

Údarás Náisiúnta
Cáilíochtaí na hÉireann
National Qualifications
Authority of Ireland



Qualifications Recognition

at

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Annual Report of the recognition service 2009

Contents:

	Page
Introduction & Principles and Objectives of the Recognition Service	3
 Part A: An Overview of the Recognition Service in 2009	
1. Overview & Highlights for 2009	6
2. The Recognition Service & Contribution to External Policy Initiatives	11
3. The Recognition service – applications and queries	14
- Breakdown of figures	
- Summary of the service	
- Staffing within the service	
 Part B: A Look Ahead to the Recognition Service in 2010	
1. Issues Arising	24
2. What's in Store for 2010?	25
3. Anticipated Trends and Developments	27
Appendix 1 Reassessment Applications Received in 2009	29
Appendix 2 Snapshots of Recognition Applications: Miscellaneous, School, Teagasc categories	30

Introduction & Principles and Objectives of the Recognition Service

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland assumed the role of the Irish ENIC-NARIC in 2003. Since that time, it has established a qualifications recognition service which is aimed at individuals, employers, education providers and other stakeholders who may have enquiries concerning education and training awards made outside of Ireland. As the Irish ENIC-NARIC, the Authority also has a role in promoting and providing information on Irish awards abroad. This paper reports on the activities of the recognition service in 2009.

The principles and objectives of the recognition service are outlined below

Principles of the Recognition Service

1. To be the definitive source of information and reference on Irish and foreign education and training qualifications and to:
 - provide up-to-date and comprehensive information on the Irish education system and on the countries for which it provides advice;
 - develop unilateral understandings of foreign education systems;
 - seek to develop recognition agreements / framework alignments with other countries where appropriate and be cognisant of sectoral agreements and framework developments in other countries as they relate to qualifications;
 - make advice/information regarding the comparability of Irish and foreign qualifications publicly available and ensure that it is current, accurate and consistent; and
 - seek to continue to increase the visibility and awareness of the qualifications recognition service.

2. To fulfil its responsibilities with regard to the recognition of Irish and foreign qualifications in line with relevant legislation and agreements, which includes *inter alia*:

- compliance with the requirements and spirit of the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region and the Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (Riga Recommendations); and
 - compliance with the Freedom of Information Acts (1997 & 2003) and the Data Protection Acts (1988 & 2003);
3. To endeavour to provide advice and / or information on all qualifications, including those not currently recognised through the NFQ, by
- promoting the full recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland by institutions, employers and society in general;
 - promoting the full recognition of Irish qualifications abroad by institutions, employers and society in general; and
 - providing advice regarding completed Irish and foreign qualifications upon submission of required documentation
4. To use the NFQ as the basis for all qualifications recognition advice provided
5. To adopt a proactive approach to the recognition of qualifications which is responsive to national trends and requirements
6. To operate a service that is non-discriminatory and customer-focused by:
- providing fit-for-purpose, consistent advice and / or information to clients in a timely and efficient manner based on extensive research and a robust process;
 - issuing advice to clients in not longer than 3 months; and
 - referring clients to appropriate external sources of information / contact points when unable to assist directly.

7. To be transparent, consistent and coherent in all of its activities and:

- undertake to explain, as fully as possible, the basis for the advice it provides to the applicant.

8. To collaborate with stakeholders in carrying out its qualifications recognition responsibilities [and cultivate a positive working environment with those stakeholders] and to:

- seek to ensure processes employed by partner organisations are transparent, consistent and coherent; and
- seek an explanation of the rationale used by partner organisations in the formulation of advice.

9. To seek to identify and anticipate the resources required to operate the service optimally.

Objectives of the Recognition Service

- To embrace knowledge management to facilitate expansion of expertise to build up an information centre that provides reliable, comprehensive and consistent information to all stakeholders
- To provide an efficient service to stakeholders ensuring that queries and recognition requests are responded to in a timely manner
- To maintain links with the ENIC/NARIC network and ensure that Ireland is adequately represented and in turn to ensure that the agenda of the ENIC-NARIC network is fed back within a national context

Part A: An Overview of the Recognition Service in 2009

1. Overview & Highlights for 2009

2009 has seen a number of changes come into effect within the recognition service. Firstly, organisational changes and personal circumstances led to some changes in staffing of the recognition service. Secondly, the recognition service has become more integrated into ongoing policy work of the Authority. During the year, the role of the recognition service evolved in line with an increased implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications in a number of different contexts. The service was **involved in many external national initiatives** in which the recognition of qualifications played a central role, such as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme; the National Car Test (NCT) discussions on the introduction of qualification regulations for testers; and the recognition of qualifications for entry to primary school training.

The recognition service has also been increasingly involved, and has made much progress through its membership on the European NARIC and Advisory Board (NAB) and the ENIC-NARIC network in the crucial work of **promoting the linkage between the recognition of qualifications and developments in qualification frameworks (QFs)**.

Internally, one of the main highlights of the year was the successful introduction of the **Sharepoint** system in April 2009, a new administration system, which has subsequently facilitated development of the service. The introduction and continuing implementation of Sharepoint has transformed the recognition service. The software has allowed a streamlining of application processing to occur, the main advantages being the aggregation of work processes into one system and the ability to more easily compile and share rationales for recognition decisions taken. A further significant advantage is the ability to quickly produce various reports from Sharepoint for future planning. While actual processing time has not been reduced, knowledge management within the service is being progressively addressed and capturing relevant information will help in

further strengthening the recognition service and will benefit the organisation in the long term.

Follow-up activity to the 'Different Roles, Different Responsibilities' conference which took place in November 2008 was a priority to further enhance communication with admissions officers in higher education institutions in particular. In light of this, a Qualifications Recognition **newsletter** template was developed with the intention of updating relevant stakeholders on developments in the area of qualifications recognition, thereby providing opportunities for sharing information. The first newsletter was issued in September 2009. It is anticipated that these newsletters will be circulated quarterly or as appropriate via e-mail and will also appear on the Qualifications Recognition website.

The programme of developing **Country Education Profiles (CEPs)** was retained and in 2009, profiles for India, Italy, Latvia, Romania, South Africa and Slovakia were initiated. These countries were selected based upon certain difficulties for the recognition service in understanding the particular education system and not necessarily in terms of volume of applications received. These profiles, earmarked for completion in early 2010 will lead to increased efficiency of the service. Of particular note in 2009 was the completion of the Irish CEP. This profile is especially important as it acts as a concise guide to the Irish education system for relevant stakeholders. As one of the Authority's responsibilities, facilitating the recognition of Irish qualifications abroad will be aided by the profile which was distributed to all ENIC-NARIC colleagues; a growing consideration due to increasing emigration. In the year to April 2009, the total number of emigrants is estimated to have increased by over 40% to a figure of 65,100, of which EU12 nationals¹ make up the largest group (30,100) followed by Irish nationals at 18,400². The continuing merging of recognition work with that of the organisation is important. An important aspect of this fusion is the updating of CEPs already published,

¹ EU12: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania

² Central Statistics Office: Population and Migration Estimates. Published 22 September 2009

where applicable, in conjunction with availability of Bologna verification and EQF referencing reports by participating countries.

