



**TREATY SERIES 2007**  
**Nº 9**

**Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Higher Education  
Qualifications between the Government of Ireland and the  
Government of The People's Republic of China**

**Done at Beijing on 23 February 2006**

**Entered into force with respect to Ireland  
on 23 May 2006**

**Presented to Dáil Éireann by the Minister for Foreign Affairs**

# **AGREEMENT ON MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

*The Agreement on Educational Co-operation between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China signed on 19 February 2001*

*RECOGNISES the benefit of establishing mechanisms for mutual recognition of academic degrees and other qualifications in order to promote co-operation in education and to improve student and professional mobility between Ireland and China.*

*The Government of Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China, hereinafter referred to as both sides,*

## **AGREE THE FOLLOWING**

### **I**

#### **The Objectives of this Agreement**

1. This Agreement aims to facilitate the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications awarded to students in Ireland and in China by their higher education awarding bodies. The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (MoE) and the Department for Education and Science (DES) of Ireland will each designate an appropriate body to provide information on recognition and to make concrete recommendations in accordance with their current regulations and practices.
2. Both designated bodies should advise higher education institutions in their countries on the provision of higher education and the comparability of qualifications from both systems with the aim of facilitating academic mobility and co-operation.
3. Recognising the important and continuing changes to higher education institutions in China in recent years, the Irish designated body, in conjunction with the designated body in China, will make available in Ireland information on currently recognised higher education institutions in China.
4. Recognising the unique structure of higher education institutions and awarding bodies in Ireland, the designated body in China, in conjunction with the Irish designated body, will make available in China information on currently recognised Irish higher education institutions and awarding bodies.

### **II**

#### **Application Profile**

1. This Agreement relates to all the higher education institutions with degree or diploma awarding powers currently recognised by the Government of China, and all Irish higher education institutions and awarding bodies currently recognised

by the Government of Ireland. The term “higher education institutions” in China refer to the universities, colleges and research organisations which are approved by the relevant degree and education administrative authorities to award degrees or higher diploma.

2. Both designated bodies will inform each other through diplomatic channels of the latest list of recognised institutions, organisations and awarding bodies, and provide information on different award titles which are recognised on both sides.
3. Both Governments respect the autonomy of higher education institutions in Ireland and higher education institutions in China for admission to higher education programmes in accordance with any relevant regulations.

### III

#### Range and Levels of Qualifications of Higher Education

1. The recommendations of designated bodies are given as advice on the comparability of academic degree and other higher education qualifications from both sides based on comparative studies of relevant academic material in China and in Ireland.
2. A summary of China’s Academic Qualifications Frameworks is attached at annex 1.
3. A summary of the higher education qualifications in Ireland’s National Framework of Qualifications is attached at annex 2.
4. Both sides encourage and support the higher education institutions and awarding bodies in Ireland and higher education institutions in China to co-operate on the recognition of course credits in order to facilitate mobility of students in both directions.

### IV

#### Entry to Study in Higher Education Institutions

1. Holders of intermediate higher education qualifications (Zhuan Ke) from recognised Chinese higher education institutions should be considered eligible to enter into programmes leading to Honours Bachelor Degrees in Ireland in a manner paralleling their entry into programmes leading to Bachelor Degrees in China, subject to the specific requirements of the admitting institution, including the manner in which their programmes are organised.
2. Holders of Bachelor degrees from recognised Chinese higher education institutions should be considered eligible to enter postgraduate and/or professional studies in Ireland subject to specific requirements determined by the admitting institution.
3. Those Chinese Bachelor degree holders who have achieved outstanding results and completed excellent research work/dissertations should be considered for

admission onto further studies leading to doctorate degrees, subject to the specific requirements of the admitting institution.

