

# Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply **2020**



# Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply 2020

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

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## List of Abbreviations

CSO	Central Statistics Office
ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
ETB	Education Training Board
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
IoT	Institute of Technology
ICT	Information Communications Technology
n.e.c.	Not elsewhere classified
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SSBL	Social Science, Business and Law
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Manufacturing
TCD	Trinity College Dublin



# 1. Introduction

This report, *Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply 2020*, is the 14<sup>th</sup> 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. 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 can contribute to meeting the skills needs of the economy.

This report serves as a companion publication for the National Skills Bulletin, which looks at the demand, rather than supply, 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. First the number of awards made to learners in Ireland's further and higher education and training system is examined. Following a summary in the Overview section, awards are broken down by NQF level (where applicable) and field of learning. Appendix 1 details the award types at each NQF level, as well as the programmes in the education system that typically prepare learners for such awards.

The second part of the report, Chapters 13 and 14, focuses on the existing skills profile of (a) the adult population and (b) recent graduates, drawing on data from Ireland's Labour Force Survey.

## Data used in this report

- [Further education and training data](#) was obtained from two sources. [QQI-FET data](#) is from Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) 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, among others. QQI-FET data is from the years 2014-2018.
- [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 data system with a full



data set available for the years 2018 and 2019 only. Therefore the 'Other FET' category does not figure in the time series analyses in this report. The data reported here is for 2019 (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 university), institutes of technology and colleges (e.g. RCSI, NCAD etc). HEA data in this report spans the five-year period 2012/13 to 2017/2018. However, at the time of writing data for Trinity College Dublin (TCD) was unavailable for the latest year (2017/2018).
- **QQI-HE data** was obtained from QQI's 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 the period 2014 to 2018.
- Finally, in terms of awards data, 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.
- **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 level and field of education qualifications attained by 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 1.1 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. In this report, where relevant and/or possible, we specify the sector (e.g. level 6 (FET) or level 6 (higher education) qualifications) as well as the NFQ level of an award,

Table 1.1 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	2 <sup>nd</sup> level education – Junior Cycle	Junior Certificate	Level 3
3 Upper secondary	2 <sup>nd</sup> level education – Senior Cycle	Leaving Certificate	Level 4
			Level 5
4 Post-secondary non-tertiary	Apprenticeship (craft + new post 2016); PLC courses; other FET <sup>1</sup>	QQI Level 5 Cert	Level 6
		QQI Advanced Cert	
5 Short-cycle tertiary education	Third level – higher cert./university diploma; New post 2016 apprenticeship	Higher Certificate	Level 6
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 <sup>2</sup>	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

<sup>1</sup> Some FET programmes (e.g. some specific skills training) also lead to awards at level 3 or 4 on the NFQ.

<sup>2</sup> In this report, awards from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) which relate to higher diplomas, officially placed at level 8 on the NFQ have been grouped with other postgraduate awards at level 9.

## Fields of education and training

ISCED fields of learning classifications are also used, although as awards are not spread evenly across fields in terms of numbers, some fields have been grouped in this report. Column 1 of Table 1.2 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 fields) shows the fields of education and training that were grouped for the analysis of education awards data. Where the number of observations was too small to report, some fields were further grouped (e.g. education was combined with arts and humanities).

Table 1.2 ISCED fields of education and training

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

## 2. Overview

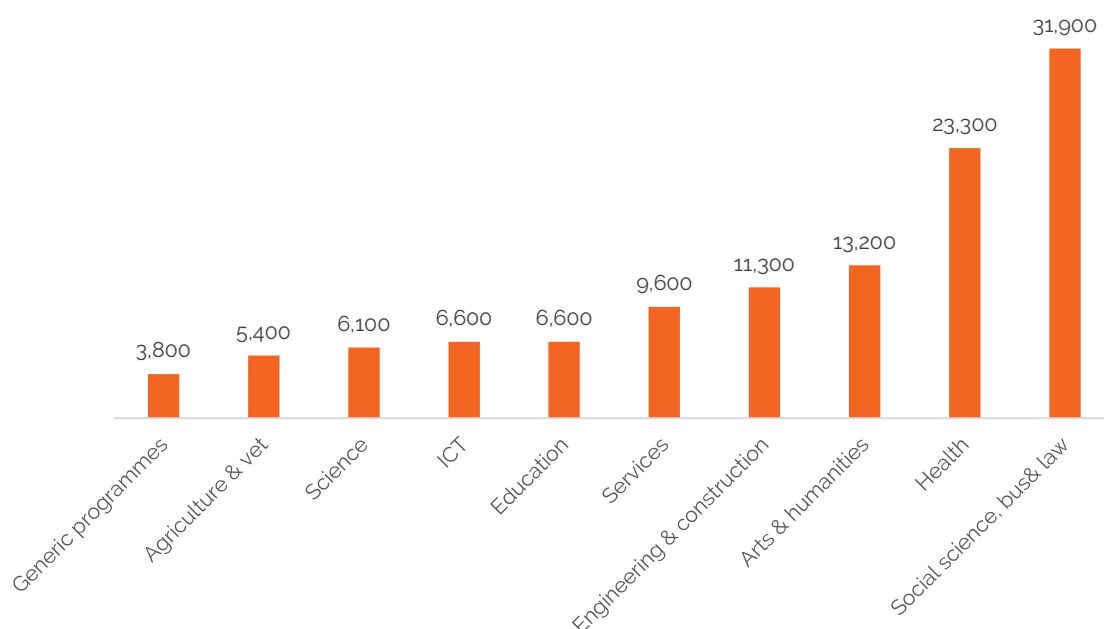
### 2.1 Awards

#### How many awards were made and in what fields of learning?

In 2018, over 118,000 awards were made in Ireland's further and higher education system (Figure 2.1). This number reflects the number of awards made in the FET sector (both QQI and non-QQI awarding bodies), the higher education sector (both HEA-aided and non-aided institutes), and a number of qualifications made by professional bodies (e.g. accountancy and tax). When compared to the preceding year, the number of awards increased by over 3%, although the increase was even higher if adjustments are made for TCD data (which was unavailable at the time of writing for 2018).

The fields with the largest number of awards were social science, business and law (SSBL) and health, which combined accounted for close to half of all awards made. Similar numbers of awards were made in the science, ICT and education fields, each making up approximately 5.5% of the total.

Figure 2.1 Number of further & higher education awards and prof. qualifications by field, 2018



Source: HEA, QQI, SOLAS (2019), IAASA and Irish Tax Institute

## What was the breakdown of awards by field and level?

Table 2.1 shows the number of awards made by field and broad level categories. With over 52,100 awards, **3<sup>rd</sup> level undergraduate awards** (which span levels 6-8 on the NFQ) **are the most common award level**, followed by FET awards (most of which are on the NFQ, with a smaller in the Other FET category where awards were not aligned with the NFQ (e.g. ICS Skills, industry awarding bodies, etc)).

Table 2.1 Number of awards by broad level and field, 2018

Field	FET (NFQ)	FET (Non-NFQ aligned)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Level Undergraduate	3 <sup>rd</sup> Level Postgraduate	TOTAL*
Science	400	0	4,300	1,500	<b>6,100</b>
ICT	700	500	3,500	1,900	<b>6,600</b>
Engineering & construction	3,100	1,400	5,500	1,300	<b>11,300</b>
<i>Of which</i>					
<i>Engineering</i>	2,400	1,360	4,300	900	<b>9,000</b>
<i>Construction</i>	700	<40	1,200	400	<b>2,300</b>
Social science, bus& law	5,700	1,300	15,300	9,700**	<b>31,900</b>
Health	10,700	-	9,000	3,600	<b>23,300</b>
Services	4,100	2,100	3,000	400	<b>9,600</b>
Agriculture & vet	4,200	-	1,000	200	<b>5,400</b>
Education	<40	-	3,200	3,400	<b>6,600</b>
Arts & humanities	4,600	<50	7,000	1,500	<b>13,200</b>
Generic programmes	2,700	500	600	<40	<b>3,800</b>
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>36,200</b>	<b>5,800</b>	<b>52,100</b>	<b>23,500</b>	<b>117,800</b>

Source: QQI, HEA (excludes TCD), SOLAS, IAASA, Irish Tax Institute

\*Discrepancies in totals are due to rounding

\*\* includes approximately 1,100 professional awards, which are usually made once an individual has completed undergraduate studies, although they are not necessarily formally recognised as postgraduate awards.

\*\*\* includes approximately 1,100 professional awards, which are usually made once an individual has completed undergraduate studies, although they are not necessarily formally recognised as postgraduate awards.

## Trends and key points, by field of learning

Between 2014 and 2018, [the number of awards made increased by 6%](#) (excluding TCD awards in 2018)<sup>3</sup>, with growth occurring for many fields of learning. [The exceptions were the construction](#) (which declined by a fifth) and [general learning](#) (which fell by 15%) fields; two other fields also experienced a decline over the same time period, but this was mostly due to the exclusion of data for learners at TCD<sup>4</sup>. When estimates for the number of awards made by TCD in these fields in 2018 are included, the number rose for the arts and humanities field and the social science, business and law field.

[Level 8](#) (equivalent to an honours bachelor degree) [was the most common award level in STEM-related fields, social science business and law, and in the arts/humanities.](#)

However, level 5 was the most common award level in the agriculture/vet, health/welfare, and services fields, while level 9 was the most common award level in the education field.

When [compared to other EU countries, Ireland has a higher than average share of third level graduates in the science, ICT, health/welfare and arts/humanities](#) fields; Ireland's share of graduates is considerably below the EU 27 average for engineering, manufacturing and construction. The gap between Ireland and the EU 27 for remaining subjects is relatively small (approximately one percentage point).

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<sup>3</sup>Times series analyses for the period 2014 to 2018 exclude 'Other FET' data from the SOLAS/ETBI PLSS, as the system is new with data available from 2018 onwards.

<sup>4</sup>As indicated in the Introduction, data for Trinity College Dublin was unavailable for the academic year 2017/2018. Where possible, data for 2018 was adjusted to include an estimate for the number of awards made at TCD by assuming the number and distribution of awards by field and level in 2018 was similar to 2017.

Table 2.2 STEM Fields overview (time comparison excludes Other FET)





Field	2014-2018 (including an estimate for TCD in 2018)	Level with the highest number of awards (% of total in this field)	Detailed subject with most awards	EU Rank: % 3 <sup>rd</sup> level graduates in this field
Science	 6% (14%)	<b>Level 8</b> 3,200 awards 52%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biology (900 awards)</li> <li>Chemistry (700 awards)</li> </ul>	EU avg: 6% Ire: 8%  Rank: 5th
ICT	 34% (38%)	<b>Level 8</b> 2,600 awards 39%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Software development (2,200 awards)</li> </ul>	EU avg: 4% Ire: 8%  Rank: 1st
Engineering /manufacturing	 17% (22%)	<b>Level 8</b> 2,100 23%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanical eng. (2,500 awards)</li> <li>Electrical/electronic (3,000)</li> </ul>	EU avg: 15% Ire: 9%  Rank: 25th
Construction	 -20% (-18%)	<b>Level 8</b> 800 34%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Civil/building eng (1,300)</li> </ul>	

Table 2.3 Health, agriculture/vet &amp; services subjects overview (excludes Other FET)








Subject	2014-2018 growth (including an estimate for TCD in 2018)	Level with the highest number of awards	Detailed subject with most awards	EU Rank: % 3 <sup>rd</sup> level graduates in this field
Health & welfare	 12% (19%)	<b>Level 5</b> 8,400 awards 36%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nursing &amp; caring (7,000 awards)</li> <li>Childcare/youth work (6,000 awards)</li> </ul>	EU avg: 14% Ire: 17%  Rank: 5th
Agriculture & vet	 63% (n.a.)	<b>Level 5</b> 3,500 awards 64%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture (4,000 awards)</li> </ul>	EU avg: 2% Ire: 1%  Rank: 20th
Services	 18% (19%)	<b>Level 5</b> 2,100 awards 22%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sports (2,000 awards)</li> <li>Hotel &amp; catering (1,900)</li> </ul>	EU avg: 5% Ire: 4%  Rank: 17th

Table 2.4 SSBL, Arts/humanities, education & generic fields (excludes Other FET)

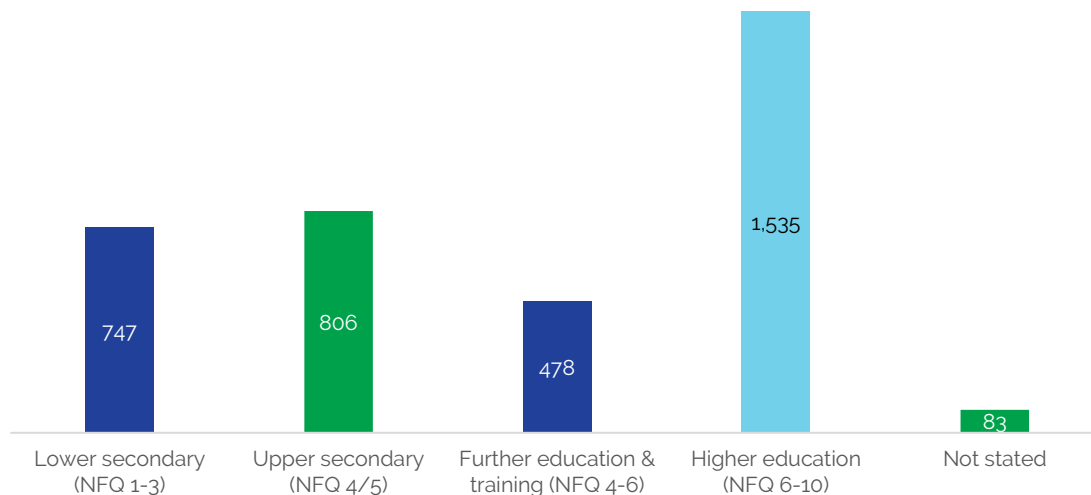
Subject	2014-2018 growth (including an estimate for TCD in 2018)	Level with the highest number of awards	Detailed subject with most awards	EU Rank: % 3 <sup>rd</sup> level graduates in this field
Social sciences, business & law	 -3% (+2%)	<b>Level 8</b> 10,800 awards 34%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management &amp; admin (5,800 awards)</li> <li>• Accounting &amp; tax (3,700 awards)</li> </ul>	EU avg: 34% Ire: 33%  Rank: 14th
Arts & humanities	 -7% (+1%)	<b>Level 8</b> 5,800 awards 44%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts/humanities n.e.c. (5,000 awards)</li> <li>• Fine arts, music etc. (2,600 awards)</li> </ul>	EU avg: 10% Ire: 12%  Rank: 3rd
Education	 6% (11%)	<b>Level 9</b> 3,300 awards 50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education science (1,600 awards)</li> <li>• Teacher training with subject specialization (1,400)</li> </ul>	EU avg: 10% Ire: 9%  Rank: 13 <sup>th</sup>
Generic programmes	 -15% (n.a)	<b>Levels 1-3</b> 2,200 awards 72%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General learning</li> </ul>	N.a.



## 2.2 Profile of the adult population

**Population by NFQ level:** in quarter 2 2020, there were almost 3.65 million persons aged 20 years or over, of which [higher education qualification holders](#) (spanning level 6 (HE) – level 10) made up more than 1.5 million persons (42%) (Figure 2.2).

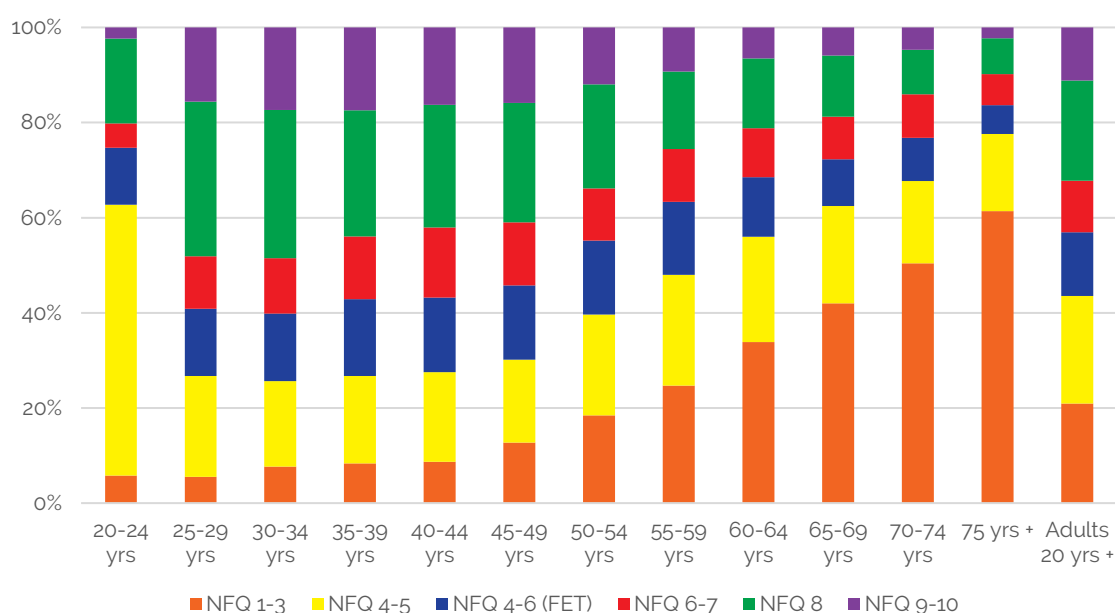
Figure 2.2 Adults in Ireland by highest level of education attained (000s), quarter 2 2020



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

**Population by NFQ level and 5-year age group:** the education profile of the population differed considerably by age group (Figure 2.3). With the exception of persons aged 20-24 years, (for whom full-time education may be ongoing), [the older the age group, the lower the education attainment level](#). 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 NFQ](#) in the years to come.

