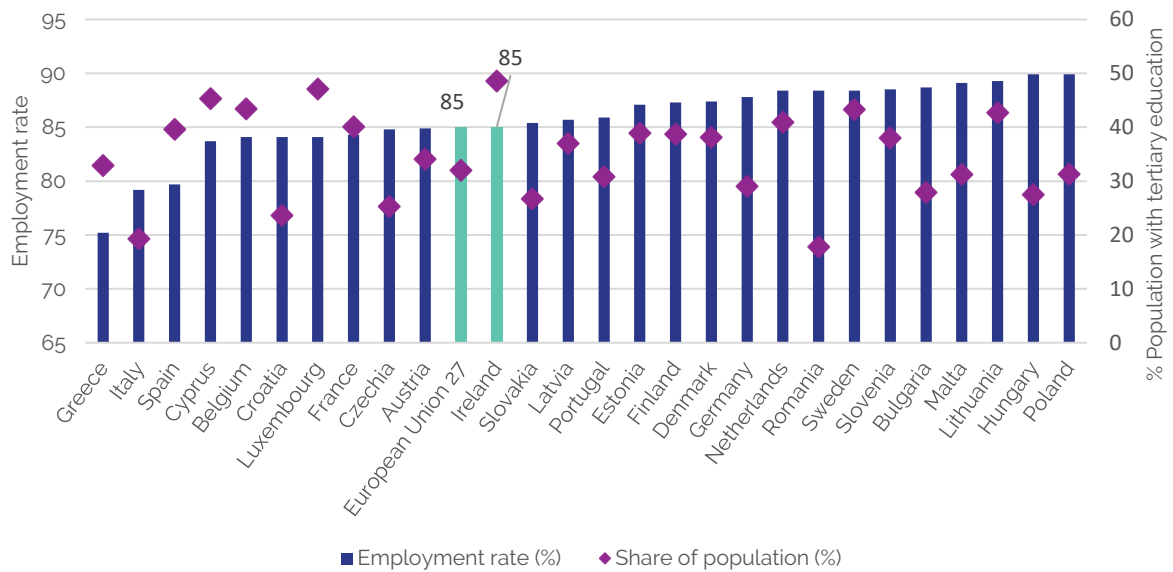
Figure 13.10 Employment rate and share of population with upper secondary and post-secondary, non-tertiary education in EU 27 countries (20-64-yrs), 2021



Source: Eurostat (date extracted 02.11.2022)

On average, 85% of 20-64 year-olds in the EU with **tertiary education** were in employment (Figure 13.11). At 85%, Ireland's share was at the EU average. Thirteen countries had employment rates of 87% or more. However, Ireland also has the highest share of its population in this cohort who held third level qualifications in 2021, at 49%, well above the EU 27 average of 32%.

Figure 13.11 Employment rate and % of population with tertiary education in EU 27 countries (20-64 yrs), 2021



Source: Eurostat (date extracted 02.11.2022)

