

The Path to Early Childhood Education and Care

QQI *Early Childhood Education and Care Graduates at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 (2014-2019)*



DATA
SERIES

PUBLICATION DATE

04 | 2021



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann



CONTENTS

- Introduction 5
- 1. Policy context 7
- 2. QQI certification data – ECEC awards in numbers in the FET sector 2014 -2019..... 10
- 3. The QQI qualifications histories of people who have QQI FET major awards in ECEC at NFQ Level 5 or 6 20

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

Split ECEC systems

QQI qualifications histories

Part-time learning

Accumulation of extra credit

Up-skilling

Re-skilling

Excess credits of qualification requirements

Learning mobility between QQI types of provider

ABSTRACT

This is a statistical analysis of QQI certification data from 2014 to 2019. It builds a longitudinal dataset that tracks holders of QQI FET awards in ECEC at NQF Level 5 or 6 in the six-year period. It provides information on their 'QQI award histories', including how individuals accumulate credit and whether or not credit accumulation involved more than one type of provider, shedding some light on how the CAS system is being utilised. It found that, on average, 20% of QQI FET learners in each certification year who qualified in the ECEC sector with a major award engaged in 'long-term learning'. Most of these are part-time learners who took between 2 to 3 years to complete an ECEC major award; and almost one in three engaged in post-major award learning that suggests up-skilling. By and large, these ECEC part-time learners attended the same provider to complete the different phases of their learning process; but a large proportion utilised the offer of different types of provider to fulfil their up-skilling requirements



INTRODUCTION

This study explores the CAS certification histories of those who graduated with QQI Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) awards 5M2009 or 6M2007¹. These are the two QQI major FET awards relating to ECEC (5M2009 at NFQ Level 5, 6M2007 at Level 6). These awards relate directly to the supply of the qualified workforce required by legislation in the ECEC industry.

METHOD

This is a statistical analysis of QQI certification data from 2014 to 2019. It builds a longitudinal dataset that tracks holders of QQI awards 5M2009 or 6M2007 in the six-year period.

The dataset includes QQI award holders:

- who achieved award 5M2009 or 6M2007;
- whose QQI certification history spans more than one calendar year.

The **panel analysis**² of this sample of learners provides information on holders of award 5M2009 and/or 6M2007 and their 'QQI award histories', including:

- how individuals accumulate credit;
- whether or not credit accumulation involved more than one type of provider; and
- an indication of the possible reasons behind the learner's decision to engage in the accumulation of learning outcomes (i.e. initial skilling, up-skilling or re-skilling)³.

The analysis of these 'learners' QQI award histories' provides insights on how the CAS system is being utilised.

1 Higher education institutions in Ireland also offer full-time undergraduate degree level programmes (QQI Levels 6, 7 and 8) in Early Childhood Education and Care. This paper focuses only on the FET sector.

2 Panel analysis is a statistical methodology that consists of multiple units of analysis, observed at two or more points in time.

3 There are many reasons behind learners' decision to accumulate learning outcomes over a particular timespan. Every learner's journey is different. But there are mainly three profile of LLL types:

- Initial skilling, which includes PLC learners
- Up-skilling: learning new skills or improving skills to assist in their current careers, such as getting a better job or promotion, or due to the introduction of new regulation
- Re-skilling: using education to change jobs or careers.

How is the study organised?

The study is organised as followed:

1. First the policy context is outlined. This frames the discussion and indicates the importance of ECEC qualifications in Ireland.
2. Next, the QQI certification data 2014 to 2019 are described in order to present overall trends for QQI ECEC major awards at levels 5 (5M2009) and 6 (6M2007), including certification volumes and learners' characteristics.
3. Finally, there is a description and statistical analysis of the longitudinal dataset that tracks the 'QQI award histories' of holders of QQI awards 5M2009 and 6M2007, reporting on main findings.

Limitations and assumptions

The dataset used includes the QQI qualifications histories of individuals who received the QQI award 5M2009 or 6M2007 in 2014-2019 and who also received any QQI certification in two or more years within this period.

The 2014-2019 period is a finite window on QQI's certification histories—this is a limitation. The significance of the limitation depends on the degree of stationarity of the certification histories.

The assumption is that this group of learners is a subset of the statistical population in which each member of the subset has an equal probability of being chosen (being the population of all 5M2009 and/or 6M2007 award holders whose qualification histories span more than one certification year).

Based on these assumptions, the statistical findings of the analysis should provide a representation of the population under study and contribute to the discussion on how the 'Common awards system' is supporting learners, based on a six-year window.

1. POLICY CONTEXT

There is an increasing acknowledgement that early childhood education and care (ECEC) provides high return investment in human capital: it improves educational attainment and labour market outcomes, particularly for groups at risk; and increases female labour participation. Also, high quality ECEC is a predictor of more cohesive and inclusive societies¹.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) refers to *'any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to the compulsory primary school age — regardless of the setting, funding, opening hours or programme content — and includes centre and family day-care; privately and publicly funded provision; pre-school and pre-primary provision'* (EU Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems, 2019²).

The EU Council Recommendation on High Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems was adopted in May 2019 in order to establish a shared understanding of the ECEC industry in the EU. The Recommendation is the result of a long process of EU cooperation³, which includes the **Barcelona targets** set by the European Council in 2002 as an important milestone. The targets are:

- Target 1: At least 90% participation in high quality and affordable childcare for pre-school children from age 3 until mandatory school age;
- Target 2: At least 33% participation in high quality and affordable childcare for children aged 0 to 3.

The 2019 EU Recommendation identifies five pillars of affordable and high quality childcare systems across the Member States. There is a need to:

1. Improve availability and accessibility;
2. Support the professionalisation of early childhood education and care staff, including leaders;
3. Enhance the development of early years' curricula;
4. Promote transparent and coherent monitoring and evaluation of ECEC services;
5. Ensure adequate funding and a legal framework for the provision of ECEC.

1.1 Professionalism of the sector is key

There is general consensus among policymakers, practitioners and researchers of the importance of pillar number two identified in the EU Recommendation. It echoes OECD's findings⁴ that the quality of early childhood services and their outcomes are dependent on well educated, 'competent' and experienced staff⁵. Establishing initial qualification requirements for ECEC staff addresses this issue. But it is not enough: the continuing professional development (CPD) that allows employees to upgrade their knowledge and skills throughout their career is also crucially important.

Based on this, the 2019 EU Recommendation calls on Member States to raise *'the status of the early childhood education and care profession by creating high professional standards, offering attractive professional status and*

1 Children who attended early childhood education for more than one year scored higher in language and maths in the PIRLS and the PISA studies. Participating in quality ECEC has also been shown to be an important factor to prevent early school leaving and provides the foundations for LLL - see OECD report: Starting Strong. Early Childhood Education and Care, OECD 2006 and updated in 2017. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/starting-strong-2017-9789264276116-en.htm>

2 EU Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (2019/C 189/02)

3 Key EU documents and initiatives: Council Recommendation on Childcare (Council of the European Communities, 1992); Quality Targets in Services for young Children (European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities, 1996); EU Communication on Early Childhood Education and Care (European Commission, 2011); European Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2014).

4 OECD, Early Learning Matters 2018. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/Early-Learning-Matters-Project-Brochure.pdf>

5 Transition from Preschool to Primary School, Research Report No. 19, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2016. Available at https://ncca.ie/media/3196/3754_ncca_researchreport19_lr.pdf By competent we understand a series of skills and pieces of knowledge that individuals need to 'possess' in order to perform a particular task

*career prospects to early childhood education and care educators, striving to reach a better gender balance*⁶.

1.2 Progress made in Ireland

ECEC policy in Ireland has been influenced by the EU policy process and considerable progress has been made.

In 2010 the 'ECCE scheme' was introduced by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, which makes provision for up to two years of early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age. The programme was extended in subsequent years and in 2016 the minimum qualification levels for childcare workers policy was introduced ([Child Care Act, Early Years Services](#)⁷). The policy states that all staff working with children in the service must hold a major award in childcare/early education at a minimum of level 5 in the NFQ; and room-leaders participating in the ECCE programme a minimum level 6, from 31 Dec. 2016⁸. There is also a forthcoming EU requirement for a level 7 qualification which will have implications for all workers in the sector⁹.

The 'ECCE scheme' addresses the key pillars of high quality and affordability of ECEC identified by the EU Recommendation. The 'scheme' is supporting progress made by Ireland in relation to the Barcelona targets: by 2018 the two targets were exceeded in Ireland (reaching 95% and 38% respectively) – a jump of 11 and 17 percentage points respectively since 2011¹⁰.

However, increased levels of participation in Ireland have not always led to affordable and high quality ECEC services. In 2017 the 'Review of Occupational Role Profiles in Ireland in ECEC' presented to the DES and the Early Years Advisory Group calls for 'the necessary systemic professionalisation of the sector' in order to increase the quality of services¹¹. In 2019, DES developed the 'Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education (Levels 7 and 8) Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) Sector in Ireland'¹². The purpose of these is to support the development of professional awards at levels 7 and 8 that will lead to the formation of early childhood educator graduates.

QQI published new awards standards for Early Learning and Care in November 2019. The new standards (at NFQ Levels 5 and 6) replaced the former Early Childhood Care & Education standards published in 2011. One of the major changes is that these standards are based on the NFQ Professional Award-type Descriptors. The Awards Standards set out, in broad terms, the standards of knowledge, skill and competence that must be achieved before a major award can be made in Early Learning and Care (ELC) at National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) Levels 5, 6, 7 or 8. The awards standards are presented in the form of annotations to the NFQ Professional Award-type Descriptors (PATDs). The annotations explain how to interpret the PATD indicators when designing programmes leading to ELC awards. The annotations at NFQ Levels 7-8 were produced under the leadership of the Department of Education and Skills using the Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Education (Levels 7 and 8) Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care sector in Ireland.

In contrast to the CAS standards which they replace the new standards do not prescribe how programmes leading to the new ELC awards should be modularised.

These initiatives are addressing some of the issues associated with the so called 'split ECEC systems'. The recent EU Commission report that monitors progress across the EU, found that Ireland remains among the 'split ECEC systems' in the EU (i.e. systems where the services for 0–3-year-old (day care) and 3–6-year-old (pre-school) children are

6 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605\(01\)&from=EN#:text=This%20Quality%20Framework%20provides%20key,state%20of%20the%20art%20research](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605(01)&from=EN#:text=This%20Quality%20Framework%20provides%20key,state%20of%20the%20art%20research).

7 www.dcy.a.gov.ie/documents/earlyyears/20171018DCYAEarlyYearsRecognisedQualifications.pdf

8 A higher capitation is available to Preschool Services where the Preschool Leader has achieved a major award in early childhood care and education at level 7 on NFQ and where the assistants have achieved the minimum Level 5 Award.

9 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019H0605%2801%29>

10 See Eurostat at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tepsr_sp210 For further information on the "Barcelona objectives": Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions on the development of childcare facilities for young children with a view to increase female labour participation, strike a work-life balance for working parents and bring about sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe. Available at:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0273>

11 www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Final-Review-of-Occupational-Role-Profiles-in-Early-Childhood-Education-and-Care.pdf

12 www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Early-Childhood/professional-award-criteria-and-guidelines-for-initial-professional-education-l7-8-degree-programmes-elc-ireland.pdf

ECEC AWARDS IN NUMBERS IN THE FET SECTOR 2014-2019

2.1 Overall numbers of QQI ECEC major awards made between 2014-2019

There are two QQI major FET awards for 'early childhood care and education' (ECEC)¹ :

- one at NFQ Level 5 (5M2009) and
- the other at NFQ Level 6 (6M2007).

Within FET, these major awards have been the most numerous certified for the last 6 years (see www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Data-Series-Certification-Major-Awards.pdf for more information). This signals the demand for ECEC qualified personnel in the labour market, particularly in the context of the ECCE scheme (see 2.3 section for further information).

Table 2.1.1 below presents the numbers of ECEC major awards (5M2009 and 6M2007) made between 2014 and 2019 and their proportions of all QQI major awards.