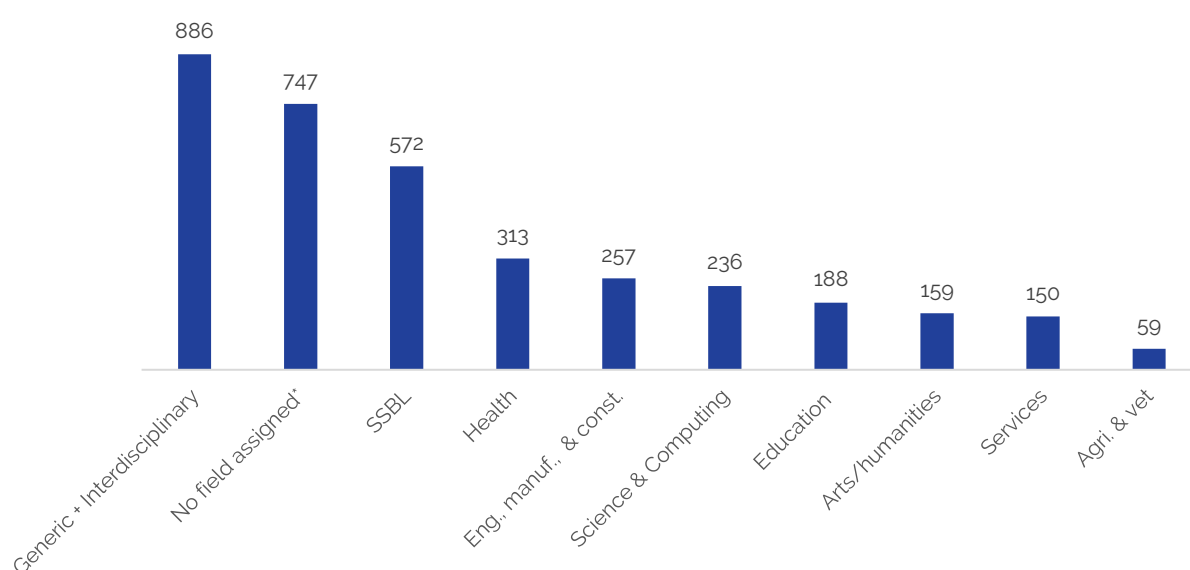
Figure 2.3 Education profile by NQF level and 5-year age group, quarter 2, 2020



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

**Population by field of learning:** for 1.63 million persons, accounting for almost half (46%) of adults aged 20 years and over, a field of learning could only be identified as either generic/interdisciplinary (866,000 persons) or could not be assigned (747,000 persons). The next largest fields were **social science business and law (SSBL)**, **health**, and **STEM**.

Figure 2.4 Adults (aged 20+) in Ireland by field of learning (000s), quarter 2 2020



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

\*For persons with qualifications at NQF 3 or below, fields of learning are not assigned in the data.

In quarter 2 2020, almost half a million 20-34-year-olds were recent graduates (i.e. had obtained a qualification no earlier than quarter 1 2015). Of these, over one half had obtained a third level qualification. Almost two thirds of recent graduates were in employment in quarter 2 2020, a fall of 8 percentage points compared to quarter 2 2019; the falls were sharper for those obtaining qualifications at lower levels of the national framework of qualifications. These falls are related to declines in employment levels associated with COVID-19-related economic restrictions from the end of quarter 1 2020.

Table 2.5 Share of recent graduates in employment, quarter 2 2019 and quarter 2 2020

NFQ Level	Share in employment (Q2 2019)	Share in employment (Q2 2020)
Level 1-3	***	***
Level 4-5	57%	44%
Level 4-6 (FET)	71%	60%
Level 6-7 (HE)	78%	73%
Level 8	85%	77%
Level 9-10	87%	83%
<b>All levels</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>64%</b>

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

[ ] data in square brackets is based on a small number of observations and should be treated with caution

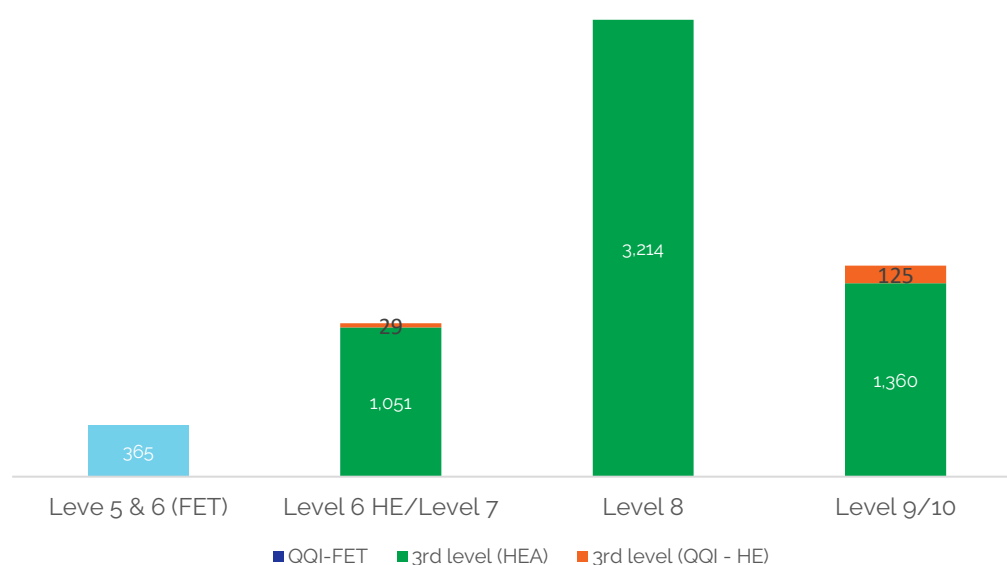
\*\*\* data is too small to report

# 3. Science Awards

How many awards were made in the science field in 2018?

- There were over 6,100 awards in science-related subjects in 2018; this number excludes learners at Trinity College Dublin (TCD), for which data was unavailable for 2018; in 2017, the number of science awards made at TCD was approximately 500.
- Science awards are concentrated at the higher end of the National Framework of Qualifications, with the majority (76%) at level 8 and above; only the education field had a higher share at these levels.
- Most level 8 awards were for honours bachelor degrees, although just under 5% were for undergraduate certs/diplomas at level 8.
- Of the postgraduate awards, almost 300 were for PhDs.

Figure 3.1 Awards in science by NFQ level and sector 2018

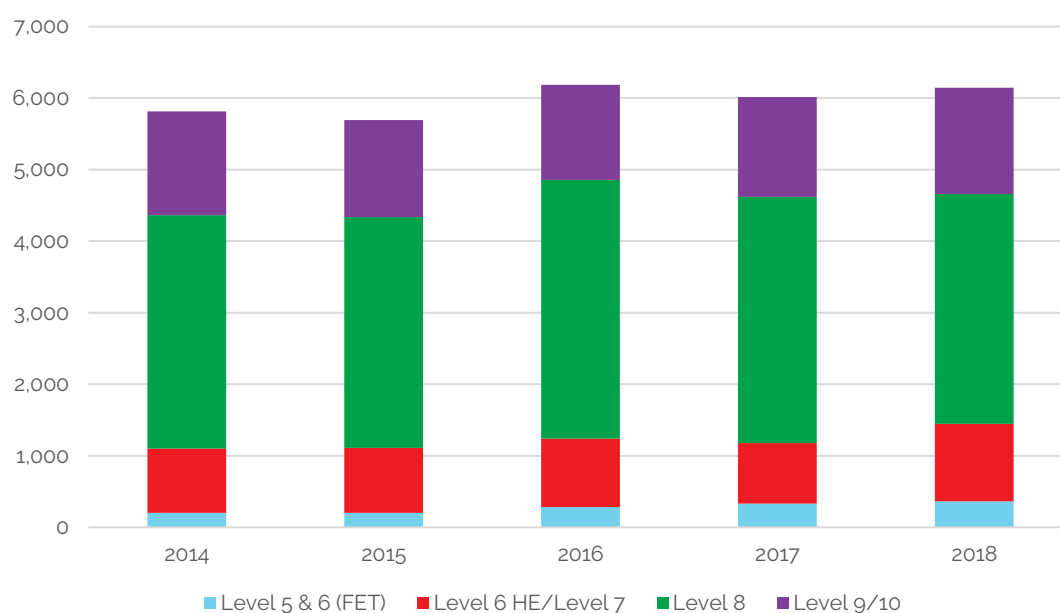


Source: HEA, QOI-FET, QOI-HE

How does this compare to preceding years?

- Between 2014 and 2018, the number of science awards in the FET and third level sectors rose by 6% (more than 300 additional awards), although there appeared to be declines at levels 8 and above.
- Nonetheless, when an estimate for TCD, based on 2017 awards data, is included for 2018 (not illustrated in the graph), the increase is even larger, at 14%, or an additional 500 awards, most of which were likely to have been at level 8, assuming the distribution of science awards in 2018 was similar to the preceding year.

Figure 3.2 Science awards by NQF level 2014-2018



Source: HEA, QQI-FET and QQI-HE

## How do the 2018 awards breakdown by detailed field?

**Biological, environmental & related sciences:** of the almost 3,600 awards in biological & environmental sciences, **over 1,100 were for medical or pharmaceutical related areas** (e.g. biomedical science, pharmaceutical/ medical device operations, or applied biology with biopharmaceutical science). PhD awards in the biological/environmental sciences field amounted to 210 (excluding TCD awards), by far the largest field for PhD awards in science

**Physical sciences:** chemistry made up 58% of the 1,276 awards in the physical sciences, with **more than 300 for pharmaceutical related areas**. Physics courses led to 279 awards (mostly at level 8) and earth sciences (not included in the Table, but comprising for example marine or geosciences) courses led to over 140 awards.

**Maths and statistics:** this included more than 150 awards in data analytics, with the majority (85%) at level 9 (mostly postgraduate diplomas are taught masters).

The analysis in this section excludes awards made at TCD; in 2017, however, of the 520 science awards made at TCD, almost two thirds were in the physical sciences.

Table 3.1 Science awards by sector, NQF level and detailed field, 2018

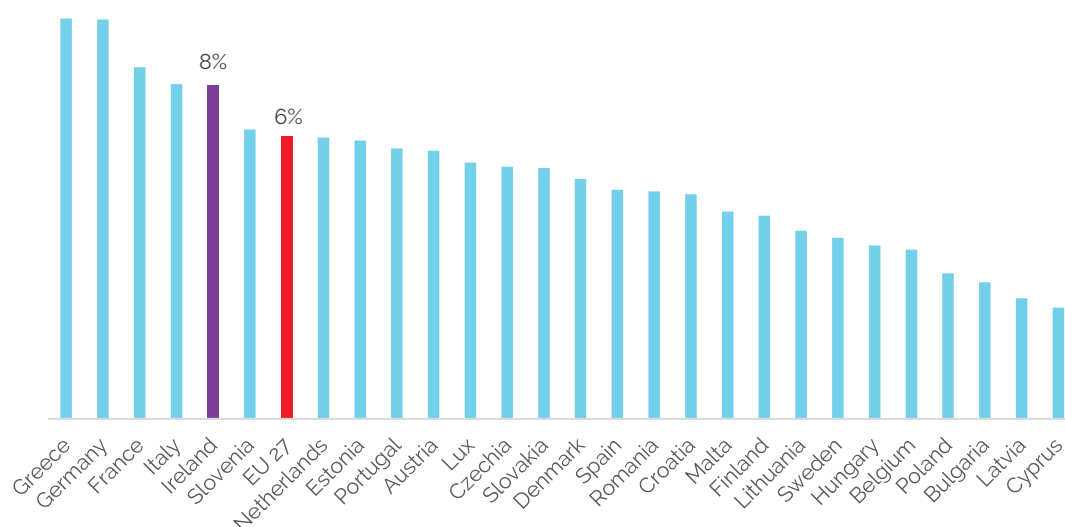
	NQF 5	NQF 6	NQF 6	NQF 7	NQF 8	NQF 9/10	Total
Biological, environmental & related sciences, <i>including</i>	-	-	<b>412</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>2,003</b>	<b>788</b>	<b>3,599</b>
<i>Biology</i>			22	109	656	126	913
<i>Biochemistry</i>			35	48	397	92	572
<i>Environment</i>			7	81	258	209	555
Physical sciences, including	-	-	<b>54</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>1,276</b>
<i>Chemistry</i>			46	114	447	135	742
Maths and statistics	-	-	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>657</b>
Other science <i>not further defined</i>	<b>365</b>	-	-	<b>1</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>458</b>
QQI -HE	-	-	-	<b>29</b>		<b>125</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Total awards</b>	<b>365</b>		<b>468</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>3,214</b>	<b>1,485</b>	<b>6,144</b>

Source: HEA, QQI-FET, & QQI-HE (excluding IoTs)

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

At almost 8% in 2018, the share of third level graduates in Ireland who had studied science was **the fifth highest amongst** the EU 27 countries, and above the EU average of 6%.

Figure 3.3. Science graduates as a share of total third level graduates, 2018



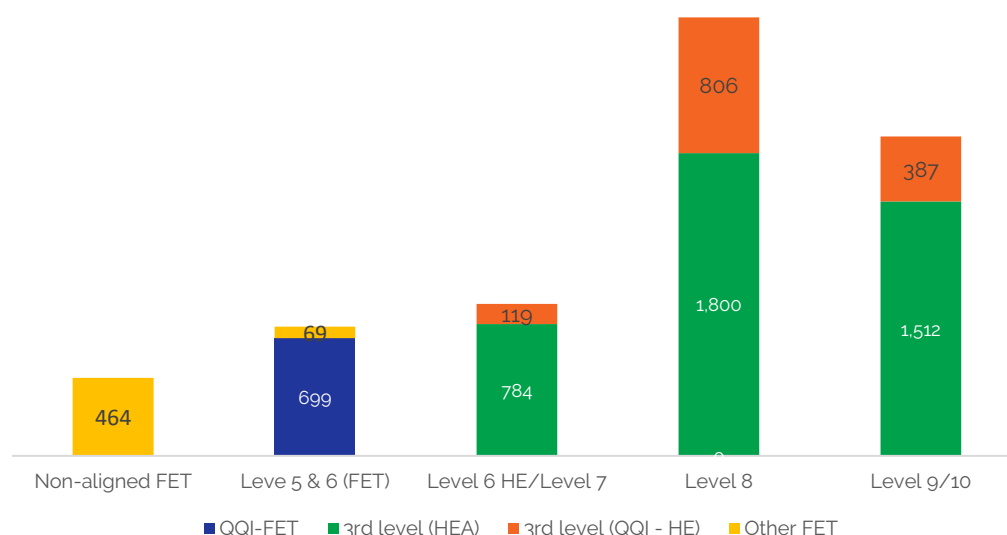
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 04.09.2020)

## 4. ICT Awards

### How many awards were made in the ICT field in 2018?

- There were over 6,600 awards in ICT-related subjects in 2018; this number excludes learners at Trinity College Dublin; in 2017, the number of ICT awards made at TCD was approximately 200. Also excluded are approximately 1,000 awards made to learners in the FET sector for ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) awards, which were deemed for the purposes of this report to be more appropriately included in the SSBL learning category, so as to avoid over-estimating the potential supply of skills to ICT occupations.
- One fifth of all awards were QQI higher education awards made to learners at private, independent colleges.
- ICT awards are concentrated at the higher end of the National Framework of Qualifications, with more than two thirds of the total in this field made at levels 8-10. Only the education and science fields had larger shares at this level.
- Of the postgraduate awards, almost 40 were for PhDs.
- The non-QQI FET category included awards from Microsoft, CompTIA, City and Guilds, among others.

Figure 4.1 Awards in ICT by NFQ level and sector\* 2018



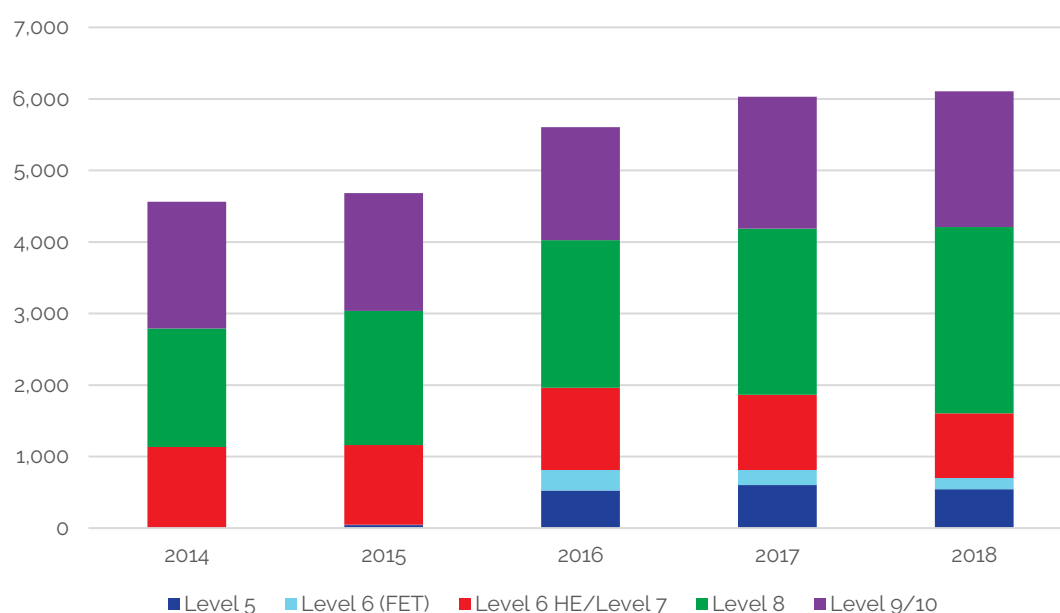
Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE & SOLAS

\*Other FET awards data is from 2019

## How does this compare to preceding years?

- Between 2014 and 2018, the total number of ICT awards rose by more than a third (approximately 1,550 additional awards), with most of the increases concentrated in the higher education sector (especially at level 8).
- When an estimate for TCD is included for 2018 (not illustrated in the graph), the increase over the period 2014-2018 is even larger, at approximately 40%.
- FET awards in this field are relatively new; previously ICT skills provision in the FET sector had been concentrated in basic digital skills such as those for office work (these are examined in the section on social science, business & law); however, the number of QQI-FET awards grew strongly between 2015 and 2016 and the slight decline that occurred in 2018 is due in part to the fact that a growing number of learners in the FET sector receive awards from awarding bodies that are not aligned to the NFAQ (e.g. Microsoft, CompTIA, etc).