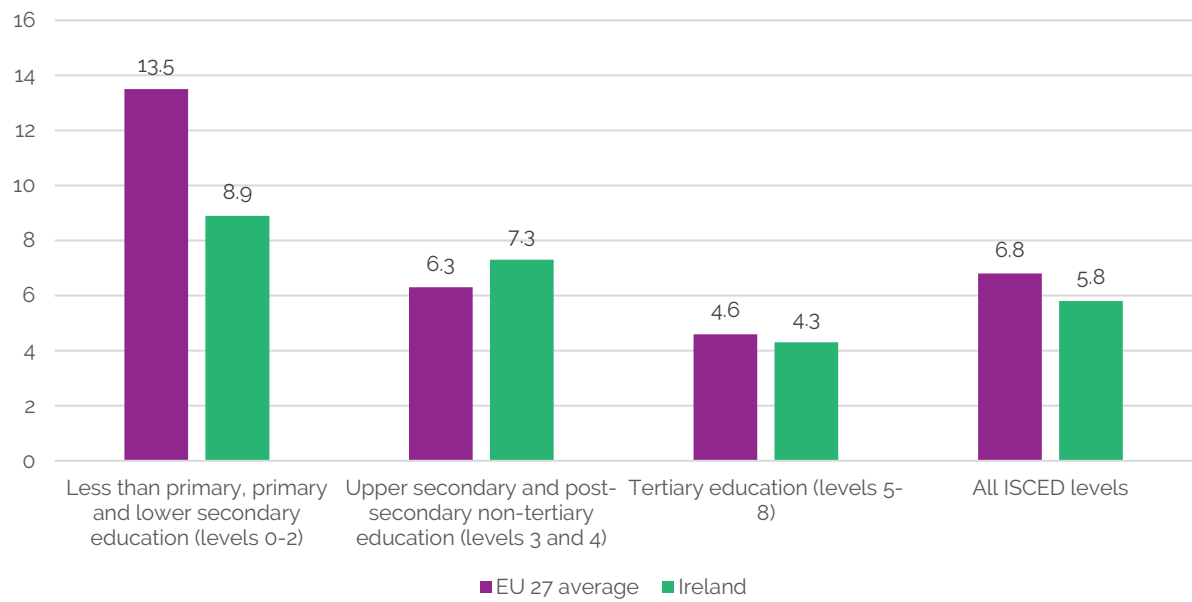
EU comparison: unemployment by education attainment level

As seen earlier in this section, employment rates in Ireland and the rest of the EU tend to vary by education level; hence it is not surprising to find similar variations in the unemployment rate by education.

When compared to the EU 27 average (6.8%), Ireland's total unemployment rate for adults aged 20-64 years was lower (5.8) (Figure 13.12). For both the EU 27 average and for Ireland, the greater the level of educational attainment, the lower the unemployment rate. However, Ireland's unemployment rate was

- lower than the EU average for both third level qualification holders and those with at most lower secondary (i.e. NQF 3) educational attainment,
- higher than the EU average for those with upper secondary (e.g. a Leaving Cert) or post-secondary non-tertiary qualifications.

Figure 13.12 Unemployment rate (20-64 yrs) by ISCED education levels in Ireland and EU 27 average, 2021



Source: Eurostat (date extracted 02.11.2022)

14. Recent Graduates

Internationally, organisations such as the OECD, Eurostat and others define recent graduates as persons aged 20-34 years who obtained a qualification in the preceding three years. However, as the number of observations in the data for this cohort in Ireland was relatively small and in order to facilitate an analysis by level and field, in this report, recent graduates are defined as persons aged 20-34 years who obtained a qualification between 2018 and the first half of 2022.

At what level have recent graduates obtained qualifications?

In quarter 2 2022 there were 408,400 recent graduates, nearly 5,000 more than in 2021. Of these,

- more than one half (56%) had attained a higher education qualification, mostly at level 8 or above
- 11% had obtained a FET qualification
- 32% had obtained a Leaving Cert (or equivalent) qualification, corresponding to levels 4-5, on the NFQ.

When compared to one year earlier, the number of recent graduates with third level or FET qualifications grew (by 14,400 and 5,000 persons respectively, or 7% and 12%) while the numbers gaining NFQ 4/5 qualifications (e.g. a Leaving Cert) fell by 15,600 persons (or by 11%).

The numbers who obtained a qualification at level 1-3 in this age cohort were too small to report. This is mostly because the majority of persons aged 20-34 are likely to have already attained qualifications at this level prior to 2017, when they were aged 15 or 16 years: almost all pupils who enrol in first year of secondary school go on to sit the Junior Certificate three years later (e.g. of the almost 60,800 pupils who enrolled in the first year of the Junior Cycle programme in 2013, almost 98% completed the Junior Certificate¹⁹).

