

1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
2. Education and learning (<https://www.gov.uk/browse/education>)
3. Apprenticeships, 14 to 19 education and training for work (<https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/find-course>)

# What qualification levels mean

[Skip to contents of guide](#)

## Contents

- Overview (<https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean>)
- England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Other countries (<https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels>)

# England, Wales and Northern Ireland

There are 9 qualification levels.

## Entry level

Each entry level qualification is available at three sub-levels - 1, 2 and 3. Entry level 3 is the most difficult.

Entry level qualifications are:

- entry level award
- entry level certificate (ELC)
- entry level diploma
- entry level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- entry level essential skills
- entry level functional skills
- Skills for Life

## Level 1

Level 1 qualifications are:

- first certificate
- GCSE - grades 3, 2, 1 or grades D, E, F, G

- level 1 award
- level 1 certificate
- level 1 diploma
- level 1 ESOL
- level 1 essential skills
- level 1 functional skills
- level 1 national vocational qualification (NVQ)
- music grades 1, 2 and 3

## Level 2

Level 2 qualifications are:

- CSE - grade 1
- GCSE - grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 or grades A\*, A, B, C
- intermediate apprenticeship
- level 2 award
- level 2 certificate
- level 2 diploma
- level 2 ESOL
- level 2 essential skills
- level 2 functional skills
- level 2 national certificate
- level 2 national diploma
- level 2 NVQ
- music grades 4 and 5
- O level - grade A, B or C

## Level 3

Level 3 qualifications are:

- A level
- access to higher education diploma
- advanced apprenticeship
- applied general
- AS level
- international Baccalaureate diploma
- level 3 award
- level 3 certificate
- level 3 diploma
- level 3 ESOL

- level 3 national certificate
- level 3 national diploma
- level 3 NVQ
- music grades 6, 7 and 8
- tech level

## Level 4

Level 4 qualifications are:

- certificate of higher education (C~~e~~rthE)
- higher apprenticeship
- higher national certificate (HNC)
- level 4 award
- level 4 certificate
- level 4 diploma
- level 4 NVQ

## Level 5

Level 5 qualifications are:

- diploma of higher education (DipHE)
- foundation degree
- higher national diploma (HND)
- level 5 award
- level 5 certificate
- level 5 diploma
- level 5 NVQ

## Level 6

Level 6 qualifications are:

- degree apprenticeship
- degree with honours - for example bachelor of the arts (BA) honours, bachelor of science (BSc) honours
- graduate certificate
- graduate diploma
- level 6 award
- level 6 certificate
- level 6 diploma
- level 6 NVQ
- ordinary degree without honours

## Level 7

Level 7 qualifications are:

- integrated master's degree, for example master of engineering (MEng)
- level 7 award
- level 7 certificate
- level 7 diploma
- level 7 NVQ
- master's degree, for example master of arts (MA), master of science (MSc)
- postgraduate certificate
- postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE)
- postgraduate diploma

## Level 8

Level 8 qualifications are:

- doctorate, for example doctor of philosophy (PhD or DPhil)
- level 8 award
- level 8 certificate
- level 8 diploma
- ← Previous : Overview (<https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean>)
- → Next : Other countries (<https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels>)

Print entire guide (<https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/print>)

## Related content

- Further education courses and funding (<https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses>)
- Higher education courses: find and apply (<https://www.gov.uk/higher-education-courses-find-and-apply>)

## Brexit

Check what you need to do (<https://www.gov.uk/brexit>)

## Explore the topic

- Apprenticeships, 14 to 19 education and training for work (<https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/find-course>)
- Universities and higher education (<https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/universities-higher-education>)
- Vocational qualifications (<https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/vocational-qualifications>)

- Exams, testing and assessment (<https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/exams-testing-assessment>)

### Is this page useful?

- 
- 

Thank you for your feedback

### Help us improve GOV.UK

Don't include personal or financial information like your National Insurance number or credit card details.

What were you doing?

What went wrong?

### Help us improve GOV.UK

To help us improve GOV.UK, we'd like to know more about your visit today. We'll send you a link to a feedback form. It will take only 2 minutes to fill in. Don't worry we won't send you spam or share your email address with anyone.

Email address