Figure 4.2 ICT awards by NFAQ level 2014-2018



Source: HEA; QQI-FET & QQI-HE (private/independent, third level providers)

## How do the 2018 awards breakdown by detailed field?

Approximately one third of ICT awards are for [software development subjects](#), with the vast majority of these being at level 8 or above. The number of awards in [software development](#) in the HEA aided sector (excluding TCD from both the 2014 and 2018 analysis) [rose](#) by more than 400 awards over the five-year period,



**Security:** in the HEA aided sector alone (universities and IoTs), there were approximately 230 awards (cyber security, digital forensics, etc), which is more than double the number observed in 2014 (time comparison excludes TCD from both 2014 and 2018)

**Games:** the number of awards in games development averaged approximately 100 per annum between 2014 and 2018 (excluding TCD from each year). Although the number of level 6 awards in this area declined over the time period, the number at level 8 rose.

Table 4.1 ICT awards by sector, NFQ level and detailed field, 2018\*

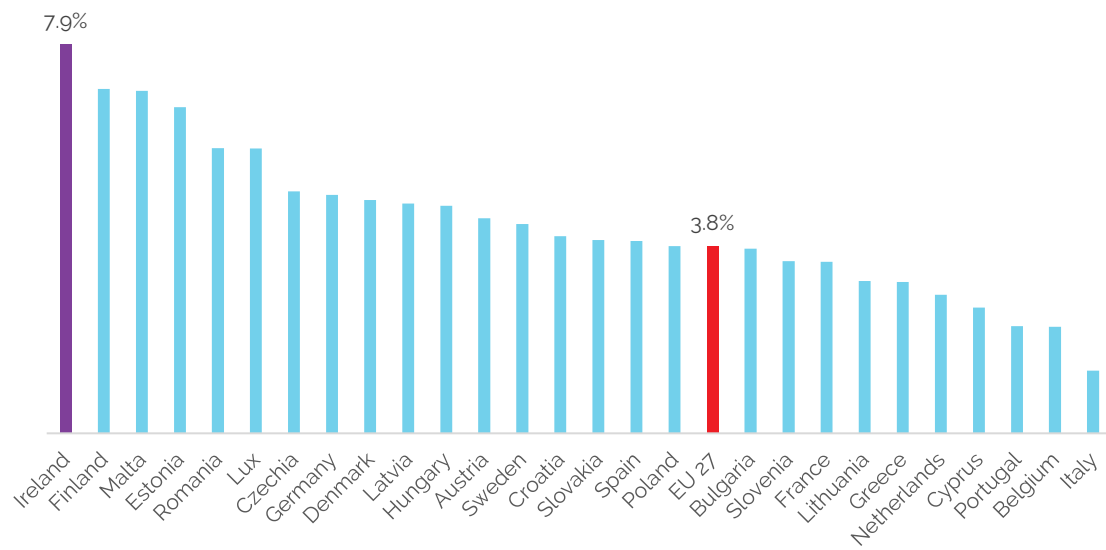
	NFQ 5	NFQ 6 (FET)	Other FET	NFQ 6 (HE)	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	Total
Computer use	24		257	22	151	160	20	634
Database/network design & admin	213	54	60	19	61	90	109	606
Software development, etc	308	100	69	9	226	766	687	2,165
Other detailed ICT fields			147	80	216	784	696	1,923
QQI-HE				34	85	806	387	1,312
<b>Total awards</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>2,606</b>	<b>1,899</b>	<b>6,640</b>

Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE & SOLAS  
 \*Other FET awards refer to the year 2019

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

At almost 8% in 2018, the share of third level graduates in Ireland who had studied ICT was the highest across EU 27 countries and double the EU average of almost 4%.

Figure 5.3 ICT graduates as a share of third level graduates in EU 27 countries, 2018



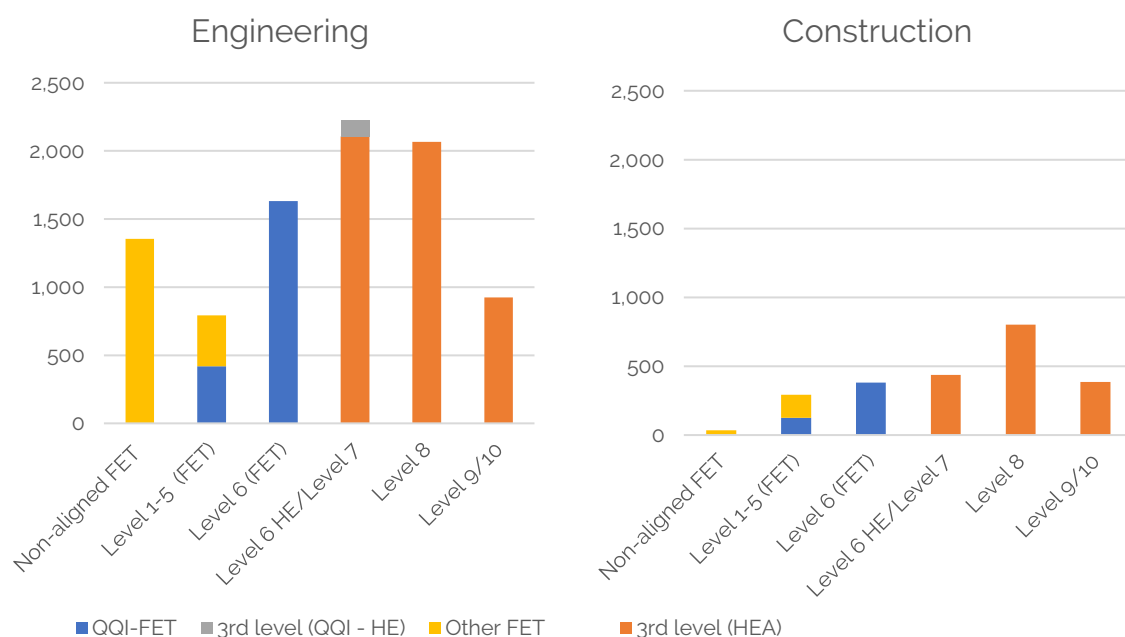
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 04.09.2020)

## 5. Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction Awards

How many awards were made in the engineering, manufacturing and construction field in 2018?

- There were over 11,300 awards in engineering, manufacturing and construction related fields in 2018 (Figure 5.1); this number excludes learners at Trinity College Dublin; in 2017, the number of engineering, manufacturing and construction awards made at TCD was approximately 350.
- Although the largest number of awards was made at level 8, unlike most other fields of learning, level 6/7 awards (in HE) made up a sizeable share (24%) of the total in this field; (the services field had the second highest share at 21%).
- With nearly four fifths of the total in this field, engineering awards outnumber construction related awards at all levels: there were nearly 9,000 awards in engineering compared to over 2,300 awards in construction.

Figure 5.1 Awards in the engineering, manuf. & construction subfield by NFQ level, 2018 \*



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

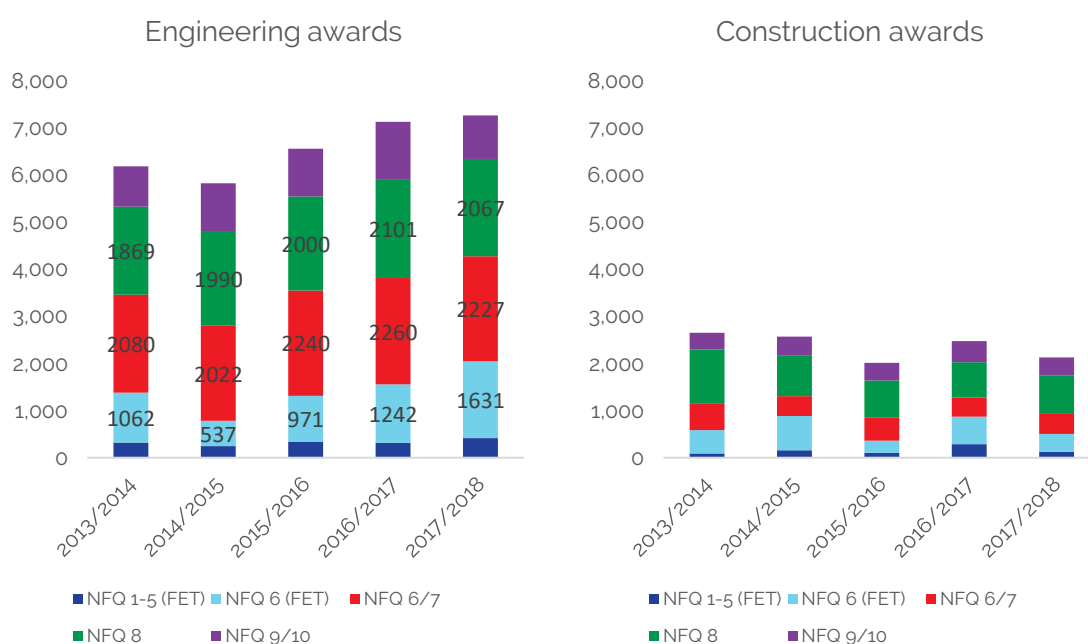
\*Other FET awards data is from 2019

Note: Excludes an average of 18 awards per annum at levels 1-4 which spanned both engineering and construction fields.

## How does this compare to preceding years<sup>5</sup>?

- Between 2014 and 2018, the number of **engineering, manufacturing and construction awards rose by 6%** (an additional 550 awards). Assuming, however, that TCD made approximately 350 awards (similar to the previous year), the increase was even greater (**+10%, or 900 additional awards**). The growth is driven largely by increases of almost a quarter (+23%) in the FET sector.
- The increases in FET awards at level 6 are related to the economic recovery and the recruitment and subsequent qualification of apprentices, particularly in trades such as electrical, mechanical automation and maintenance fitting, metal fabrication and plumbing.
- Engineering/manufacturing sub-field:** between 2014 and 2018, the number of engineering/manufacturing award rose by 17% (going from 6,200 to over 7,100 (not taking into consideration awards issued to TCD students).
- Construction sub-field:** the number of awards fell by approximately 20%, with 500 fewer awards made between 2014 and 2018. The fall was slightly smaller (18%) if we assume there were approximately 50 awards made to learners at TCD (as was the case in 2017).

Figure 5.2 Awards\* in the engineering/manuf. & construction by NFQ level, 2018



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

\*Excludes an average of 18 awards per annum at levels 1-4 which spanned both engineering and construction fields.

<sup>5</sup> SOLAS data for non-QQI FET awards is only available from 2018. Therefore, the timeseries refers to QQI and HEA data only. Unless otherwise stated data for TCD is included for the period 2014-2017, but not for 2018.

## How do the 2018 awards breakdown by detailed field?

### Engineering/manufacturing related fields:

- Of the almost 8,900 awards made in engineering and manufacturing related fields, the largest detailed field was mechanics, at almost 2,150 awards; about half of these were made in the [Other FET category](#) by industry certification bodies, typically for courses in [welding](#) and related subjects.
- Combined [electrical and electronic engineering](#) accounted for more than [a third](#) of engineering/manufacturing awards. Electrical engineering awards were dominated by [craft-electrical](#) awards (FET NFQ level 6), made to qualifying apprentices (i.e. electricians), while electronic engineering awards were concentrated at NFQ level 7, with many (about a third) being in mechatronic/manufacturing areas.

### Construction:

- [Civil and structural engineering awards](#) made up 243 awards at levels 8-10. The number of civil/structural engineering awards had been declining in recent years, a reflection of the recession in earlier years in which the construction sector was particularly negatively impacted. However, [the decline appears to have halted, and may even have reversed with 45 additional awards in 2018](#) compared to 2017, although levels remain significantly lower than the 329 awards observed in 2014. (Time series comparisons exclude TCD across each year examined).
- [Architecture and town planning](#): there were over 500 architecture related awards in 2018; of these, almost 130 awards were made to learners on one of the five RIAI accredited programmes in architecture<sup>6</sup>, down from almost 150 awards five years earlier; this, however, is an increase on the preceding year (2017) where approximately 100 awards were made.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.riai.ie/careers-in-architecture/education/accredited-programmes>; TU Dublin, UCD, UL, WIT and CIT/UCC

Table 5.1 Engineering, manufacturing and construction awards by NQF level & detailed field, 2018\*

	NQF 1-4	NQF 5	NQF 6 (FET)	Other FET	NQF 6 (HE)	NQF 7	NQF 8	NQF 9/10	Total
<b>Engineering &amp; manufacturing, inc</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>1,631</b>	<b>1,728</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>1,608</b>	<b>2,067</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>8,876</b>
Chemical					41	77	137	210	465
Electricity & energy			811	215	59	121	194	89	1,489
Electronic		33	81	202	153	532	393	94	1,488
Mechanics			402	1,251	34	319	431	51	2,488
Food processing		14			46	42	218	75	395
<b>Construction, inc.</b>		<b>125</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>2,331</b>
Architecture & town planning		23	8		3	59	267	166	526
Civil & building eng.		112	277		77	287	461	129	1,343
QQI-HE						<b>120</b>			<b>120</b>
<b>Total awards</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>2,012</b>	<b>1,929</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>2,081</b>	<b>2,868</b>	<b>1,309</b>	<b>11,327</b>

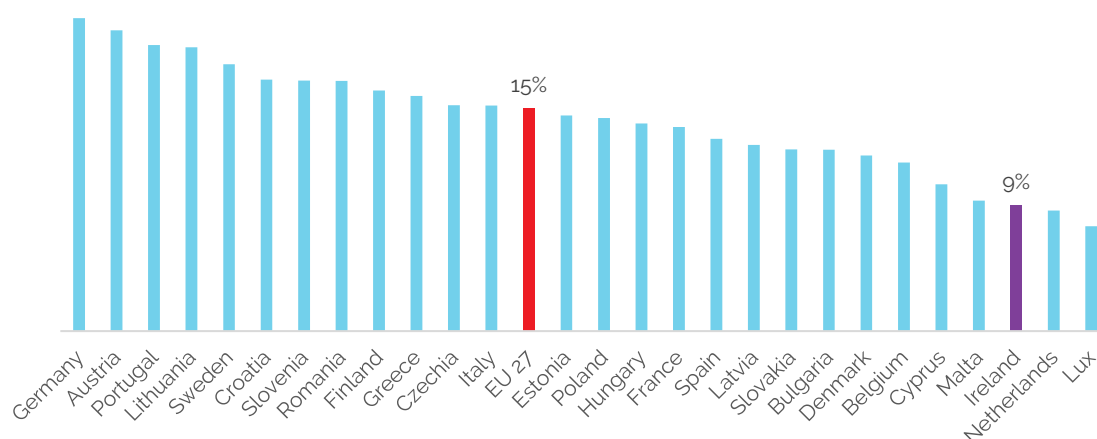
Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE & SOLAS

\*Other FET awards refer to the year 2019

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

At 9% in 2018, the share of engineering, manufacturing & construction graduates in Ireland was one of the lowest in the EU, ranking 25<sup>th</sup> out of 27 countries, and well below the EU 27 average of 15%. While Ireland ranked towards the top of the scale for science and ICT, its relatively low share in engineering, brings the total share of graduates in STEM-related fields close to the EU 27 average (24% for Ireland compared to 25% for the EU average).

Figure 5.3 Engineering & construction graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2018



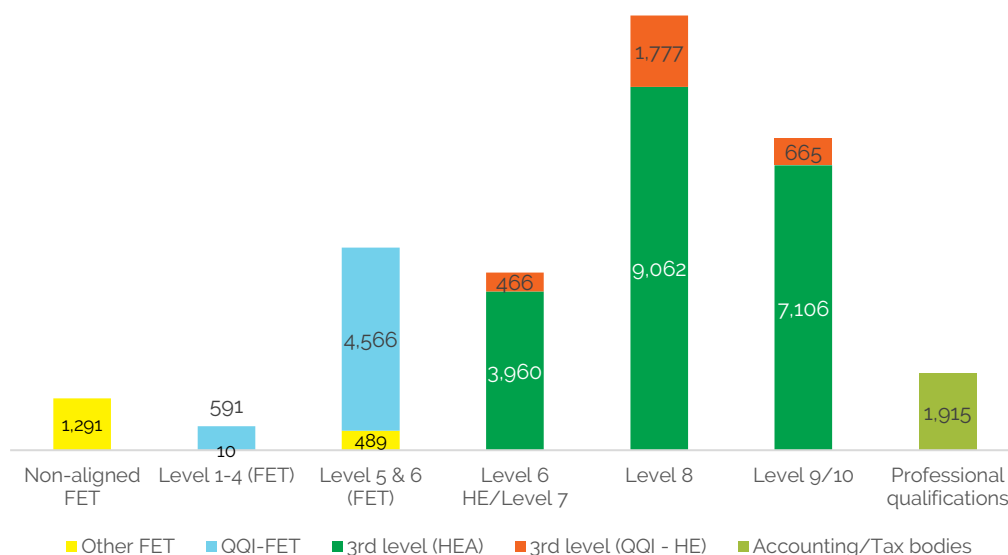
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 04.09.2020)

## 6. Social Science, Business & Law Awards

How many awards were made in the SSBL field in 2018?

- There were almost 32,000 awards in social science, business and law (SSBL) related subjects in 2018; this number excludes learners at Trinity College Dublin; in 2017, the number of SSBL awards made at TCD was approximately 1,400.
- This is by far the largest field, in terms of the number of awards made, accounting for more than a quarter of the 118,000 awards made in Ireland in 2018.
- Over a half (58%) were made at level 8 or above (18,600).
- Almost 3,000 QQI-HE awards were made to learners in private, independent colleges, mostly at level 8 (Appendix I details the colleges included in this sector).
- Just over a fifth (22%) of the awards were made in the FET sector, making up almost 7,000<sup>7</sup>.
- More than 10% of SSBL awards were neither on nor aligned to the NFQ; of these approximately one half were made in the FET sector, and included awards made to learners on courses such as digital skills (ECDL) and project management (e.g. Prince 2) among others. There were also 1,900 individuals who obtained qualifications through professional bodies.