Table 14.1 Recent graduates by level of qualification obtained, Q2 2022

NFQ Level	Recent graduates	Recent graduates %
Level 1-3	***	***
Level 4-5 (second level)	131,200	32%
Level 4-6 (FET)	45,100	11%
Level 6-7 (HE)	42,000	10%
Level 8-10	185,100	45%
All levels	408,400	100%

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

Excludes observations where NFQ level is not stated

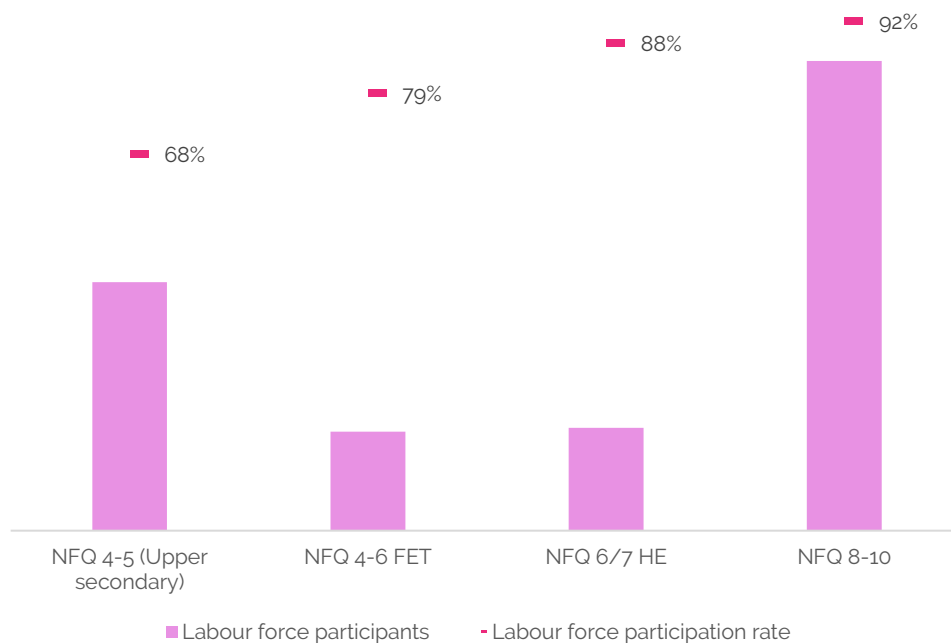
¹⁹ Department of Education and Skills series of reports on retention rates of pupils in second-level schools.

Labour force status of recent graduates

In quarter 2, 2022, 82% of the 408,400 recent graduates were in the labour force, representing 334,400 persons. This is slightly higher than the 79% figure recorded for quarter 2 2021. Overall, the higher the NFQ level, the higher the share in the labour force: recent level 4-5 graduates from the second level system (e.g. Leaving Cert) had the lowest share at 68%, while the highest shares were observed for those with level 8-10 qualifications (92%) (Figure 14.1).

The gap in the share in employment for persons with level 4-5 upper secondary qualifications compared to those with FET level 4-6 qualifications is partly due to the fact that some people in this cohort may have yet to complete their education, with many opting to pursue further studies in the FET or higher education sectors rather than entering the labour force. Data from the CSO shows that at least one quarter of FET graduates²⁰ progressed to higher education in the year directly following FET programme completion.

Figure 14.1 Number and share of recent graduates in the labour force by NFQ level, Q2, 2022



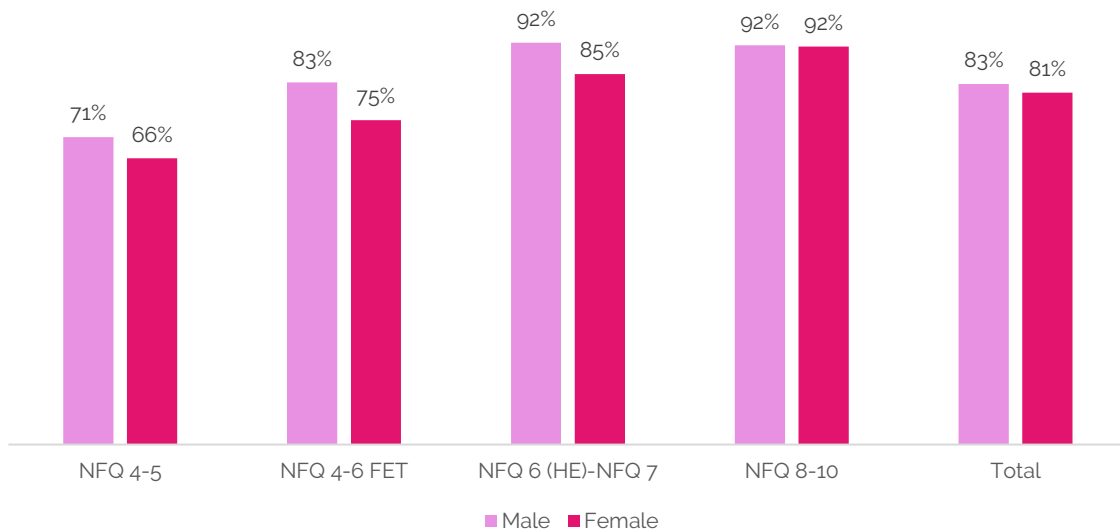
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

