

## **Guidelines regarding Qualification Requirements for participation in the Free Preschool Scheme**

In addition to meeting the requirements regarding staff ratios, as provided for under the Child Care Regulations, the pre-school year Leader must hold a certification for a major award in childcare/early education at a minimum of level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications of Ireland (NFQ) or an equivalent recognised qualification in the childcare/early education field.

### **Interim measure**

In recognition of the complex nature of educational attainment of staff within the early childhood care and education workforce in Ireland, in the first two full years of the scheme, where the pre-school year Leader has an award in early childhood care and education that includes significant content relating to early childhood education/early learning and child development and has at least two years experience of working in a position of responsibility with children in the 0-6 age range, she/he will meet the requirement.

### **Evidence**

Valid evidence of staff members' certification and experience will be required at contract stage.

### **Some additional information on the qualification requirements for the Free Preschool Scheme is provided below in the form of questions and answers:**

#### **What is the National Framework of Qualifications and what is a Major Award?**

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is a 10 level Framework that incorporates qualifications from the very initial stages of learning to the most advanced. A major award is a qualification with a large volume of knowledge, skill and competence associated with it, which is recognised through the National Framework of Qualifications. This is distinct from smaller pieces of learning such as minor or component awards, which go together to make up a major award.

#### **How do I know if my qualification is currently recognised through the National Framework of Qualifications as at least a Level 5 Major Award?**

A list of the most common qualifications in childcare that are recognised through the National Framework of Qualifications as being at least a Level 5 Major Award is available at Appendix 1.

#### **I have achieved certificates for minor awards at level 5 in early childhood care and education/ childcare but I have not achieved a FETAC Level 5 or 6 Major award, can I still take on the role of leader?**

In the start up phase of the new preschool scheme, where a practitioner can provide evidence that he/she has achieved an award in early childhood care and education that includes significant content relating to early childhood education/early learning and child development and has at least two years experience of working in a position of responsibility with children in the 0-6 age range, she/he will meet the requirement.

#### **What should I have completed in order to be awarded a FETAC certificate for the achievement of a major award in Childcare at level 5 or 6?**

Information on the number and type of components that must be obtained in order to be awarded a major award FETAC Level 5 or Level 6 Certificate in Childcare qualification will be available through your Childcare Committee.

#### **I have a childcare award made by a UK awarding body. How do I know if that is equivalent to a Major Award at Level 5 of the NFQ?**

If you have an award made by a UK awarding body you will need to check the UK database of qualifications <http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/index.aspx> to find out (i) the name of the awarding body that made your award (ii) the type of qualification you obtained and (iii) the level of the qualification in the UK framework of qualifications.

#### **You can then use the document at the following link**

[http://www.qualificationsrecognition.ie/recognition/int\\_qual\\_databse/uk/documents/CrossBoundaries.pdf](http://www.qualificationsrecognition.ie/recognition/int_qual_databse/uk/documents/CrossBoundaries.pdf) to establish how the level of this qualification compares with the Irish NFQ levels. You should include this information at contract stage. The OMCYA will then notify you whether or not this qualification is considered comparable to a Level 5 or Level 6 Major Award.

#### **I gained my childcare qualification abroad. How do I find out if it is equivalent to a Major Award at Level 5 on the Irish NFQ?**

If you have gained your qualification abroad, you should provide as much information on the qualification as possible to the OMCYA at contract stage, including the name of the awarding body and the institution in which the qualification was attained. Having checked that all other aspects of the application are in order, the OMCYA will then refer the information on the international qualification to the Irish authority which deals with the recognition of international awards. It will then provide advice to the OMCYA on the equivalence or

otherwise of the qualification to an Irish Level 5 Major Award and the OMCYA will then notify you whether or not this qualification is equivalent to a Level 5 or Level 6 Major Award.

I have additional questions on the eligibility of my qualifications. Who do I contact?

You should direct any additional questions you have on these qualification requirements to the OMCYA to which you are making your application. It will be best placed in the first instance to discuss these with you.

Note: Services who qualify under the interim arrangements for the introduction of the free preschool year will have to be fully qualified to Level 6 in early childhood care and education/cognisant discipline by September 2012.

**Appendix 1**  
**Title**

**Awarding Body NFQ Level**

<b>Certificate in Childcare</b>	FETAC NFQ	Level 5
<b>Certificate in Childcare</b>	FETAC (NCVA)	NFQ Level 5
<b>Childcare Practitioner Traineeship</b>	FETAC (FÁS)	NFQ Level 5
<b>Advanced Certificate in Childcare Supervision</b>	FETAC	NFQ Level 6
<b>Supervision in Childcare</b>	FETAC (NCVA)	NFQ Level 6
<b>Childcare Supervisor</b>	FETAC (FÁS)	NFQ Level 6