Figure 6.1 Social science, business & law awards by NFQ level and sector, 2018



Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE, SOLAS, IAASA and Irish Tax Institute

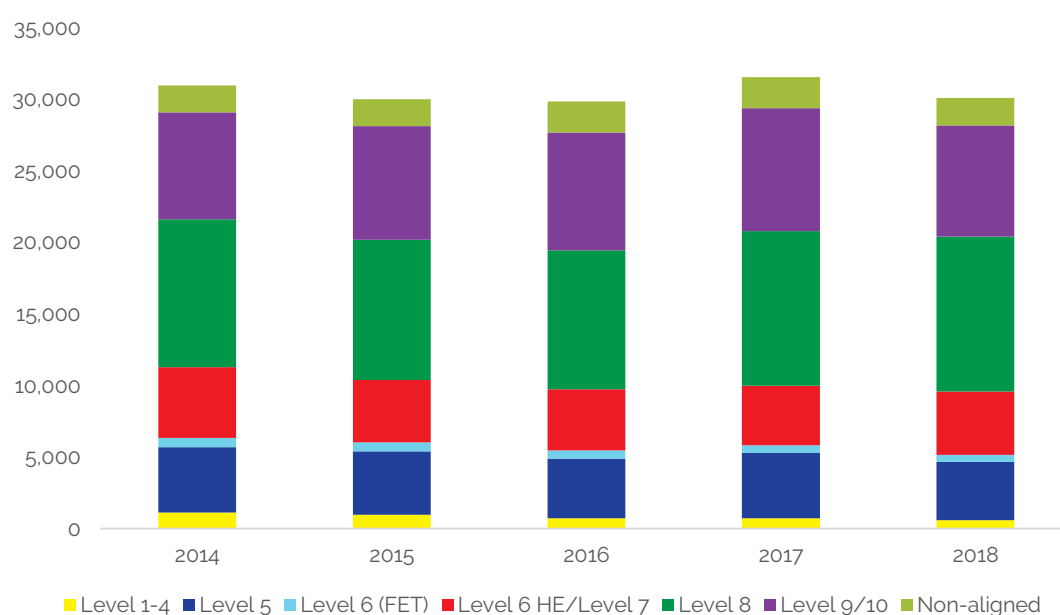
<sup>7</sup>Other FET awards data is from 2019

<sup>7</sup> The Other FET sector includes approximately 1,000 awards made to learners on ECDL courses; these were categorised in the SOLAS/ETBI PLSS as ICT awards, but for the purposes of this report, where the primary aim is to identify the potential pool of skills for the labour market, 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 1,000 ECDL awards may otherwise be counted as potential skills for ICT related occupations.

## How does this compare to preceding years<sup>8</sup>?

- Since the 'Other FET' awards data is only available for two years, they have been excluded from this time series analysis. However, year-on-year, the number of learners who received awards in social science, business and law awards through SOLAS-funded programmes remained stable.
- Between 2014 and 2018, the number of SSBL awards fell by 3% (nearly 900 fewer awards); however, if we assume that the number of awards made to learners at TCD in 2018 was similar to that observed the previous year, the estimated number of awards rose by almost 600, or 2%
- Assuming the number of awards made to learners at TCD in 2018 was similar to 2017 (1,400 awards), the number of SSBL awards remained stable between 2017 and 2018, halting the decline observed in earlier years.
- In the FET sector, the number of QQI awards declined by almost 1,200, with a fall observed across each NFQ level (or group of levels).
- Despite fluctuations in the intervening years, the number of learners gaining qualifications from professional bodies (accountancy and taxation) increased by 2% (or 30 individuals) in 2018 compared to 2014.

Figure 6.2. Social science, business & law (SSBL) awards by NFQ level 2014-2018



Source: HEA; QQI-FET & QQI-HE (private/independent, third level providers)

<sup>8</sup> SOLAS data for non-QQI FET awards is only available from 2018. Therefore, the timeseries refers to QQI, HEA and professional qualifications data only. Unless otherwise stated data for TCD is included for the period 2014-2017, but not for 2018.



## How do the 2018 awards breakdown by detailed field?

- With 5,800 awards, **management and administration** is the largest detailed field, accounting for almost a fifth of the total SSBL awards. Most of these awards were in the higher education sector, particularly at postgraduate level (NFQ 9).
- **Secretarial and office work** awards made up almost 3,400 awards and were made almost exclusively in the FET sector. Approximately 2,000 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. word processing).
- **Accounting/tax related awards** made up almost 1,800 awards, but there were a further 1,915 qualifiers through professional bodies, to give a total of 3,700.
- The number of **economics** awards (all from the higher education sector) was less than 500; 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. The true number is likely to be higher, although it cannot be identified in the available data.

Table 6.1 Social science, business and law awards by NFQ level and detailed field, 2018

	NFQ 1-4	NFQ 5	NFQ 6 (FET)	Other FET	NFQ 6 (HE)	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	Non-aligned	Total
<b>Social sciences &amp; journalism, inc</b>	-	<b>1,094</b>	-	-	<b>147</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1494</b>	-	<b>5,037</b>
<i>Economics</i>						10	260	195		465
<i>Psychology</i>					56	77	425	470		1,028
<b>Business, admin &amp; law, inc</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>3,027</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>1,790</b>	<b>1,358</b>	<b>2,133</b>	<b>7,082</b>	<b>5,612</b>	-	<b>22,078</b>
<i>Accounting &amp; tax</i>				425	76	233	750	305		1,789
<i>Finance etc.</i>				24	0	4	172	397		597
<i>Mgmt &amp; admin</i>			367	24	567	1,057	1,469	2,343		5,827
<i>Marketing etc</i>		76		28	97	234	502	724		1,661
<i>Secretarial etc</i>	415	1,811	95	1,005**	25	5	0	0		3,356
<i>Sales</i>	176	89		78	20	43	59	73		538
<i>Law</i>		94			33	79	1,065	443		1,714
<b>QQI -HE awards</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>105</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>1,777</b>	<b>665</b>	-	<b>2,908</b>
<i>Social sciences, &amp; journalism</i>					3	22	198	56		279
<i>Business &amp; admin</i>					102	339	1,579	609		2,629
<b>Professional (accounting + tax)</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>1,915</b>	<b>1,915</b>
<b>Total awards</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>4,081</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>1,790</b>	<b>1,610</b>	<b>2,816</b>	<b>10,839</b>	<b>7,771</b>	<b>1,915</b>	<b>31,898</b>

Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE, SOLAS, IAASA and Irish Tax Institute

\*Other FET awards refer to the year 2019

\*\*Includes approximately 1,000 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.

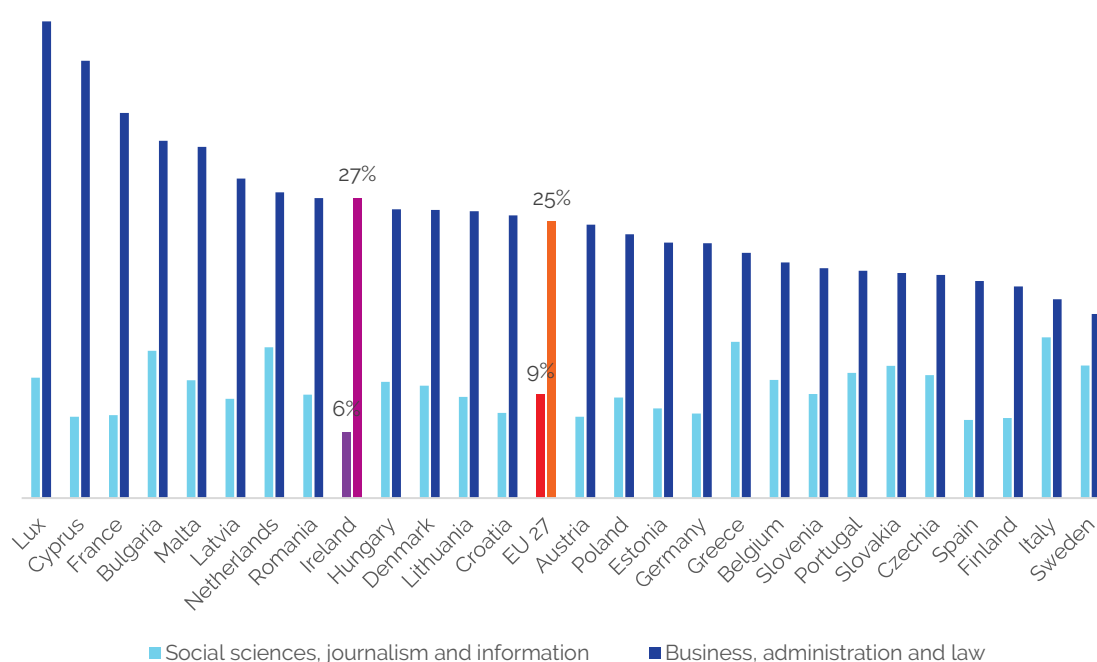
## How does Ireland compare internationally in terms of the share of third level graduates in this field?

**Social sciences, information and journalism:** at 6%, the share of third level graduates in Ireland who had studied social science, information and journalism was **the smallest in the EU**. This is partly due to the fact that many social science subjects in Ireland can be taken as part of an arts/humanities programme, e.g. economics or sociology.

**Business and administration:** at 27%, the share of third level graduates in Ireland who had studied business and administration **was amongst the highest in the EU, ranking 9<sup>th</sup>** out of 27 countries and above the EU average of 25%.

Combined, the total share of social science, business and law graduate in Ireland was 33%, only marginally lower than the EU 27 average of 34%.

Figure 6.3 SSBL graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2018



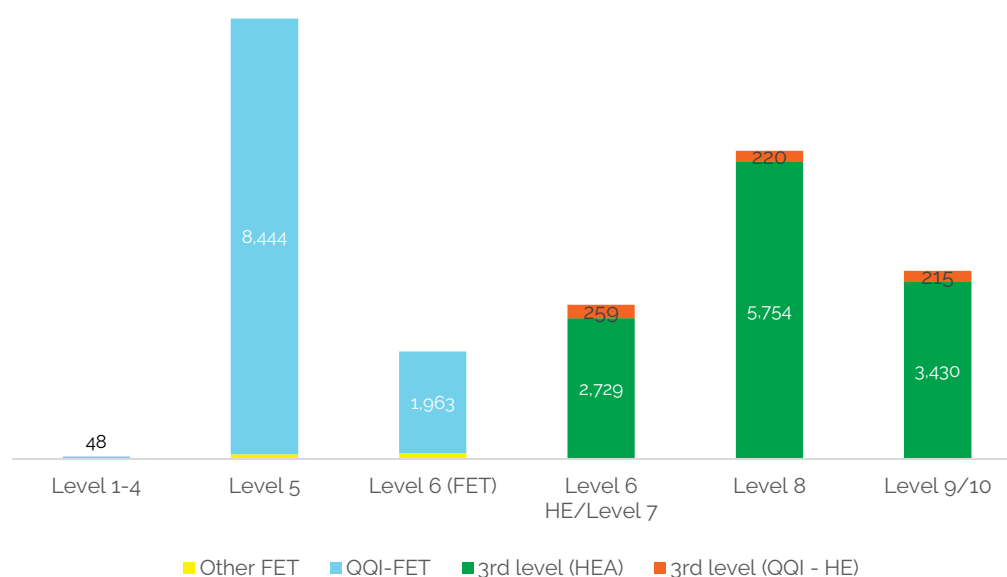
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 04.09.2020)

## 7. Health and Welfare Awards

How many awards were made in the health and welfare field in 2018?

- There were almost 23,300 awards in health and welfare related subjects in 2018; this number excludes learners at Trinity College Dublin; in 2017, the number of health related awards made at TCD was approximately 1,300.
- Over one half of health and welfare awards were made in the higher education sector, largely due to the fact that a third level qualification is a pre-requisite for many health and welfare related careers such as nursing, medicine, social worker, etc.
- At over 8,500, level 5 had the highest number of awards, followed by level 8 (nearly 6,000), making up over a third and over a quarter of all health and welfare awards, respectively. Level 5 awards tended to be for caring related areas such as healthcare and childcare; level 8 awards were concentrated in nursing and medical courses.
- More than 200 awards were for PhDs.

Figure 7.1 Awards in health and welfare, by NFQ level, 2018 (2019 for non-QQI FET)

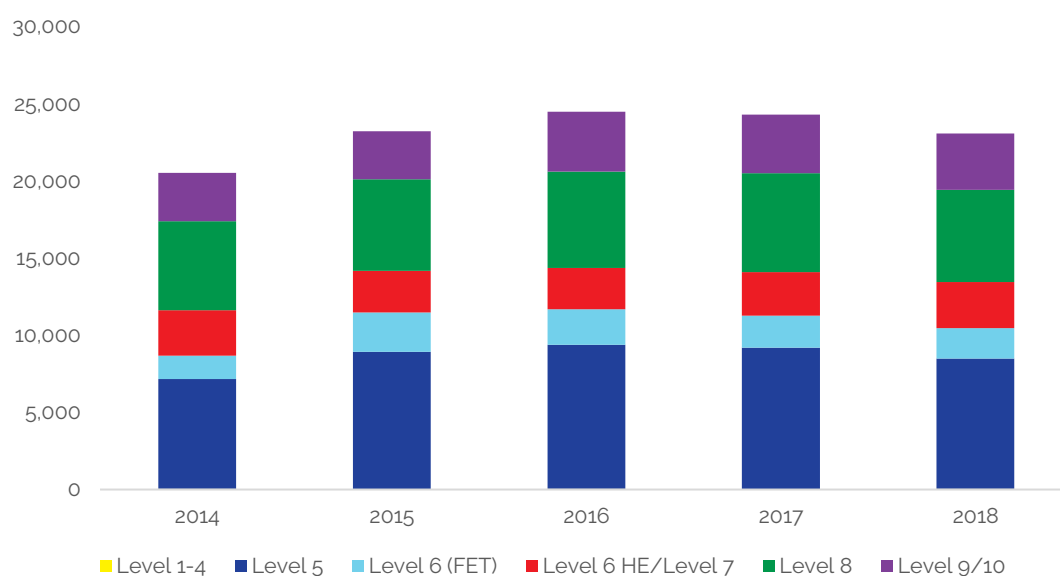


Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE & SOLAS  
 \*Other FET awards data is from 2019

## How does this compare to preceding years<sup>9</sup>?

- Between 2014 and 2018, the number of health and welfare awards rose by almost 2,500, or 12%, or by 3,800, if we assume the number of awards made to learners at TCD in 2017 and 2018 was similar (approx., 1,300).
- While there was a slight decline in 2018 when compared to 2017, this was due to the exclusion of TCD data for 2018; if we adjust the 2018 total to include an estimate of 1,300 awards for TCD learners, the number of awards remained largely unchanged between 2017 and 2018, at approximately 24,400 awards.
- The increases observed over the five-year time period were concentrated in 2015 for the FET sector and 2016 for the higher education sector. Between 2014 and 2015, the number of QQI-FET awards grew by a third (2,800 additional awards), while between 2015 and 2016, growth at third level amounted 11%, or 1,200 additional awards, with particular strong increases at level 9 (+24% year-on-year).

Figure 7.2. Health and welfare awards by NFQ level 2014-2018



Source: HEA; QQI-FET & QQI-HE

## How do the 2018 awards breakdown by detailed field?

Awards in this broad field were almost evenly divided between health (10,700) and welfare (almost 10,800), with an additional 1,800 in combined health and welfare fields (including QQI-HE data).

<sup>9</sup> SOLAS data for non-QQI FET awards is only available from 2018. Therefore, the timeseries refers to QQI and HEA data only. Unless otherwise stated data for TCD is included for the period 2014-2017, but not for 2018.

Over half (54%) of awards in [nursing and caring awards were made in the FET sector](#), for [healthcare support](#) (2,616 awards) or [nursing studies](#) (1,249 awards), each at level 5. Most of the remainder (44%) were made at levels 8 and 9 (higher education), of which 1,300 were for [honours bachelor degrees in nursing](#) (all types – general, children's, etc).

Childcare and youth work: this detailed field includes awards made to those working (or hoping to work) early years education (e.g. in creches). There were 3,997 awards in the FET sector for early childhood care and education related areas (at levels 5 and 6). In addition, there were approximately [1,000 awards \(almost 700 of which were honours bachelor degrees\)](#) made [for early childhood education](#) in the higher education sector.

Table 7.1 Health and welfare awards by NFQ level and detailed field, 2018

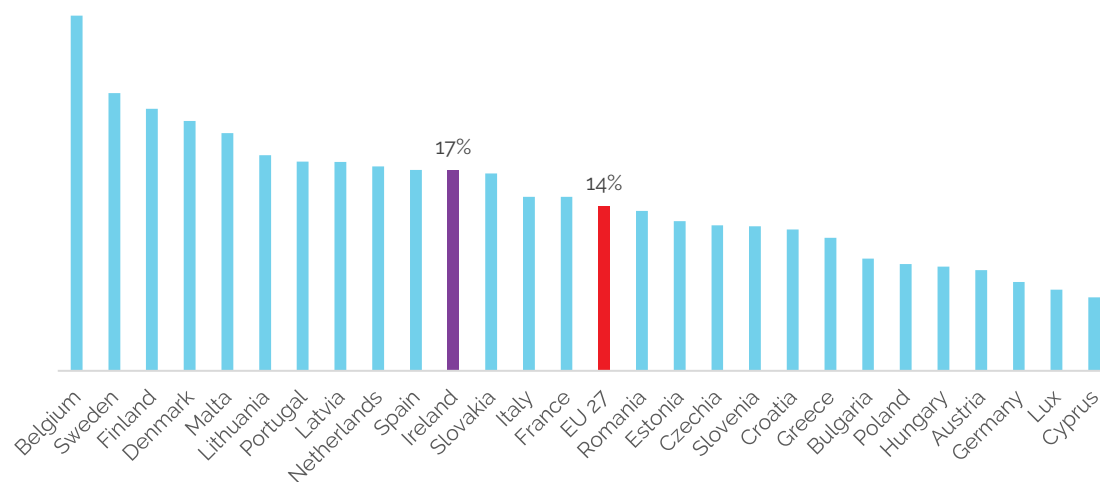
	NFQ 1-4	NFQ 5	NFQ 6 (FET)	Other FET	NFQ 6 (HE)	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	Total
Health & Welfare n.e.c	-	-	-	-	<b>192</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>1,085</b>
Health , including	-	<b>3,859</b>	-	<b>90</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>3,759</b>	<b>2,489</b>	<b>10,727</b>
<i>Medicine</i>					6	43	1,140	414	1,603
<i>Nursing &amp; caring</i>		3,859			22	34	1,699	1,403	7,017
<i>Dental studies</i>					37	61	38	11	147
<i>Pharmacy</i>				23	112	40	139	158	472
Welfare, including	<b>48</b>	<b>4,585</b>	<b>1,963</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>1126</b>	<b>1717</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>10,764</b>
<i>Childcare &amp; youth services</i>	48	2,327	1,685		478	611	851	110	6,110
<i>Social work &amp; counselling</i>		2,258	278		136	502	854	299	4,327
QQI-HE	-	-	-	-	<b>3</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>694</b>
<b>Total health &amp; welfare</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>8,444</b>	<b>1,963</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>1,140</b>	<b>1,848</b>	<b>5,974</b>	<b>3,645</b>	<b>23,270</b>

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

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

At 17%, the share of third level graduates in Ireland who had studied health and welfare was the 11<sup>th</sup> highest in the EU, and above the EU 27 average of 14%.

