

A flexible, inclusive approach to CEFR alignment

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Quality and
Qualifications Ireland



**Authorised to English
language education
(ELE) and higher
education (HE)
providers**

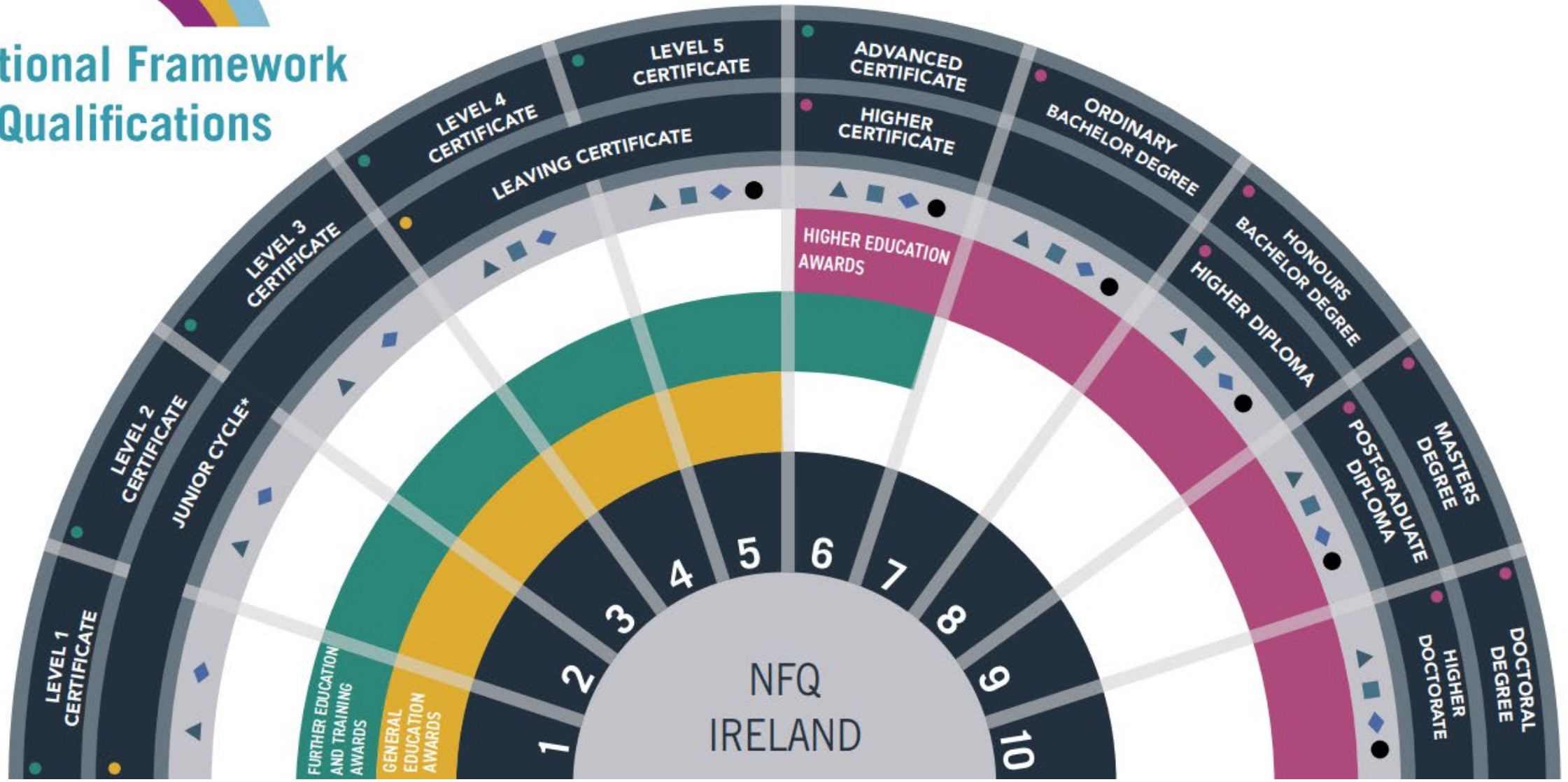
TrustEd Ireland will:
attest to quality of providers
**attest to quality of programmes &
qualifications**
support international recognition
**identify Ireland as study
destination**