4. Holders of Masters degrees from recognised Chinese higher education institutions should be considered eligible to pursue doctorate studies in Ireland subject to the relevance of previous studies and the proposed research and the specific requirements of the admitting institution.
5. Holders of Higher Certificates and Ordinary Bachelor Degrees (or equivalents) from recognised Irish awarding bodies should be considered eligible to enter into programmes leading to Bachelor Degrees in China in a manner paralleling their entry into programmes leading to Honours Bachelor degrees in Ireland, subject to the specific requirements of the admitting institution, including the manner in which their programmes are organised.
6. Holders of Honours Bachelor Degrees from recognised Irish awarding bodies with excellent academic results should be permitted to participate in the Entrance Examination for Doctor Programmes in the People's Republic of China in accordance with the regulations concerning doctorate degrees in higher education institutions.
7. Holders of Masters degrees from recognised Irish awarding bodies should be considered eligible to enter doctorate programmes in relevant subjects in the People's Republic of China.
8. Students of Chinese higher education institutions who have successfully completed defined elements of higher education programmes in China shall be eligible for appropriate credits in respect of their entry into cognitive programmes in Irish higher education institutions with the purpose of continuing their study, subject to the specific requirements of the admitting institution, including the manner in which their programmes are organised.
9. Students of Irish higher education institutions who have successfully complete defined elements of higher education programmes in Ireland shall be eligible for appropriate credits in respect of their entry into cognitive programmes in Chinese higher education institutions with the purpose of continuing their study, subject to the specific requirements of the admitting institution, including the manner in which their programmes are organised.
10. Chinese higher education institutions retain the right to determine the grades and examination results required for all courses of study according to their own regulations.
11. Irish higher education institutions retain the right to determine the grades and examination results required for all courses of study according to their own regulations.

## V Expert Committee

1. An expert committee may be established from time to time consisting of members from and nominated by each side. The names of members will be exchanged through diplomatic channels. The primary function of the Expert Committee is to:
  - (a) Follow-up all issues and discussions raised by this Agreement including further discussions on details as appropriate.
  - (b) Monitor and facilitate the co-operation between the designated bodies and other relevant organisations to ensure the continuing development of recognition mechanisms in Ireland and China and exchange of information.
  
2. The Expert Committee may arrange meetings and/or discussions as necessary and appropriate according to any working programme agreed upon by both sides. The location of the meeting will be determined through diplomatic channels.

## VI The Duration and Force of this Agreement

The Agreement will come into effect three month after the date of signature by both sides. It may be terminated at any time by either side by giving six month's notice in writing.

Signed in duplicate in Beijing on 23 February 2006, in two original copies, in the Chinese and English languages, both versions being equally authentic.

## **Annex 1**

### **Introduction to Academic Qualification Frameworks in China**

According to the Academic Degree Regulations of the People's Republic of China, the academic degrees in China include Bachelor, Master and Doctor degrees.

#### **BACHELOR DEGREE**

A person enrolled in regular higher education courses (undergraduate courses) may be awarded undergraduate certificate upon accomplishing four-year university education. A qualified student may apply for a Bachelor degree, provided the institution has the authority to award Bachelor degree.

A person who fails to enter a regular higher education course may also obtain undergraduate graduation certificate if he/she passes the National Test for Self-Taught Students or meets the relevant requirements of an Adult Higher Education Institution. A qualified person may apply for a Bachelor degree, provided the institution has the authority to award Bachelor degree.

#### **MASTER DEGREE**

A Bachelor degree holder may be admitted to an education programme in a Master degree awarding institution (higher education institution or research institution with authority to award Master degree) after passing the national Entrance Test to study and/or research for two or three years, and to be awarded a Master degree if qualified.

A Bachelor degree holder may also apply for and be awarded a Master degree by an institution with authority to award a Master degree by means of Part-time Study for Academic Degree if qualified.

#### **DOCTOR DEGREE**

A Master degree holder may be admitted to an education programme in a Master degree awarding institution (higher education institution with authority to award Master degree) after passing the required test, to study and/or research for three or more years to be awarded a Doctor degree if qualified.

A Master degree holder may also apply for and be awarded a Doctor degree by an institution with authority to award Doctor degree by means of Part-time Study for Academic Degree if qualified.