Figure 7.3 Health and welfare graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2018



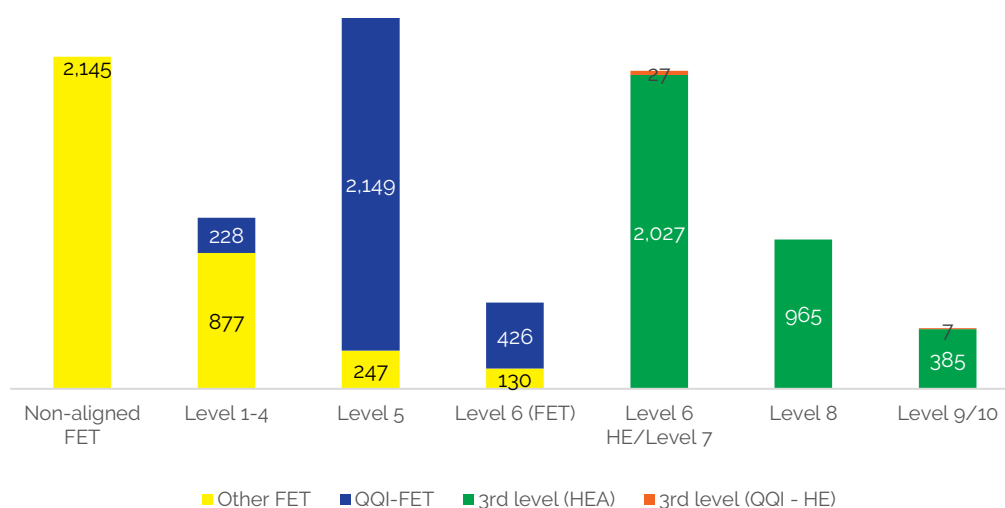
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 04.09.2020)

## 8. Services

### How many awards were made in the services field in 2018?

- There were over 9,600 awards in services related subjects in 2018; this number excludes learners at Trinity College Dublin; in 2017, the number of awards made in the services field to learners at TCD was negligible (<50).
- This field had the highest number of awards (over 2,100) that were neither on nor aligned to the NFQ; these awards, which made up a fifth of all services awards, were typically made by industry bodies such the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council, Road Transport Industry Training Body (RTITB), among others.
- Nearly two thirds of services awards were made in the FET sector; only the agriculture/vet field had a higher share of FET awards.
- With nearly 2,400 awards, level 5 had the largest number of awards; this number includes awards made by QQI as well as a small number of awards that were made by other awarding bodies whose qualifications are aligned to the UK's National Qualification's Framework<sup>10</sup>. These awarding bodies include City and Guilds, CIDESCO, CIBTAC, among others.
- Unlike other fields of learning, higher education awards (HE) in the services field were concentrated at levels 6/7; levels 6/7 made up two thirds of all HE awards and one fifth of total awards (FET and HE) in this field.

Figure 8.1. Awards in the services field of learning NFQ level 2018\*



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

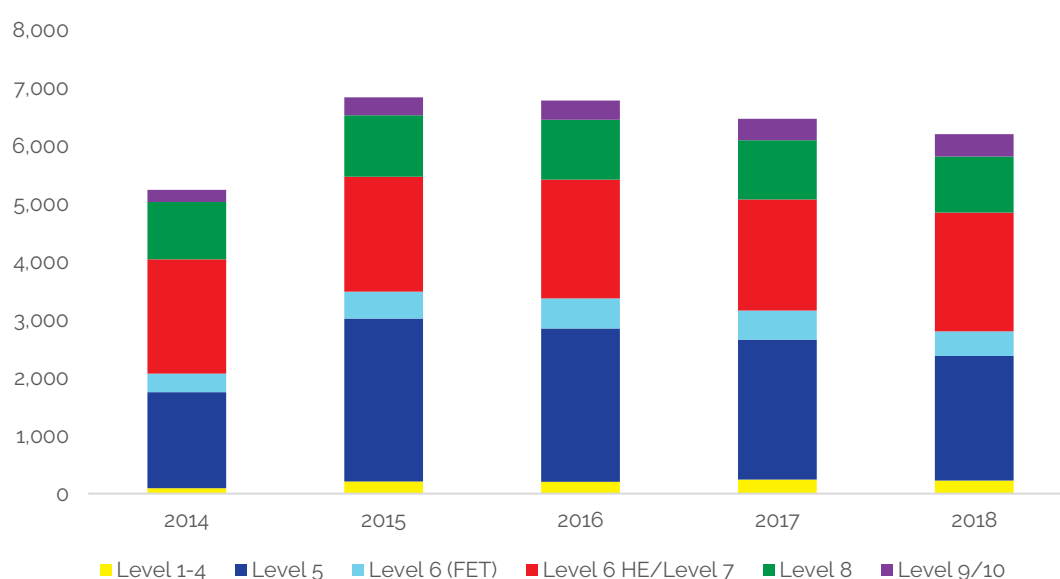
\*Other FET awards data is from 2019

<sup>10</sup> SOLAS assigned an NFQ level to non-QQI awards, based on the document 'Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries'. <https://www.qqi.ie/Documents/Qualifications%20can%20cross%20boundaries%20June%202017.pdf>

## How does this compare to preceding years<sup>11</sup>?

- Between 2014 and 2018, the number of services awards increased by almost a fifth, amounting to an almost 1,000 additional awards over that period.
- This growth, however, masks declines in more recent years, mostly at levels 5 and 8, where numbers fell each year from 2016, although numbers have not returned to their 2014 levels.
- The decline in awards in this field between 2017 and 2018 is due almost entirely to a fall in the number of QQI awards made to FET learners.

Figure 2. Services awards by NFQ level 2014-2018



Source: HEA; QQI-FET & QQI-HE

## How do the 2018 awards breakdown by detailed field?

The sports detailed field had the highest number of awards, at approximately 2,000 in 2018. Over a half of all sports awards were made in the FET sector at level 5, typically in sports recreation and exercise. A further 40% were at levels 7 and 8 in the higher education sector and included programmes such as sports/exercise, leisure/recreation management, and coaching.

There were almost 1,900 awards in the hotels, restaurants and catering detailed field. Of these, approximately 500 awards were in culinary arts in higher education and a further

<sup>11</sup> SOLAS data for non-QQI FET awards is only available from 2018. Therefore, the timeseries refers to QQI and HEA data only. Unless otherwise stated data for TCD is included for the period 2014-2017, but not for 2018.



256 awards (NFQ 4-6) in [professional cookery](#) in the FET sector. Most of the 'other FET' awards in this field were either for barista or food safety courses.

[Transport services](#): of the 800 non-NFQ aligned FET awards made in this detailed field, almost 400 were for programmes leading to certification in HGV driving (articulated, rigid etc) and a further 200 were for forklift driving.

Occupational health and safety awards in the FET sector relate primarily to learners on [First Aid Responder](#) courses.

Table 8.1 Services awards by NFQ level and detailed field, 2018

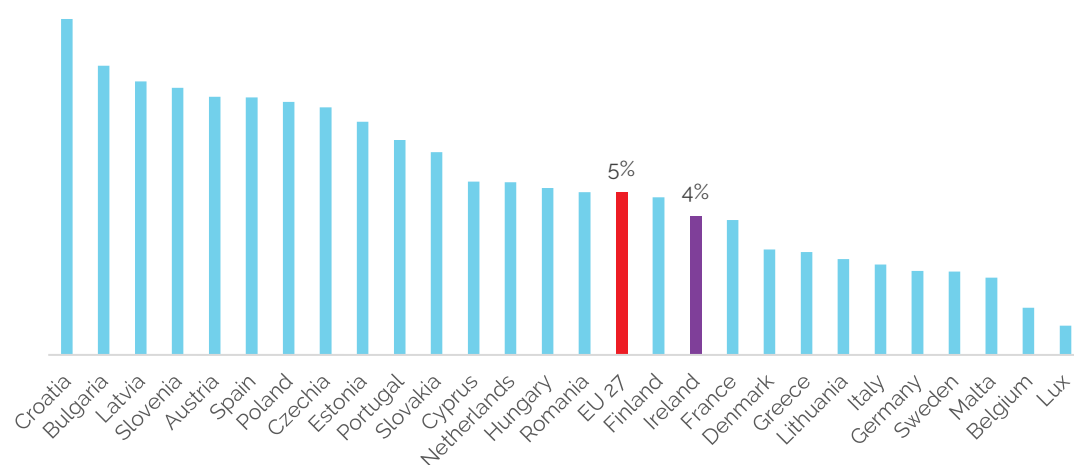
	NFQ 1-4	NFQ 5	NFQ 6 (FET)	Other FET	NFQ 6 (HE)	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	Grand Total
<b>Personal services, of which</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>2039</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>1779</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>1019</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>6,897</b>
<i>Hair &amp; beauty</i>		656	63	926	0	0	0	0	1,645
<i>Hotel, rest &amp; catering</i>	156	243	97	322	330	456	210	53	1,867
<i>Sports</i>	68	807	178	28	69	379	383	81	1,993
<i>Travel, tourism &amp; leisure</i>	0	333	68	48	62	184	201	40	936
<b>Transport services</b>	-	<b>29</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>814</b>	-	<b>76</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1,004</b>
<b>Security services</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>11</b>	-	<b>139</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>515</b>
<b>Occupational health &amp; safety</b>	-	-	-	<b>806</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>1,163</b>
<b>Non-HEA(QQI-HE)</b>	-	-	-	-	<b>9</b>	<b>18</b>	-	<b>7</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>2,149</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>3,399</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>1,429</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>9,613</b>

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

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 (just less than 5%).

Figure 8.3 Services graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2018



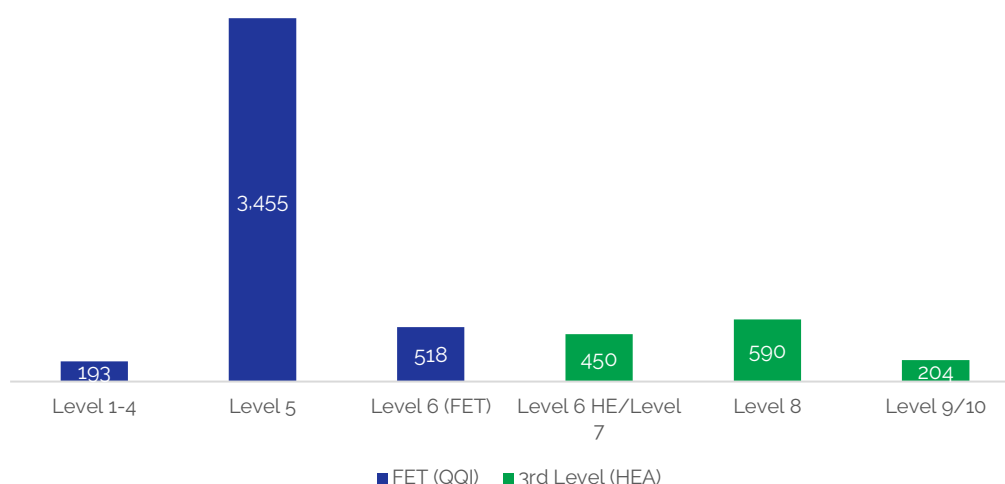
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 04.09.2020)

## 9. Agriculture & Vet Awards

How many awards were made in agriculture and vet in 2018?

- There were over 5,400 awards in agriculture/vet related subjects in 2018; this number excludes learners at Trinity College Dublin; in 2017, TCD made no awards to learners in this field of learning.
- 2,842 awards (approximately two thirds of all QQI-FET major awards in this field) were made to learners at Teagasc centres, unlike all other fields of learning where most FET awards were made to learners at Education and Training Boards (ETBs).
- More than three quarters of all awards (almost 4,200) in this field were in the FET sector, especially at level 5, which accounted for almost 3,500 awards.

Figure 9.1. Agriculture & vet awards by NFAQ level, 2018



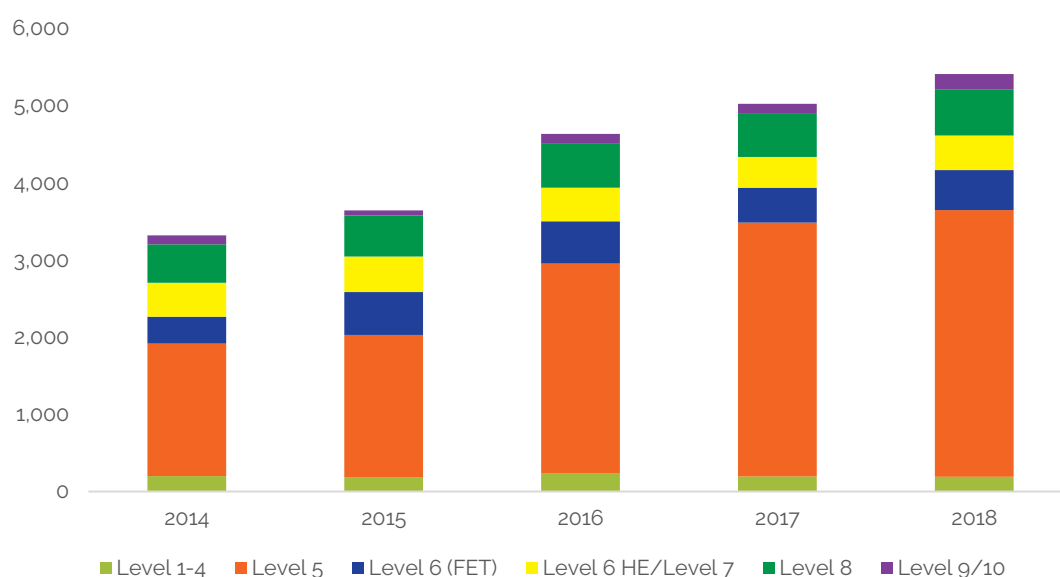
Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE

How does this compare to preceding years<sup>12</sup>?

- The number of awards in agriculture and veterinary grew annually between 2014 and 2018, reaching over 5,400 awards in 2018 (almost two thirds more than in 2014).
- Growth was particularly strong at level 5, where numbers doubled between 2014 and 2018.
- Only awards at levels 1-4 recorded a decline, although the numbers involved are small.
- The number of additional awards at level 8 and 9, compared to 2014, amounted to approximately 90 awards each, but because the number of awards in this field is small overall, this translated into strong relative growth of 18% and 81% respectively.

<sup>12</sup> SOLAS data for non-QQI FET awards is only available from 2018. Therefore, the timeseries refers to QQI and HEA data only. Unless otherwise stated data for TCD is included for the period 2014-2017, but not for 2018.

Figure 9.2. Agriculture and veterinary awards by NFQ level 2014-2018



Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE

## How do the 2018 awards breakdown by detailed field?

Awards in this broad field are concentrated in agriculture, accounting for 73% of the total. It is thought that these awards are related to the requirements for Government (Department of Agriculture 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 or horsemanship; in higher education, awards were mostly for veterinary medicine or veterinary nursing.

Table 9.1 Services awards by NFQ level and detailed field, 2018

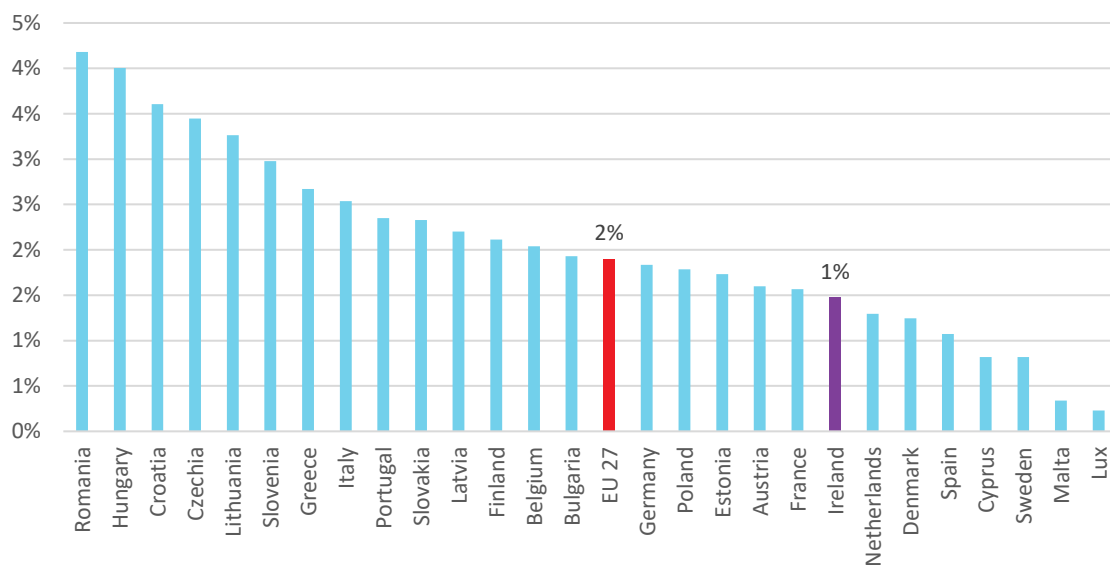
	NFQ 1-4	NFQ 5	NFQ 6 (FET)	NFQ 6 (HE)	NFQ 7	NFQ 8	NFQ 9/10	Total
Agriculture		2,731	406	26	261	398	126	3,948
Horticulture	158	229	55	10	51	33	0	536
Forestry		11	4		19	15		49
Veterinary	35	484	53		83	144	78	877
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>3,455</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>5,410</b>

Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HEA

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

At just over 1%, the share of graduates in Ireland who had studied agriculture and vet was one of the lowest in the EU (20<sup>th</sup> out of 27 countries), although few countries had high shares in this field: the EU average was 2%, while the countries with the largest shares (Romania, Hungary and Croatia) had 4%.