It shows that over the six-year period:

1. On average **5M2009** awards represent 11.4% of all QQI major awards made at NFQ Level 5 (on average, level 5 major awards make up 66% of all FET major awards).
2. The number of 5M2009 awards has decreased marginally year on year since 2015 by about 4 percentage points on average (see figure 2.1.1 below).
3. The share of awards made in 5M2009 over all QQI major awards made at NFQ Level 5 shows an increase of around 0.6% and 0.4 percentage points in 2019 with respect to previous years, 2017 and 2018.
4. On average, the number of **6M2007** awards represents 30.3% of all QQI major awards made at NFQ Level 6.
5. A 79% increase in 6M2007 awards was observed from 2014 to 2015. From this point onwards, the number of 6M2007 awards decreased at a rate of about 12% year on year (see figure 2.1.1 below).

There is a general decline in QQI awards made in the FET sector at all NFQ levels in 2018 and 2019. The decrease in numbers of awards made in the ECEC industry should be seen within this general trend.

¹ This study looks at FET QQI awards 5M2009 and 6M2007, which were introduced in 2012. Previously the ECEC-related awards were 'Childcare' at level 5 and 'Supervision in Childcare' at level 6. The number of these two awards made in 2012 were 149 and 15; and by 2013 were 2,314 and 657 respectively. The current study focuses on figures from 2014 onward when the 'common awards system' (CAS) was established and the ECEC new awards set. Also, the paper focuses on the FET sector, although there are higher education institutions in Ireland that offer full-time undergraduate degree level programmes (at levels 7 & 8) in Early Childhood Education and Care; and awards at level 6.

2. QQI CERTIFICATION DATA – ECEC AWARDS IN NUMBERS IN THE FET SECTOR 2014-2019 [CONTINUED]

[PAGE 11]

Table 2.1.1 – Number and proportion of QQI awards 5M2009 and 6M2007 made between 2014-2019, ECEC major awards at levels 5 and 6

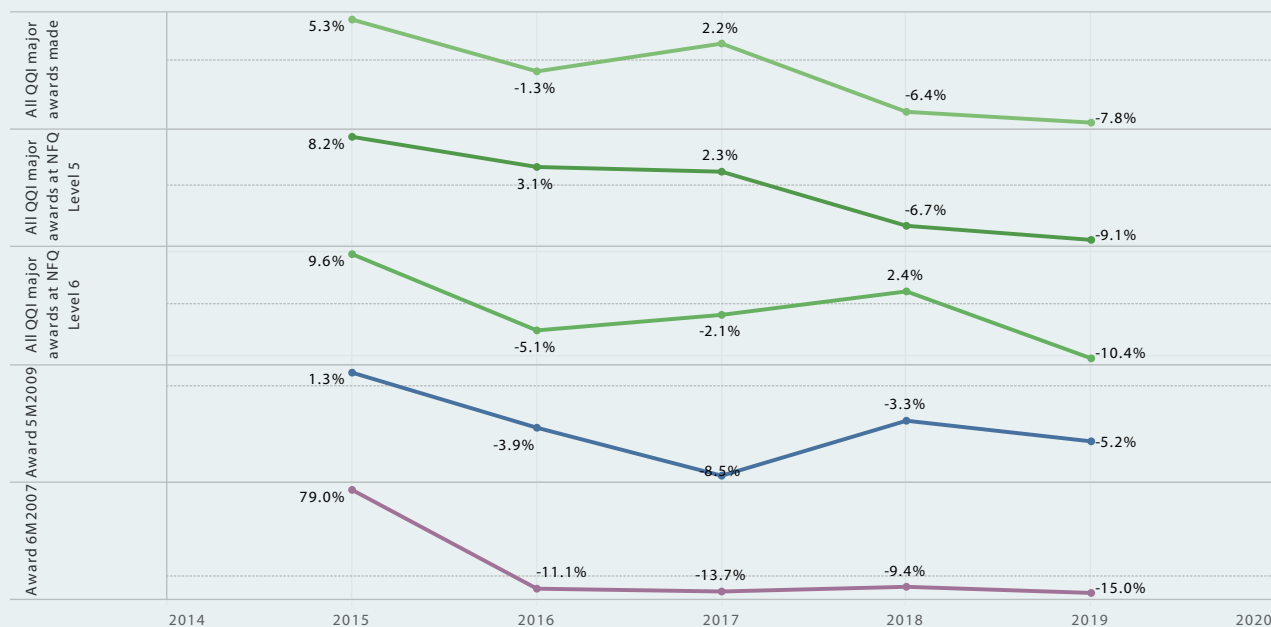
FET SECTOR	All QQI major awards made	All QQI major awards at NFQ Level 5	Award 5M2009	All QQI major awards at NFQ Level 6	Award 6M2007
2014	32,257	20,100	2,621	5,832	1,354
Proportion of total		62.3%	13.0%	18.1%	23.2%
2015	33,951	21,739	2,656	6,389	2,423
Proportion of total		64.1%	12.2%	18.8%	37.9%
2016	33,507	22,418	2,552	6,065	2,153
Proportion of total		66.9%	11.4%	18.1%	35.5%
2017	34,246	22,940	2,335	5,938	1,858
Proportion of total		67.0%	10.2%	17.3%	31.3%
2018	32,039	21,402	2,259	6,081	1,683
Proportion of total		66.8%	10.6%	19.0%	27.7%
2019	29,538	19,466	2,141	5,447	1,430
Proportion of total		66.0%	11.0%	18.4%	26.3%
Average proportion	-	Over all FET Awards 66.0%	Over all awards at level 5 11.4%	Over all FET Awards 18.3%	Over all awards at level 6 30.3%

The significant increase observed in 2015 is likely to be the result of the introduction of the Child Care Act Regulations 2016, which stated that from 31 December 2016 all staff working directly with children must hold a 5M2009 award and ECCE room-leaders a minimum of a 6M2007 award or equivalent.

Figure 2.1.1 below shows the year on year percentage change of awards made in the FET sector in relation to all QQI major awards; all major awards at NFQ Levels 5 and 6; and awards 5M2009 and 6M2007. It shows that fluctuations in the total number of awards made have occurred over the years. However, it shows that in every year from 2015 onwards, the number of 5M2009 and 6M2007 awards made declined. This decline is particularly noticeable in the 6M2007 award.

Figure 2.1.1 – Percentage change of QQI awards made year on year in the FET sector, 2014-2019

TRENDS



2.2. Provision – Type of Provider

Programmes leading to QQI ECEC major awards at levels 5 (5M2009) and 6 (6M2007) are offered by a range of providers types. Currently, there are five **types** of providers providing programmes leading to 5M2009 or 6M2007 awards:

- Community / Comprehensive School (CMS),
- Community / Voluntary Sector Organisation (CVS),
- Education and Training Board (ETB),
- Private Provider (PRC),
- Voluntary Secondary School (SCS).

Table and Figure 2.2.1 below show that:

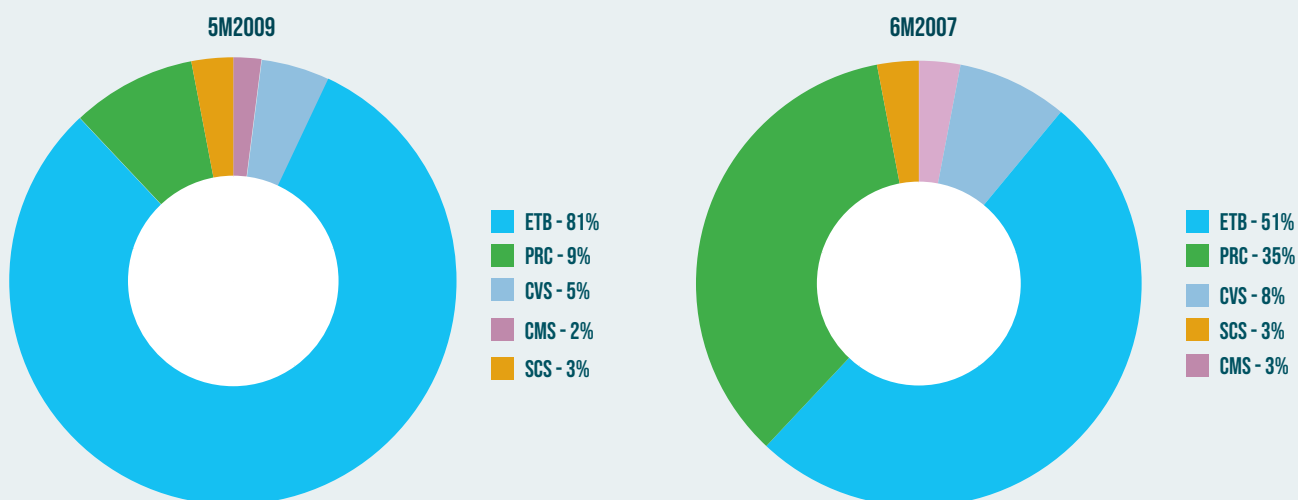
- Most of the QQI **5M2009** awards made in 2014-2019 (on average 81%) were issued by ETBs.
- Table 2.2.1 shows that the number of 5M2009 awards issued by ETBs declined 5% on average between 2014 and 2019. The number issued by private providers (PRC) increased by 20% on average over the 6 years.
- On average 51% of the **6M2007** awards made in 2014-2019 were issued by ETBs; 35% were issued by private providers; and 9% by Community / Voluntary Sector Organisation (CVS).
- Table 2.2.1 also shows that all five types of provider increased provision of programmes leading to 6M2007 awards between 2014 and 2019. Much of this was due to the increase of provision in 2015. From this point in time, the number of 6M2007 awards issued declined for all types except the Community / Comprehensive School (CMS) and Voluntary Secondary School (SCS).

2. QQI CERTIFICATION DATA – ECEC AWARDS IN NUMBERS IN THE FET SECTOR 2014-2019 [CONTINUED]

Table 2.2.1 – Number of QQI 5M2009 and 6M2007 awards made by type of provider and average change year on year, 2014-2019

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Av. %Change 2014-2019
Community / Comprehensive School (CMS)							
5M2009	59	55	50	33	37	47	-2%
6M2007	30	54	53	69	50	63	22%
Community / Voluntary Sector Organisation (CVS)							
5M2009	86	154	250	114	105	65	8%
6M2007	21	345	295	84	87	54	285%
Education and Training Board (ETB)							
5M2009	2,300	2,165	1,942	1,803	1,839	1,735	-5%
6M2007	805	1,214	1,030	969	851	708	0.2%
Private Provider (PRC)							
5M2009	121	221	240	312	224	244	20%
6M2007	459	757	730	690	634	553	7%
Voluntary Secondary School (SCS)							
5M2009	55	64	69	73	54	50	-0.7
6M2007	39	53	45	46	61	52	8%

Figure 2.2.1 Average proportion of QQI awards 5M2009 and 6M2007 issued by type of provider, 2014-2019



2.3 Supply of qualified ECEC workforce and learner characteristics

2.3.1 Overview

QQI classifies the levels 5 and 6 major award in ECEC (i.e. 5M2009 and 6M2007) under the ‘Health and Welfare’ field of learning². This field of learning is the most common for QQI awards and accounted on average for almost one in four of all FET awards certified by QQI since 2014.

The major awards 5M2009 and 6M2007 have been consistently within the top 15 most popular QQI major awards since 2014. The top 15 major awards each year makes up almost half of all FET major awards made by QQI. Figure 2.3.1 below lists the top 15 FET major awards for 2019.

Figure 2.3.1 – Top-15 QQI major awards, 2019

5M4339	Level 5	Healthcare Support	2,771
5M2009	Level 5	Early Childhood Care and Education	2,141
5M20454	Level 5	Agriculture	1,475
6M2007	Level 6	Early Childhood Care and Education	1,430
5M4349	Level 5	Nursing Studies	1,194
P2GL0	Level 2	General Learning	1,123
5M3782	Level 5	Health Service Skills	856
5M2102	Level 5	Business Studies	803
3M0935	Level 3	Employability Skills	783
5M1997	Level 5	Office Administration	778
5M5146	Level 5	Sports, Recreation and Exercise	740
5M4468	Level 5	Community Health Services	723
5M2468	Level 5	Business Administration	632
4M2010	Level 4	General Learning	606
9M1801	Level 9	Professional Master of Education in Primary Education	598
Total			16,653

Source: QQI summary of certification data 2019, available at www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Data-Series-Certification-Major-Awards.pdf
The high numbers of QQI awards made in the ECEC sector each year suggests a high demand for qualified workers in the sector. However, some learners use the qualification to access higher education.

