

IPMA Education and Training Series¹

Collaboration between IPMA National Associations and Academic Organizations

By Ed Naughton and John Vickery

This paper presents a case study of the collaboration between an IPMA[®] member association and domestic academic institutions. The specific collaboration models have proved to be particularly successful. The Institute of Project Management in Ireland is the IPMA[®] member association with responsibility for the administration of the IPMA[®] 4 level certification system.

Approximately 3,500 IPMA[®] Certified Professionals are currently registered in Ireland and the numbers continue to grow strongly each year.

Since 1993 the Institute has worked closely with the Department of Management and Marketing University College Cork (UCC). They combine the proven project management pragmatism and international reputation of the Institute with the academic expertise of the Department of Management and Marketing UCC. UCC awarded an honorary master's degree in 2011 to the Institute's Director General Mr. Ed Naughton in recognition for his contribution to project management development.

In 2014 the Institute also entered into a significant collaboration agreement with the Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT) - the sole higher education institution in South Dublin County with approximately 5000 students which provides programmes from Level 6 to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications. This article concentrates on this recent agreement.

The authors recognise that this model will not necessarily be suitable to all project management professional bodies/member associations that operate within their own unique contexts. However, they also believe that much can be gained from a closer scrutiny of the lessons learnt in this case.

A key component of ITT's strategy is that it must continue to engage and strengthen its partnerships with other higher education institutions nationally and internationally and must develop inter-institutional strategic alliances to deliver on its mission and to ensure that it remains a key provider of relevant higher education to the region. To this extent, it has collaborative agreements nationally, with universities in the EU, Brazil, Vietnam and China. ITT acknowledges the important role that academic collaboration has in achieving aspects of its mission that relates to serving its communities, promoting lifelong learning and being an outward looking institution. It

¹ This series of articles is by members of the IPMA Education and Training (E&T) Board or other IPMA leaders on the subject of project management education, training, careers and related topics. More information about the IPMA E&T can be found at <http://ipma.ch/education>.

is a key aspect of its academic strategy and recognises the benefits of collaborations, both to the institute and to its students.

Academic collaborations are designed to focus and facilitate the development and appropriate academic partnerships within Ireland and internationally. These include, but are not limited to educational providers both further education and higher education, professional bodies, research bodies, international education providers.

It is important in establishing collaborations that relationships are balanced with collaborative partners deriving equal benefit from the partnership. Working together will develop stronger articulation routes and joint programmes in pursuit of access policies and develop routes to continuing professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning through partnerships with organisations involved in education and training.

There are also benefits to employers as it aligns the IPMA® professional body qualification on a National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) making it easier to explain the qualification and can be very important when considering further education or training or for the individual who is applying for a job either in Ireland or abroad.

The alignment of the Institute of Project Management Certified Project Management Diploma to the Irish NFQ facilitates recognition of the relationship between a professional award (**IPMA - Level D®**) and qualifications in the NFQ. Specifically, the alignment process here determines that the professional award from the Institute of Project Management can be recognised as a Special Purpose Award at NFQ Level 8.



The Certified Project Management Diploma offered by the Institute of Project Management which has run since 2009 and meets the knowledge requirements of IPMA-Level D® certification was validated in 2014 by the Institute of Technology Tallaght in Dublin as a Special Purpose Award on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) at Level 8.

The workload for students is 15 credits as per the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). One ECTS credit is equivalent to 25 to 30 hours of student effort. The quality assurance procedures of the Institute of Technology Tallaght are applied in relation to the award.

The programme is offered nationally at five major urban centres (Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford.)

About the NFQ

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) is a ten-level system (1–10) giving an academic or vocational value to qualifications obtained in Ireland. NFQ levels help indicate how an award can be used for training, education and employment opportunities Fig 1.1.

Each level is based on nationally agreed standards of what a learner is expected to know and be able to do after receiving an award. Level 8 is an Honours Degree or Higher Diploma on the Irish NFQ.

It is linked to similar frameworks in Europe. This helps people considering employment or study opportunities outside Ireland. There are two qualifications frameworks at European level:

- (i) The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area also known as the 'Bologna Framework'. This deals with higher education awards (NFQ 6-10)
- (ii) The European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which deals with all NFQ levels including schools, Further Education and Training, and Higher Education