Figure 8.3 Agriculture & vet graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2018



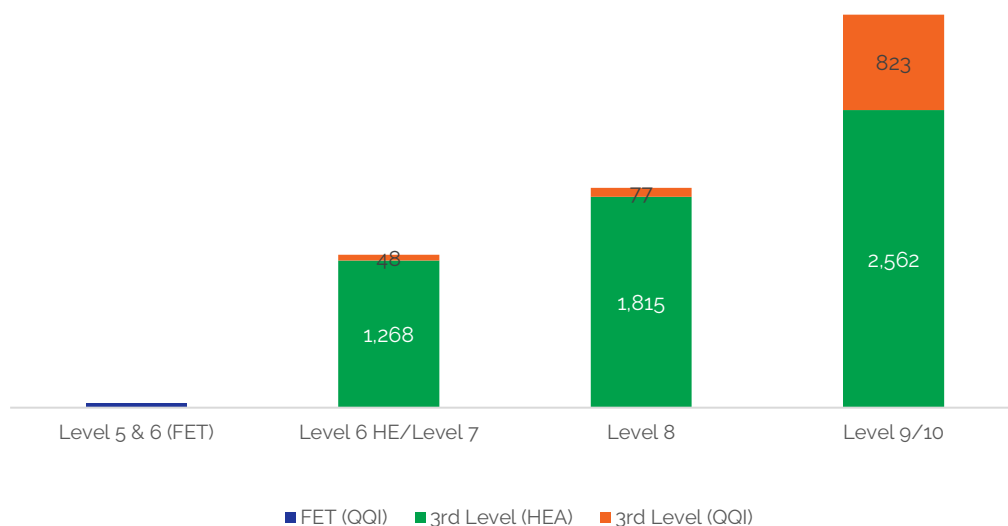
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 04.09.2020)

# 10. Education Awards

How many awards were made in education in 2018?

- There were over 6,600 awards in education related subjects in 2018; this number excludes learners at Trinity College Dublin; in 2017, TCD made approximately 320 awards to learners in this field of learning, the vast majority at level 9
- Almost all education related awards were made at levels 8 and 9, due largely to the fact that entry to primary and post-primary teaching occupations require at least a level 8 or level 9 qualification.
- Almost one third (823 awards) of postgraduate awards were made to learners at private, independent colleges.
- FET awards in this field related to inclusive education and training, but were very small in number.
- FET awards made to those studying early childhood care and education are categorised in a separate field of learning (health and welfare), and do not, therefore, figure in the data in this section.

Figure 10.1 Awards in the education field of learning, by NFQ level 2018

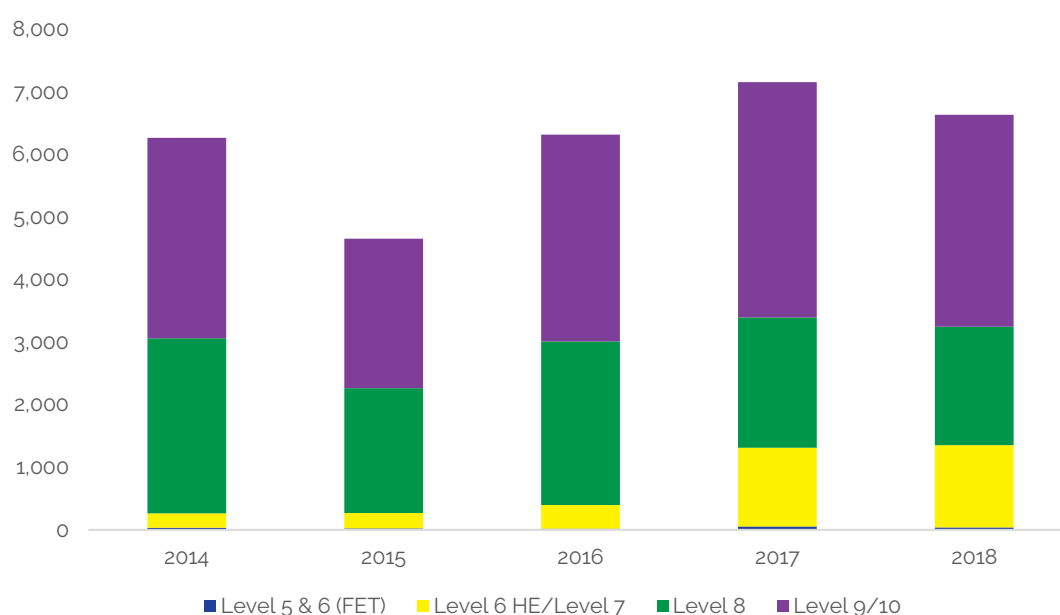


Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE

## How does this compare to preceding years<sup>13</sup>?

- Between 2014 and 2018, the number of awards in the education field of learning grew by 6%, or 370 additional awards. If we assume that learners at TCD in this field amounted to 320 in 2018 (as in 2017), then the growth was even stronger, at 11%.
- However, there were approximately 500 fewer awards (or 200 fewer, if we adjust for TCD data in 2018) in 2018 relative to 2017.
- The sharp decline observed in 2015 was related to changes in the duration of teacher education programmes.

Figure 10.2 Awards in education by NFQ level 2014-2018



Source: HEA, QQI-FET and QQI-HE

## How do the 2018 awards breakdown by detailed field?

The detailed field analysis shows that there were almost 1,100 higher education awards made in training for pre-school teachers; however, not included in this data are almost 4,000 learners who gained awards in early childhood care and education programmes in the FET sector, many of whom may also expect to find work in pre-school settings (these FET awards were captured in the health/welfare data under childcare).

The education science detailed field, with awards mostly at postgraduate level, included subjects such as education leadership and management, learning support, special needs, and technology enhanced learning. Classification issues have also meant that some PME

<sup>13</sup> SOLAS data for non-QQI FET awards is only available from 2018. Therefore, the timeseries refers to QQI and HEA data only. Unless otherwise stated data for TCD is included for the period 2014-2017, but not for 2018.

(Professional Masters in Education – second level teaching qualification) were also included in this field (while others occur in the teaching with subject specialisation field).

Table 10.1 Education awards by NQF level and detailed field, 2018

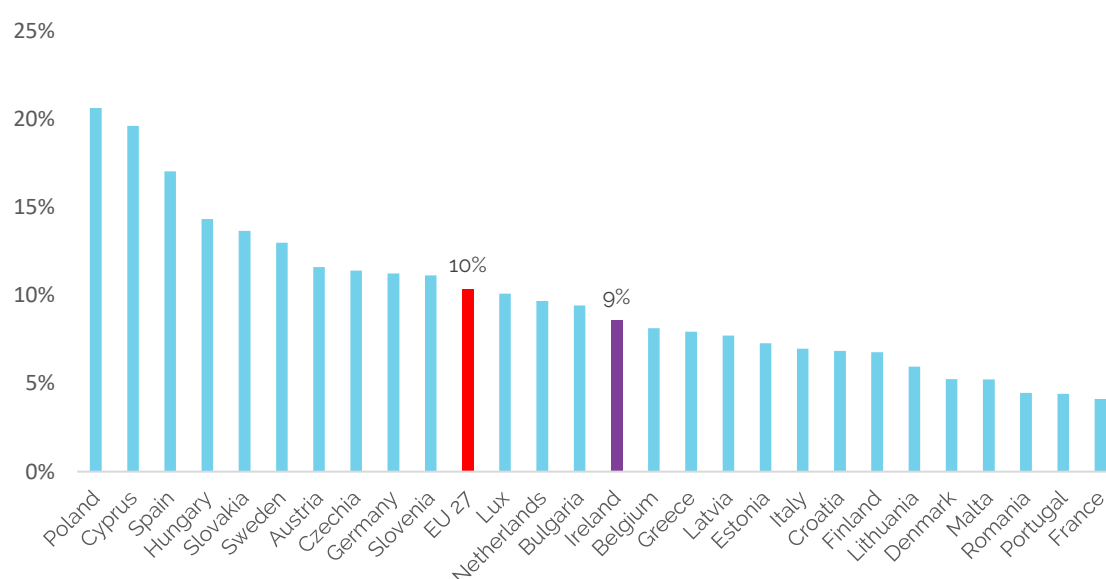
	FET (NQF 5 & 6)	NQF 6 (HE)	NQF 7	NQF 8	NQF 9	NQF 10	Total
Education n.e.c.	11	55	133	7	301	3	510
Education science	25	11	129	104	1280	40	1,589
Training for pre-school teachers		852	37	173	3		1,065
Teacher training without subject specialization		5		848	228		1,081
Teacher training with subject specialization		5	41	683	700	7	1,436
QQI - HE		3	45	77	823		948
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>1,892</b>	<b>3,335</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>6,629</b>

Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE

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

At 9%, Ireland's share of third level graduates who had studied education-related subjects was slightly below the EU 27 average (10%), ranking 14<sup>th</sup> out of 27 countries.

Figure 10.3 Education graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2018



Source: Eurostat (date extracted 04.09.2020)

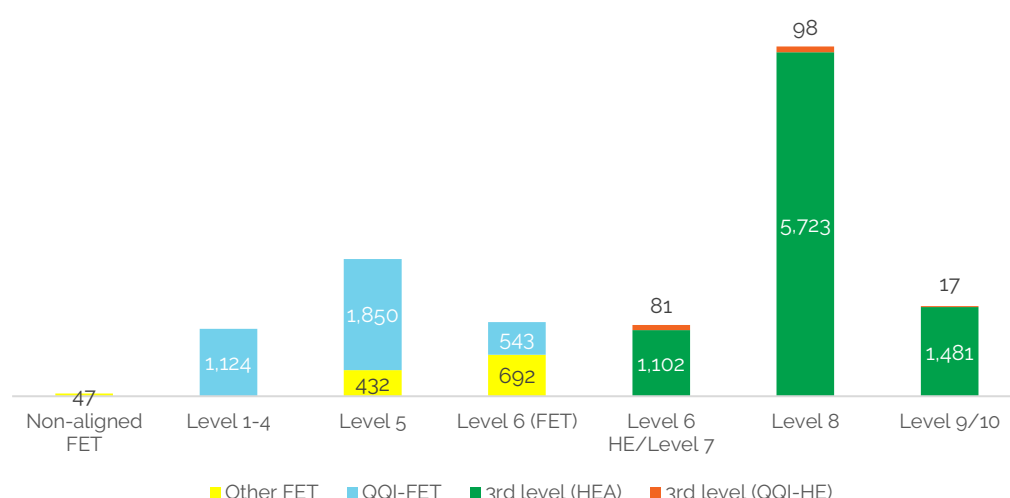


# 11. Arts and Humanities Awards

How many awards were made in arts and humanities in 2018?

- There were nearly 13,200 awards in arts and humanities subjects in 2018; this number excludes learners at Trinity College Dublin; in 2017, TCD made nearly 1,000 awards to learners in this field of learning.
- Over 44% of arts and humanities awards were made at level 8 and a further 11% were made for postgraduate studies (levels 9 and 10). All told, 7,300 persons received awards at levels 8-10 in 2018.
- The FET sector accounted for just over a third of all arts and humanities awards; while level 5 had the largest number of FET awards.
- Unlike most other fields of learning, the majority (albeit by a small number) of level 6 FET awards 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.

Figure 11.1 Arts & humanities awards by NFQ level and awarding body type, 2018



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

\*Other FET awards data is from 2019

How does this compare to preceding years<sup>14</sup>?

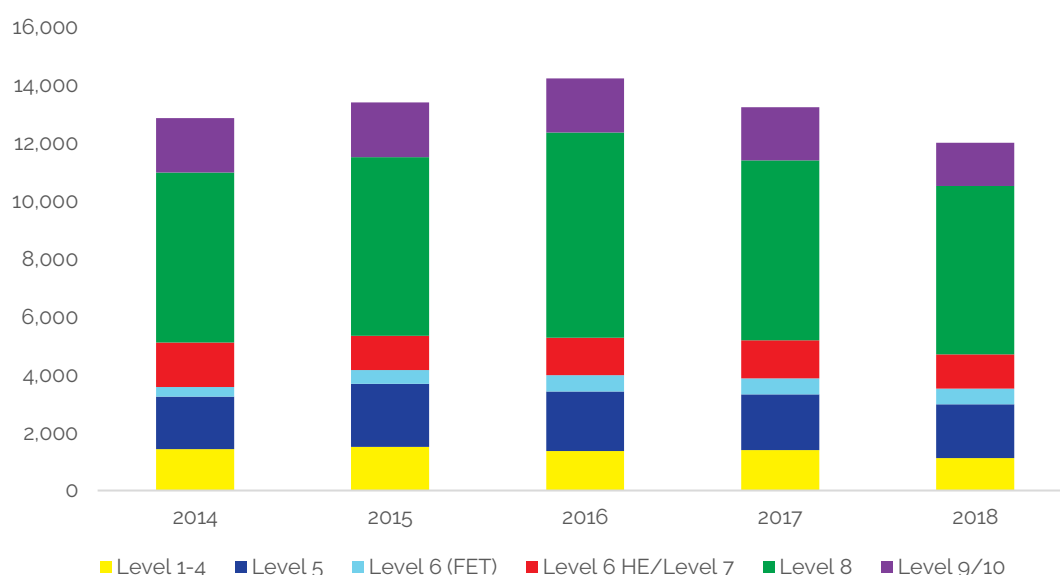
- Between 2014 and 2018, the number awards in arts and humanities declined by 7% (approximately 850 fewer awards). However, if we assume that the number of awards

<sup>14</sup> SOLAS data for non-QQI FET awards is only available from 2018. Therefore, the timeseries refers to QQI and HEA data only. Unless otherwise stated data for TCD is included for the period 2014-2017, but not for 2018.

made to learners at TCD in 2018 was the same as in 2017, the numbers actually grew slightly (by about 100 awards, or 1%).

- There was a 2% decline in the total number of FET awards, driven by a fall in the number of awards at the lowest levels of the NFQ (levels 1-4).
- Between 2014 and 2018, increases in the number of FET awards at level 5 and 6 were due to rises (+400 awards, or 77%) in audio visual, graphic design and media related awards, with most of the increase occurring between 2014 and 2015. The growth for these awards between 2017 and 2018 was considerably smaller, at 3% or 26 awards.
- Over the five-year period, the most significant absolute declines in higher education were for history, literature/linguistics and fine arts, which combined fell by a quarter (amounting to nearly 600 fewer awards; in contrast, the largest absolute growth was observed audio visual techniques, music and language acquisition (up nearly 300 awards, or 13%). (Note: TCD is excluded from each year of this analysis).

Figure 11 2 Awards in arts and humanities by NFQ, 2014-2018



Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE

## How do the 2018 awards breakdown by detailed field?

More than a third (almost 5,000 awards) were in the arts & humanities n.e.c field, where the subject is 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 were in the HE sector.

Audio visual and media awards were in similar subject areas in the FET and HE sector, namely film & TV production, media/multimedia/digital production and digital media. There were approximately 200 awards in graphic design, with similar numbers in the HE and FET sectors.

The languages field includes English (e.g. MA in creative writing), which had the highest number of awards in the HE sector at more than 600. While English was the most popular language, there were almost 800 awards for other languages.

In instances where [foreign languages](#) were specified, the highest number of awards in higher education was for French, followed by Spanish, Irish, and German. However, the numbers for specified languages were small (less than 90 each) as many awards mention 'international' or 'European' languages. In addition, many students enrolling in foreign languages at third level often combine it with another subject (e.g. history, economics, etc). Therefore, the numbers here under-represent the true number of learners gaining foreign language skills in the education system.

Table 11.1 Education awards by NQF level and detailed field, 2018 \*

	NQF 1-4	NQF 5	NQF 6 (FET)	Other FET*	NQF 6 (HE)	NQF 7	NQF 8	NQF 9	NQF 10	Grand Total
Arts & humanities n.e.c.	1,124	138		426	60	93	2,749	285	63	4,938
Audio-visual & media		804	257	337	79	207	679	151	3	2,517
Fashion, interior & industrial design		36	52	137	6	83	359	109		782
Fine, music & performing arts (including handicrafts)	0	872	234	224	26	119	921	218	10	2,624
History & archaeology					49	57	175	188	12	481
Philosophy & religion	0	0	0		12	0	89	98	5	204
Language	0	0	0	47	89	222	751	333	6	1,448
QQI -HE						81	98	17		196
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,124</b>	<b>1,850</b>	<b>543</b>	<b>1,171</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>5,821</b>	<b>1,399</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>13,190</b>

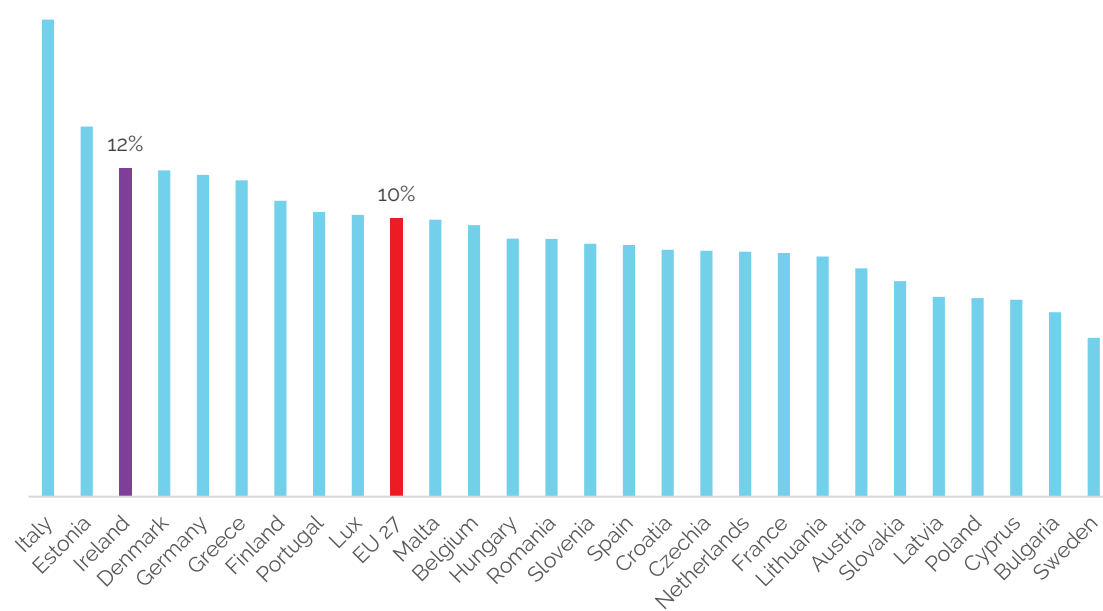
Source: HEA, QQI-FET, QQI-HE & SOLAS

\*Other FET awards refer to the year 2019

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

At 12%, [Ireland had the third highest share](#) of third level graduates in 2018 who had studied arts and humanities programmes, above the EU average of 10%.

