

QUALIFICATIONS

Introduction and points available

Academic qualifications

- Definitions of academic qualification levels
- Professional/vocational qualifications
- What supporting evidence is required for qualifications?
- Evidence required for academic qualifications
- Evidence required for professional/vocational qualifications
- Evidence required for applicants who have just graduated and are awaiting the issue of the certificate
- What if the applicant requests exceptional consideration of their application?
- Alternative evidence required for an academic qualification
- Alternative evidence required for a professional qualification
- Annex A – Guide to the UK Higher Education Framework

Introduction and points available

Applicants are awarded points according to the qualification they have achieved.

There are three scoring bands offered, depending on the level of the qualification.

Applicants can only claim points for one qualification.

PhD	Masters	Bachelors
50 points	35 points	30 points

In order to be awarded the respective points, qualifications have to meet the recognised standard of UK Bachelors, Masters or PhD, as validated by the current National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) database.

All qualifications and institutions should be checked with NARIC to ensure that they are correctly validated.

Definitions of academic qualification levels

Please note - The definitions in [Annex A](#) provide a guide to the UK Higher Education framework. Qualifications gained from overseas should not be assumed to be the same as the UK equivalent classification. The qualification must always be validated with UK NARIC as being equivalent to the UK qualification before any points are awarded.

Please note, it is highly unlikely that Bachelor degrees will have been awarded to individuals who are under 20 years of age. Therefore, if an application gives some cause for concern, caseworkers are advised to check the applicant's date of birth to determine their age at the time of the award of the degree.

Professional/vocational qualifications

If an applicant wishes to submit a vocational or professional qualification to meet the points scoring criteria, he must supply verifiable evidence from the UK professional body confirming the qualification's equivalence to a UK academic level. Where caseworkers have concerns about the evidence from the UK professional body, they may seek to verify the documents following the 'verification' section of these instructions.

If the applicant fails to provide evidence from the UK professional body, then caseworkers **should not** undertake their own investigation to establish the

equivalency of the qualification. The applicant should therefore be awarded zero points for the qualification in question.

If the caseworker is unsure that the evidence provided meets the requirements they should discuss the case with a manager.

What supporting evidence is required for qualifications?

Evidence required for an academic qualification (including MBA Provision)

Applicants should provide their **original degree certificate**, which should clearly show

- the date of the award; and
- the title of the award; and
- the name of the awarding institution; and
- their name.

Evidence required for a professional/vocational qualification

The applicant should provide their **original award certificate**, together with **confirmation from the appropriate UK professional body** confirming their qualification's equivalence to UK academic levels.

The original award certificate should clearly show all of the following:

- the date of the award;
- the title of the award;
- the name of the awarding institution;
- the applicant's name.

Original **provisional** certificates are not acceptable. If the applicant has only recently completed the qualification and the certificate has yet to be issued, they should provide an original letter from the awarding body and an academic transcript as outlined below.

The applicant must provide an original letter from the appropriate UK professional body confirming both the following:

- the name of the qualification including the country and awarding body;
- which UK academic level it is equivalent to.
-

Evidence required for applicants who have just graduated and are awaiting the issue of the certificate

If the applicant is awaiting graduation but has successfully completed their degree, then caseworkers can consider **an original letter** from the institution awarding the degree together with an **original academic transcript**.

The letter from the institution should be on the official headed paper of the institution and clearly show:

- The applicant's name; and
- Title of award; and
- Date of award, confirming that it will be awarded; and
- Date that the certificate will be issued.

If the letter does not state what qualification has been 'granted'/'conferred'/'awarded' it cannot be considered as suitable evidence.

The academic transcript must be on the institution's official paper and should show the following details:

- The name of the applicant
- The name of the academic institution;
- The course title

- Confirmation of the award.

If the transcript does not state what qualification has been ‘granted’/‘conferred’/‘awarded’, it cannot be considered as suitable evidence.

What if the applicant requests exceptional consideration of their application?

If there are exceptional and compelling reasons as to why the applicant is not able to provide the required evidence, then they may request exceptional consideration of their case. Please see the section of these instructions on ‘considering an application and evidence required to support and score an application’ for further information on exceptional consideration.