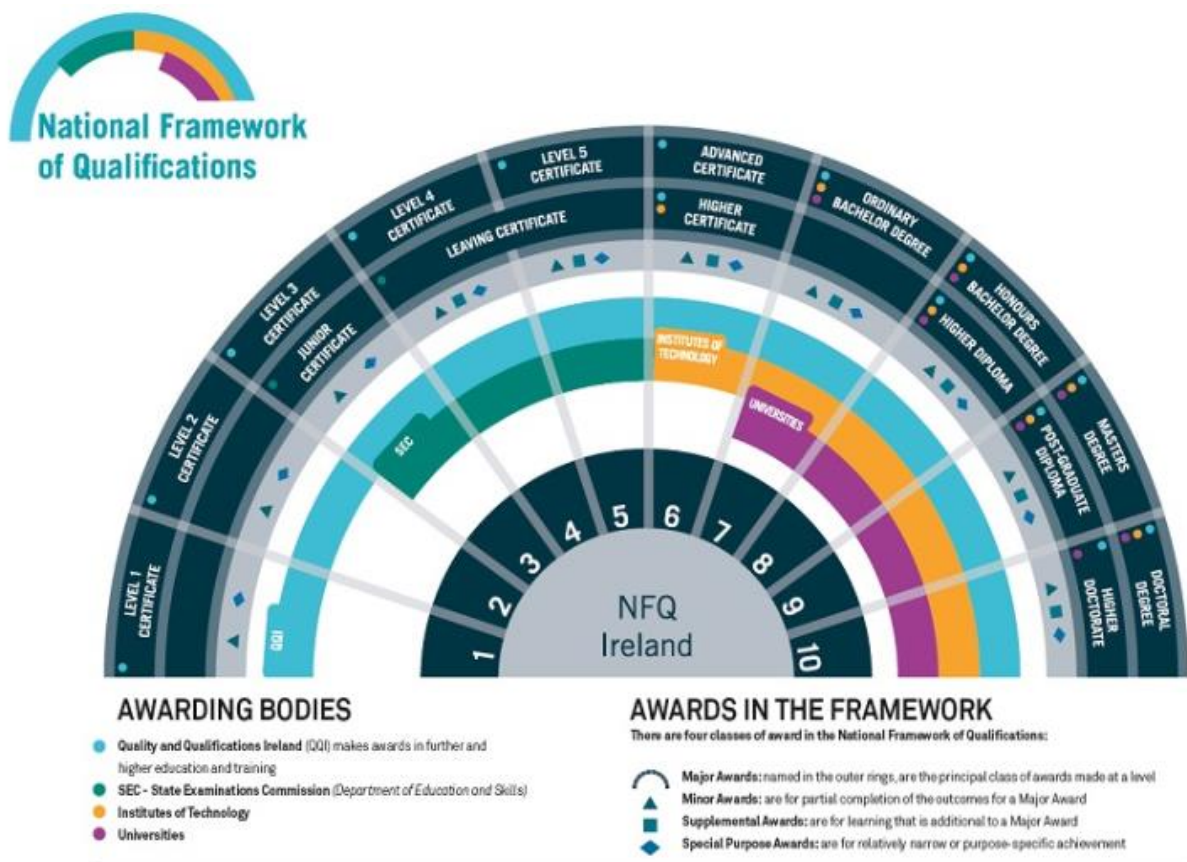


Fig 1.1 National Framework of Qualifications Ref www.qqi.ie

The NFQ levels are described in terms of general (non-subject-specific) indicators of a person's knowledge, skill and competence (i.e., standards for their learning achievements).

The policies and criteria for the NFQ framework set out that, as well as Major Awards, e.g., PhDs, Masters, Honour Bachelor Degree etc. that there should be other award-types in the framework including **Special Purpose Awards**.

These are standalone and have a distinct identity which reflects their clearly defined purpose. There is no requirement that they be linked to a major award. They may however be integral to a major award.

The curriculum for the Special Purpose Award reflects the fact that the students have already completed a Degree programme or equivalent qualification (NQAI Level 7 Ordinary Degree) or have met the learning outcomes of a Level 7 award and so the emphasis is very much on the development of the knowledge, skills and competencies relevant to the role of the project management professional. The objective is to provide learners with a solid foundation of knowledge from which they can competently practice project management across a wide range of different projects.

The benefits of having the programme validated as a **Special Purpose Award** are:

- it is now placed on the NFQ and all awards obtained in Ireland on the framework are quality-assured and recognised internationally;
- it supports lifelong learning by recognising knowledge and skills within a comparative framework;
- it provides a system of establishing eligibility in learning processes for access, transfer and progression in higher education;
- it facilitates comparing the award with international awards; and aligns the professional body qualification with awards made on the framework.

Further information on the Irish NFQ and awards descriptors can be obtained at www.nfq.ie.

About the Authors



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John Vickery is a Fellow of The Institution of Mechanical Engineers (UK) and also a Fellow of The Institution of Engineers of Ireland. He was formerly Head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, and is now Registrar at the Institute of Technology Tallaght. He has extensive experience in quality systems and project management and has managed a number of EU funded projects. He has over 10 year's industrial experience in the areas of manufacturing, quality, maintenance and management and is currently a member of the IPMA® Education and Training Board.



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Ed Naughton, BE, C. Eng., F.I.E.I, FIPMA, IPMA-a, PMP, is the founder and Director General of the Institute of Project Management of Ireland, the leading authority on the PM profession in Ireland. On the international front, Ed was responsible for initiating cooperation agreements with both the PMI (Project Management Institute) USA and the IPMA (International Project Management Association). He is Ireland's representative on the IPMA council of delegates, and a former Vice President-Marketing for the IPMA. He was also the first PMP registered in Ireland. Ed has researched, published and presented many articles and papers on project management and is the author of the Irish Project Management Competence Baseline. During his thirty year career, Ed has worked as a project manager and/or project management consultant on a large variety of high profile domestic and international assignments. Ed Naughton is a graduate of University College Dublin (BE, civil), a Fellow of the Institute of Engineers of Ireland, a Chartered Engineer (Ireland), a Professional Engineer in Canada, and holds an IPMA Level A certification. He is former founder and editor of the quarterly international publication "Project Management Practice". One of Ireland's most respected experts on the topic of modern project management, Ed is an executive advisor to PM World in Ireland. Ed Naughton was named a Fellow of IPMA in 2013. Ed lives in Dublin and can be contacted at ed@projectmanagement.ie.