Some institutions that have authority to award Doctor degree offer from-Bachelor-to-Doctor-degree awarding programmes. A Bachelor degree holder who is enrolled in such a programme may be awarded a Doctor degree after five years of study and/or research.

#### **HIGHER DIPLOMA**

All those who graduate from high school or have equivalent level, after successfully passing examinations and recruited by higher education institutions offering relevant diploma education, will have the access to higher vocational education institutions or higher diploma education. The basic schooling-year for higher education or higher

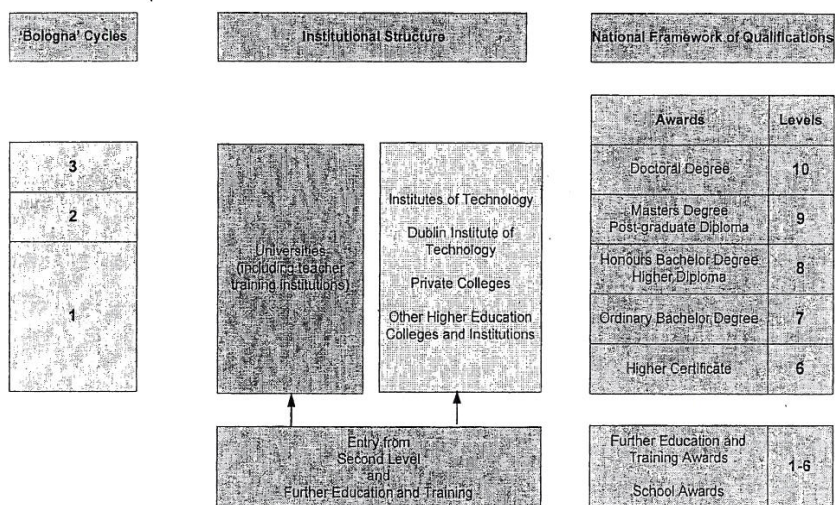
diploma education is two or three years. It lasts longer for non-full-time higher diploma education.

For those students receiving higher diploma education, they will be awarded relevant higher diploma or other certificates concerned by the receiving higher education institution in line with their courses, academic performance and relevant national regulations and rules. For those students receiving non-diploma higher education, they will be awarded relevant certificate stating their completion of relevant courses by recruiting higher education institutions or other higher education institutions.

## Annex 2

### Annex 2

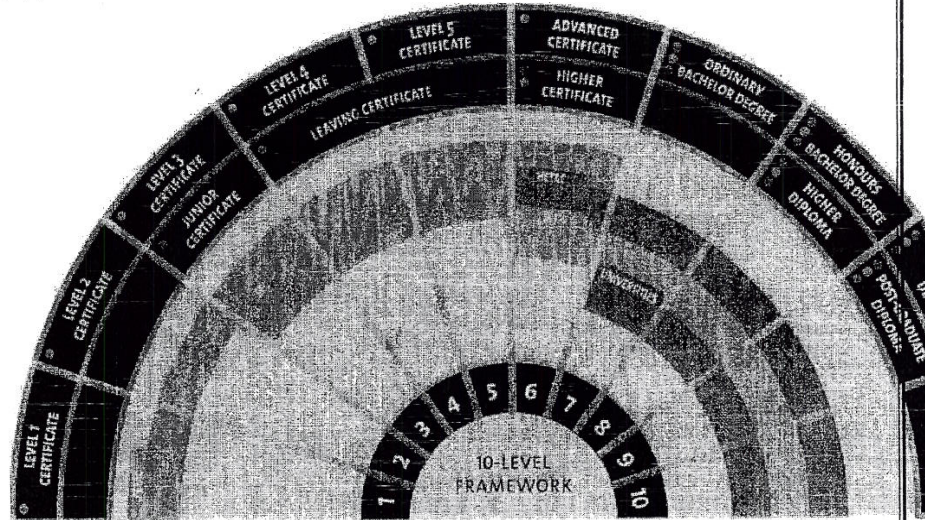
#### The Higher Education and Training System in Ireland