Figure 11.3 Arts/humanities graduates as a share of third level graduates, 2018



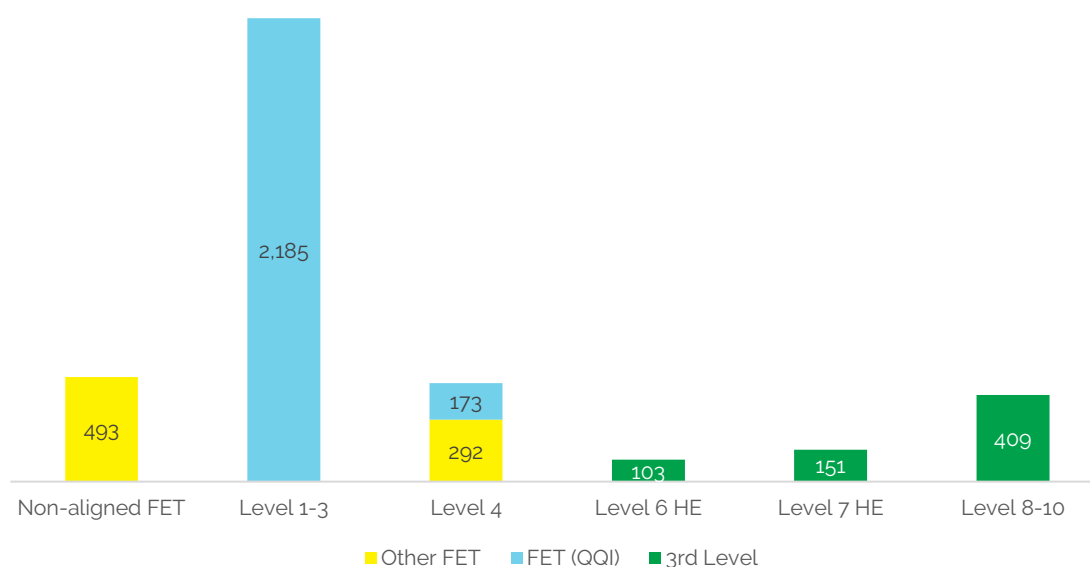
Source: Eurostat (date extracted 04.09.2020)

# 12. Generic Programmes Awards

How many awards were made in education in 2018?

- Generic programmes is the smallest field of learning, largely because most education/training programmes beyond the [Leaving Certificate](#) have a greater focus on a specific subjects or group of subjects.
- In 2018, there were just over 3,800 awards made in this field, the vast majority at levels 1-3 in the FET sector. There were no awards at levels 5 or 6 (FET).
- In FET, awards were for areas such as [general learning](#), [employability skills](#), and [communication skills](#).
- Higher education awards amounted to fewer than 700, with 375 of these being level 8 awards.
- Some of the awards in higher education may be a result of classification issues, although many were for programmes such as [preparatory or foundation studies](#).

Figure 12.1 Awards in the generic programmes field by NFQ, 2018



Source: HEA, QQI-FET & SOLAS

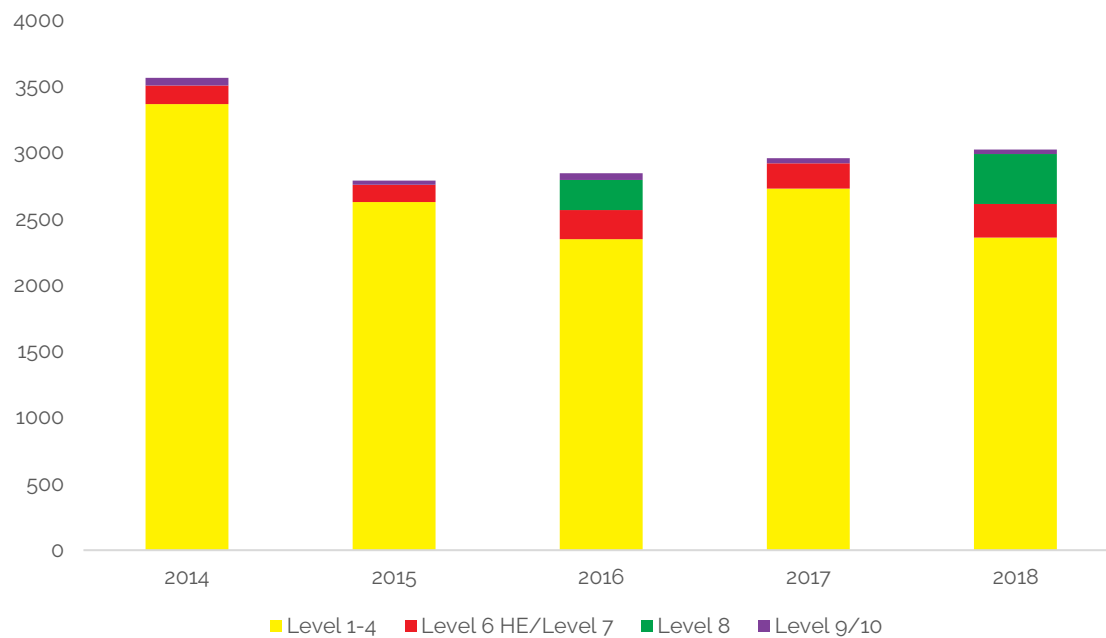
How does this compare to preceding years<sup>15</sup>?

- The number of awards made for generic programmes declined by 15% (amounting to 500 fewer learners), between 2014 and 2018, driven by a 30% fall in the number of QQI awards, particularly at level 2.

<sup>15</sup> SOLAS data for non-QQI FET awards is only available from 2018. Therefore, the timeseries refers to QQI and HEA data only. Unless otherwise stated data for TCD is included for the period 2014-2017, but not for 2018.

- The increase observed between 2017 and 2018 was due to the presence of higher education awards at level 8, although this may have been as a result of field misclassifications.

Figure 12.2 Generic programmes awards by NFQ level, 2014-2018



Source: HEA and QQI-FET

## Detailed Field

The vast majority of awards in this field were for general learning.

# 13. Educational Profile of Ireland's Adults

In this section we examine the educational profile of Ireland's adult population in terms of level and field of learning, using data from the CSO's Labour Force Survey (LFS). [The level of education refers to the highest level of education achieved by an individual](#); 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, and subsequently completes a PLC course in business studies (level 6), their education level is nonetheless captured as being at level 8.

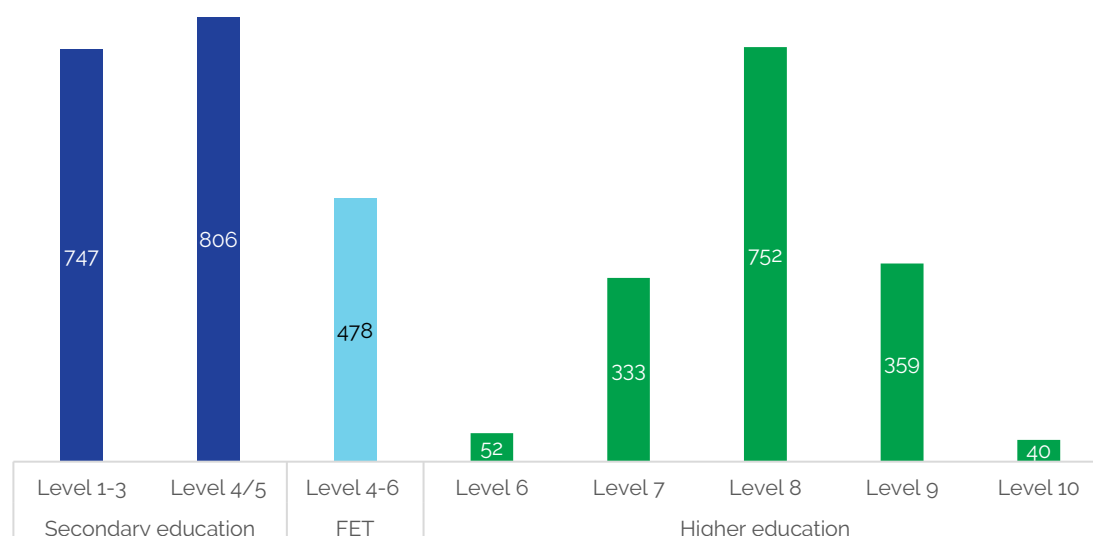
Similarly, [the field of education or training refers to the field of the highest level of education attained by an individual](#). Therefore, if for example a person first attains a qualification at level 9 in business studies, and subsequently achieves a level 8 qualification (e.g. higher diploma) in computer studies, s/he will nonetheless be categorised in the business and law field.

## What is the education level of adults in Ireland?

In quarter 2 2020, there were almost 3.65 million persons aged 20 years or over. Of these, as illustrated in Figure 13.1,

- approximately 1.6 million people (or 43% of the total adult population) held [second level qualifications or their equivalent](#), spanning either levels 1-3 (e.g. Junior Cert) or levels 4/5 (e.g. Leaving Cert)
- [FET qualification holders](#) (spanning levels 4-6) accounted for almost half a million persons (13% of the total)
- [third level qualification holders](#) (spanning level 6 (HE) – level 10) made up 1.5 million persons (42%)
- the education level for the remaining 83,000 persons (not illustrated in the graph) was not stated.

Figure 13. 1 Adults in Ireland by highest level of education attained (000s), quarter 2 2020



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?

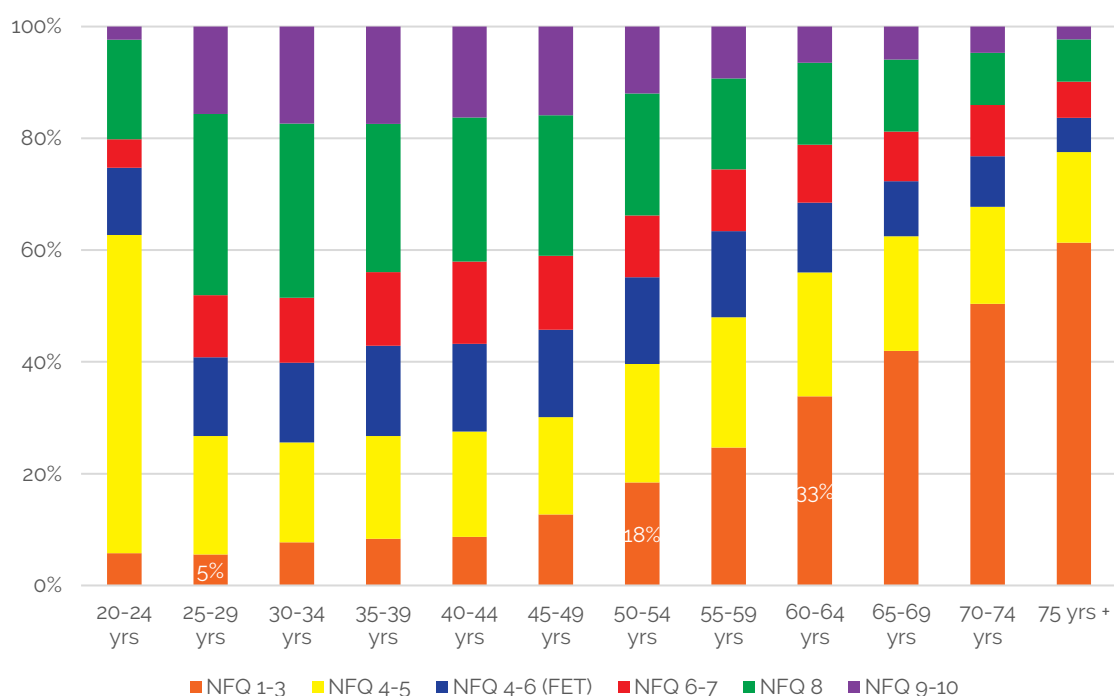
The educational profile of the population differed considerably by age group (Figure 13.2). With the exception of persons aged 20-24 years (for whom full-time education may still be ongoing), [the older the age group, the lower the education attainment level](#):

- almost one half (47%) of 25-29-year-olds held a qualification at level 8 or above; this compares to a third for persons aged 50-54 years, and to a fifth for persons aged 60-64 years
- conversely, while 5% of 25-29-year-olds held at most a level 3, this share rises to 18% of 50-54-year-olds and a third of 60-64-year-olds.

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 NFQ](#) in the years to come.



Figure 13.2 Education profile by NFQ level and 5-year age group, quarter 2, 2020



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

## In what fields of learning do Irish adults hold qualifications?

For 1.63 million persons, accounting for almost half (46%) of adults aged 20 years and over, a field of learning could only be identified as either generic/interdisciplinary (866,000 persons) or could not be assigned (747,000 persons). This is due to the fact that the Leaving Certificate is classified as a generic qualification<sup>16</sup> and that, in line with international practice, lower secondary qualifications (i.e. NFQ level 3) or below are not usually assigned an ISCED level in the Labour Force Survey<sup>17</sup>.

The next largest fields, apart from the general/interdisciplinary learning fields were

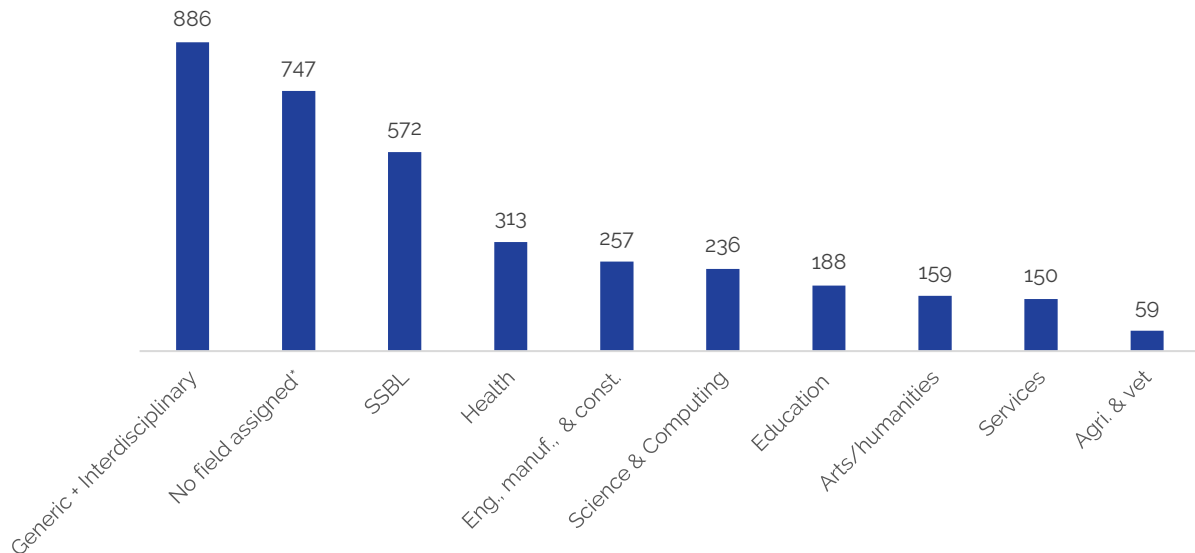
- **social science business and law** (SSBL), with over half a million persons, or 16% of adults aged 20 years and over
- **health & welfare**, with almost a third of a million persons, making up 9%

<sup>16</sup> This contrasts with the situation in many other EU countries where vocational education and training (including apprenticeship training) begins in the upper secondary school system, and therefore more specific fields of learning can be identified.

<sup>17</sup> For awards data, however, both QQI and SOLAS (in the PLSS) assign fields of learning to awards and programmes at these levels.

- when combined, the engineering, manufacturing & construction field and the science and ICT fields (i.e. [STEM related subjects](#)), which made up more than half a million persons, or a 14% share.

Figure 13.3 Adults (aged 20+) in Ireland by field of learning (000s), quarter 2 2020



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

*Excludes observations where NFQ level is not stated*

\*For persons with qualifications at NFQ 3 or below, fields of learning are not assigned in the data.