The **recognition website** (www.qualrec.ie) is an important resource and during 2009, the website was visited 55,422 times, an increase of 59% on the previous year. On average, over 3,300 unique visitors³ per month visited the website in 2009. The majority of traffic was concerned with seeking information on how to avail of the service. The international qualifications database has seen an increase in traffic to its pages since last year and it is hoped that with the continued development of CEPs this trend will continue as more people seek relevant information on the website. Monitoring of the most common queries received via e-mail and telephone prompted a review of the website layout with the aim of improving usability and accessibility to the information it contains. In 2009, considerable planning time was devoted to the website and it is hoped that general telephone and e-mail queries will be reduced by making the website more accessible. This follows a successful project conducted on the NFQ website and a plan for the recognition website is now in place which will be implemented in early 2010. The homepage of the recognition website will more closely mirror that of the NFQ and NQAI sites, with the intention of more clearly identifying the service as being an integral part of the Qualifications Authority.

The **ENIC-NARIC network** is an important forum for the Authority to link policy initiatives with the recognition of qualifications and mobility of citizens. A particularly important development in terms of influencing activities of this network was the election of the NQAI to the NARIC Advisory Board (NAB) for a second year running. The NAB, made up of representatives of 3 member countries, is responsible for helping to manage the ENIC-NARIC Network and offers advice to the Secretariat (consisting of the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the UNESCO-CEPES) on the design, implementation and monitoring of the annual work programme. In addition, members of the NAB may suggest agenda items for the annual meetings of the

³ Unique Visitors: Number of visitors from different IP addresses. However, depending on how computers are networked, certain organisations may operate all computers from one IP address.

network. Membership of the Board allows the Authority raise issues of concern in the area of qualifications recognition in a European context. Much emphasis was placed on the link between recognition of qualifications and the development of QFs at the ENIC-NARIC Annual Meeting in June 2009 as a result of the previous NAB meeting. The need for credential evaluators to gain an adequate understanding of QFs for their daily work was noted at this meeting and presentations were provided on QF developments in the Netherlands, Flanders, Latvia and Australia. There appeared to be a general consensus surrounding the need to foster links between recognition and quality assurance through the use of QFs. Later in the year, the NAB meeting of 15 October resulted in the development of a workshop on QFs which was delivered at the annual NARIC meeting in Brussels on 27 November. It was decided that background information should be gathered by delegates prior to attending to ensure active participation. To this end, the Authority executive drafted a simple questionnaire for distribution to ENIC-NARICS before the meeting using the Irish NARIC as an example. The Authority executive was invited to make a presentation as an example of a NARIC using QFs in the recognition process. The presentation was well received and the meeting ended with many NARICs calling for a stronger mandate from the EU Commission around their involvement in the development of QFs in their home countries.

On an ongoing basis, the recognition team has been engaged **in maintaining an efficient service to customers** who wish to obtain recognition of their qualifications. Specifically, there has been an evident increase in Irish citizens seeking recognition of legacy awards for the purpose of gaining employment or continuing education in Ireland. The executive is constantly seeking ways to improve the recognition service. To this end, Recognition Service Enhancement Meetings (RSEM), introduced initially in 2008, are held on an ad-hoc basis. In summary, the following **significant changes** have been introduced by the recognition service, and supported by the whole organisation, over the past 12 months:

- Since April 2009, all staff in the recognition section have been involved in logging and assessing all categories of application to allow all staff gain experience in each area.
- The Authority executive formally commenced processing of all school awards. This includes school awards presented for the Garda recruitment process.
- A handbook detailing recognition processes and background information on the service, together with comprehensive information on common queries and issues relating to recognition was developed. This handbook, stored in Sharepoint, can be used by all staff but will be of particular benefit for any staff joining the recognition service in the future.
- The recognition website now contains a country education profile on Ireland.
- Processing of all recognition applications now takes place through Sharepoint, eliminating the need for using multiple software programs. The hard copy document checklist on which rationale was documented for each file in the past is no longer required. This information is currently stored on Sharepoint, thus, reducing the risk of loss of information when files are shredded for compliance with data protection.
- Generation of statistics relating to the recognition service has been made easier through the introduction of Sharepoint. Statistics are gathered on a quarterly basis for the purposes of comparison and identification of trends.
- As members of the recognition team spend a considerable amount of time dealing with queries via telephone and callers to the office, it was agreed that each person take one day per week when they do not take such calls. Individuals will focus on specific projects detailed in their respective PMDS on these days aimed at improving the recognition service such as development of CEPs.
- Much discussion regarding recognition of UK awards took place during 2009 in light of a revised 'Qualifications can cross boundaries' document and work on alignment of the awards of some UK awarding bodies to the Irish NFQ. A number of decisions were made as follows:
 - The process of alignment refers to UK awards delivered in Ireland. If the award is customised for Ireland and no substantial changes are evident from a search on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ) in the UK or through

communication with the institution involved, Cross boundaries may be used for recognition purposes. A template for aligned awards' letters was developed for Sharepoint. As the UK does not describe qualifications in terms of major or non-major awards, it was felt that an explanation of Guided Learning Hours (GLH) could be included in the letter to help users more easily understand the comparability statement. A template was developed which indicates GLH and how it broadly compares to credits in the Irish system.

- A benchmark statement was developed for use in recognising UK legacy awards. The UK awarding body in question is contacted in the first instance for information on how the qualification is benchmarked to the UK Framework.
- For engineering awards from abroad which are compared to an Honours Bachelor Degree (NFQ Level 8) in Ireland, a revised template was developed in association with Engineers Ireland. The template now states that the comparability statement relates to academic recognition and does not entitle a person to use the regulated title of 'Chartered Engineer'.
- It has been agreed that English language Diploma Supplements issued by institutions across Europe are acceptable as transcripts and that the applicant should provide their parchment in the original language and a translation to ensure that the award is assessed correctly.

2. The Recognition Service & Contribution to External Policy Initiatives

Although a decrease in recognition applications occurred in 2009, there were considerable demands placed on the recognition service due to growth in the level of interest from various stakeholders in its work and due to the increasing implementation of the Framework. A brief description of a sample of these activities is listed below:

Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE)

The ECCE scheme, introduced by the Government in 2009 to apply from 2010 involves the provision of free childcare places. In addition to meeting the requirements regarding

staff ratios as provided for under the Child Care Regulations, the pre-school year staff leader in crèches must have a major award in childcare/early childhood education of at least a Level 5 on the NFQ, or equivalent. This will be raised to a minimum qualification requirement of a major award at Level 6 on the NFQ by September 2012. The Authority executive attended a number of meetings with the early childhood section of the DES and provided advice relating to qualifications and their placement on the NFQ. The Authority also received a large volume of queries from the public relating to this scheme and referred individuals as appropriate to the County Childcare Committees, charged with administering the scheme in conjunction with the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMYCA).

Public Appointments Service (PAS)

The executive has worked closely with the PAS throughout 2009 to agree an appropriate level of engagement for future Garda competitions. For Garda recruitment, the recognition service assesses foreign qualifications to ascertain if they meet the education requirements as outlined by the PAS. In the past, this input resulted in the executive assuming a role of information provider for competitions and has placed heavy demands in terms of workload on the recognition service at certain times. A new procedure has now been agreed with the PAS and involves the Authority remaining in the background with no role evident to the public. In addition, contact details for the recognition service are to be removed from the Garda recruitment booklet and all queries to the service will originate from PAS directly. It has been proposed that the prison officer recruitment campaign planned for February 2010 will act as an opportunity to 'test' the new procedures agreed. In the event of an appeal relating to qualifications, the procedure involved has yet to be finalised but work will continue in 2010 to resolve the issues involved.