Excludes observations where NFQ level is not stated

²⁰ Refers to those who obtained QQI major awards only and is therefore a subset of total FET graduate numbers. <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-feo/furthereducationoutcomes-graduationyears2010-2016/outcomeseducation/>

When the gender of recent graduates is explored, some variations in labour force participation can be seen (Figure 14.2). With the exception of NFQ levels 8-10 where male and female participation of recent graduates is the same, at 92%, the participation of males exceeds that of females for all other levels. When all NFQ levels are looked at, there is a fairly even gender participation of males (83%) and females (81%).

Figure 14.2 Labour force participation for recent graduates by NFQ level and gender, Q2, 2022



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data
 Excludes observations where NFQ level is not stated

Appendix

ISCED levels of education and associated NFQ award levels

Table A1 shows the formal ISCED levels, the typical programmes in Ireland that correspond to these levels, the name of the award typically (but not exclusively) associated with completion of a programme, as well as the award's NFQ level. As can be seen, some award levels span more than one sector (e.g. awards at level 4 and 5 are available in both the secondary school system and the further education and training (FET) system). Similarly, awards at level 6 span the FET and higher education system. Where relevant, and where the data allows, in addition to presenting awards by NFQ level, we also provide an indication of the sector (e.g. level 6 (FET) or level 6 (higher education) qualifications).

Table A1 ISCED levels of education and associated awards and award levels

ISCED 2011 Level	Corresponds to:	Typical award	Award NFQ Level
0 Pre-primary education	Early Start and other pre-primary	QQI Certificate	Level 1/2
1 Primary education	Primary education		
2 Lower secondary	2nd level education – Junior Cycle	Junior Certificate	Level 3
3 Upper secondary	2nd level education – Senior Cycle	Leaving Certificate	Level 4
			Level 5
4 Post-secondary non-tertiary	Craft apprenticeship, PLC courses, other FET ²¹	QQI Level 5 Cert	Level 6
		QQI Advanced Certificate	
5 Short-cycle tertiary education	Third level – higher cert./university diploma /new post 2016 apprenticeship	Higher Certificate	
6 Bachelor's degree or equivalent	Third level – ordinary & honours bachelor degree Higher diploma New post-2016 apprenticeship	Ordinary Degree	Level 7
		Honours Degree	Level 8
		Higher Diploma	Level 8
7 Master's degree or equivalent	Third level – master's degree, postgrad. certs./diplomas new post -2016 apprenticeship	Postgraduate Diploma Master's degree	Level 9
8 Doctor or equivalent	PhD	PhD	Level 10

²¹ Some FET programmes (e.g. some specific skills training) also lead to awards at level 3 or 4 on the NFQ.

Private independent colleges whose learners received QQI – HE awards in 2021

Dublin Business School

Griffith College

National College of Ireland

Hibernia College

CCT College Dublin

Dorset College

IICP Education and Training Limited

Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences Limited

Carlow College, St. Patrick's

Independent Colleges

Saint Nicholas Montessori College Ireland

ICD Business School

The Open Training College

Children's Therapy Centre

Setanta College

Galway Business School

International College for Personal and Professional Development

The American College, Dublin

Gaelchultúr

Dublin Institute Of Design

Clanwilliam Institute

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