## Does field of learning differ by NFQ level?

Excluding persons with second level qualifications, Figure 13.4 shows the remaining 2 million individuals by field of learning for levels 4-6 in the FET sector and levels 6-7 and levels 8-10 in the higher education sector in quarter 2 2020. The top three fields for each of the education level groups examined here are the same, although the order and magnitude of each differs slightly:

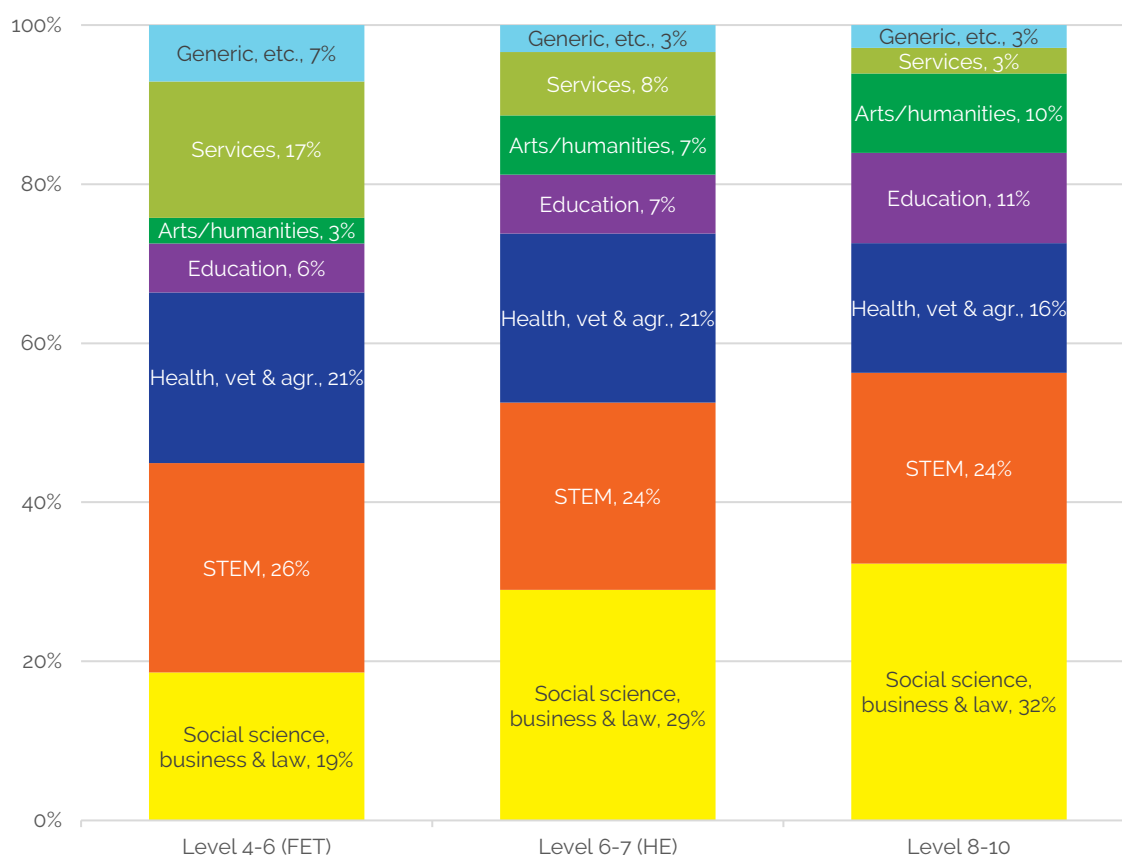
- [Social science, business and law](#) accounted for almost a third of all awards made at level 6-7 (higher education) and level 8-10. It accounted for the third highest share of persons with FET qualifications at levels 4-6.
- [STEM related fields accounted](#) for approximately one quarter of persons at each level, although for persons with FET qualifications, the majority of these were in [engineering related fields \(rather than science or ICT fields\)](#).
- [Health, vet and agriculture qualification](#) holders accounted for over a fifth of qualification holders at levels 4-6 (FET) and levels 6-7 (HE); while accounting for a

comparatively smaller share (16%) at levels 8-10, it was nonetheless the third largest field at this level.

- The share of adults with qualifications in generic etc fields at NFQ levels 4-6 (FET only) is more than double the share of those with third level qualifications. This is in part due to the provision of the many second chance education opportunities (e.g. Back to Education Initiative, Youthreach, literacy-related programmes) in the FET sector.

Therefore, despite some differences in the field of learning at each level, [the same three fields accounted for between two thirds and three quarters of all qualification holders at each NFQ level group examined here.](#)

Figure 13.4 Adults (aged 20 years+) by level and field of learning, quarter 2 2020



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

## 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 quarter 1 2015 and quarter 2 2020.

### To what level have recent graduates obtained qualifications?

In quarter 2 2020, there were 469,700 recent graduates. Of these,

- a third had obtained a qualification at levels 4-5 (i.e. Leaving Cert or equivalent qualification)
- a quarter had obtained a level 8 qualification (e.g. honours bachelor degree)

The numbers who obtained a qualification at level 1-3 in this age cohort are 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 2015, 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 60,000 pupils who enrolled in second level school in 2011, almost 98% completed the Junior Certificate in 2014).<sup>18</sup>

Table 14.1 Recent graduates by level of qualification obtained, quarter 2 2020

NFQ Level	Recent graduates	Recent graduates %
Level 1-3	***	***
Level 4-5	156,400	33%
Level 4-6 (FET)	66,800	14%
Level 6-7 (HE)	40,200	9%
Level 8	132,100	28%
Level 9-10	66,800	14%
<b>All levels</b>	<b>469,700</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

[ ] Numbers are based on a small number of observations and should be treated with caution

<sup>18</sup> Department of Education and Skills series of reports on *Retention rates of pupils in second-level schools*.

## In what fields have recent graduates obtained qualifications?

More than one third (36%) of recent graduates had obtained qualifications in the general and interdisciplinary fields, most of whom were those completing the Leaving Certificate; Social science, business and law and STEM related fields were the next most frequently obtained qualifications, which combined accounted for almost a further third of all recent graduates.

Table 14. 2 Recent graduates by field of learning, quarter 2 2020

Field of learning		%
General & interdisciplinary	169,400	36%
Social science, business & law	79,000	17%
STEM (Science, ICT, engineering & construction)	77,500	16%
Arts, humanities & education	61,800	13%
Health, veterinary & agriculture	54,400	12%
Services	20,100	4%
Field not stated/not assigned	***	***
All fields	469,700	100%

Source: SLMRUF analysis of CSO (LFS) data

\*\*\* Numbers too small to report,

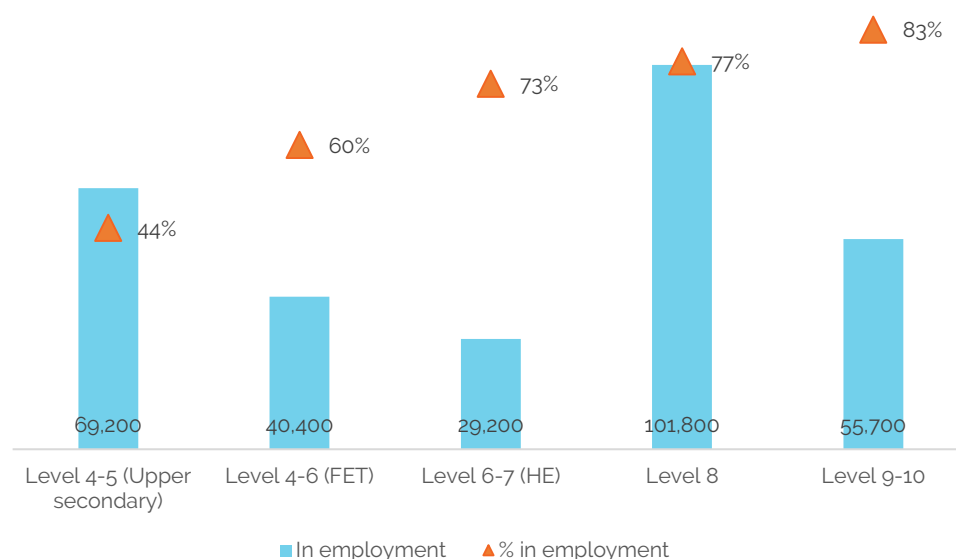
## Employment status of recent graduates

In quarter 2, 2020, 64% of the 469,700 recent graduates were in employment, representing 299,000 persons. [The higher the NQF level, the higher the share in employment](#): recent level 4-5 graduates from the second level system (i.e. Leaving Certificate holders) had the lowest share at 44%, while the highest shares were observed for those with level 8 qualifications (77%) or postgraduate qualifications (83%) (Figure 14.1).

The particularly large gap of 16 percentage points in the share in employment for persons with level 4-5 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: [of the total number of level 4-5 graduates who were not in employment \(87,200 persons\), the majority \(72%\) were still engaged in full-time study](#). The share still engaged in

education declined to just over a third (36%) for the FET (level 4-6) and higher education (level 6-10) recent graduates who were not in employment in quarter 2 2020.

Figure 14.1 Number and share of recent graduates in employment by NFQ level, quarter 2, 2020



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

Employment shares for recent graduates, regardless of NFQ level, were lower than those for the adult population overall (Table 14.2). This may be due to factors such as

- many recent graduates, particularly those who have recently attained a Leaving Certificate, tend to remain in education rather than enter the labour force
- securing employment may require time for some recent graduates as many employers seek individuals with work experience, and older graduates will inevitably have an advantage over recent graduates in this regard
- some (particularly females) recent graduates may enter the labour force but leave again before the age of 34 years due to child rearing duties.

Table 14.3 Shares in employment: qualification holders (20-64 years) & recent graduates by NFQ level, q2 2020

NFQ Level	% Adults (20-64 years) in employment	% Recent graduates in employment
Level 1-3	50%	***
Level 4-5	61%	44%
Level 4-6 (FET)	71%	60%
Level 6-7 (HE)	78%	73%
Level 8-10	84%	79%
Total	71%	64%

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

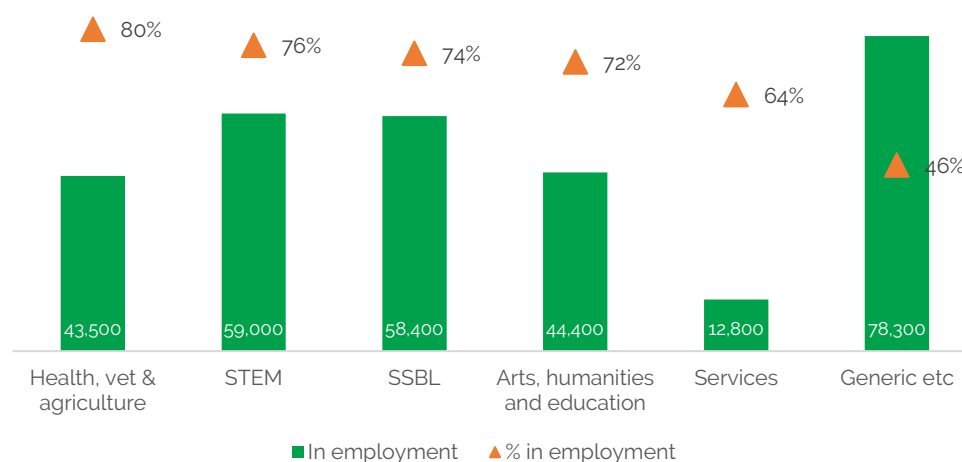
*Excludes observations where NFQ level is not stated*

\*\*\* Numbers too small to report

The shares of recent graduates in employment also differs by field of education:

- At 80%, the highest share in employment was for recent graduates in health, vet & agriculture
- This was followed by STEM and social science, business and law graduates at 76% and 74% respectively
- The lowest share was for graduates from generic etc programmes, but this is most likely to due to continued engagement in further study by these graduates (mostly Leaving Cert completers).

Figure 14.2 Recent graduates in employment by field of learning, quarter 2 2020



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

There is little difference between adult qualification holders overall, (20-64-year-olds) and recent graduates in terms of the field of learning with the highest shares in employment (Table 14.4): at least four fifths of those who had studied health, vet and agriculture subjects were in employment in both cohorts (20-64-year olds and recent graduates). Similarly, those who had studied generic etc field had the smallest shares in employment; however, many recent graduates from this field were still engaged in education and training.

Table 14.4 Shares in employment: qualification holders (20-64 years) and recent graduates by field, quarter 2 2020

Field	% Adults (20-64 years) in employment	% Recent graduates in employment
Generic etc	62%	46%
STEM	86%	76%
Social science, bus. & law	80%	74%
Arts, humanities & education	77%	72%
Health, vet & agriculture	82%	80%
Services	70%	64%
Not stated/not assigned	53%	***
Total	71%	64%

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

\*\*\* Numbers too small to report

## How has COVID-19 impacted on employment levels of recent graduates?

### Employment by level

**Numbers in employment:** despite a 7% increase in the total number of recent graduates in the population (amounting to almost 29,000 extra people), the number of recent graduates in employment declined by 6%, or 19,100 people between quarter 2 2019 and quarter 2020 (Table 14.5).

- There were falls in the number of employed recent graduates at most NFQ levels, except at levels 9-10.



- The sharpest decline, at 18% (or 15,300 fewer persons) was for those with level 4/5 qualifications; these recent graduates are typically Leaving Cert completers, many of whom may have been seeking to enter the labour market for the first time.
- The fall in job opportunities available associated with the onset of the COVID-19 economic restrictions is reflected in the fact that the 10% increase in the number of level 9-10 recent graduates in employment is nonetheless smaller than the 15% growth observed in the number of recent graduates in the population at this level.

Table 14.5 Number and % change for recent graduates in the population and in employment by NFQ level

	Recent graduates in the population			Recent graduates in employment		
	Q2 2019 (000s)	Q2 2020 (000s)	% change Q2 2019 - Q2 2020	Q2 2019 (000s)	Q2 2020 (000s)	% change Q2 2019 - Q2 2020
Level 1-3	[7.3]	*	*	*	*	*
Level 4-5	147	156	6%	84.5	69.2	-18%
Level 4-6 (FET)	65.3	67	2%	46.1	40.4	-12%
Level 6-7 (HE)	41.9	40	-4%	32.7	29.2	-11%
Level 8	121.3	132	9%	102.9	101.8	-1%
Level 9-10	58.2	67	15%	50.7	55.7	10%
<b>All levels</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>318.1</b>	<b>299.0</b>	<b>-6%</b>

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

\*\*\* Numbers were too small to report

[ ] Numbers in small brackets are based on a small number of observations and should be treated with caution

The 6% fall in the number of recent graduates employed between quarter 2 2019 and quarter 2 2020 was twice the size of the fall in the number of adults aged 20-64 in employment (3%), suggesting that [recent graduates were more adversely affected by the fall in employment associated with the COVID-19 economic restrictions](#). This effect was observed across most NFQ levels except level 9-10, where employment numbers increased by 9% for 20-64-year-olds but by an even higher rate (albeit only slightly higher) of 10% for recent graduates.

[Shares in employment](#): between quarter 2 2019 and quarter 2 2020, the share of recent graduates in employment declined from 72% to 64% (Table 14.6).

- [the fall in the share in employment was particularly sharp for recent graduates at levels 4-5 and levels 4-6 \(FET\)](#) which declined by 13 and 11 percentage points

respectively (Table 14.6), compared to an eight percentage-point fall for the total cohort.

- Despite the increase in the absolute number of recent graduates at level 9-10 in employment (Table 14.5), the share in employment at this level declined slightly, although the decline was smaller (at four percentage points) than the average for recent graduates overall, which observed an eight percentage point fall.

Table 14.6 Number and share of recent graduates in employment by NFQ level

	Recent graduates in employment (% of total)	
	Q2 2019	Q2 2020
Level 1-3	***	***
Level 4-5	57%	44%
Level 4-6 (FET)	71%	60%
Level 6-7 (HE)	78%	73%
Level 8	85%	77%
Level 9-10	87%	83%
Not stated	-	-
<b>All levels</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>64%</b>

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

\*\*\* Numbers were too small to report

The declines in the share of recent graduates in employment (at eight percentage points) was twice that of 20-64-year olds, where the share in employment fell by four percentage points (from 74% to 71%).

## Employment by field

The 6% fall in the numbers in employment for recent graduates was not evenly spread across fields of learning (Table 14.7):

- In relative terms, [the strongest fall in the number of recent graduates was observed for those who had studied services subjects](#) (e.g. catering, hairdressing), where the numbers fell by 27% between quarter 2 2019 and quarter 2 2020. Nonetheless, as the services field is comparatively small (accounting for just 4% of all recent graduates), the fall in employment translated to approximately 5,000 fewer persons

- In terms of absolute numbers, however, the largest fall in employment occurred for recent graduates who had studied generic qualifications, who are typically Leaving Cert completers; the 12% decline in the employment that occurred in this field translated into almost 11,000 fewer persons; this was despite the 10% increase in the number of recent graduates in this field in the population.

Table 14.7 Number (000s) and % change for recent graduates in the population and in employment, by field of learning, Q2 2019 and Q2 2020

	Recent graduates in the population			Recent graduates in employment		
	Q2 2019	Q2 2020	% change	Q2 2019	Q2 2020	% change
Generic etc	154.1	169.4	10%	89.2	78.3	-12%
STEM (Science, ICT, eng. & construction)	67.6	77.5	15%	54.9	59.0	7%
Social science, business & law	71.2	79.0	11%	60.6	58.4	-4%
Arts, humanities & education	54.8	61.8	13%	43.9	44.4	1%
Health, veterinary & agriculture	61.0	54.4	-11%	49.5	43.5	-12%
Services	23.4	20.1	-14%	17.6	12.8	-27%
Field not stated/not assigned	8.8	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Total Result</b>	<b>440.9</b>	<b>469.7</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>318.1</b>	<b>299.0</b>	<b>-6%</b>

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

\*\*\* Numbers were too small to report

**Share in employment:** although the share of recent graduates in employment declined between quarter 2 2019 and quarter 2 2020 for each field of learning (Table 14.7),

- the fall was only marginal (just one percentage point) for those who had studied health, vet and agriculture subjects
- the decline in the share in employment for recent graduates in STEM subjects, at five percentage points (going from 81% to 76%) was also below the average for recent graduates overall

While the social science, business and law field had the highest share of recent graduates in employment in quarter 2 2019 (at 85%), it only had the third highest share (74%) by quarter 2 2020, suggesting that the other two subject areas (STEM and health etc) were comparatively less affected by the COVID-19 economic restrictions.

Table 14.7 Number and share of recent graduates in employment by field of learning

Recent graduates in employment (% of total)		
Field of learning	Q2 2019	Q2 2020
Generic etc	58%	46%
Social science, business & law	85%	74%
STEM (Science, ICT, engineering & construction)	81%	76%
Arts, humanities & education	80%	72%
Health, veterinary & agriculture	81%	80%
Services	75%	64%
Field not stated/not assigned	***	***
All fields	72%	64%

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO (LFS) data

\*\*\* Numbers were too small to report

# Appendix I

Private independent colleges offering programmes leading to QQI – HE awards

Carlow College

National College of Ireland

The Open Training College

CCT College Dublin Children's Therapy Centre

Clanwilliam Institute

College of Computing Technology

Dorset College

Dublin Business School

Dublin Institute of Design

Gaelchultúr

Galway Business School

Griffith College Hibernia College

Ibat College Dublin

ICD Business School

IICP Education and Training Limited

Independent Colleges

Institute of Physical Therapy and Applied Science

International College for Personal and Professional Development

Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences Limited

Irish Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management

Kimmage Development Studies Centre

Newpark Music Centre

Saint Nicholas Montessori College Ireland

Setanta College

The American College, Dublin



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