2.3.2 Gender

The ECEC industry is highly gender imbalanced: the majority of the individuals who perform childcare work are female. According to the latest figures from the [EU Skills Panorama](#), in 2018 88% of all care sector workers in the EU were female. This is in line with figures at national level: 82% employed in the care sector in Ireland were female (SOLAS)³.

There are multiple studies that relate the existing gender imbalance in the ECEC industry with:

- the low status of the ECEC profession;
- the low pay of ECEC staff; and
- low levels of professionalism in the industry.

² See ISCED classification. However, there is an argument that these awards should be included in the education field instead.

³ SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO data, November 2019. Social and care occupations represent 5.3% of the national workforce and 5% of the EU workforce. The social and care sector includes all social workers and welfare, care and home workers, including childminder professions. At national level, on average, 23% of the care sector workers are employed in the childcare sector. At EU level, 17% of care professionals are employed in the educational field.

2. QQI CERTIFICATION DATA – ECEC AWARDS IN NUMBERS IN THE FET SECTOR 2014-2019 [CONTINUED]

[PAGE 15]

According to the OECD⁴, the gender disparity within the ECEC profession ‘seen to reflect deeply-held cultural beliefs about child-rearing and the roles of women and men in society’. Furthermore, the ‘CoRe project’ and the ‘Review of Occupational Role Profiles in Ireland in ECEC’ point out that the low status of the ECEC profession can not only be explained by low pay but by ‘how the work is seen in society and of how education and employment are structured in ways that reproduce gendered workforces’. These issues affect the retention of qualified staff in the sector.

Table 2.3.2 and Figure 2.3.2 below present information from QQI certification data on the number of 5M2009 and 6M2007 awards by gender between 2014 and 2019. Figure 2.3.2 shows that on average only 3% of those who qualified at level 5 were male; and 2% at level 6.

Table 2.3.2 Number of qualified learners, QQI awards 5M2009 and 6M2007 by gender, 2014-2019

		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
5M2009	Female	2,562	2,592	2,471	2,256	2,166	2,064
	Male	59	64	81	79	93	77
6M2007	Female	1,335	2,392	2,224	1,833	1,650	1,402
	Male	19	31	39	25	33	28

Figure 2.3.2 Average proportion of qualified learners - QQI awards 5M2009 and 6M2007 by gender, 2014-2019

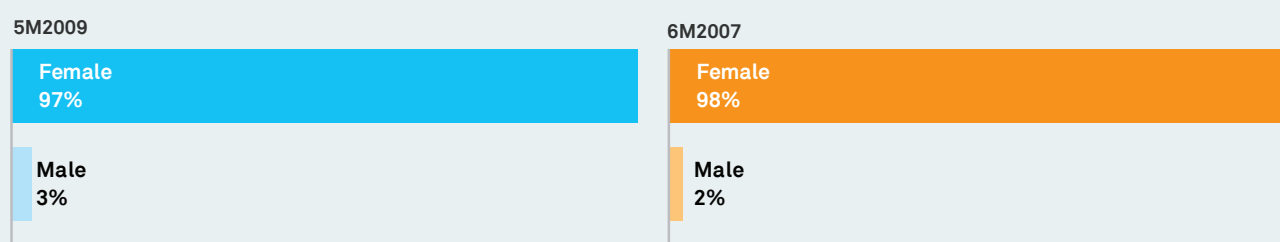
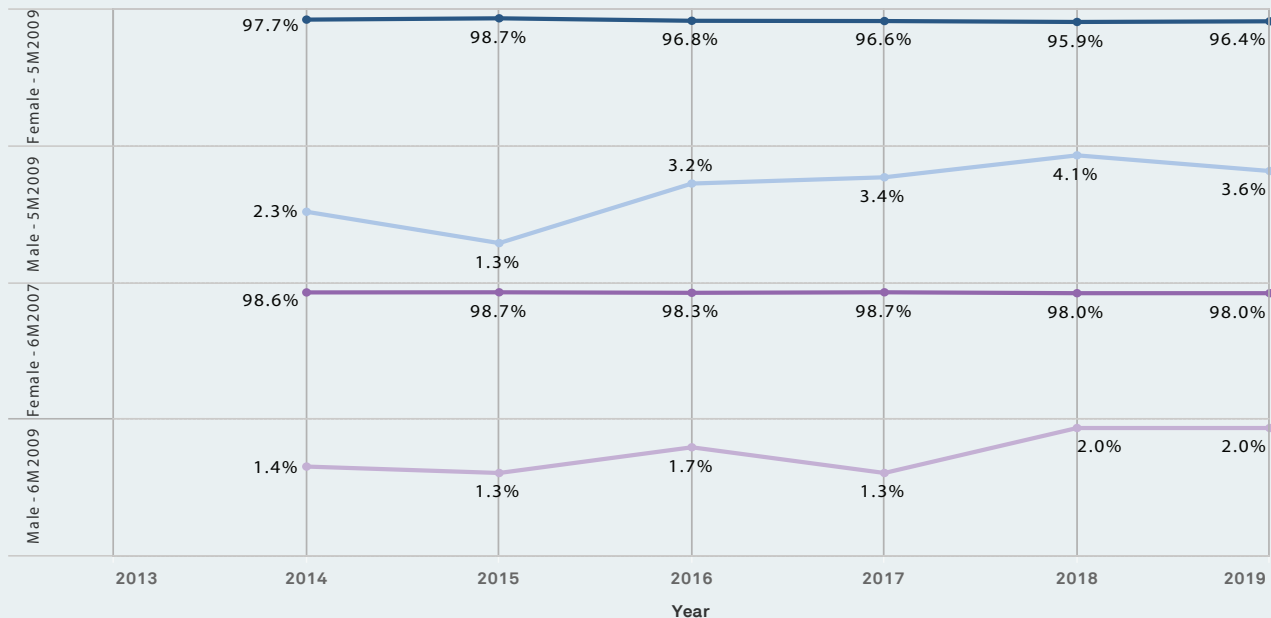


Figure 2.3.3 below shows the share of learners who achieved the 5M2009 and 6M2007 awards respectively each year by gender. There is a marginal increase in the proportion of males qualifying in the ECEC industry from 2016 onwards. The increase is more evident in the 5M2009 award: from 2016 the share of males achieving this QQI award is slightly above the 3% average.

⁴ Starting Strong. Early Childhood Education and Care, OECD 2006 and updated in 2017. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/starting-strong-2017-9789264276116-en.htm> The ‘Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care’ (CoRe) project was funded by the European Commission and jointly conducted by the University of East London, UK and the University of Gent, Belgium in 2012. The report is available at: <https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/CoRe-report-Competencies.pdf> Review of Occupational Role Profiles in Ireland in Early Childhood Education and Care funded by University of Roehampton, Early Childhood Research Centre (ECRC), London, 2017

Figure 2.3.3 Proportion of learners achieving QQI awards 5M2009 and 6M2007 by Gender, 2014-2019



2.3.3 Age

The analysis carried out by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU, SOLAS) of CSO data in 2019 (National Skills Bulletin⁵), indicates that the share of employees aged 55 and over working in the social and care occupations⁶ in Ireland is 19%; which is slightly above the national average of 17%.

The analysis of QQI certification data on ECEC graduates (i.e. those who received QQI major awards at NFQ Level 5 – 5M2009, and at Level 6 – 6M2007) suggests that these learners seem to be older when they are compared against all learners who achieved a QQI award at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 between 2014-2019.

Figure 2.3.4 below shows the share of learners who achieved the QQI awards 5M2009 and 6M2007 between 2014 and 2019 by age group. It shows that over the six-year period:

- On average 25% of all learners who achieved the QQI award **5M2009** were in the 20-24 age group. The second largest age group is the 15-19 age group, at 14%.
- Learners aged between 15 and 29 accounted for more than half of all learners who received the award 5M2009, at 52%.
- Figure 2.3.4 and Table 2.3.2 below show that learners who received the award 5M2009 are on average older than the average for all learners who achieved a QQI major award at level 5.
- The largest group of learners who achieved the QQI award **6M2007** were in the 20-24 age group, at 23%; followed by the 25-29 age group, at 17%.
- The 20-34 age group accounted for more than half of all learners who received the award 6M2007, at 55%. Learners who achieved the award 6M2007 were slightly older than those who achieved the award 5M2009. This is to be expected.
- Figure 2.3.4 and Table 2.3.2 below show that on average learners who received the 6M2007 award were significantly older in comparison to all learners who achieved a QQI major award at level 6 between 2014 and 2019.

⁵ https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/fe9df0d967/occupation_social.pdf

⁶ Social and care occupations included: childcare workers, care workers & home carers, social & welfare professions, and other caring professions.

2. QQI CERTIFICATION DATA – ECEC AWARDS IN NUMBERS IN THE FET SECTOR 2014-2019 [CONTINUED]

Figure 2.3.4 - Distribution of QQI awards 5M2009 and 6M2007 made by Age, 2014-2018

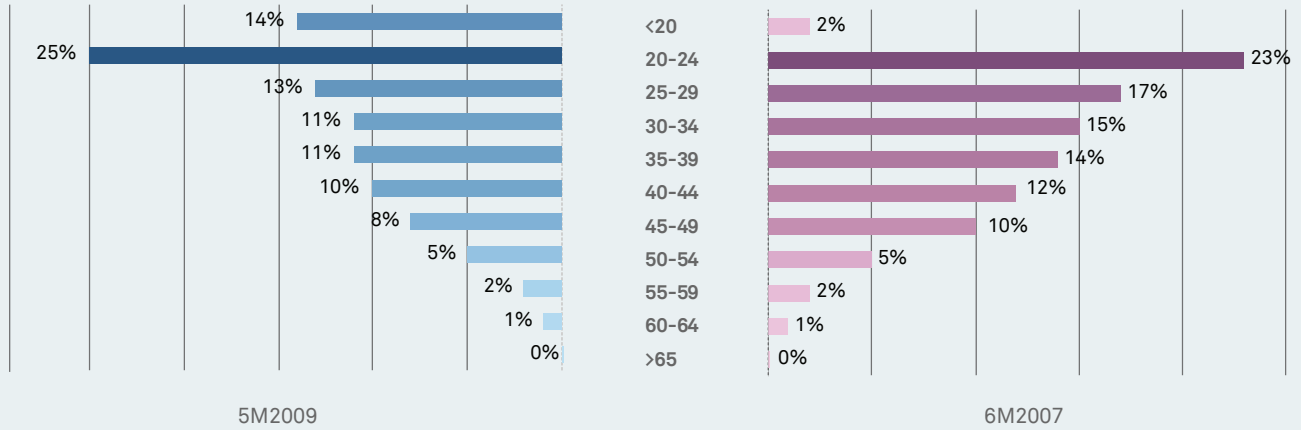


Figure 2.3.5 - Distribution of all QQI awards made at levels 5 and 6 vs. the awards 5M2009 and 6M2007 by age group, 2014-2018

Level	5M2009 (%)	6M2007 (%)
All QQI awards made at Level 5	20%	3%
Award 5M2009	14%	2%
All QQI awards made at Level 6	27%	37%
Award 5M2009	25%	23%
All QQI awards made at Level 5	11%	22%
Award 5M2009	13%	17%
All QQI awards made at Level 6	9%	11%
Award 5M2009	11%	15%
All QQI awards made at Level 5	9%	9%
Award 5M2009	11%	14%
All QQI awards made at Level 6	8%	7%
Award 5M2009	10%	12%
All QQI awards made at Level 5	7%	5%
Award 5M2009	8%	10%
All QQI awards made at Level 6	5%	3%
Award 5M2009	5%	5%
All QQI awards made at Level 5	3%	2%
Award 5M2009	2%	2%
All QQI awards made at Level 6	1%	1%
Award 5M2009	1%	1%
All QQI awards made at Level 5	0%	0%
Award 5M2009	0%	0%

2. QQI CERTIFICATION DATA – ECEC AWARDS IN NUMBERS IN THE FET SECTOR 2014-2019 [CONTINUED]

[PAGE 18]

Table 2.3.3 below compares the share of all learners who achieved a QQI award at levels 5 and 6 versus learners who achieved 5M2009 and 6M2007 by broader age groups. The analysis calculates average bases on certification figures of 2014 to 2019. It indicates that on average ECEC graduates were older. This is particularly evident in relation to graduates who achieved QQI 6M2007 award.