Teaching Council

Throughout 2009, many queries were received by the Authority relating to access to the Higher Diploma in Education. A Level 8 Honours Bachelor Degree or equivalent is required for entry but particular difficulties exist when an individual presents an Irish

legacy award which has not yet been placed on the NFQ. The executive has been in contact with the teacher training section of the DES in addition to the Teaching Council and Hibernia on this issue and will continue this work in 2010. In addition, the legacy award project already underway will hopefully resolve many queries.

NCT (National Car Test) Vehicle Inspectors

The Road Safety Authority (RSA) requested a meeting with the Authority, FETAC and FÁS amongst other bodies in July 2009 to discuss qualifications required by individuals to act as NCT testers. The Authority provided advice on the placement of the Advanced Craft Certificate in Motor Mechanics on the NFQ and explained how qualifications from abroad are recognised academically through the Qualifications Recognition service. The Authority also expressed its willingness to continue liaising with FÁS to provide academic recognition as a first step for those who wish to gain advanced entry to the apprenticeship programme in Ireland.

Relevant stakeholders have been actively targeted throughout the year by attending and presenting at conferences and information seminars where possible. It is strategically important to have a presence at these events in order to fully support and interact with stakeholders. Some of these events are detailed below:

- **Information Meetings for Embassy Officials** – Two events were organised by the Integration Unit of the Department of Education and Science during the year (28 April & 5 November) with the purpose of providing embassy officials with information on the higher and further education and training system in Ireland, respectively. The Authority provided a presentation on the Qualifications Recognition service and its relationship with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) on both occasions. The presentation provided was well received and attendance at these events provided the Authority with useful contacts within the Embassies. There was much interest in the development of country education profiles and the availability of the Irish profile from October 2009 was very welcomed. At the latter meeting, the

Qualifications Recognition newsletter was included in the information pack for delegates.

- **OECD: Education of Migrants** - the DES invited the Authority executive and the Teaching Council to attend a consultative meeting with the OECD in March 2009 regarding a current project on Education of Migrants. The Authority executive provided a brief overview of the Qualifications Recognition service and confirmed the Authority's willingness to support the Teaching Council by all means possible while the Teaching Council representatives spoke about their work, particularly around the registration of migrant teachers.
- **Professional Recognition Conference** – this event, organised by the qualifications section of the DES regarding the EU Directive 2005/36 on the recognition of professional qualifications took place on 02 December 2009. Difficulties and issues in the area of professional recognition including work experience were discussed. The Authority executive attended and the event provided a useful opportunity to gain further appreciation of the issues involved in professional recognition. In addition, it is important for the executive to continue engagement with various competent bodies such as the Teaching Council and the Academy of Medical Laboratory Science, in order to work towards a more integrated approach to the recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland.

3. The Recognition Service – Applications and queries

Growth of service from 2003 - 2009

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland assumed the role of the Irish ENIC-NARIC in 2003. Since then, the executive has recorded the number of applications received on an annual basis. The service has grown steadily since 2003 with the number of applications increasing each year until 2009. The reason for a decrease in formal applications experienced in 2009 may be two-fold. In the first instance, a slowing down in the economy may have contributed, as the number of all migrants to Ireland decreased from 83,800 to 57,300 (32%) in the year to April 2009⁴. Secondly, as CEPs

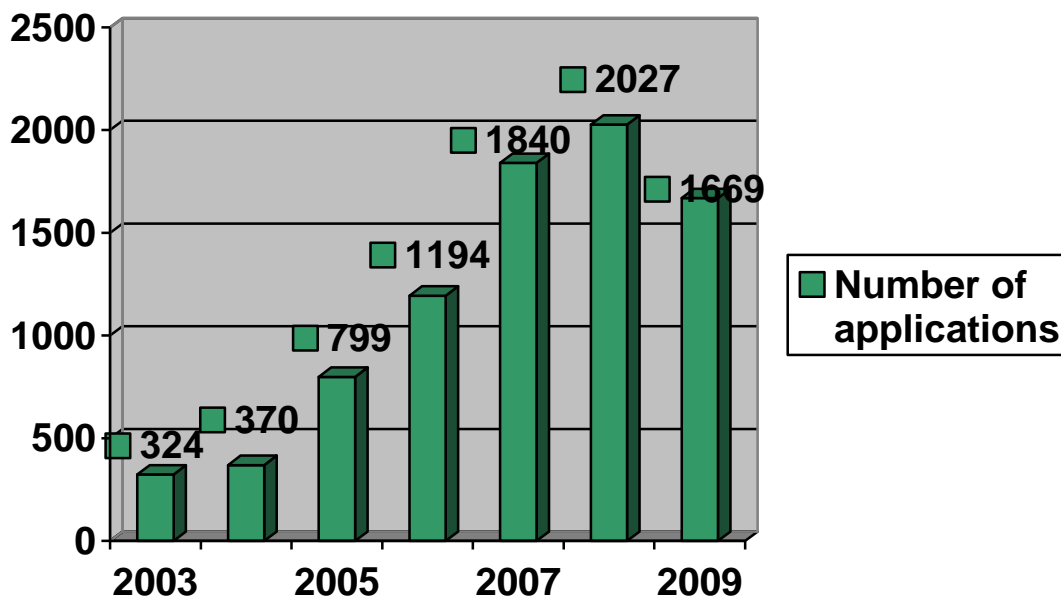
⁴ Central Statistics Office: Population and Migration Estimates. Published 22 September 2009.

are developed and information on comparabilities published on the website, individuals may not need to make a formal application in order to receive the recognition information they require.

It is evident from the current numbers that the service is still very much in demand. The increase in numbers is attributable to some degree to the service's active engagement with stakeholders and to the fact that the executive has taken all available opportunities to promote the service. The result of this is that the work of the executive and in particular the work of the recognition service is becoming more widely recognised.

The graph presented below is representative of the number of applications that have been received and logged in each year of the service. The figures do not reflect the number of telephone and email queries received each year, nor are they reflective of the number of individuals who call to the office during office hours. Further information on the number of queries dealt with by the executive in 2009 is included under the 'Breakdown of numbers – 2009' section below.

Development of the recognition service from 2003 – 2009



Breakdown of numbers - 2009

A total of 1,669 applications were received over the year. The number of applications decreased by 18% in 2009, the first reduction in application numbers since the NQAI assumed the role of the Irish ENIC-NARIC in 2003. This trend is not surprising as immigration of non-Irish nationals to Ireland dropped from 67,600 in 2008 to 38,900 in 2009⁵. In addition, Qualifications Recognition deals with a large volume of queries via email, phone and visitors to the office. These are estimated to amount to approximately 5,178 queries based on the number that were recorded by members of the recognition service between July and December 2009. The queries recorded from this six-month time-frame were then projected to estimate the volume of queries received during the year. It is felt that this figure under represents the true number of queries as it can be difficult to record all queries at busy periods. The executive is interested in exploring further a suitable system for recording telephone queries in particular so that fully accurate statistics can be produced on a regular basis.

Summary

The following pages provide information on the categories of applications received and information on the volume as well as the main countries from which applications are received.

It is of note that the majority of applications received were assessed and closed within the 12 week time-frame that is stipulated to applicants. More importantly, there is a demonstrable connection between the number of applications closed within a 1-2 week timeframe and the CEPs that have been completed. With completed CEPs, the research component generally required for each application is significantly reduced, meaning that applications can be logged, checked and closed off immediately. This in turn means that more time is available to conduct research on awards from countries that we have limited experience in dealing with.