Alternative evidence required

Alternative evidence required for an academic qualification

In exceptional circumstances caseworkers can consider evidence of academic qualification in the form of a **letter from the awarding institution** AND an **academic transcript**.

The original letter on the headed paper of the awarding institution from an authorised official should show:

- The applicant’s name; and
- The qualification awarded; and
- The date of the award.

The academic transcript must include:

- The applicant’s name;
- The name of the academic institution; and
- Course details; and
- Confirmation of the award.

If the letter/transcript does not state what qualification has been ‘granted’/‘conferred’/‘awarded’ it cannot be considered as suitable evidence.

With PhD qualifications, it may be the case that an academic transcript is not produced, especially for those qualifications which have a research bias. In such circumstances, a letter from the awarding institution will be acceptable in the absence of a transcript. This letter should outline the key details requested for academic transcripts.

Alternative evidence required for a professional qualification

In exceptional circumstances caseworkers can consider evidence of a professional qualifications in the form of a **letter from the awarding institution** together with **confirmation from the appropriate UK professional body** confirming their qualification’s equivalence to UK academic levels.

The original letter on the headed paper of the awarding institution from an authorised official should show:

- The applicant’s name; and
- The qualification awarded; and
- The date of the award.

The applicant should also provide an original letter from the appropriate UK professional body confirming their qualification’s equivalence to UK academic levels. The letter from the UK professional body must confirm:

- The name of the qualification including the country and awarding body; and
- Which UK academic level it is equivalent to.

Annex A – Guide to the UK Higher Education framework

Higher National Certificate (HNC)/Diploma (HND)

HNC/HND is a higher education qualification in the UK and is a British Training and Enterprise Council (BTEC) qualification. The attainment level for an HND is one above that of a HNC and one below that of a Bachelors degree. The HND usually covers the same area as the first two levels of a Bachelors degree but does not have the final demanding level.

Therefore, HNC/HND are not degree level

Certificate of Higher Education

A certificate of Higher Education is the most basic level of qualification that can be gained in higher education.

This is not degree level

Lower degree

This is an intermediate level of Higher Education which includes the ordinary (non-Honours) degree, the Foundation degree, Diploma of Higher Education and other higher diplomas.

Some of these are classed as degree level, but it depends on the awarding institution. This should be confirmed by verifying the qualification with NARIC (see *Verifying evidence with UK NARIC* below).

Honours degree

Honours degrees form the largest group of higher education qualifications. Typical courses last for three years (if taken full-time) and lead to a Bachelors degree with Honours, having a title such as Bachelor of Arts (BA (Hons)).

This is degree level.

Post-Graduate Certificates or Graduate Diplomas

Type 1: These are short courses and professional ‘conversion’ courses, based largely on undergraduate material. They are taken usually by those who are already graduates in another discipline.

Type 2: There are some advanced short courses, often forming parts of Continuing Professional Development programmes, leading to Post-graduate Certificates and Post-graduate Diplomas.

Type 1: These can be classed as degree level but if the applicant does not have a

degree as well it should be checked with NARIC (see *Verifying evidence with UK NARIC* below) as established graduates usually take these.

Type 2: Some of these are Masters level. This depends on the complexity of the course so if the applicant is claiming a post graduate qualification as Masters level it should be checked with NARIC. NARIC has a flow chart that covers the levels of qualifications for each country at the end of the country page that will give more information on the level of post-graduate qualifications (see *Verifying evidence with UK NARIC* below).

Masters

Masters degrees are awarded after a taught course, a programme of research or a mixture of both. Most Masters courses last at least one year, longer courses often lead to an Mphil (see section on Mphil). Most Masters are usually taken by people with Honours degrees, however, some science or engineering degrees are 4 years long and award a Masters on completion.

This is Masters level

Master of Philosophy (Mphil)

This is an extended Masters qualification, which usually involves more in-depth research. This can be extended to a PhD if the student makes satisfactory progress.

Therefore, an **Mphil is Masters level**

Doctorates (PhD)

The titles PhD and D Phil are commonly used for doctorates awarded on the basis of original research. A doctorate normally requires the equivalent of three years full time study.

This is PhD level

Source - The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. This is an independent body funded by universities and the main higher education funding bodies.