Table 2.3.3 – Distribution of all QQI awards made at levels 5 and 6 vs. 5M2009 and 6M2007 by broader age group, 2014-2018

AGE GROUP Broader age groups Average (2014-2019)	All learners who achieved a QQI award at level 5	All learners who achieved award 5M2009	All learners who achieved a QQI award at level 6	All learners who achieved award 6M2007
Age group 15-29	58%	52%	62%	42%
Age group 30-44	26%	32%	27%	41%
Age group 45-59	15%	15%	10%	17%

Learners who achieved QQI awards 5M2009 and 6M2007 are older than average. It is likely that a high proportion of these learners were already working in the sector and they engaged in learning because they were unqualified or sought to progress to higher levels of qualification.

2.4 Trends in demand for ECEC qualified workers

Data on people currently employed in the childcare sector can be drawn from the Quarterly National Household Survey within the National Skills Database, which is sourced from the Central Statistics Office (CSO).

The latest Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) module on childcare⁷, which took place in the last quarter of 2016, showed that there has been a fall in the number of children in parental childcare between the years 2007 and 2016. The decrease is larger among primary school children (from 81% to 74%) than among pre-school children (from 64% to 62%). The most commonly used non-parental childcare type for pre-school children is a crèche/Montessori/playgroup/after-school facility. This type of care is used by 19% of pre-school children, with the highest rate of use in Dublin (25%). The most commonly used type of non-parental childcare for primary school children nationally is an unpaid relative or family friend (16%). The highest rate is in the Border region (21%).

It is difficult to be precise about the numbers employed in the delivery of childcare services as childcare related occupations are employed in the education, health and social work and household activities sectors of the economy (i.e. the nursery nurses and playgroup leaders are primarily employed in the health and social work sector; but special needs assistants are almost exclusively employed in the education sector). Employment data collected by CSO is occupationally coded (SOC classification). This classification aggregates a number of occupations many of which are directly related to childcare but some, such as special needs assistants, which are not.

SOLAS acknowledges that in the medium term the expansion of the ECCE scheme will have an impact on the demand for these skills. It *may cause difficulties in recruiting appropriately qualified staff due to issues such as low wages in the sector*⁸; which is partially being addressed by the recognition of relevant 'foreign' qualifications for employment purposes: the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) recognises a list of more than 500 early years qualifications from across thirty-seven countries which are considered acceptable for working in the ECEC sector in Ireland.

⁷ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/q-chi/qnhschildcarequarter32016/>

⁸ National Skills Bulletin 2019 - Regional Skill. A Report by the Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS on behalf of the National Skills Council; available at www.regionalskills.ie

2.5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

In the last ten years in Ireland, the ECEC workforce has experienced significant changes in terms of its qualifications profile and working settings.

European policy and national legislation and investment have encouraged positive developments in both of these areas. Although further work is needed in order to address the issues associated with the so-called 'ECEC split systems'.

The analysis of QQI Certification data 2014-2019 provides some interesting insights into the ECEC workforce in Ireland in the last six years:



It found a high demand for ECEC-related QQI major awards when compared to other QQI awards: 5M2009 and 6M2007 awards continue to be in the Top 10 most common awards. From 2016 onward, demand has seen a small but incremental decline, particularly in the level 6 award.



The growing demand for qualified workers in ECEC can partly be explained by the introduction of new legislation (namely the ECCE scheme and Child Care Act in 2016).



Legislation influenced the demand for ECEC qualifications from:
a) new entrants to the ECEC workforce;
b) those already in the workforce who were unqualified; and
c) those who wished to progress to higher levels of qualification.



The need to up-skill workers might explain why QQI learners participating in ECEC courses seem to be older than average.



The majority of provision is accounted for by the ETBs. Private and community and voluntary organisations are also involved. This involvement is significant in relation to the level 6 award.



Currently, there are no skill shortages in the ECEC sector (due to demographics); but an aged ECEC workforce, highly gender-skewed and low paid might result in pressure in the medium to long term. Particularly given that there are issues with retaining qualified ECEC personnel in the sector.



This would appear to indicate that the demand for education and training in ECEC at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 will be sustained over the long term.

HISTORIES' OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE QQI FET MAJOR AWARDS IN ECEC AT NFQ LEVELS 5 OR 6

This section reports on a 6-year longitudinal dataset which traces the learning histories of QQI Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) FET award holders, whose learning histories span more than one certification/calendar year. The longitudinal dataset was built utilising the *standardised QQI Certification dataset* of 2014 to 2019.

The purpose is to seek a better understanding of how QQI's 'Common Awards System' (CAS) is being used by learners and whether or not it appears to meet the individual needs of an important cohort of learners in Ireland.

3.1 Background – Getting started and exploring the data

The longitudinal dataset of ECEC FET major award holders (at NFQ Levels 5 and 6), which we will refer to as the **ECEC dataset**, has been developed to support a cohort study of QQI learners, whose learning achievements extended over more than one certification year¹. The certification years included are 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Each learner can be traced across these certification years because the *standardised QQI Certification data*, on which the longitudinal dataset is based, identifies each learner with a unique number based on learner's PPS number (the real PPS numbers are not contained in the dataset used for analysis). The *standardised QQI Certification dataset* is produced by QQI at the end of each year. It provides comprehensive data on QQI awards obtained by: award type, award level, gender, age, fields of learning and provider type. The data is analysed and QQI publishes a report each year². The *dataset* is supplied to the Department of Education; and to the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit in Solas, as part of their work for the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

Building on the information provided by the *standardised QQI Certification dataset*, the ECEC dataset includes learners who have achieved an ECEC major award and have a certification history that spans more than one year. It arranges the learning achievements of ECEC FET awards holders (at NFQ Levels 5 or 6) chronologically by calendar year³. It contains detailed information on their QQI qualifications histories. The variables in the longitudinal dataset include:

- Learner characteristics: age and gender
- Information on QQI awards achieved: year, award code, title, class, NFQ level, field of learning
- Provider information: name, type, code
- Chronology: arranges the completion of QQI awards in order of year of occurrence

1 In FET a certification year is made up of 6 certification periods, February, April, July, September, October and December. i.e. a certification year is equivalent to a calendar year

2 The standardised QQI Certification dataset includes 20 variables which provide data on QQI awards obtained by learners. These are: Year, Anonymised version of learner PPS number, Award Type, Award Level, HET / FET, Award Code, Award Title, FSD Code, Broad Code, Broad Field, Narrow Code, Narrow Field, Detailed Code, Detailed Field, ISCED, Provider Type, Provider Code, Provider Name, Actual Age of Learner in 2014/2015/2016/2017/2018 or 2019 and Gender.

3 The ECEC dataset was generated by completing the following steps:

- the standardised QQI Certification datasets 2014 to 2019 were filtered to identify all learners who achieved a level 5 or 6 QQI ECEC major award in any given year. Results from each year were merged in a single dataset.
- This dataset was then contrasted against each standardised QQI Certification datasets of 2014 to 2019 to trace each observation in any given year by performing 'cartesian joins' clauses. The variable 'Anonymised learner PPS number' was used as the set operator. The cartesian joins returned only those observations which were in both datasets being contrasted; singling out learners with certification histories that spanned more than one certification year.
- The results of the cartesian joins from each year were aligned in a single dataset, based on 6 cross-sectional datasets, (6 time periods or certification years 2014 to 2019). Each observation/learner was indicated by ID and categorised into groups which determine the QQI awards—being the ECEC major award, the reference category (X1), other awards (Y1, Y2 ...) each learned achieved.
- The longitudinal data, with multiple measurements on observations over time (i.e. QQI components achieved) was converted from long to wide format.
- The reference categories and certification years were used to generate the variable chronology relative to each reference category.
- Information on each achievement was provided by the variables: Year, Anonymised version of learner PPS number, Award Type, Award Level, HET / FET, Award Code, Award Title, ISCED, Provider Type, Provider Name, Age and Gender. The software statistical package Tableau was utilised to carry out the data joining and functions for plotting.

Why a longitudinal analysis? – Objective

The ECEC dataset allows us to look at the learning histories of this cohort of learners over a six-year period and speculate on the possible reasons behind their decision to engage in learning processes that spanned over more than one certification year.

We cannot be sure about the intentions behind learners' decision to pursue QQI awards or the manner in which they pursue them.

Methodology and Hypothesis suggested by the longitudinal dataset

The QQI ECEC major awards at levels 5 and 6 comprise eight minor awards or *components* (120 credits in total). The QQI CAS *Specification* provides information on the mandatory along with the elective *components*⁴ required to make up the overall specified credit value of a particular major award. The *CAS Specification* relating to the ECEC major awards is provided below:

Table 3.1 – The QQI CAS Specification of mandatory and elective modules for ECEC awards at level 5 & 6

5M2009 Award – Minor awards (15 credits) at level 5	6M2007 Award – Minor awards (15 credits) at level 6
<p>All of the following component(s) 5N1764 - Child Development 5N1765 - Child Health and Well Being 5N1770 - Early Care and Education Practice 5N1773 - Early Childhood Education and Play</p> <p>A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s) 5N1356 - Work Experience 5N1433 - Work Practice</p> <p>A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s) 5N0690 - Communications 5N0972 - Customer Service 5N1367 – Teamworking 5N1390 - Personal Effectiveness</p> <p>A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s) 5N1279 - Human Growth and Development 5N1370 - Social Studies 5N1394 - Legal Practice and Procedures 5N1763 - Approaches to Early Childhood Education 5N1766 - Childminding Practice 5N1769 - Creative Arts for Early Childhood 5N1775 - Equality and Diversity in Childcare 5N1779 - Infant and Toddler Years 5N1781 - School Age Childcare 5N1786 - Special Needs Assisting 5N2005 - Irish for Preschool Services 5N2006 – Nutrition 5N2396 - Children with Additional Needs</p> <p>The remaining credit value of 15 can be obtained by using vocationally relevant component(s) from level 5. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from either level 4 or level 6. See further information here</p>	<p>All of the following component(s) 6N1942- Child Development 6N1944- Early Childhood Curriculum 6N1945- Childhood Social Legal and Health Studies</p> <p>A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s) 6N1946- Work Experience 6N1947- Work Practice</p> <p>A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s) 6N1948- Team Leadership 6N1949- Personal and Professional Development 6N1950- Communications</p> <p>A minimum credit value of 30 from the following component(s) 6N1932- Early Learning Philosophy 6N1933- Early Learning Environment 6N1935- Early Childhood Literacy and Numeracy 6N1936- Early Childhood Arts and Culture 6N1957- Special Needs Assisting 6N1972- Creative Studies for Special Needs 6N1973- Supervision in Early Childhood Care 6N1974- Equality and Diversity in Childcare 6N1975- Disability Awareness 6N2023- Child Psychology</p> <p>The remaining credit value of 15 can be obtained by using vocationally relevant component(s) from level 6. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from level 5. See further information here</p>

⁴ Component certificates are single modules which can be completed and certificated individually. All minor awards are linked to a major award which enables learners to build on their minor awards and work towards gaining a major award.

In the *QQI CAS system*, part-time programmes stretch the completion of the components (typically 8) over more than one certification year. But components are also achieved independently by learners who are not pursuing a major – e.g. by learners wishing to focus on one specific area to gain a specific skill.

The *standardised QQI Certification dataset* for a given year does not include the *components* that were achieved in that year to qualify for the major award⁵ earned in that year. This suppression of data on components severely limits the usefulness of the *standardised dataset* for analysing qualifications histories.