⁵ Central Statistics Office: Population and Migration Estimates. Published 22 September 2009.

It is also important to note that the executive processes applications from EU and Non-EU countries alike. This means that the recognition service may be conducting research into any number of education systems. For example, in higher education in 2009, 1132 applications were received and these concerned awards from 82 countries. This again reinforces the value of CEPs – the more profiles that are in place the faster applications can be dealt with and consequently there is more time available to research other awards and education systems.

Applicants who are dissatisfied with the advice issued by the recognition service can avail of the reassessment process that is in place. This year, 8 applications for reassessment were received and only 1 remains outstanding. A more detailed examination of the reassessment applications can be viewed in Appendix 1.

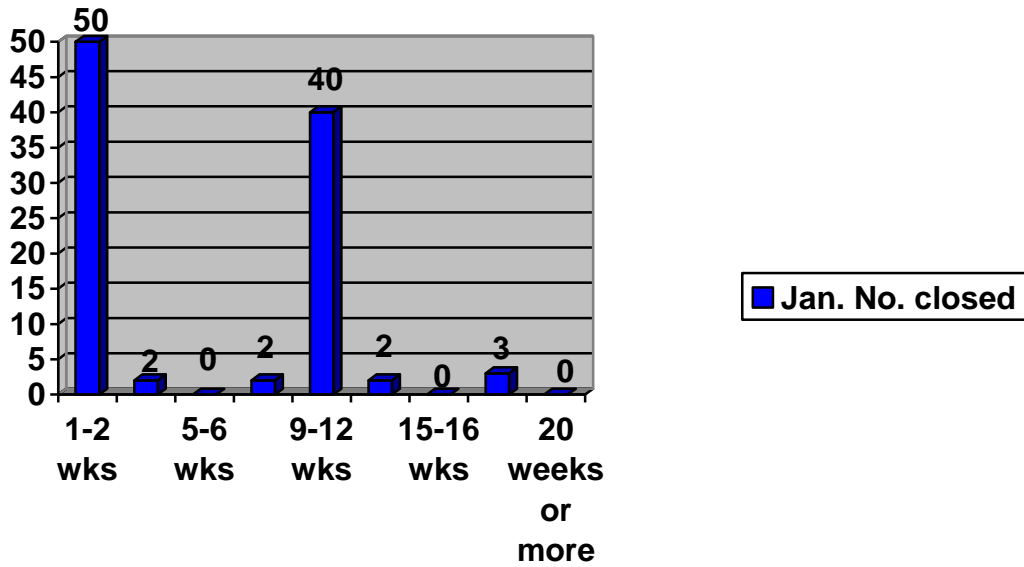
When applications are received, they are divided equally among three staff members and logged and assigned as appropriate. A further staff member logs and assesses a number of instant response applications when time allows. Within the current system, applications can be logged under 1 of 7 headings:

- **Higher Education** – all applications that concern awards that form part of the higher education system in another country are logged under this heading.
- **Further Education** – all applications concerning awards that are of a vocational nature and form part of the vocational education and training system in another country are logged under this heading.
- **Garda Applications** - In 2006, the NQAI was approached by the Public Appointments Service to assist with determining the comparability of foreign qualifications for the purposes of meeting the minimum entry requirements for An Garda Síochána. Any applications received that stipulate the applicant is seeking recognition for this purpose are logged under this heading.

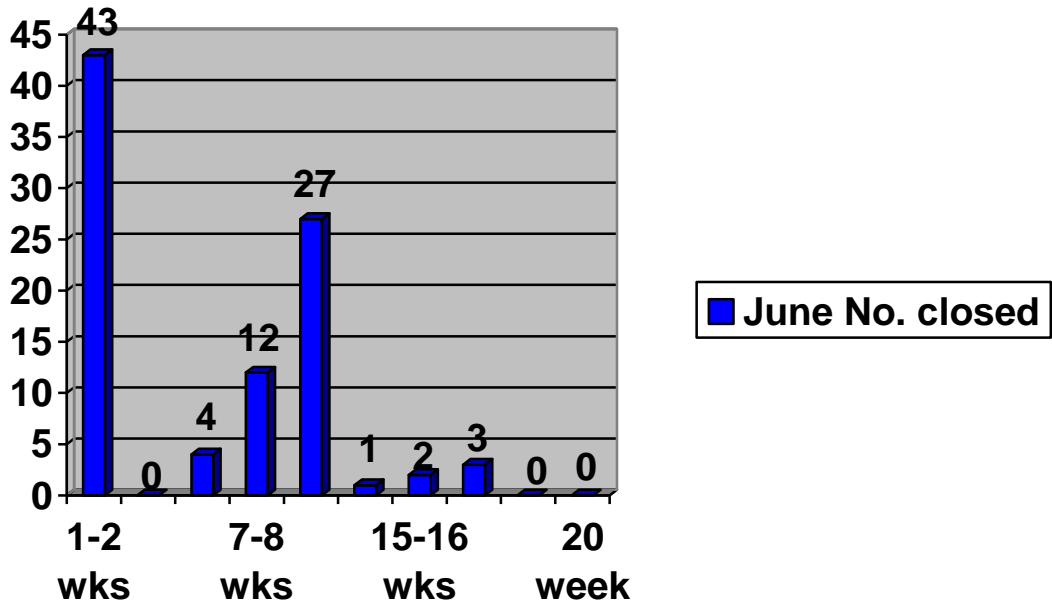
- **School awards** – All non-Garda applications concerning awards that form part of the school system, be it primary or post-primary are logged under this heading.
- **Teagasc** – the executive has a role in assessing qualifications for the purposes of meeting the stipulations for tax exemptions regarding the transfer of land as per the Finance Act. Any applications that indicate this as the purpose for the recognition request are logged under this heading.
- **Miscellaneous** – the executive receives number of applications that do not match the criteria of the above mentioned categories. These could concern applications regarding awards made by professional bodies, Irish awards that are not placed on the Framework and grant applications to name a few.
- **Reassessments** – the executive makes provision for applicants who are dissatisfied with the comparability statement received in relation to their recognition requests. Reassessment applications are logged under this heading. The process requires a review of the documentation submitted with the original application. Information on the reassessments received in 2009 is located at the end of this section.

In order to further illustrate the number of applications received and logged in 2009, the following graphs set out the number of applications received in the months of January, June and November and the timeframe within which they were closed. The graphs relate to higher and further education awards. Similar graphs relating to the remaining categories of applications, excluding Garda, are listed in Appendix 2.