**QQI: authorising
body**

**Underpinned by the
Irish state**



National Framework of Qualifications



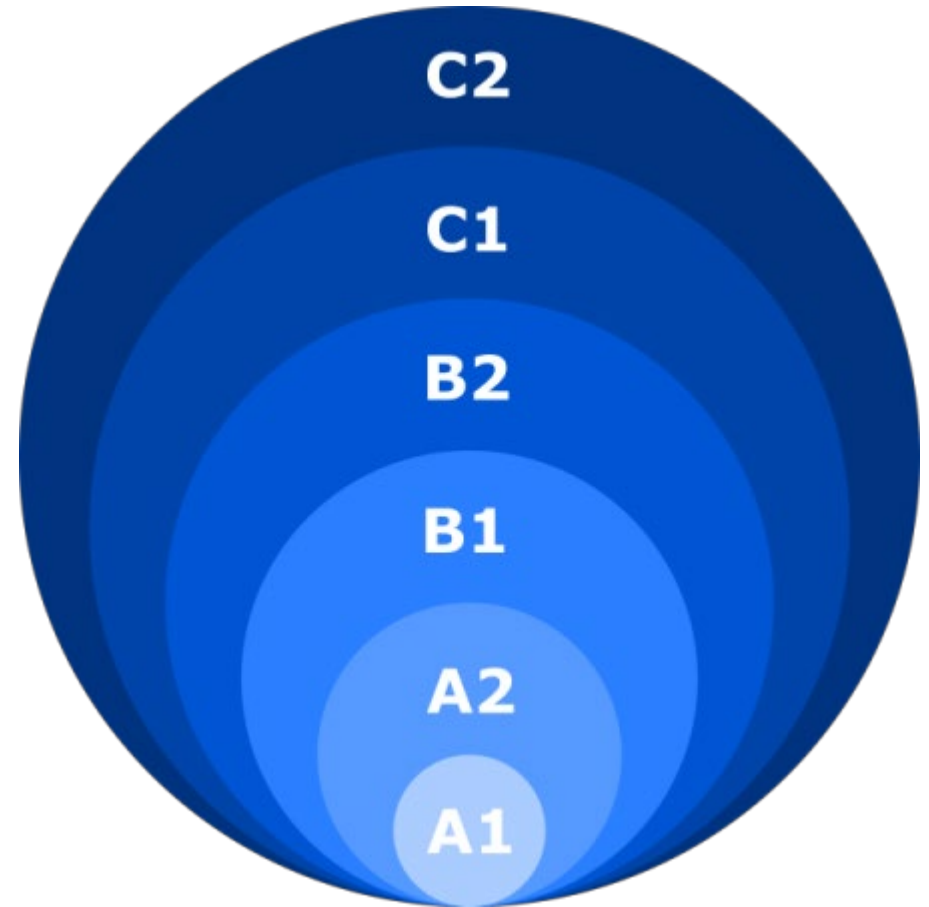
Diversity of ELE providers

Size

Location

Provision

CEFR alignment



TrustEd Ireland development

October 2021

QQI

Application
Window 1

Dept of Further
& Higher Education,
Research,
Innovation
& Science

Launch



Government
Departments

Legislation

International

Approval

ELE & HE
stakeholders

Public consultation



Requirements for premises

Operational, risk and human resources management

Programme design

Supports and services for international learners

Ethical marketing and recruitment

Enrolment, fees, refunds and subsistence

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QQI

POLICY.

Code of Practice for Provision of
Programmes of English Language
Education to International Learners