## Appendix 2 – The National Framework of Qualifications

### Appendix 2 – The National Framework of Qualifications



#### KEY

- FETAC - Further Education and Training Awards Council
- SEC - State Examinations Commission (*Department of Education & Science*)
- HETAC - Higher Education and Training Awards Council
- DIT - Dublin Institute of Technology
- Universities

## **Summary of Nature of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications**

The basis structure of the national framework of qualifications is one based on levels. Each level has a specified indicator. At each level in the framework there are one, or more, award-types. Each award-type has its own award-type descriptor. It has been the responsibility of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland to develop these level indicators and award-type descriptors.

For each award-type a wide range of named awards are being developed. It is the responsibility of awarding bodies to develop named awards.

The framework is intended to enable the recognition of all learning achievements and the range of award-types provided will facilitate this inclusiveness. Not all combinations of achievement, at a given level, are the same or of equal importance. Some award-types fulfil a broader range of purposes and these are labelled major award-types. Other, more limited or specialised, recognition needs are met by minor, supplemental and special-purpose award-types. The following are the classes of award-types determined by the Authority:

Major award-types are the principal class of awards made at each level. At most levels, such award-types capture a typical range of achievements at the level

A minor award-type will provide recognition for learners who achieve a range of learning outcomes, without achieving the specific combination of learning outcomes required for a major award

Special-purpose award-types are made for specific, relatively narrow, purposes

Supplemental award-types are for learning which is additional to a previous award.

International frameworks of qualifications are also generally based on similar concepts of levels, generic award types and individual named awards.

Within a national framework, levels allow for award-types to be placed at a level on an overall, basis rather than by conformity to a defined set of required outcomes. Thus the placing of two award-types at the same level indicates that in general that have a common level of outcomes associated with them, but this does not mean that they are equivalent.

Building on this, the development of two named awards of different major award-types at the same level signifies that the awards have a common level of outcomes associated with them.

Existing and previously made awards are those that were made either before the framework existed, or after it was put in place, but prior to implementation of the new framework standards for award types. Such awards will retain their identities and their value and their standing/status as awards in their own right and for employment and progression. Such awards (sometimes referred to as legacy awards) will be accommodated in the framework and will be placed on the Framework levels, even though they may not fully conform to any new award-type (because they are designed differently). Many such award types will cease to be offered as the framework approach is implemented. The process of placing these awards in the framework has already begun. The Authority is working with the awarding bodies to agree the placement of existing awards at appropriate levels in the Framework.

## **Award-type Descriptors**

Descriptors are attached for award-types **h,i,j,k,l,m,n,o**

### **General notes:**

- The titles used for the award-type descriptors are determinations made by the Authority.
- The descriptors are all for general purpose major awards, and the purpose descriptor is common for all award-types in the set.
- The level defined for each award-type refers to the 10-Level Grid of level indicators as determined by the Authority.
- The volume descriptor is based on an initial general understanding of small, medium and large.
- The sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competence defined for each descriptor are in each case taken from the 10-Level Grid of level indicators.
- Progression and transfer possibilities listed for each descriptor are those typically associated with the particular award-type: the listing is intended to describe possibilities rather than to be prescriptive or exhaustive. In accordance with the policies of the Authority in relation to Access, Transfer and Progression, the aim will be that the framework concept itself will greatly facilitate access, transfer and progression. It is also of note that, for each descriptor, transfer should generally be possible from a given named award to a programme leading to some other named award of the same award-type. This overall approach does not imply entitlement to a programme place, which may be limited by factors of supply and demand.