CHRONOLOGY

The ECEC dataset includes a variable called 'chronology', which arranges the completion of components by the learners included in this dataset in order of occurrence in time, where:

- n is the year in which the ECEC major award was achieved;
- $n-1, n-2, n-3, n-4$ or $n-5$ represent the components completed before the major award in 'n' year;
- $n+1, n+2, n+3, n+4$ or $n+5$ represent the components completed after the major award in 'n' year.
- Where learners achieved the ECEC level 5 major award followed by the level 6, n refers to the year in which the former was achieved. In addition, these learners are identified by a variable that determines the 'year-gap' between the achievement of the level 5 major award and the level 6.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the information provided by learners' chronologies and the *CAS Specifications*, our analysis suggests three hypotheses to explain patterns in the certification histories in the ECEC dataset.

Hypothesis 1 – refers to the possibility that components achieved in $n-1, n-2, n-3, n-4$ or $n-5$ (i.e. before the ECEC major award in year n) which are part of the *CAS Specification* for the relevant major, were completed on a **part-time learning basis**. The aim of completing these components in the years prior to n was toward earning the ECEC major award in year n .

Hypothesis 2 – associates **accumulation of extra credit** with the achievement of components in years $n+1$ to $n+5$ (i.e. after the major), at a lower or equal NFQ level to the major award achieved in year 'n' and not listed in Table 3.1. We assume that the components achieved in years $n+1$ to $n+5$, were either completed with a view to earning a higher NFQ level qualification or to up-skilling. For ECEC level 6 award holders, all components completed after year n are taken to be an **accumulation of extra credit**.

According to Cedefop⁶, 'up-skilling' involves learning new skills or improving skills to: assist learners in their current careers (i.e. for promotion); or due to the introduction of new regulations. Accumulation of extra credits is assumed to be associated with up-skilling. Achieving a level 6 ECEC major following the achievement of a level 5 ECEC major is also regarded as up-skilling.

Hypothesis 3 – a proxy for **re-skilling** is the completion of a QQI major award in another field after year n , i.e. after the ECEC major award, and in unrelated or not in the 'Health and Welfare'/'Education' fields of learning. According to

⁵ The high quality of the standardised QQI Certification dataset facilitated the creation of the longitudinal dataset of QQI ECEC award holders. However, given the characteristics of this longitudinal study, there is a limitation in the dataset: where a major award is achieved in a single calendar year, the dataset lists the outcome but does not break down information into the specific 8 minor awards / modules that made up the overall credit value of the major award. Where a learner takes more than one year to complete a major award, the modules completed in previous years will be recorded individually but not the rest of the modules that make up the final credit value, as the standardised QQI Certification dataset only records the overall result of that year, i.e. the major award. Therefore, as the later components are not individually specified, we cannot be sure which components were not completed by learners for this purpose.

⁶ Cedefop (2014): 'Terminology of European education and training policy'. 2nd ed. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Available at: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4117_en.pdf

Cedefop, by 're-skilling' is understood as the process of learning new skills in order to change jobs or careers. This can provide an indication of the level of retention of qualified staff in a particular industry.

Other components achieved by learners included in the longitudinal dataset, which do not meet any of the conditions described within these hypotheses, are termed '**other post-award achievements**'.

3.2 Overview – who is in the ECEC dataset?

The ECEC dataset contains 4,865 learners: i.e. between 2014 and 2019, there were 4,865 learners who achieved the QQI ECEC awards at NFQ Levels 5 or 6 and with certification histories extending beyond one year.

The longitudinal analysis of these learners and their QQI qualifications histories reveals two main group of learners:

GROUP 1 – includes learners who achieved an ECEC major at NFQ Levels 5 or 6, and who were part-time learners (Hypothesis 1) or 'accumulated extra credits' (Hypothesis 2).

GROUP 2 – includes learners who achieved an ECEC major at NFQ Levels 5 or 6 and another QQI major award in a different field (Hypothesis 3).

Table 3.2.1 below presents the two groups of learners and the QQI major award/s they achieved. It shows that 87% of the learners contained in the longitudinal dataset are part of Group 1.

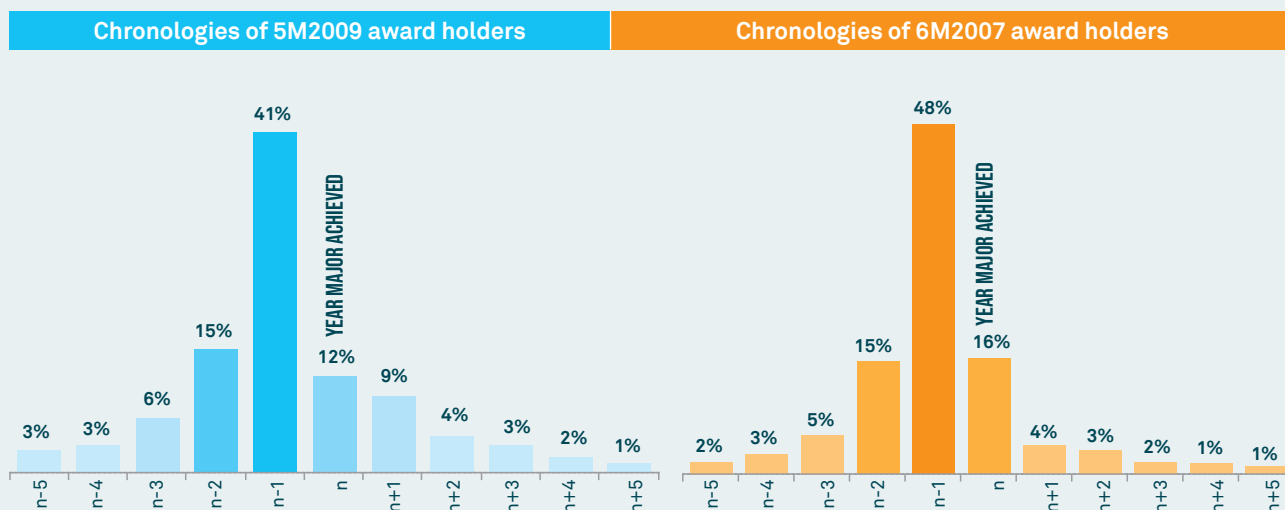
Table 3.2.1 - Identification of long-term QQI ECEC learners at levels 5 & 6, contained in the longitudinal dataset

MAIN GROUPS Long-term learners	Includes learners who achieved:	No. of learners	Prop. (%)	Av. age
GROUP 1:	Only the ECEC major award at level 5 (5M2009)	1,951	69%	36
	Only the ECEC major award at level 6 (6M2007)	1,401		35
	Both ECEC major awards	866	18%	35
GROUP 2:	Either 5M2009 or 6M2007 + other QQI Major/s	647	13%	34
	Both 5M2009 and 6M2007 + other QQI Major/s			
	TOTAL	4,865	-	-

3.3 GROUP 1 Qualifications histories

Figure 3.3 below presents the Group 1 QQI qualifications histories. It shows that most of QQI components were achieved between years $n-1$ and $n-2$, suggesting part-time learning according to Hypothesis 1 (see also Figure 3.3.2 for further information).

Figure 3.3: Chronologies of long-term learning by QQI award holders of either 5M2009 or 6M2007



*Caption: each bar represents % of total number of components achieved for each chronology by long-term learners who achieved either the level 5 or level 6 ECEC major award between 2014-2019. Colour scheme compares the categorical data in a continuous array of colour relative to value magnitude: from highest, darker tones, to lowest, lighter tones

Based on the chronology of the completion of components presented by Figure 3.3, this section is organised as followed:

- Section 3.3.1 analyses the components achieved before the ECEC major award.
- Section 3.3.2 analyses the components achieved after the ECEC major award.
- Section 3.3.3 analyses the qualifications histories of learners who achieved both ECEC Majors.
- Section 3.3.4 explores mobility between types of provider.

3.3.1 Analysis of the components achieved before the ECEC major award

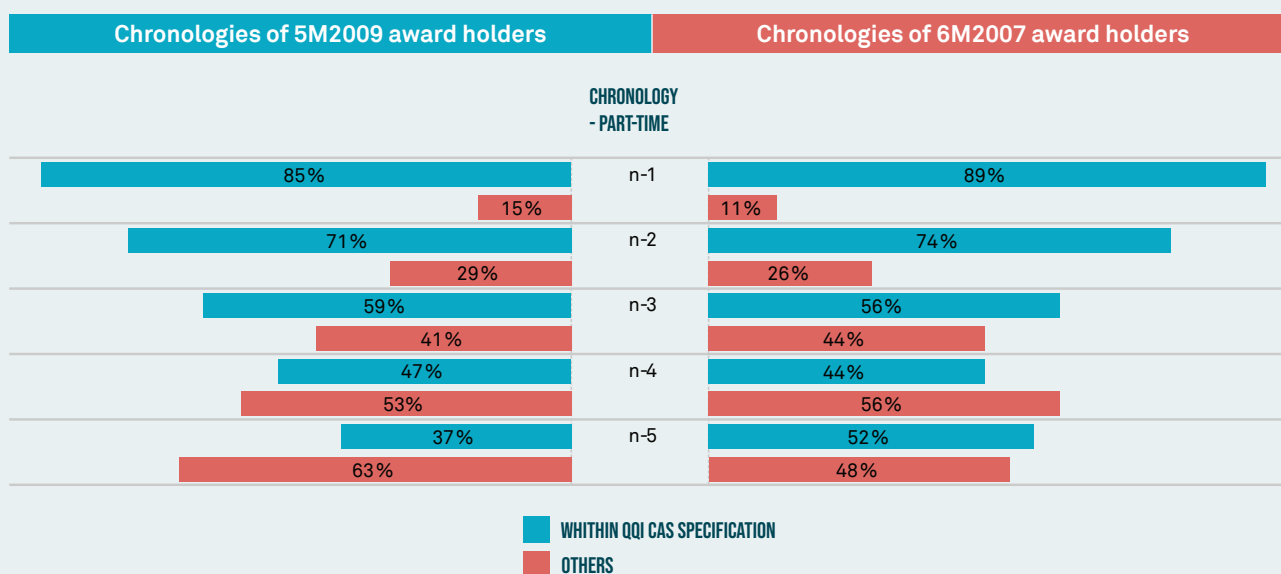
This section looks at the patterns in the chronologies of the components achieved before an ECEC major award. It suggests insights into 'part-time' learning patterns (Hypothesis 1).

Figure 3.3 above shows that:

- For those who achieve the level 5 ECEC major award (5M2009): **56%** of all components were achieved in years $n-2$ to n with 41% in year $n-1$. This suggests most part-time learners took 2 to 3 years to complete a level 5 major ECEC award.
- Figure 3.3.1 illustrates the proportion of components achieved before n that were part of the 5M2009 CAS *specification*. It shows that the majority of components achieved between $n-1$ and $n-2$ were part of the CAS *Specification* for award 5M2009; suggesting that most part-time learners achieved the ECEC level 5 major within 3 years.
- For learners who earned the level 6 ECEC major award (6M2007): **63%** of all components were achieved in years $n-2$ to n with 48% in year $n-1$. This suggests most part-time learners took 2 to 3 years to complete a level 6 major ECEC award.

- Figure 3.3.1 below shows that the majority of components achieved between $n-1$ and $n-2$ by this group of learners were part of the CAS Specification for award 6M2009. It suggests most part-time learners achieved the ECEC level 6 major within 3 years.

Figure 3.3.1 – Components achieved between $n-5$ and $n-1$: Proportion QQI CAS Specification against 'other'



3.3.2 Analysis of the components achieved after the ECEC major award

This section looks at the patterns in the chronologies of the components achieved after an ECEC major award. It provides information on learners' engagement in 'up-skilling' processes.

Figure 3.3. above shows that:

- 19% of all recorded components achieved by 5M2009 award holders were completed after the major award.
- Table 3.3.2 below shows the numbers of components associated respectively with **accumulation of extra credits** and with **accumulation of credit towards 6M2007**. Based on Hypothesis 2 these data suggest that 23% of learners in the ECEC dataset who achieved a level 5 ECEC major award engaged up-skilling. These learners accumulated in total 772 components, an average of two components each.
- 11% of all components achieved by 6M2007 award holders were completed after the ECEC major award, most of which were completed within two years of completing the major award (i.e. by year $n+2$). Based on Hypothesis 2 these data suggest that 30% engaged in further learning with a view to up-skilling. They accumulated a total of 689 components, an average of 1.6 components each.