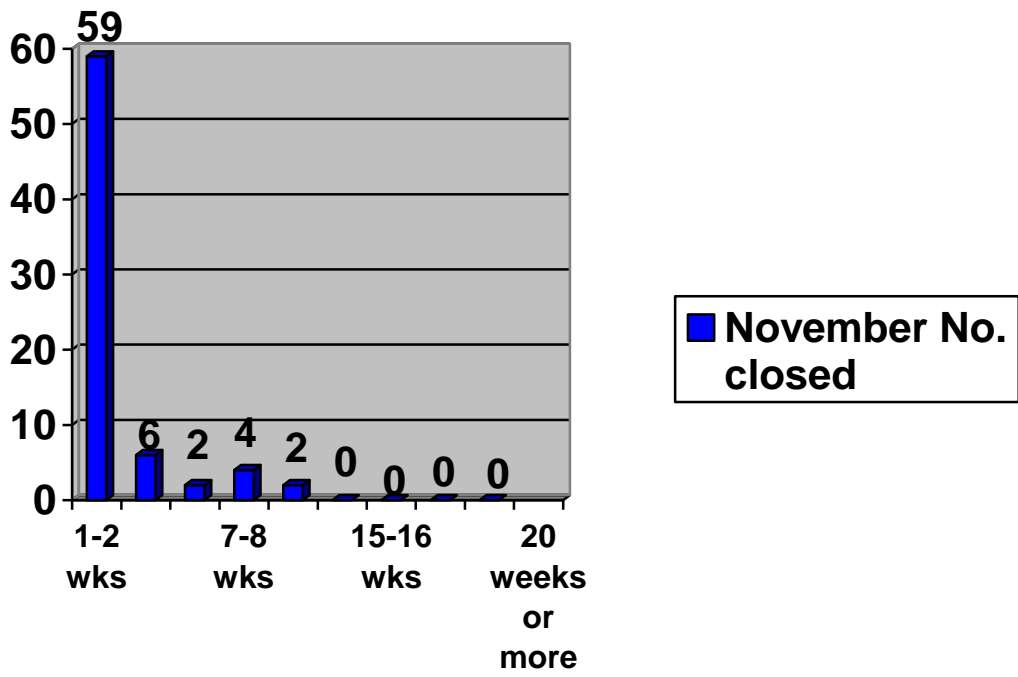
1.1 Higher Education: January 2009, received 99 in total, all are closed.



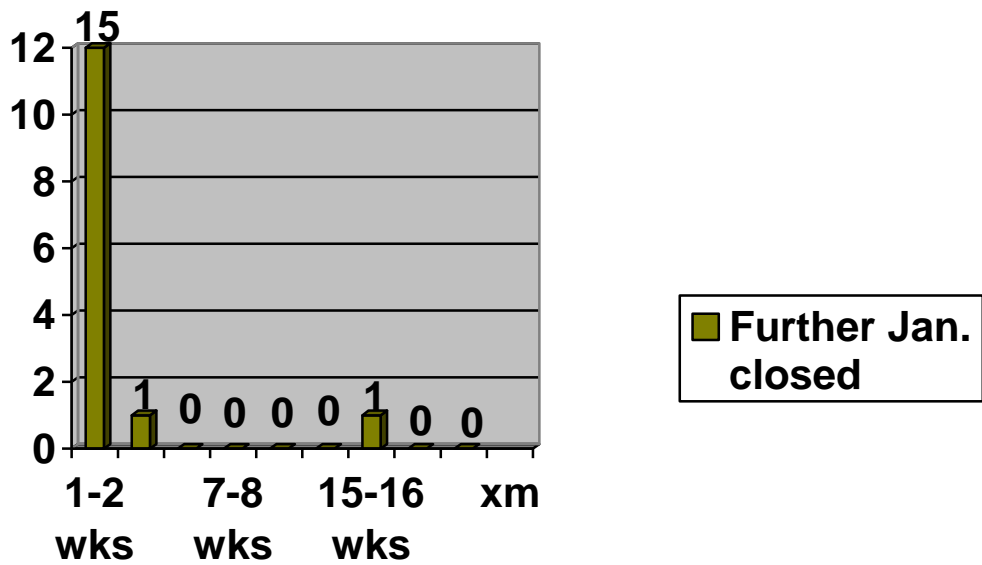
1. 2 Higher Education: June 2009, received 92 applications in total, all are closed.



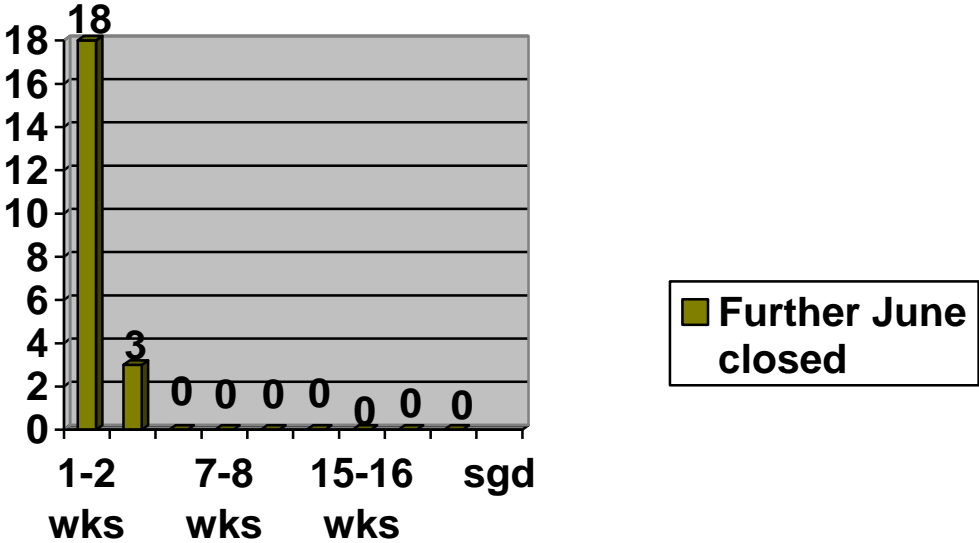
1.3 Higher Education: November 2009, received 98 applications in total, 73 have been closed.



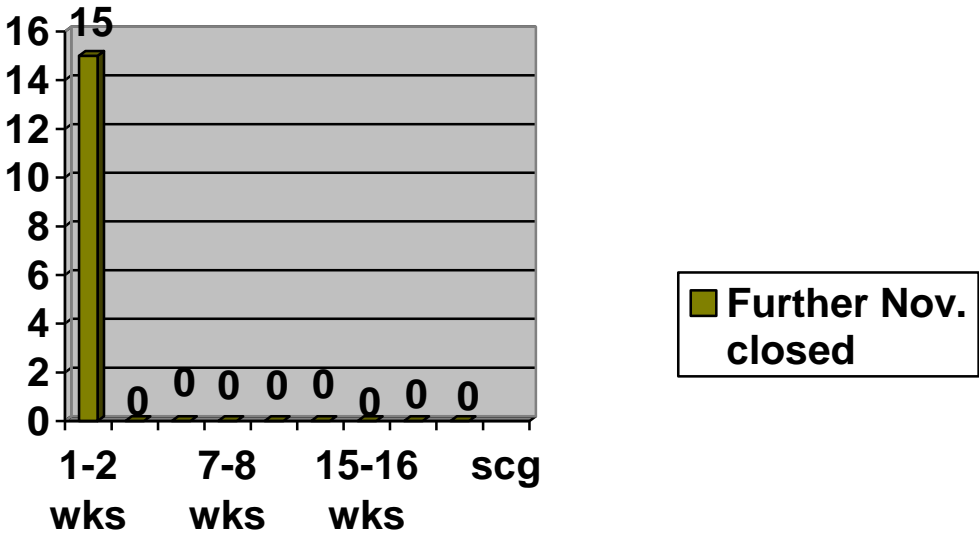
2.1 Further Education: January 2009, 17 received in total, all have been closed.



2.2 Further Education: June 2009, 22 received in total, 21 have been closed.



2.3 Further Education: November 2009, 28 received in total, 15 have been closed.



The figures from 2009 are analysed further below, within the context of each category, to illustrate the main countries from which applications were received. To compare and contrast, the figures from 2008 are also represented below while anticipated trends and developments for 2010 are detailed further on page 26.