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Organisational Structures

Management and Governance of Quality Assurance

Academic Management Structures

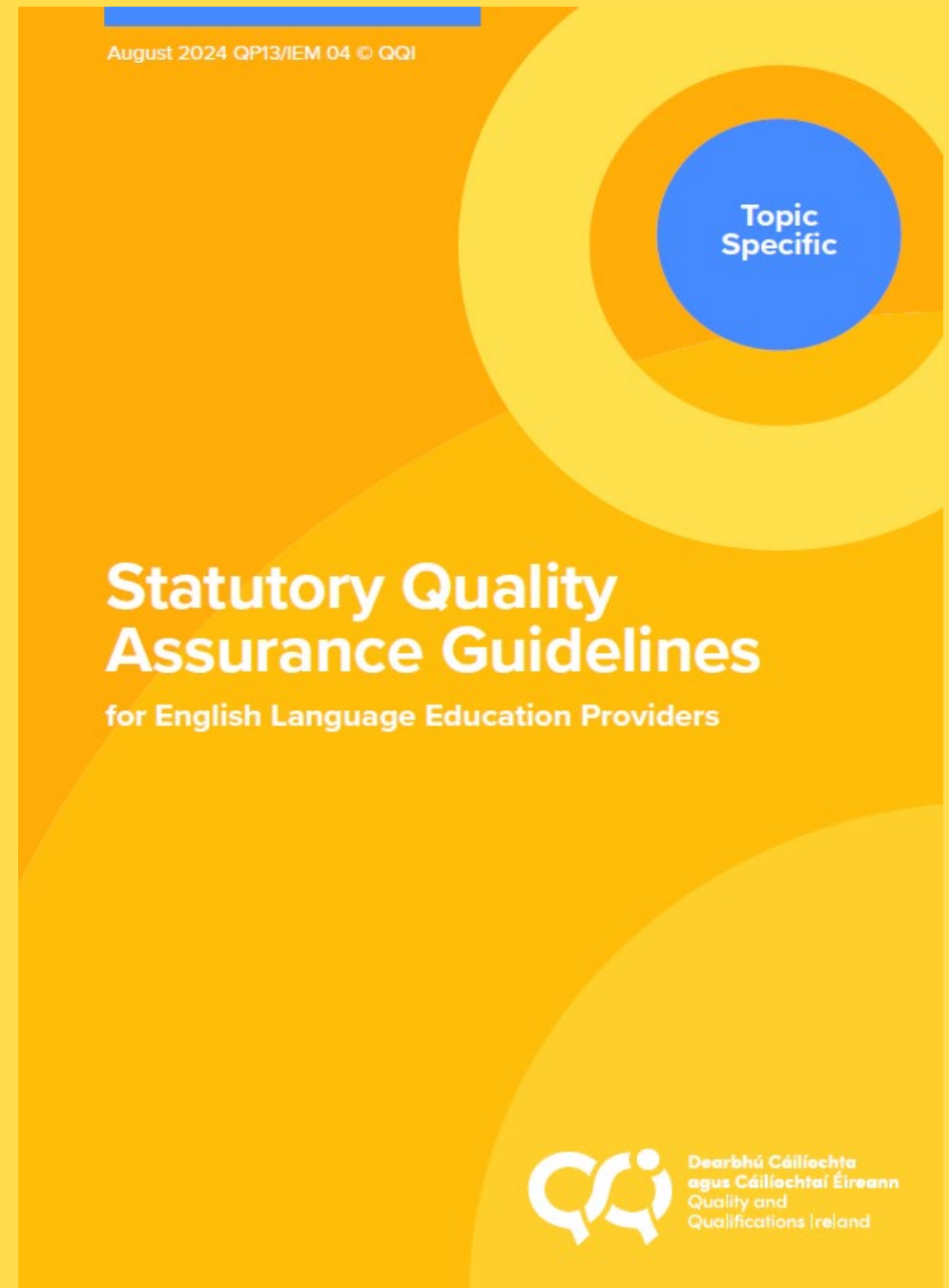
Programme Design

Supports and Services for International Learners

Staff Supports and Development

Annex 1: Guidelines on CEFR Alignment

Annex 2: Guidelines for Assessment



Adjustments to the CEFR Handbook

ACCESSIBILITY

- separate processes for curriculum and assessment
- thin down explanations
- create glossaries

DOCUMENTATION

- define what to include & when
- recognise that documentation is a work in progress
- capture thinking (training for developing evidence-based rationales)

DETAILED META-PROCESSES

- how to judge where you are at the start
- how to create a decision group
- deciding a timeline and budget
- planning a schedule

COMPENSATIONS FOR LIMITATIONS

- lack of resources
- lack of expertise
- starting from scratch

Accessibility for multiple audiences

1 Check that the Decision Group agrees on the distribution of levels for the learner group.

Q: Which levels does the course curriculum identify?

2 Using understanding from Stage A, agree which CEFR levels are represented in the learner group

Q: How many levels of the CEFR are represented across the whole learner group?

Q: How many levels of the CEFR are represented in one class in the learner group?

3 Discuss issues of any flexibility in level boundaries

Q: Can you identify where different levels in the learner group overlap or repeat?

Q: Is any overlap/repetition across levels desirable? Why?

4 Check decisions made in Step 3 in Familiarisation

Q: Which scales are needed for which learning purpose?

Q: Which scales are needed at each level within the learner group?

