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What qualification levels mean

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England, Wales and Northern Ireland

There are 9 qualification levels.

Entry level

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

Entry level qualifications are:

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

Level 1

Level 1 qualifications are:

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

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

Level 2

Level 2 qualifications are:

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

Level 3

Level 3 qualifications are:

- A level
- access to higher education diploma
- advanced apprenticeship
- applied general
- ~~AS~~ level
- international Baccalaureate diploma
- level 3 award
- level 3 certificate
- level 3 diploma
- level 3 ~~ESOL~~
- level 3 national certificate
- level 3 national diploma
- level 3 ~~NVQ~~
- music grades 6, 7 and 8
- tech level

Level 4

Level 4 qualifications are:

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

Level 5

Level 5 qualifications are:

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

Level 6

Level 6 qualifications are:

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

Level 7

Level 7 qualifications are:

- integrated master's degree, for example master of engineering (~~MEng~~)
- level 7 award
- level 7 certificate
- level 7 diploma

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

Level 8

Level 8 qualifications are:

- doctorate, for example doctor of philosophy (PhD or DPHil)
 - level 8 award
 - level 8 certificate
 - level 8 diploma
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