Higher Ed: *1132 applications received in total from 82 countries*

2009	Total 1132	2008 Total 1288
Poland	25% (279 applications)	Poland (261 applications)
Nigeria	7% (84 applications)	Nigeria (116 applications)
Lithuania	7% (75 applications)	Lithuania (92 applications)
India	5% (53 applications)	India (75 applications)
US	4% (44 applications)	Romania (52 applications)
Russia	4% (40 applications)	
Romania	3% (39 applications)	

Further Ed: *315 applications received in total from 38 countries*

2009	Total 315	2008 Total 289
UK	30% (94 applications)	Poland (56 applications)
Poland	18% (56 applications)	UK (40 applications)
Ireland	7% (23 applications)	Germany (20 applications)
Australia	4% (13 applications)	Australia (16 applications)

Misc: *123 applications received in total from 26 countries.*

2009	Total 123	2008 Total 161
Ireland	46% (57 applications)	Ireland (58 applications)
Poland	13% (16 applications)	UK (27 applications)
UK	10% (12 applications)	Nigeria (14 applications)
<i>- Remaining applications fragmented.</i>		

School: *89 applications received in total from 33 countries*

2009	Total 89	2008 Total 127
Lithuania	12% (11 applications)	Poland (19 applications)
Poland	11% (10 applications)	UK (14 applications)
Latvia	10% (9 applications)	Lithuania (9 applications)
Romania	8% (7 applications)	
Pakistan	7% (6 applications)	
<i>- Remaining applications fragmented.</i>		

Teagasc:	<i>8 applications received in total from 2 countries</i>	
2009	Total 8	2008 Total 30
UK	63% (5 applications)	Ireland (17 applications)
Ireland	37% (3 applications)	UK (10 applications)
		Poland (1 application)
		Canada (1 application)
		USA (1 application)

Garda:	<i>2 applications received in total from 2 countries</i>	
2009	Total 2	2008 Total 121
Russia	1 application	UK (32 applications)
China	1 application	China (28 applications)
		Poland (22 applications)
		Ireland (11 applications)

Staffing within the service

Organisationally, the executive operates with two teams: the Corporate and Communications (C & C) team and the Framework Implementation and Qualifications Recognition (FIQR) teams. Both teams work on an integrated basis with cross-team projects. In respect of recognition, the FIQR team is primarily responsible for the management and efficient running of the recognition service. As in 2008, the service has operated with four full time staff members throughout the year. The nature of the work of the recognition service is evolving, with staff in this area becomingly increasingly involved in, amongst other areas, discussions with external parties on various policy initiatives as implementation of the NFQ deepens. This development has led to increased opportunities to further integrate the recognition service into other work of the Authority. It is of note that staff in this area are now responsible for management of the National Europass Centre and this has increased workload. In addition, recognition staff are responding to or fielding the majority of calls to the organisation from the public. The remaining members of the FIQR team, with assistance from C & C colleagues, provide support, assistance and guidance on an on-going basis.

Part B: A Look Ahead to the Recognition Service in 2010

1. Issues Arising

Resources

An appropriate level of staffing of the recognition service is one of the key elements in ensuring that a successful, efficient and professional service is delivered. It is of note that the number of staff directly working in the section has remained relatively static in the last number of years, notwithstanding the recorded growth of the service. Even with a decrease in formal applications in 2009, there is increasing demand and pressure on resources as a result of developmental work undertaken for the service and additional work acquired such as Europass. It is fully recognised that in the current economic climate, current staffing levels will not increase. However, a decrease in the levels of staffing would curtail the service's capacity for further growth and diversification. The executive is committed, however, to exploring new ways to maximise output with existing resources.

Communications

The recognition service availed of every opportunity arising to communicate with our target audiences. This included attending a number of events such as the National Ploughing Championships and the design and circulation of the Qualifications Recognition newsletter; an initiative to be built upon in 2010. In addition, as a number of study visits from abroad regularly seek meetings with the executive, discussions took place on how to gain more value for the organisation from these visits. It was decided that, where appropriate, visiting groups should be asked to provide information on their qualifications and education systems with the aim of building internal expertise and raising the profile of the recognition service.

2. What's in Store for 2010?

- **Internationalisation Register** – from 01 March, the Authority will assume responsibility for the management and maintenance of the Internationalisation Register from the DES. The Register consists of a list of education programmes which meet certain criteria and allow students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) access casual employment in Ireland. The application process and administration involved in maintenance of the Register will be managed by the recognition team, introducing an additional function to the current activities of the recognition service.
- **Sharepoint** - the recognition service is looking forward to the continuing use and exploitation of Sharepoint to increase efficiency and to facilitate information gathering and sharing amongst staff. Of particular importance is the integration of the recognition Sharepoint system into that developed for the organisation as a whole as all members of the organisation will have access to information gathered on education systems, making information available to aid in the development of country education profiles.
- **Partner in French NARIC project 'The use of the EQF in the recognition procedures of the NARIC centers'** - As a result of a call for projects to the Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) for the year 2010-2011, the French NARIC proposed a project with the aim of creating convergence in the utilisation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in daily comparison work. The Netherland, Belgium (French community) and Ireland were invited to be partners in the project. This work will outline the different recognition procedures employed by the NARICS participating in the project, the problems encountered by employing the EQF (Levels 4 – 8) and national frameworks, and their possible solutions. This working group aims to produce guidelines for NARIC centres to help increase understanding about how a national Qualifications Framework and its referencing to EQF may be used as a tool in the process of recognition of foreign qualifications. This is a two year project scheduled to commence in February 2010 with 4 – 5 meetings of participants planned.

- **Country Education Profiles** – the benefits of developing country education profiles (CEPs) have been noted previously and have led to increased efficiency of the Qualifications Recognition service. In early 2010, a number of CEPs are due to be completed and published, following which, a review of the process will take place. The compilation of further profiles offers stakeholders an opportunity to collaborate. Thus, as draft profiles become available, admissions officers will be invited via e-mail to offer feedback on each profile prior to publication in the International Qualifications Database on www.qualrec.ie. Such feedback and perspective will add to the quality of the information contained in the profiles.
- **National Stakeholders** - it is essential for the ongoing development of the service that the contacts made with relevant national stakeholders in 2009 are maintained and enhanced in 2010 so that there is steady movement towards the achievement of increased national communication and consistency within the field of recognition of qualifications. In particular, further collaboration with education providers is envisaged for this year through work on CEPs and recognition newsletters.
- **European/International Dimension** – during 2010, a priority for the executive is to build further on the progress achieved in linking the recognition of qualifications to developments in qualifications frameworks through the ENIC-NARIC network. Key events for driving this work include NAB and NARIC meetings throughout the year in addition to the annual ENIC-NARIC meeting scheduled for June 2010 in Paris.
- **Recognition Website** – it is planned that the new-look recognition website will be in operation by March 2010. It is hoped that the changes implemented will allow individuals access information more easily. In addition, a section for staff of higher education institutions will be introduced allowing the executive to liaise and collaborate on mutual issues and areas of interest more easily with this target group.

3. Anticipated Trends and Developments

Given the current economic climate, the recognition service acknowledges that the number of immigrants coming to Ireland has fallen significantly in the past year while the number of emigrants has also increased⁶. Combined, these figures show a net outward migration of 7,800 for the first time since 1995 in Ireland. This change in climate will obviously impact on the recognition service although to what extent is difficult to predict. It is likely that the number of recognition applications in 2010 will be similar to those received in 2009, but other areas of work, such as queries relating to Irish qualifications, and the recognition service's role in the promotion of the recognition of Irish qualifications abroad, may become increasingly important. The executive will continue to monitor and examine the number of applications and queries received on an ongoing basis.