3. THE 'QQI QUALIFICATIONS HISTORIES' OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE QQI FET MAJOR AWARDS IN ECEC AT NFQ LEVELS 5 OR 6 [CONTINUED]

Table 3.3.2 – Patterns on how QQI ECEC learners accumulated components

		No. of learners	% of Total	No. of awards accumulated	Av. component certificate accumulated
5M2009 award holders	Towards achieving 6M2007	446	23%	1,275	3 awards (part-time)
	Accumulation of extra credit	447	23%	772	2 awards
6M2007 award holders	Accumulation of extra credit	424	30%	689	1.6 awards

Figure 3.3.2 below presents the most popular QQI components achieved by 5M2009 and 6M2007 award holders and categorised as having been **accumulated as extra credit** (it excludes components that were completed by fewer than six learners). All the components seem to be vocationally relevant to the ECEC industry (e.g. Occupational First Aid is a legal requirement for those working in the industry). This suggests that the CAS components are helping to support the up-skilling requirements of this cohort of QQI learners and the needs of the industry.

Figure 3.3.2 – Most popular QQI components ‘accumulated as extra credits’ by QQI ECEC major award holders at NFQ Levels 5 and 6

What 5M2009 award holders accumulated as extra credits				What 6M2007 award holders accumulated as extra credits			
AWARD TITLE	AWARD CODE			AWARD TITLE	AWARD CODE		
Occupational First Aid	5N1207	132		Occupational First Aid	5N1207	153	
Special Needs Assisting	5N1786	55		Special Needs Assisting	6N1957	101	
Care of the Older Person	5N2706	39			5N1786	28	
Care Skills	5N2770	35		Children with Additional Needs	5N2396	16	
Word Processing	5N1358	9		Training Delivery and Evaluation	6N3326	16	
	3N0588	8		Care of the Older Person	5N2706	15	
	4N1123	7		Care Skills	5N2770	15	
Safety and Health at Work	5N1794	20		Payroll Manual and Computerised	5N1546	14	
Payroll Manual and Computerised	5N1546	19		Reception and Frontline Office Skills	5N1407	14	
Bookkeeping Manual and Computerised	5N1354	19		Training and Development	6S3372	12	
Customer Service	5N0972	18		Bookkeeping Manual and Computeri..	5N1354	10	
Information Technology Skills	4N1125	15		Word Processing	5N1358	8	
Reception and Frontline Office Skills	5N1407	13		Safety and Health at Work	5N1794	8	
Work Experience	5N1356	13		Therapeutic Play Skills	6N4705	8	
Handling Food Hygienically	4N1119	13		Intellectual Disability Studies	5N1652	7	
Infection Prevention and Control	5N3734	11		Care Support	5N0758	6	
Health and Safety Awareness	3N0532	11		Infection Prevention and Control	5N3734	6	
Computer Applications	4N1112	10					
Children with Additional Needs	5N2396	10					
Intellectual Disability Studies	5N1652	9					
Care Support	5N0758	9					
Human Growth and Development	5N1279	8					
Communications	5N0690	8					
Teamworking	5N1367	7					
School Age Childcare	5N1781	7					
Palliative Care Support	5N3769	7					
Business Administration Skills	5N1610	7					
Spreadsheets Methods	4N1120	6					
Computer Literacy	3N0881	6					

The chronologies presented in Figure 3.3 above indicate that a large proportion of components were achieved in n year (i.e. the same year the major award is achieved).

There are several factors which may explain the large proportion of components reported in the ECEC dataset in year n :

1. If a major award was requested by a particular provider but a constituent component was achieved with a different provider in the same calendar year, the dataset provides information on both at the end of the year (i.e. the component certificate is recorded within the major year and individually in n year).
2. Some providers offer programmes leading to QQI ECEC major awards that include more than the 8 components required by the *CAS Specification*, in some cases 9 or 10.
3. Some learners, unaware of their full learning history and/or the qualification requirements, complete more components than those required.
4. Some learners sit the same component certificate twice in order to improve grades.

Points 2 and 3 can be regarded as a case of '**excess credits of qualification requirements**'. A McKinsey report in 2010 pointed out that although *excess crediting may give students extra educational benefit, it adds to the cost of a qualification and so diminishes qualification productivity*⁷. The need for initiatives that guide and track learners to prevent possibly redundant efforts (Point 3) may benefit from further analysis.

3.3.3 The chronologies and qualifications histories of learners who achieved both the level 5 and 6 QQI ECEC major awards

The qualifications histories of learners who achieved the level 5 followed by the level 6 ECEC major award is presented by Figure 3.3.3 below.

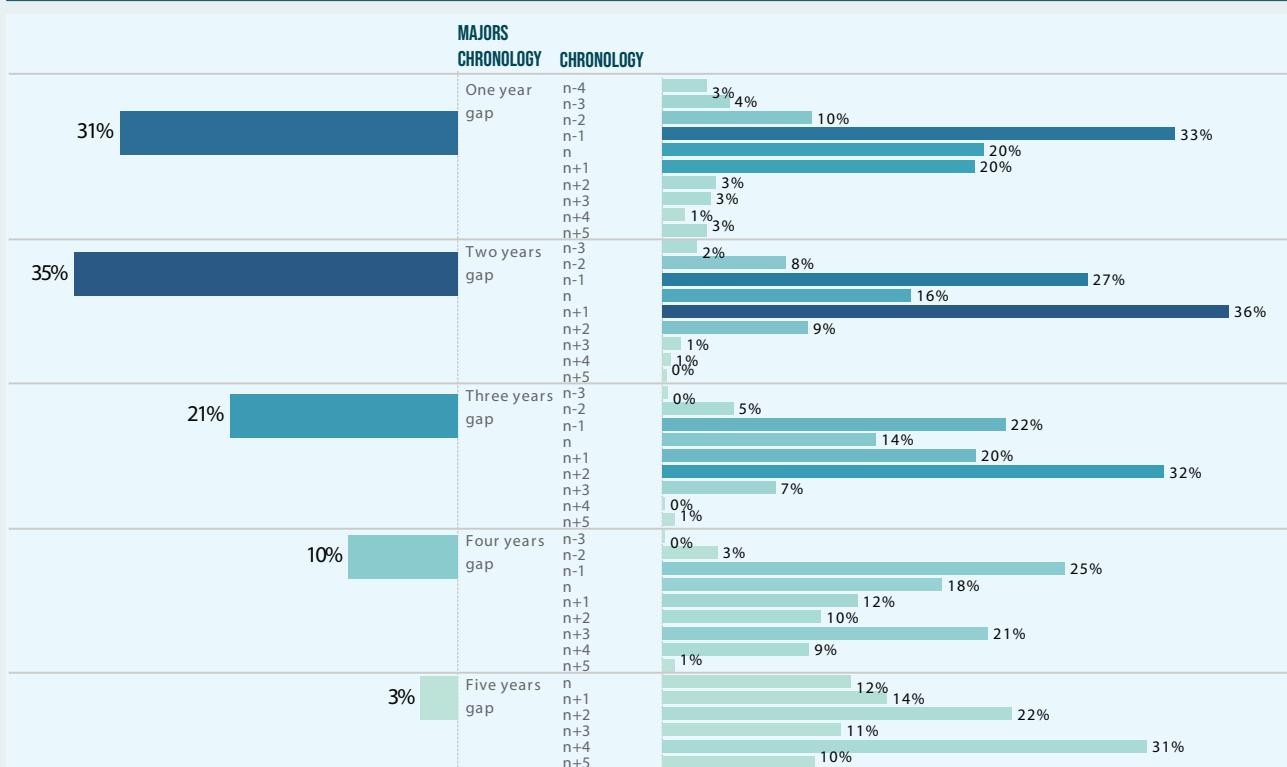
- The 'gap' in years between achieving the ECEC level 5 major award and the level 6 major is indicated the left centre column.
- The bars on the left hand-side indicate the percentage with the relevant gap. For a one 'year-gap', the level 6 major award was completed in year $n+1$; for a two-year gap' the level 6 major award was completed in year $n+2$; and so on.
- Year n is the year in which the level 5 ECEC major award was completed. The chronology relative to year n is indicated by the centre right column.
- The bars on the right indicate the completion of components by year relative to year n .

Figure 3.3.3 also shows that:

- More than a third of this cohort of learners (35%) took a two-year gap between achieving the level 5 and level 6 major awards. The analysis of components suggests that these learners took five calendar years to complete both major awards (between $n-2$ and $n+2$).
- 31% achieved the ECEC level 6 major award one year after the level 5, i.e. the following year. However, these learners seem to build their qualifications histories between $n-2$ and $n+1$, i.e. they took four calendar years to achieve both QQI major awards.

⁷ A McKinsey report in 2010 found that 14 percent of the credits earned by degree completers are over the threshold required by their degree. The report notes that 'such "excess crediting" may constitute up to 10 percent of total credits taken by all students. Failed credits and credits from which students withdraw constitute another 7 percent. Although excess crediting may give students extra educational benefit, it adds to the cost of a degree and so diminishes degree productivity. The latter can be improved by 4 percent to 26 percent by initiatives to prevent such redundant efforts. Measures include better developmental education and tutoring, policies for tracking and intervening to support student progress and completion, transfer policies that conserve credits, and innovative delivery methods'. <https://aascu.org/corporatepartnership/McKinseyReport.pdf>

Figure 3.3.3: Chronologies of long-term learning by QQI award holders of both 5M2009 and 6M2007



*Caption: bars on the left hand-side represent % of total number of learners who achieved the level 5 followed by the level 6 QQI ECEC major award for each 'year-gap' -i.e. number of years between achieving the level 5 and level 6 ECEC major award. Bars on the right hand-side represent % of total number of components achieved by this group of learners according to variable 'year-gap' and year *n* -i.e. year in which the level 5 ECEC major award was achieved-. Colour scheme compares the categorical data in a continuous array of colour relative to value magnitude: from highest, darker tones, to lowest, lighter tones

3.3.4 – Learning mobility between QQI types of provider

The longitudinal analysis of QQI ECEC long-term learners permits an analysis of the learning mobility utilised by these learners between QQI types of provider. In the context of the CAS, this is important because CAS has imposed many constraints on the development of programmes to facilitate mobility. If the mobility is not being availed of then we can consider relaxing those constraints bringing other advantages to learners and providers.

As stated in section 2.2, programmes leading to QQI ECEC major awards at levels 5 (5M2009) and 6 (6M2007) are offered by five types of provider registered with QQI: Community / Comprehensive School (CMS); Community / Voluntary Sector Organisation (CVS); Education and Training Board (ETB); Private Provider (PRC); and Voluntary Secondary School (SCS).

Figures 3.3.4a and 3.3.4b below present the mobility between types of provider exercised by long-term learners included in Group 1 (i.e. those who achieved either the ECEC major award at level 5 or 6, or both). The Figures examine this mobility by analysing the proportion of components achieved in years *n-5* to *n-1* and in years *n+1* to *n+5* that were completed in the same or a different type of provider as per the major award in year *n*. The analysis focuses only on: i) part-time learning; ii) 'accumulation of extra credits'. Data is presented in percentages and actual numbers to account for different numbers certified for each type.

Figure 3.3.4a shows that:

- **On average 75%** of all components achieved by ECEC level 5 major award holders as **part-time learning** (in years *n-5* and *n-1*) were achieved in the same type of provider as where the major award was issued.
- In relation to components achieved by ECEC level 6 major award holders on a part-time basis, data shows that **on average 86%** (between *n-5* and *n-1*) were achieved in the same type of provider as where the major award was issued.
- An exception to these trends where same type of provider is attended is the completion on a part-time basis of an ECEC major award in a PRC-type provider utilising components achieved previously in an ETB.