## Award-type Descriptor i

<b>Title</b>	Higher Certificate
<b>Purpose</b>	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
<b>Level</b>	6
<b>Volume</b>	Large
<b>Knowledge -breadth</b>	Specialised knowledge of a broad area
<b>Knowledge -kind</b>	Some theoretical concepts and abstract thinking, with significant underpinning theory
<b>Know-how and skill-range</b>	Demonstrative comprehensive range of specialised skills and tools
<b>Know-how and skill-selectivity</b>	Formulate responses to well-defined abstract problems
<b>Competence -context</b>	Act in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs; identify and apply skill and knowledge to a wide variety of contexts
<b>Competence -role</b>	Exercise substantial personal autonomy and often take responsibility for the work of others and/or for the allocation of resources; form, and function within, multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups
<b>Competence -learning to learn</b>	Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group
<b>Competence -insight</b>	Express an internalised, personal world view, reflecting engagement with others
<b>Progression and Transfer</b>	Transfer to programme leading to an Advanced Certificate (Award-type h) Progression to a programme leading to an Ordinary Bachelor Degree (award-type j) or to an Honours Bachelor Degree (award-type k)
<b>Articulation</b>	

Award-type Descriptor **j**

<b>Title</b>	Ordinary Bachelor Degree
<b>Purpose</b>	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
<b>Level</b>	7
<b>Volume</b>	Large
<b>Knowledge -breadth</b>	Specialised knowledge across a variety of areas
<b>Knowledge -kind</b>	Recognition of limitations of current knowledge and familiarity with sources of new knowledge; integration of concepts across a variety of areas
<b>Know-how and skill-range</b>	Demonstrate specialised technical, creative or conceptual skills and tools across an area of study
<b>Know-how and skill-selectivity</b>	Exercise appropriate judgement in planning, design, technical and/or supervisory functions related to products, services, operations or processes
<b>Competence -context</b>	Utilise diagnostic and creative skills in a range of functions in a wide variety of contexts
<b>Competence -role</b>	Accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes; take significant or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work
<b>Competence -learning to learn</b>	Take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group
<b>Competence -insight</b>	Express an internalised, personal world view, manifesting solidarity with others
<b>Progression and Transfer</b>	Progression to programme leading to an Honours Bachelor Degree (Award-type <b>k</b> ) or to a Higher Diploma (Award-type <b>l</b> ) Progression internationally to some second cycle (i.e. “Bologna masters”) degree programmes
<b>Articulation</b>	

## Award-type Descriptor **k**

<b>Title</b>	Honours Bachelor Degree
<b>Purpose</b>	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
<b>Level</b>	8
<b>Volume</b>	Large
<b>Knowledge -breadth</b>	An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning
<b>Knowledge -kind</b>	Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field(s)
<b>Know-how and skill-range</b>	Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advanced technical activity
<b>Know-how and skill-selectivity</b>	Exercise appropriate judgement in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing
<b>Competence -context</b>	Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts
<b>Competence -role</b>	Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups
<b>Competence -learning to learn</b>	Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically
<b>Competence -insight</b>	Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view manifesting solidarity with others
<b>Progression and Transfer</b>	Transfer to programmes leading to Higher Diploma (Award-type <b>l</b> ). Progression to programmes leading to Masters Degree or Post-graduate Diploma (Award-types <b>m</b> or <b>n</b> ), or in some cases, to programmes leading to a Doctoral Degree (Award-type <b>o</b> ). Progression internationally to second cycle (i.e. “Bologna masters”) degree programmes
<b>Articulation</b>	

