**Dearbhú Cáilíochta
agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann
Quality and
Qualifications Ireland**

QQI AWARDS STANDARDS.

Award Standards for Youth Work at NFQ Levels 5

March 2025

Foreword

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012 requires QQI to 'determine the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired, and where appropriate, demonstrated, by a learner before an award may be made by the Authority'. QQI award standards are based on the level indicators and award type descriptors of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and are governed by QQI Policy for the Determination of Award Standards.

Youth work is an international, informal and non-formal educational and reflective practice, committed to the personal/social development and empowerment of young people. Youth workers, paid and voluntary, play a pivotal role in the provision of a safe, social, inclusive learning environment where young people can flourish and take action on issues that impact their lives. Youth work practice is based on principles of voluntary participation, inclusion, equality, social justice, human rights and working in partnership with young people. The youth work relationship is an empowering one, based on mutual respect where youth workers and young people together create a learning environment that is enjoyable, inclusive, young person centred and promotes young people's sense of agency.

The revised QQI youth work standards are the result of a standard development process, based on cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders including youth work organisations, Further Education and Training (FET) providers, Higher Education (HE) youth work educators, sectoral representatives and other subject experts. The Standards Development Group was led by the North-South Education and Training Standards (NSETS) for Youth Work which is hosted by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI). NSETS is recognised by QQI as a 'peak body' i.e. the relevant body to set standards in a sector.

These standards represent an elaboration of the generic descriptors of the Framework. They should facilitate experts in particular fields of learning to create the link between their programmes' intended learning outcomes and the NFQ. These standards are not programme specifications. It is through these, however, that the relationship between a programme, its component parts and the NFQ should be evident. The standards are a reference point and a point of comparison against which individual programmes may be justified.

They are intended to provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with a particular field of learning. In designing programmes, providers must take cognisance of the standards for specific fields of learning where they generally relate to the programme being developed. It is, however, recognised that there is a significant growth in multi-disciplinary/inter-disciplinary programmes;

there are emerging fields of learning; and in addition, within each field there is the vast spectrum of programmes possible, which range from highly practical to very theoretical. In this context, it is not possible to have a standard, or multiple standards, that cater for the complete range of programmes possible. It is therefore expected that the standards for specific fields of learning will be used as reference points for the design of programmes.

In drafting these award standards every effort has been made to ensure that they will provide for flexibility and variety in the design of programmes and therefore encourage innovation within an overall agreed framework. It is not expected that all programmes will include every learning outcome identified in a standard. It is, however, expected that many programmes will include learning outcomes that are not included in the relevant standard. When designing a programme, each learning outcome in the standard should be considered. Where departure from these is necessary, it should be justified in the context of the specific orientation of the programme and other facts pertaining to it. Each programme provider should be able to demonstrate how the design and content of its own programmes has been informed by the standard.

The level descriptors of the Framework, the award type descriptors and consequently the standards for the specific fields of learning are divided into three different types of learning outcomes - knowledge, skill and competence. These strands are further subdivided into eight sub-strands. Each strand/sub-strand is important. The relative weighting of each strand in a programme will vary from programme to programme.

The weighting will be determined by many factors, including for example, the practical nature of a programme, or otherwise. Each strand/sub-strand should be addressed appropriately in every programme. Where a programme is multidisciplinary or inter-disciplinary in nature, the use of more than one standard may be necessary. In such cases, the scope, depth and balance of knowledge, skill and competence should be attended to.

These standards are determined by QQI under section 49(1) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 2012.

Purpose

It is intended that this new Broad Award Standards for Youth Work will be used as reference to guide the development of FET programmes, equipping the learner with the knowledge, skills and competence to:

1. understand the distinctive nature of youth work as an (informal and non-formal) educational practice which is underpinned by specific values, principles and processes.

2. to engage in and contribute effectively to youth work responses, under the direction of a professional youth worker, in a broad range of settings.

3. progress to further and/or higher education.

Note: The indicators at each level build on the skills from the previous one.
The outcomes at each NFQ level include those of all the lower levels in the same sub-strand unless stated otherwise.

NFQ	LEVEL 5
KNOWLEDGE BREADTH	Broad range of knowledge
KNOWLEDGE KIND	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant depth in some areas

The Purpose, Values and Principles of Youth Work	Knowledge and understanding of:
	• Youth work as a distinct professional educational approach to work with young people
	• Youth work's defining features
	• Underpinning principles and values methods and processes
	• The purpose, role and boundaries of youth work
	• Youth work in relation to/as distinct from other practices/professions that work with young people e.g. teaching, social work, justice system etc.