Figure 3.3.4a - Learning mobility between QQI types of provider – Part-time learners who achieved either the level 5 or the level 6 award (components were achieved before the ECEC major award)

QQI ECEC major award at level 5 (5M2009)

Provider Type where ECEC major award was achieved	Provider Type where components were achieved				
	CMS	CVS	ETB	PRC	SCS
CMS	88%		11%	1%	
CVS		82%	17%	1%	
ETB	0%	3%	95%	1%	0%
PRC	1%	9%	56%	34%	
SCS	3%	6%	17%		75%

ECEC major award at level 6 (6M2007)

Provider Type where ECEC major award was achieved	Provider Type where components were achieved				
	CMS	CVS	ETB	PRC	SCS
CMS	76%		22%	2%	
CVS	0%	94%	3%	3%	
ETB	0%	3%	95%	2%	
PRC	1%	4%	19%	76%	
SCS		2%	2%	7%	90%

*Caption: % of total number of records is broken down by QQI provider type where components were achieved vs. where ECEC major award was achieved. % are relative to each type pf provider represented by rows. Colour shows % of total number of records

Table 3.3.4a - Learning mobility between QQI types of provider – Part-time learners who achieved either the level 5 or the level 6 award (components were achieved before the ECEC major award)

Actual numbers - QQI ECEC major award at level 5 (5M2009)

Provider Type where ECEC major award was achieved	Provider Type where components were achieved				
	CMS	CVS	ETB	PRC	SCS
CMS	72		9	≤5	
CVS		666	138	12	
ETB	13	132	3789	53	15
PRC	6	40	259	158	
SCS	≤5	≤5	6		27

Actuals number - QQI ECEC major award at level 6 (6M2007)

Provider Type where ECEC major award was achieved	Provider Type where components were achieved				
	CMS	CVS	ETB	PRC	SCS
CMS	91		26	≤5	
CVS	≤5	577	20	16	
ETB	≤5	52	1768	33	
PRC	≤5	36	184	728	
SCS		≤5	≤5	≤5	55

Figure 3.3.4b below shows the patterns pertaining to the 'accumulation of extra credit' by learners in the ECEC dataset. It indicates that:

- **On average 54%** of all components 'accumulated as extra credit' by level 5 ECEC major award holders were completed in the same type of provider as where the major award was issued.
- **On average 33%** of all components 'accumulated as extra credit' by level 6 ECEC major award holders were achieved in the same type of provider as where the major award was issued. The offer of provider type PRC was often utilised to fulfil this purpose.

This suggests that a large proportion of ECEC award holders utilised the offer of different types of provider to fulfil their up-skilling requirements.

Figure 3.3.4b - Learning mobility between types of provider – accumulation of extra credits by learners who achieved either the level 5 or the level 6 award (components were achieved after the ECEC major award)

ECEC major award at level 5 (5M2009)

Provider Type where ECEC major award was achieved	Provider Type where components were achieved				
	CMS	CVS	ETB	PRC	SCS
CMS	23%	10%	50%	17%	
CVS		58%	36%	5%	1%
ETB	2%	9%	77%	11%	1%
PRC		12%	34%	54%	
SCS		5%	14%	24%	57%

ECEC major award at level 6 (6M2007)

Provider Type where ECEC major award was achieved	Provider Type where components were achieved						
	CMS	CVS	ETB	HEI	IOT	PRC	SCS
CMS			35%			65%	
CVS		35%	25%	2%		37%	
ETB	1%	7%	50%	1%	3%	39%	
PRC	1%	6%	28%	1%		64%	
SCS		5%	16%			63%	16%

Table 3.3.4b - Learning mobility between types of provider – accumulation of extra credits by learners who achieved either the level 5 or the level 6 award (components were achieved after the ECEC major award)

Actual numbers – QQI ECEC major award at level 5 (5M2009)

Provider Type where ECEC major award was achieved	Provider Type where components were achieved				
	CMS	CVS	ETB	PRC	SCS
CMS	7	≤5	15	≤5	
CVS		87	54	7	≤5
ETB	15	89	767	114	14
PRC		9	26	41	
SCS		≤5	≤5	≤5	12

Actual numbers – QQI ECEC major award at level 6 (6M2007)

Provider Type where ECEC major award was achieved	Provider Type where components were achieved						
	CMS	CVS	ETB	HEI	IOT	PRC	SCS
CMS			6			11	
CVS		29	21	≤5		31	
ETB	≤5	29	201	≤5	10	155	
PRC	≤5	10	48	≤5		110	
SCS		≤5	≤5			12	≤5

Figure 3.3.4c presents learning mobility to achieve ECEC majors among learners who completed both the QQI levels 5 and 6 ECEC major awards, by type of provider. It shows that:

- **On average 54%** of the learners who achieved the ECEC major award at level 5 followed by the level 6 award attended the same type of provider to do so.
- **On average 65%** of learners who attended an ETB to complete the level 5 ECEC major award 'transitioned' to CMS or PRC to earn the level 6 major award.

Figure 3.3.4c - Learning mobility between types of provider – learners who achieved both ECEC major awards

Provider Type where 6M2007 was achieved	Provider Type where 5M2009 was achieved				
	CMS	CVS	ETB	PRC	SCS
CMS	29%	4%	67%		
CVS	1%	63%	32%	3%	
ETB	1%	5%	91%	3%	0%
PRC	1%	11%	63%	24%	1%
SCS		7%	36%		57%

Table 3.3.4c - Learning mobility between types of provider – learners who achieved both ECEC major awards

Provider Type where 6M2007 was achieved	Provider Type where 5M2009 was achieved				
	CMS	CVS	ETB	PRC	SCS
CMS	7	≤5	16		
CVS	≤5	45	23	≤5	
ETB	≤5	27	502	17	≤5
PRC	≤5	22	121	46	≤5
SCS		≤5	10		16

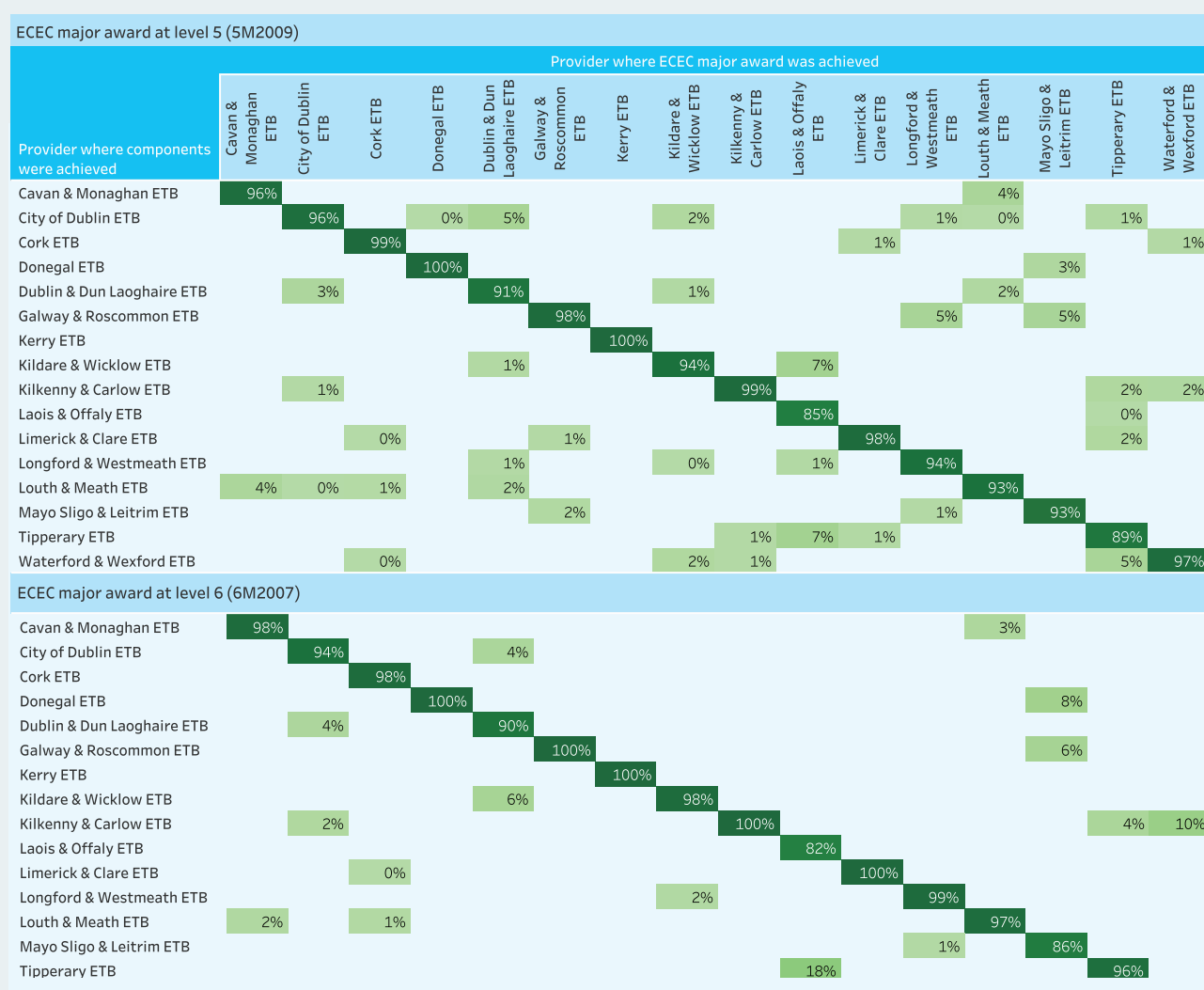
Figures 3.3.5 to 3.3.7 present information pertaining to learning mobility of the cohort of learners included in the longitudinal dataset who earned the ECEC major award attending an ETB. There are 16 ETBs, namely: Cavan &

3. THE 'QQI QUALIFICATIONS HISTORIES' OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE QQI FET MAJOR AWARDS IN ECEC AT NFQ LEVELS 5 OR 6 [CONTINUED]

Monaghan ETB, City of Dublin ETB, Cork ETB, Donegal ETB, Dublin & Dun Laoghaire ETB, Galway & Roscommon ETB, Kerry ETB, Kildare & Wicklow ETB, Kilkenny & Carlow ETB, Laois & Offaly ETB, Limerick & Clare ETB, Longford & Westmeath ETB, Louth & Meath ETB, Mayo Sligo & Leitrim ETB, Tipperary ETB, Waterford & Wexford ETB.

Figures show that learning mobility utilising the offer of different ETBs was rare among learners. Some level of learning mobility is observed among those ETBs which are geographically proximal.

Figure 3.3.5 Learning mobility – part-time learners who completed either level 5 or 6 ECEC major award (components were achieved before the ECEC major) in an ETB



3.4 GROUP 2 Qualifications histories

This section looks at the group of learners included in the ECEC dataset who achieved an ECEC major award (either at level 5 or 6, or both) and a QQI major award in another field.

Table 3.4 below shows the combination of QQI major awards completed by these Group 2 learners, indicating that three quarters earned two QQI major awards. It shows that most learners achieved one QQI major award in addition to either the level 5 or 6 ECEC major award.

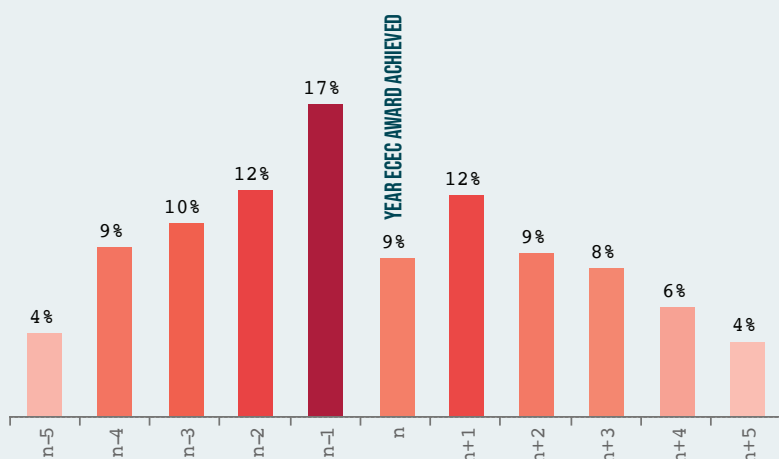
Table 3.4. Number of learners included in Group 2 and QQI major awards achieved

Number of QQI major awards achieved	What was achieved?	No. of learners	Prop. (%)
Two	Either the ECEC major award at level 5 (5M2009) or 6 (6M2007) + another QQI major award	480	74%
Three	Either 5M2009 or 6M2007 + two other QQI majors	67	25%
	Both 5M2009 and 6M2007 + another QQI major	98	
	Total	165	
Five	Both 5M2009 and 6M2007 + three other QQI majors	≤5	-

Figure 3.4 below presents the QQI qualifications histories of this group of long-term learners. As in previous section, year n refers to the year in which the ECEC major award was completed and the achievement of other QQI major awards are chronologically depicted with reference to year n , where:

- n is the year in which the ECEC major award was achieved;
- $n-1, n-2, n-3, n-4$ or $n-5$ represent the non-ECEC major awards achieved before the ECEC major award in n year;
- $n+1, n+2, n+3, n+4$ or $n+5$ represent the non-ECEC major awards achieved after the ECEC major award in 'n' year;
- Where learners achieved the ECEC level 5 major award followed by the level 6, n refers to the year in which the former was achieved.

