**What qualification levels mean**

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**England, Wales and Northern Ireland**

There are 9 qualification levels.

**Entry level**

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

Entry level qualifications are:

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

**Level 1**

Level 1 qualifications are:

* first certificate
* GCSE - grades 3, 2, 1 or grades D, E, F, G
* level 1 award
* level 1 certificate
* level 1 diploma
* level 1 ESOL
* level 1 essential skills
* level 1 functional skills
* level 1 national vocational qualification (NVQ)
* music grades 1, 2 and 3

**Level 2**

Level 2 qualifications are:

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

**Level 3**

Level 3 qualifications are:

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

**Level 4**

Level 4 qualifications are:

* certificate of higher education (CertHE)
* higher apprenticeship
* higher national certificate (HNC)
* level 4 award
* level 4 certificate
* level 4 diploma
* level 4 NVQ

**Level 5**

Level 5 qualifications are:

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

**Level 6**

Level 6 qualifications are:

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

**Level 7**

Level 7 qualifications are:

* integrated master’s degree, for example master of engineering (MEng)
* level 7 award
* level 7 certificate
* level 7 diploma
* level 7 NVQ
* master’s degree, for example master of arts (MA), master of science (MSc)
* postgraduate certificate
* postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE)
* postgraduate diploma

**Level 8**

Level 8 qualifications are:

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