Policy and Sectoral Context of Youth Work	Knowledge and understanding of:
	• Youth work origins, history and key developments
	• The current context of youth work provision in Ireland
	• Youth work structures and funding
	• Relevant organisations and providers
	• Relevant policy and legislative context in relation to young people and youth work
	• Relevant quality standards, reporting and compliance requirements
	• The European youth work context.
Young People and Society	Knowledge and understanding of:
	• 'Youth' and 'young people'
	• Young people and society (sociology/social studies)
	• Relevant public policy and administration.

Working with Young People in Youth Work Settings	Knowledge and understanding of: • The importance of building relationships with young people • Communication and teamwork • Group work and working in groups as a means of learning • Youth work methods and approaches in different spaces/domains • The role and responsibilities of the youth worker • Youth work programme planning, review and evaluation • Importance of reflective practice • Safeguarding and child protection principles and practices • How to create a safe, inclusive and enjoyable environment for young people.

NFQ	LEVEL 5
KNOW-HOW AND SKILL RANGE	Demonstrate a broad range of specialised skills and tools
KNOW-HOW AND SKILL SELECTIVITY	Evaluate and use information to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to varied unfamiliar problems
Teamwork, Communication & Relationship Building Skills	Ability to: • Present one-self in a warm, friendly and welcoming manner to all • Apply good teamwork skills • Develop effective communication skills, in particular listening skills • Use opportunities to engage informally with young people • Build positive relationships with young people, staff, volunteers and services • Use language and terminology that is appropriate to youth work and young people.

Accountability, Reflection and Critical Thinking Skills	Ability to: • Describe youth work as a distinct profession • Demonstrate responsibility & accountability in the workplace • Consider your own and others' personal and practice values and belief systems • Execute tasks effectively • Demonstrate basic understanding of the language and terminology of evaluation process • Reflect on your practice, assess effectiveness and identify areas for improvement • Make connections between youth work theory and practice • Prepare for and engage in support and supervision meetings with workplace supervisor • Use critical thinking skills in response to problems/challenges/barriers.
Inclusion, Equality and Human Rights	Ability to: • Work in an inclusive manner with all young people • Be aware of and respectful of differences in attitudes and experiences • Recognise and respond appropriately to discrimination and prejudice.

Administration and Information Organising	Ability to: • Undertake basic administration of meetings • Use appropriate digital technologies to share information or data • Select a variety of appropriate digital ways to communicate in each situation • Gather information and present information in appropriate and accessible ways • Apply standards regarding ethics, GDPR and other relevant statutory compliance.
Specific Youth Work Skills	Ability to: • Demonstrate an understanding of the issues that young people face • Demonstrate a basic understanding of adolescent development • Undertake basic needs assessment and plan an appropriate session/activity for a group of young people • Undertake a review and evaluation of a programmes/activity with young people under guidance/supervision of a staff member • Build and maintain relationships with young people which are positive/healthy/ safe, and which are cognisant of boundaries • Recognise various ways of responding to challenging behaviour from individuals and within groups • Identify services and supports available to young people in the community - e.g. mental health services.

Workplace Skills	Ability to:
	• Apply appropriate boundaries between worker and young people
	• Embrace new opportunities that develop new skills/competencies
	• Recognise and follow health and safety procedures
	• Present and act in an appropriate manner
	• Contribute to general tasks within workplace environments.

NFQ	LEVEL 5
COMPETENCE CONTEXT	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs; identify and apply skill and knowledge to a wide variety of contexts
	• Take responsibility for self with young people, adults and the wider community • Demonstrate general work-related competence e.g. timekeeping, reliability, integrity, confidentiality, GDPR etc. • Undertake administrative tasks related to the effective planning, implementation and reporting of youth work programmes • Demonstrate ability to review and adapt activities in response to needs or circumstances • Employ a range of approaches/methods appropriate to the specific youth work context • Demonstrate facilitation skills.

NFQ	LEVEL 5
COMPETENCE ROLE	Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities; join and function within multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups
	• Demonstrate appropriate boundaries with young people, colleagues, management and wider community • Awareness of/compliance with safeguarding policies and procedures • Be mindful of the positive and negative aspects of the use of social media tools in the context of the youth work • Plan and manage learning and development activities with young people safely and effectively • Communicate effectively and appropriately with young people and other adults in the youth work context • Take guidance and direction from experienced youth workers and management.

NFQ	LEVEL 5
COMPETENCE LEARNING TO LEARN	Learn to take responsibility for own learning within a managed environment
	• Recognise areas for personal development and practice learning • Appreciate the value of reflective practice in relation to learning • Maintain a reflective learning diary/journal • Seek out opportunities for development and learning • Plan for progression opportunities • Management of self in workplace e.g. time-management, reliability, prioritising work, appropriate workplace behaviour and demeanour etc.

NFQ	LEVEL 5
COMPETENCE INSIGHT	Assume full responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour
	Demonstrate: • Capacity to reflect on practice • Insight on values in action • Appropriate boundaries in relationships with young people • Self-reflective practice to explore personal attitudes and values engagement with appropriate supervision.