Figure 3.4: Chronologies of long-term learning by QQI award holders of 5M2009/6M2007 and other QQI major awards



*Caption: each bar represents % of total number of QQI non-ECEC major awards achieved for each chronology by Group 2 learners. Colour scheme compares the categorical data in a continuous array of colour relative to value magnitude: from highest, darker tones, to lowest, lighter tones

The chronology of this group of learners shows that:

- **52%** of the non- ECEC QQI major awards achieved by this group of learners were completed before the ECEC major awards (i.e. between $n-5$ and $n-1$); and
- **39%** of the non- ECEC QQI major awards were achieved 'after' the ECEC major awards (i.e. between $n+1$ and $n+5$).
- **9%** were achieved the same year as the ECEC major award.

The following analysis of this group of learners focuses only on the non-ECEC major awards achieved between $n+1$ and $n+5$. The primary purpose of this analysis is to acquire data on the proportion of learners who engaged in re-skilling processes. The analysis is based on the assumption that a proxy for re-skilling is the completion of QQI major awards after the ECEC major award was achieved, in an unrelated (ISCED) industry.

Table 3.4.1 below provides information on the number of non-ECEC QQI major awards achieved on years $n+1$ to $n+5$ by this group of learners, showing the proportion of these awards were in the 'Health & Welfare' / 'Education' fields of learning and otherwise.

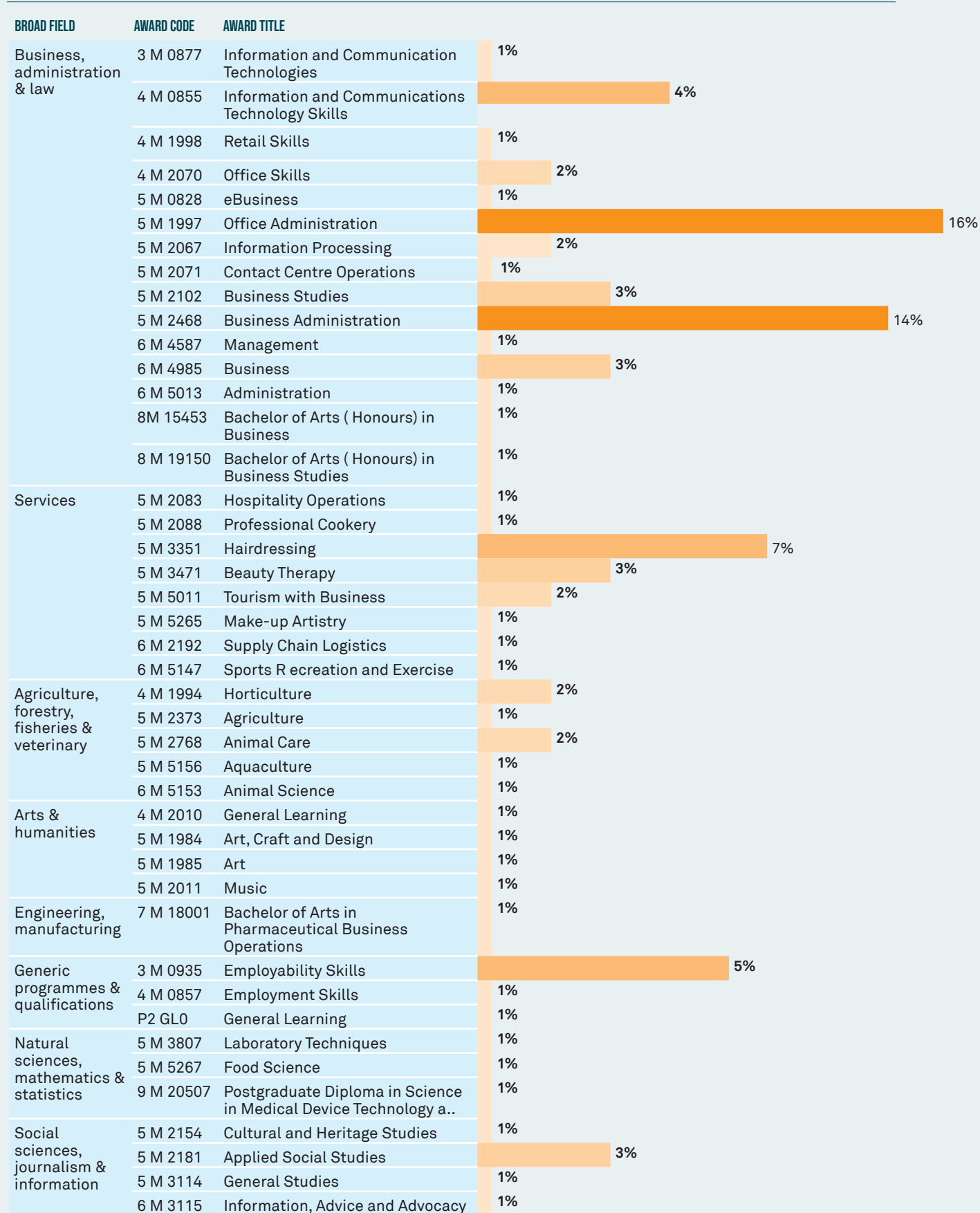
Table 3.4.1 Number of QQI major awards achieved after the ECEC major award

QQI major awards achieved by Group 2 in the 'Health & Welfare' and 'Education' fields of learning	171	64%
QQI major awards achieved by Group 2 in an unrelated field of learning	96	36%
TOTAL	267	100%

It shows that **36%** of these major awards were achieved in an unrelated field of learning. Figure 3.4.1 below presents these QQI major awards, showing that the majority were made in the 'Business, Administration & Law' and 'Services' fields of learning.

3. THE 'QQI QUALIFICATIONS HISTORIES' OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE QQI FET MAJOR AWARDS IN ECEC AT NFQ LEVELS 5 OR 6 [CONTINUED]

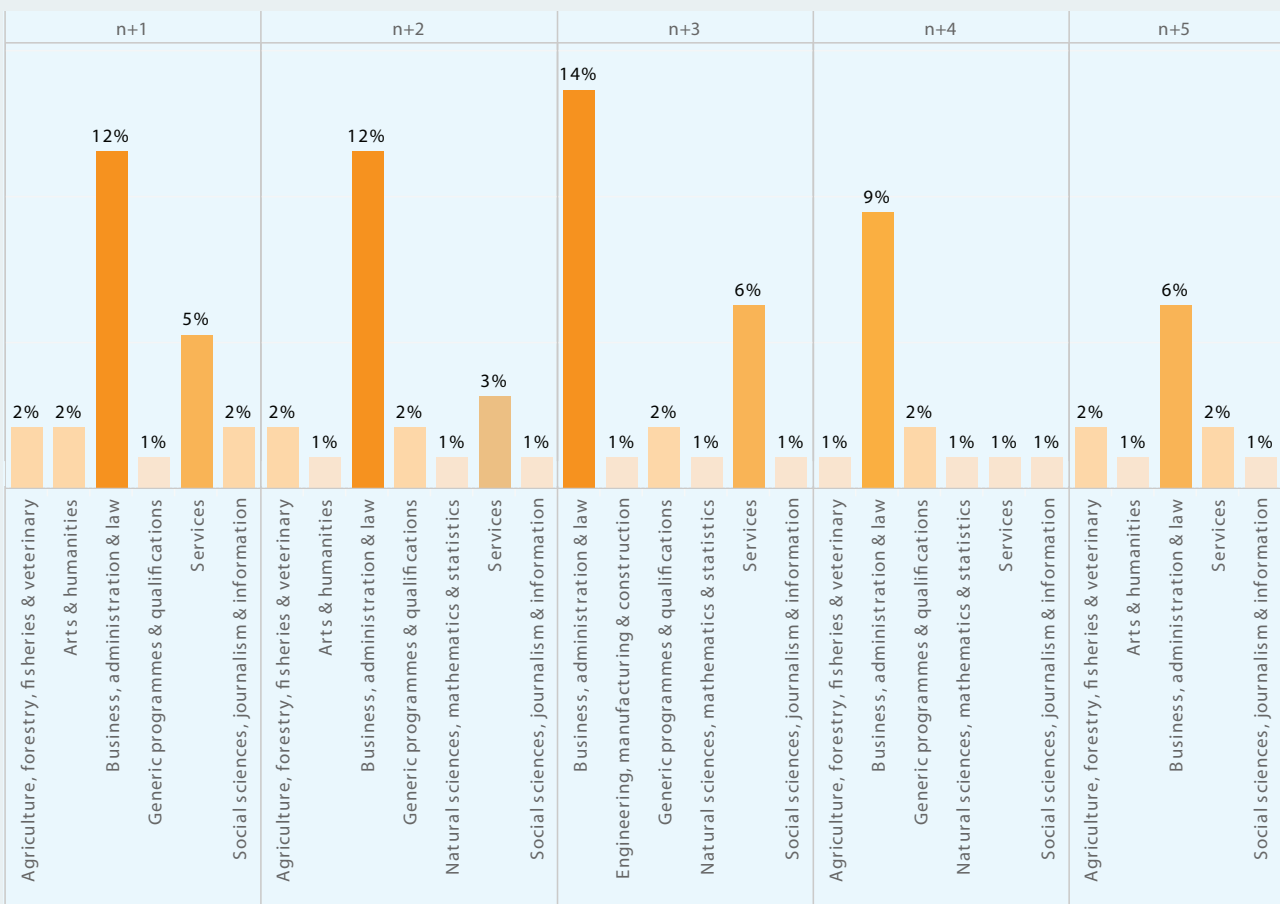
Figure 3.4.1 QQI major awards achieved after the ECEC major award in an unrelated field of learning



3. THE 'QQI QUALIFICATIONS HISTORIES' OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE QQI FET MAJOR AWARDS IN ECEC AT NFQ LEVELS 5 OR 6 [CONTINUED]

Figure 3.4.2 below shows that when only the non-ECEC QQI major awards achieved after year n in an unrelated field of learning are tallied chronologically, the year n+3 is the most frequent:

Figure 3.4.2 QQI major awards achieved in an unrelated field of learning after an ECEC major award



3.5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

Some of the most interesting findings are listed below. We highlight areas that may benefit from further analysis. We found that:



On average in each certification year 20% of QQI FET learners who qualified in the ECEC sector with a major award engaged in long-term learning.



A large proportion of these long-term learners obtained their qualifications on a part-time basis.



Most part-time learners took between 2 to 3 years to complete an ECEC major award



Many learners who completed both the level 5 and level 6 ECEC major awards took five years to finalise their qualification history.



Almost one in three QQI ECEC long-term learners engaged in post major award learning leading to QQI FET qualifications that suggest up-skilling. On average, these learners achieve two QQI components (QQI minor awards).



By and large, ECEC part-time learners attended the same provider to complete the different phases of their learning process. However, the data suggest that for the purpose of up-skilling, learners were more likely than part-time learners to utilise different providers.



Where learners attended ETBs, most continued their association with that institution for the remainder of their qualifications histories within the ECEC dataset. Some level of learning mobility is observed among geographically proximal ETBs.



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