5 Document process, participants' roles and decisions taken, together with rationales

Detailing the meta-processes

Key questions for you to keep in mind at all times during an alignment process are:

1. Why are we doing this?
2. Which steps are essential for us in our context and for our purposes?
3. Which steps do we prioritize?
4. Which steps may not be necessary?
5. How long will the process take?
6. How much will it cost?
7. What expertise will we need, or have access to?
8. What resources (i.e. time, funding, expertise) do we need to plan for?

Responses to the Annexes

Both annexes have helped a lot as the process is quite complex. They have **helped us to find our way** through the process **more easily**.

The annexes have been really useful in terms of **helping us increase the alignment**. However, I've not been able to implement any changes due to **lack of time**.

These were used as almost a guide where **we could see the step-by-step process and definitions of what we were doing** therefore **allowing us to plan** accordingly. They were used to refer back to examples to **ensure we were on the right track**

Briefings 2022 – 2024

- For ELE and HE providers
- Content and focus informed by provider surveys
- An opportunity to work collaboratively, ask questions, and focus on specific aspects of alignment



Briefings 2022 – 2024: focus areas

- **Project diaries and documentation**
- **Using “Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook” – familiarisation; specification; standardisation; validating**
- **Principles of a priori and a posteriori alignment**
- **Using syllabus templates and writing rationales**
- **Aligning assessment – receptive, productive, linguistic, language-plus**
- **Younger learners, ESP and EAP**
- **Case studies and resources**

ELE provider feedback

“They were useful for mostly to understand what other institutions were having difficulty with and seeing it from another view, **open discussions with colleagues**, being able to seek clarifications and understanding [that] it is very much **up to each institution to create their own curriculum** based on student profile once it aligns with the CEFRL framework - this provided **reassurance for schools.**”

“They have been extremely informative. In particular, they clarified for our 'niche' programmes/modules **how CEFR is intended to be flexible** to meet the variety of courses on offer and not strictly regimented or exam focused.”

“It provided the **space and time to think and reflect** upon full implications of the CEFR alignment which is valuable given the busy nature of day-to-day school operations. it also provided **practical starting points.**”

ELE provider feedback

“Our QA Manager at the time went to these meetings and I'm sure found them useful. However, **he left the company in the middle of the alignment process.**”

“They were a bit highbrow and **not really suited to what we actually do** in school - Would have been **more useful to find out where people were in their settings** and worked from there - Helped people adapt what they had rather than present **a whole new system that people didn't really relate to.**”

Ongoing support

Resource repository (Padlet)

Online Q&A events

The screenshot shows a Padlet board with the title "QQI CEFR briefings resource links" and a date of "September 2022". The board is organized into five columns, each representing a different briefing or assessment session. The resources include:

- Briefing 1: CEFR 1:** Presentation slides Sept 2022, Overview of Sept Briefing (DOCX), CEFR Companion Volume 2020 (PDF).
- Briefing 2: CEFR 2:** Presentation slides Nov 2022, Handout 1: Syllabus template example - blank (DOCX), Handout 2: Syllabus template example - part-filled (DOCX).
- Briefing 3: Assessment 1:** Presentation slides 3 Feb 2023, Presentation slides 4 Feb 2023.
- Briefing 4: CEFR and YLs:** Presentation slides 4 March 2023, Handouts for session 4 March 2023 (DOCX), European Junior Language Portfolio (PDF).
- Briefing 5: Assessment 2:** Session Presentation 1, Session Presentation 2, APTIS technical manual (PDF).

ELE provider feedback

“They are a useful resource when **bringing new people into the team** or to clear up areas of confusion. They also provide material on **areas where some schools may not have expertise.**”

“A lot of them were very useful. The **Nile Filtering Tool** was probably the most helpful. The **CEFR Companion Volume**, The **Core Inventory Posters** and handbook, the **CEFR Alignment Handbook** and the **Grammar and Vocabulary Profile** were also useful.”

Biggest challenges

“Finding the **time** and **budget**.”

“Creating and updating syllabi is one thing, **implementing the updates** and **staff training** is another. One of the biggest challenges was to **have all staff buy into the process**.”

“**Balancing the assessment** to incorporate [mediation and traditional language] skills with our **students’ expectations** of what a test looks like.”

“Selecting **the most relevant/achievable descriptors**; adapting/editing descriptors to **word our specific ILOs** and better **tailor our programme** to cater for different learners.”

TrustEd Ireland information and resources:

www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-of-education-and-training/what-is-the-international-education-mark

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