## Award-type Descriptor I

<b>Title</b>	Higher Diploma
<b>Purpose</b>	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
<b>Level</b>	8
<b>Volume</b>	Medium
<b>Knowledge -breadth</b>	An understanding of the theory, concepts and methods pertaining to a field (or fields) of learning
<b>Knowledge -kind</b>	Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialised areas, some of it at the current boundaries of the field
<b>Know-how and skill-range</b>	Demonstrate mastery of a complex and specialised area of skills and tools; use and modify advanced skills and tools to conduct closely guided research, professional or advance technical activity
<b>Know-how and skill-selectivity</b>	Exercise appropriate judgment in a number of complex planning, design, technical and/or management functions related to products, services, operations or processes, including resourcing
<b>Competence -context</b>	Use advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for all related decision making; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills in a range of contexts
<b>Competence -role</b>	Act effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners; lead multiple, complex and heterogeneous groups
<b>Competence -learning to learn</b>	Learn to act in variable and unfamiliar contexts; learn to manage learning tasks independently, professionally and ethically
<b>Competence -insight</b>	Express a comprehensive, internalised, personal world view manifesting solidarity with others
<b>Progression and Transfer</b>	Progression to programmes leading to Masters Degree or Post-graduate Diploma (Award-types <b>m</b> or <b>n</b> )
<b>Articulation</b>	From an Ordinary Bachelor Degree (Award-type <b>j</b> ), or from an Honours Bachelor Degree (Award-type <b>k</b> ), into a new field of learning



Award-type Descriptor **m**

<b>Title</b>	Masters Degree
<b>Purpose</b>	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
<b>Level</b>	9
<b>Volume</b>	Large
<b>Knowledge -breadth</b>	A systematic understanding of knowledge at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning
<b>Knowledge -kind</b>	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning
<b>Know-how and skill-range</b>	Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry
<b>Know-how and skill-selectivity</b>	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques
<b>Competence -context</b>	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill defined contexts
<b>Competence -role</b>	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity
<b>Competence -learning to learn</b>	Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic/professional development
<b>Competence -insight</b>	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them
<b>Progression and Transfer</b>	Progression to programmes leading to Doctoral Degree (Award-type <b>o</b> ), or to another Masters Degree or to a Post-graduate Diploma (Award-types <b>m</b> or <b>n</b> ).
<b>Articulation</b>	



Award-type Descriptor **n**

<b>Title</b>	Post-graduate Diploma
<b>Purpose</b>	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
<b>Level</b>	9
<b>Volume</b>	Medium
<b>Knowledge -breadth</b>	A systematic understanding of knowledge, at, or informed by, the forefront of a field of learning
<b>Knowledge -kind</b>	A critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, generally informed by the forefront of a field of learning
<b>Know-how and skill-range</b>	Demonstrate a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent tools and techniques of enquiry
<b>Know-how and skill-selectivity</b>	Select from complex and advanced skills across a field of learning; develop new skills to a high level, including novel and emerging techniques
<b>Competence -context</b>	Act in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional levels and ill defined contexts
<b>Competence -role</b>	Take significant responsibility for the work of individuals and groups; lead and initiate activity
<b>Competence -learning to learn</b>	Learn to self-evaluate and take responsibility for continuing academic / professional development
<b>Competence -insight</b>	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them
<b>Progression and Transfer</b>	May exempt from part of the programme leading to a Masters Degree (Award-type <b>m</b> )
<b>Articulation</b>	

Award-type Descriptor **o**

<b>Title</b>	Doctoral Degree
<b>Purpose</b>	This is a multi-purpose award-type. The knowledge, skill and competence acquired are relevant to personal development, participation in society and community, employment, and access to additional education and training.
<b>Level</b>	10
<b>Volume</b>	Large
<b>Knowledge -breadth</b>	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of a field of learning
<b>Knowledge -kind</b>	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy review by peers
<b>Know-how and skill-range</b>	Demonstrate a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials which are associated with a field of learning; develop new skills, techniques, tools, practices and/or materials
<b>Know-how and skill-selectivity</b>	Respond to abstract problems that expand and redefine existing procedural knowledge
<b>Competence -context</b>	Exercise personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent contexts
<b>Competence -role</b>	Communicate results of research and innovation to peers; engage in critical dialogue; lead and originate complex social processes
<b>Competence -learning to learn</b>	Learn to critique the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts
<b>Competence -insight</b>	Scrutinise and reflect on social norms and relationships and act to change them
<b>Progression and Transfer</b>	
<b>Articulation</b>	