As predicted in the 2008 recognition report, a decrease in recognition requests pertaining to the Garda recruitment campaign was experienced. In fact, no Garda campaigns occurred in 2009, but the executive understands that there is the possibility of a campaign in late 2010. The executive will liaise closely with the PAS on developments in this area. The Garda Reserve recruitment campaign is ongoing and there is a Prison Officer campaign planned for February 2010, both of which are expected to have limited impact for the recognition service.

The considerable rise in unemployment from 6.4% in 2008 to 11.7% in 2009⁷ may lead to further changes within the service in 2010. It is difficult to anticipate whether this will impact upon the service in terms of increased or decreased demand. It may well be the case that as competition for jobs increases, migrants in Ireland who were previously in employment without ever availing of the service may now find it an appropriate time to seek recognition of their awards. Similarly, an increase in queries regarding legacy Irish awards is anticipated together with an increase in queries regarding the recognition of Irish qualifications abroad. It is estimated that non-Irish nationals represent 14.7% of the

⁶ Central Statistics Office: Population and Migration Estimates. Published 22 September 2009.

⁷ Central Statistics Office: Live Register. Published 8 January 2010.

labour force in Ireland and this group represented 18.3% of the Live Register in December 2009⁸. Of this number, the largest proportion of individuals are nationals of the EU15 to EU27 states⁹ while the smallest number are from the EU15 outside of Ireland and the UK. These statistics have an implication for the service in terms of the origin of foreign awards and the planning of CEPs.. The executive will continue to monitor statistics, trends and developments of this nature, and in national policy, as it seeks to further progress and enhance the recognition service's functions over the coming year

⁸ Central Statistics Office: Live Register. Published 8 January 2010

⁹ EU15: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Portugal & UK.

EU27: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia & Slovenia.

Appendix 1

Reassessment Applications Received in 2009

The review process currently engaged by Qualifications Recognition consists of three stages:

1. Information Provision
2. Formal Reassessment
3. Formal Review

Information Provision

The aim of the advice provided by Qualifications Recognition Ireland is to clearly set out how the foreign qualification held by an individual compares to a qualification that is placed at a particular level on the National Framework of Qualifications. In the majority of cases applicants find the information to be clear in its content. In some more complex cases applicants are seeking clarification on points made in the advice issued and these can be addressed with an early response either via e-mail or telephone.

Formal Reassessment

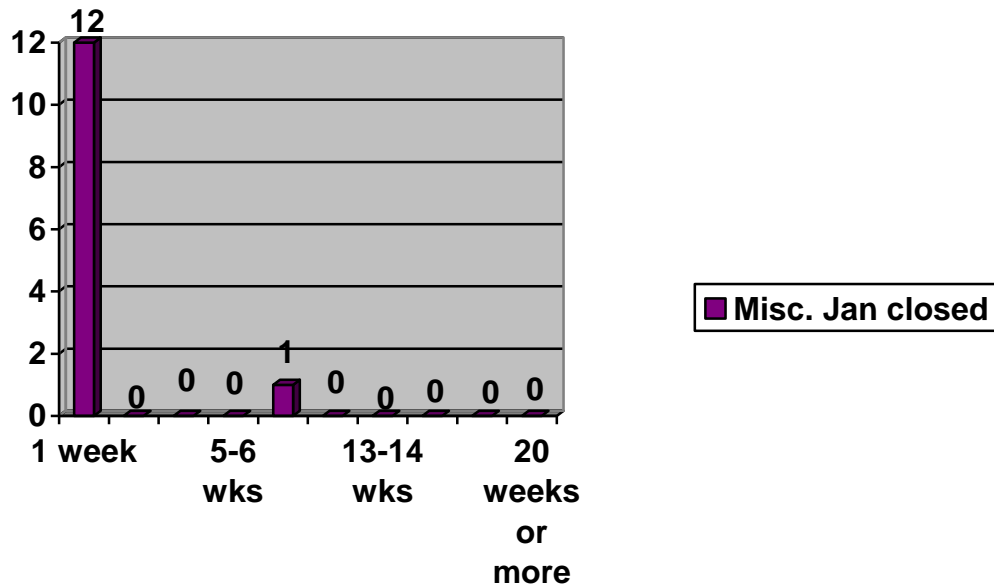
In 2009, 8 applications were received requesting formal reassessment of their qualifications; 5 related to higher education qualifications, 1 related to further education qualifications and 2 related to school applications.

1 application for reassessment is outstanding. Of the remaining 7 applications, 5 were recognised at a higher level due to further information being made available while 2 remained unchanged. There has been no indication from the applicants involved that there is intention to proceed further and avail of the formal review process in place. No formal review applications were received in 2009.

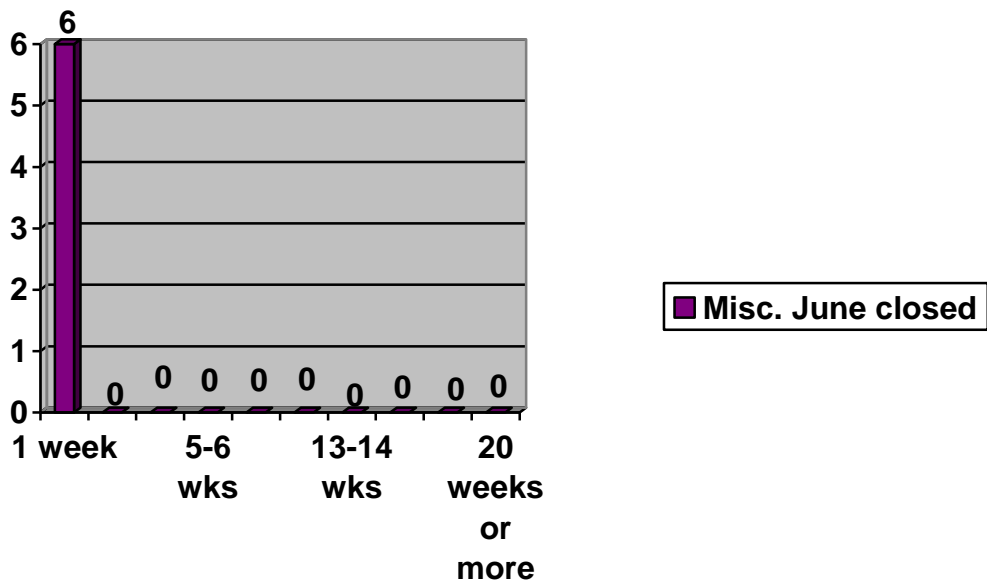
Appendix 2 Snapshots of Recognition Applications: Miscellaneous, School, Teagasc categories

Miscellaneous Applications

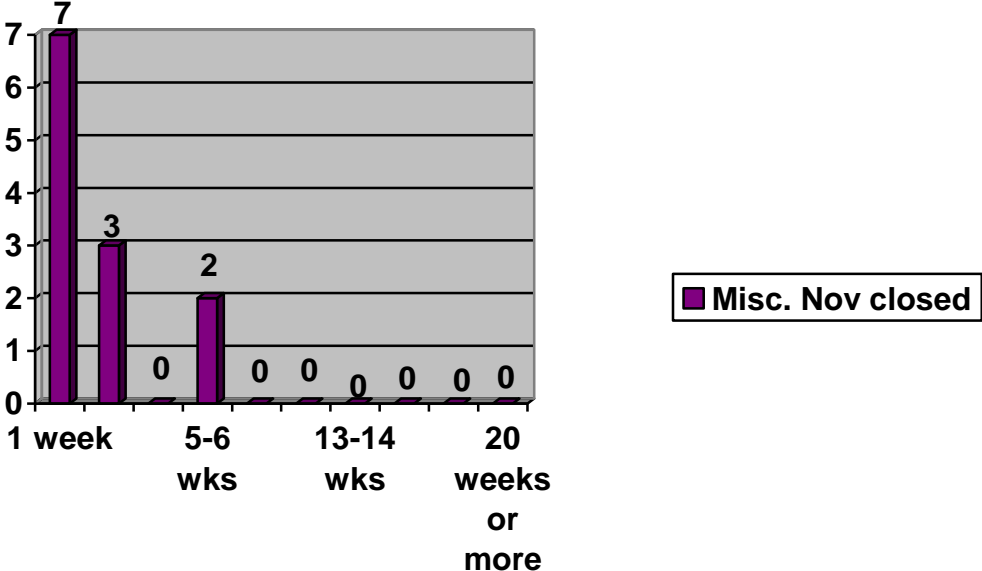
Miscellaneous applications: January 2009, 13 received in total, all have been closed.



Miscellaneous Applications: June 2009, 6 received in total, all have been closed.

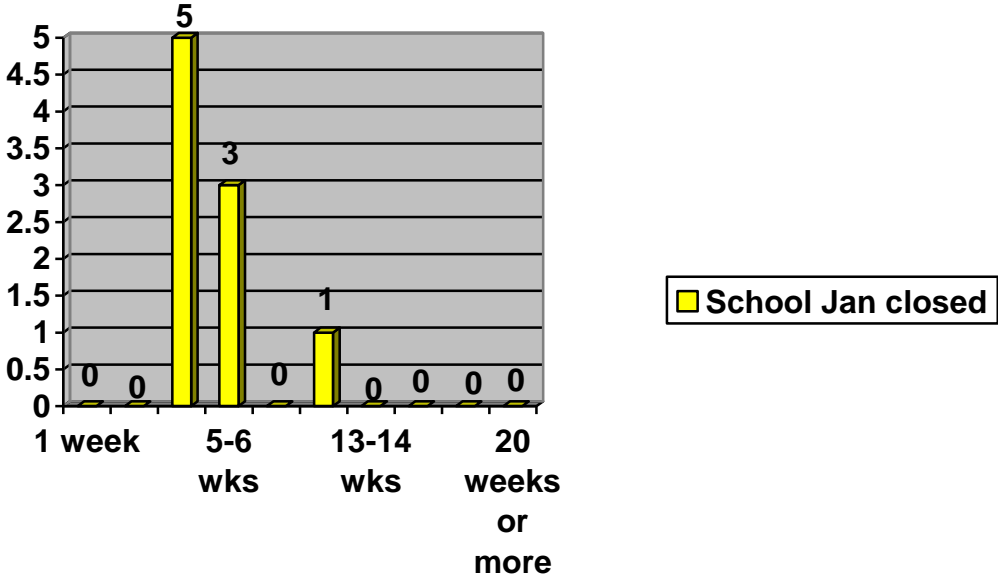


Miscellaneous applications: November 2009, 15 received in total, 12 have been closed.

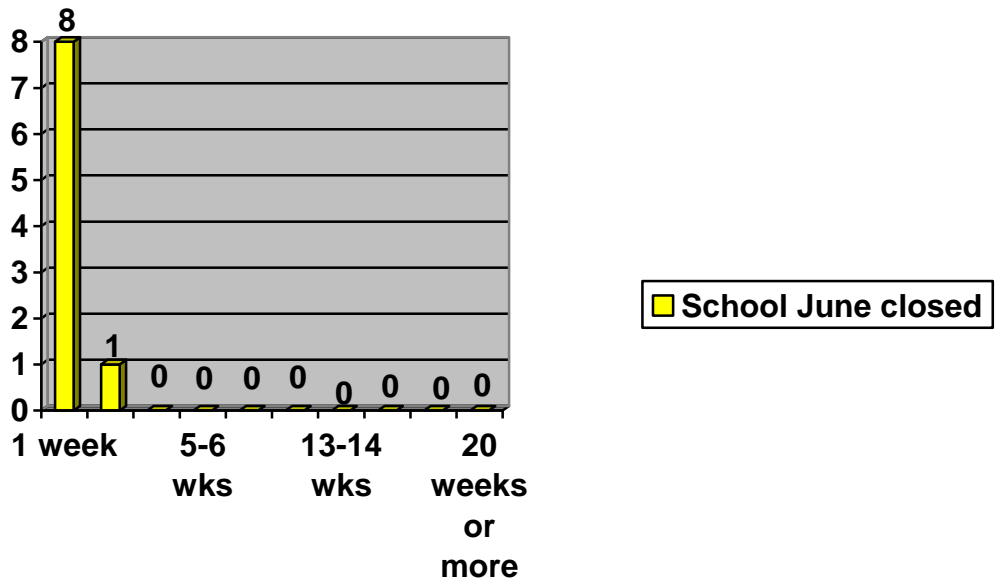


School awards

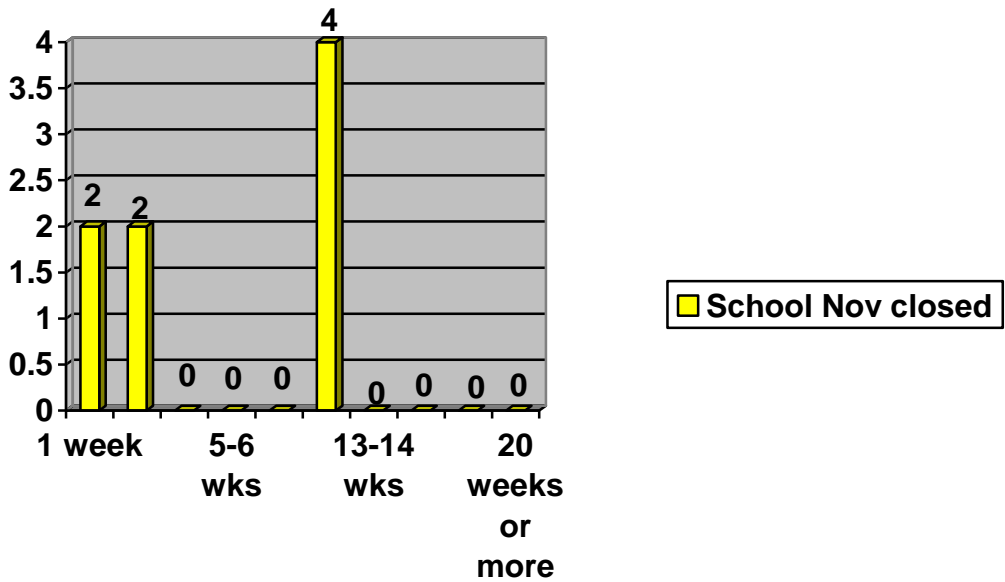
School awards: January 2009, 9 received in total, all have been closed.



School awards: June 2009, 9 received in total, all have been closed.



School awards: November 2009, 9 received in total, 8 have been closed



Teagasc Applications

No recognition requests concerning Teagasc were received in January 2009. 2 applications were received in June and 1 in November and all were closed within 2 weeks.