



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# National Briefing Note on Education at a Glance 2023 OECD Indicators

## A Country Profile for Ireland

Prepared by the Statistics Division

## Introduction

The 2023 edition of Education at a Glance (EAG) was published by the OECD on Tuesday 12 September. EAG has been published by the OECD on a yearly basis since 1992. The reference year for data in this publication is the school year 2020/2021 for enrolments, the financial year 2020 for expenditure data, the calendar year 2021 for earnings and educational attainment (CSO) and the calendar year 2022 for labour market status (CSO).

EAG is organised into four chapters:

- A. The Output of Educational Institutions and the Impact of Learning
- B. Access to Education, Participation and Progression
- C. Financial and Human Resources Invested in Education
- D. Teachers, the Learning Environment and Organisation of Schools

This summary document aims to highlight some key indicators with a main focus on how Ireland compares with the OECD or EU25 averages. Levels of education are classified by a system referred to as ISCED-2011. For more details on OECD/EU25 average and classification of levels of education see [Technical Note 11](#).

The data presented in EAG is largely based on information provided through the annual UOE (UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat) data collection by the Department of Education. See [Technical Note 1](#). Other sources such as the Labour Force Survey (CSO), the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (CSO), the OECD-INES Network for the Collection and Adjudication of System-level Descriptive Information on Educational Structures, Policies and Practices (NESLI) and the OECD-INES Network on Labour Market, Economic and Social Outcomes of Learning (LSO) are also used.

Chapter C covers financial and human resources and includes estimates of education expenditure. The methodology used when compiling expenditure on education is laid out in a detailed manual on concepts, definitions and classifications published by the OECD. Expenditure covers not just government expenditure but also expenditure by households, by other private sources and international expenditure

A review of data sources and methods undertaken in 2019 and early 2020 has resulted in a number of significant changes to the estimates provided to the OECD. In particular:

- Retirement expenditure no longer includes pensions paid to former employees resulting in a fall in public expenditure in the primary and post-primary sectors in particular.
- Revisions to the treatment of expenditure by the National Training Fund.
- The inclusion of additional components of educational expenditure by the Department of Social Protection, such as supports for clothes, books and transport.
- Improved estimates of household expenditure resulting in increases in private expenditure across all sectors.
- Revised estimates of expenditure on research and development to bring it into line with the UOE manual.

As a result of these revisions the overall figure for education expenditure has been revised upwards while the split between public and private expenditure has shifted and is now more in line with the OECD average. The OECD average for 2020 is 84% public and 16% private while the split for Ireland is 84% public and 16% private. Prior to these revisions the split between for Ireland was around 91% public and 9% private.

It is important to note that due to these extensive revisions the expenditure data for pre-2015 is not comparable with expenditure data post-2015.

The entire pdf copy of Education at a Glance Indicators 2023 and the detailed Excel data tables can be downloaded here:

[Education at a Glance 2023 - OECD](#)

If you wish to consult or download data from last year's publication EAG 2022 go to:

[Education at a Glance 2022 - OECD](#)

## A. The Output of Educational Institutions and the Impact of Learning

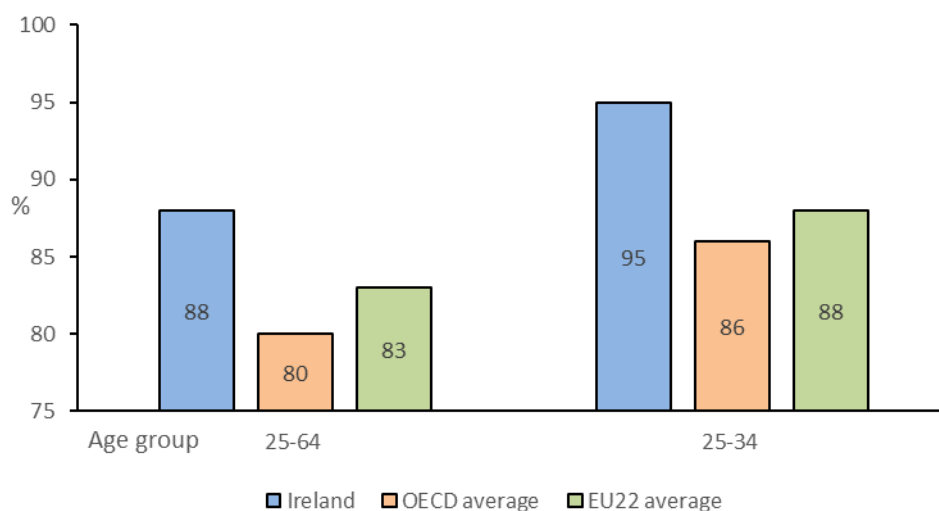
### Educational attainment in the adult population (A1)

#### Upper-secondary educational attainment

In 2022, 88 percent of persons aged between 25 and 64 had completed upper-secondary education or higher (Leaving Certificate or equivalent), leaving Ireland ranked thirteenth out of [38](#)<sup>1</sup> in this indicator. The corresponding figure in 2021 was 87 percent, with Ireland ranked fifteenth. For the younger age group of 25-34-year-olds Ireland was ranked fourth with 95 percent educated to upper-secondary or above, compared to 86 percent across the OECD. In 2021 the figure was 95 percent, leaving Ireland ranked fourth.

*EAG tables A1.1 & A1.3*

Figure A1: Population with least upper secondary education, by age group, 2022



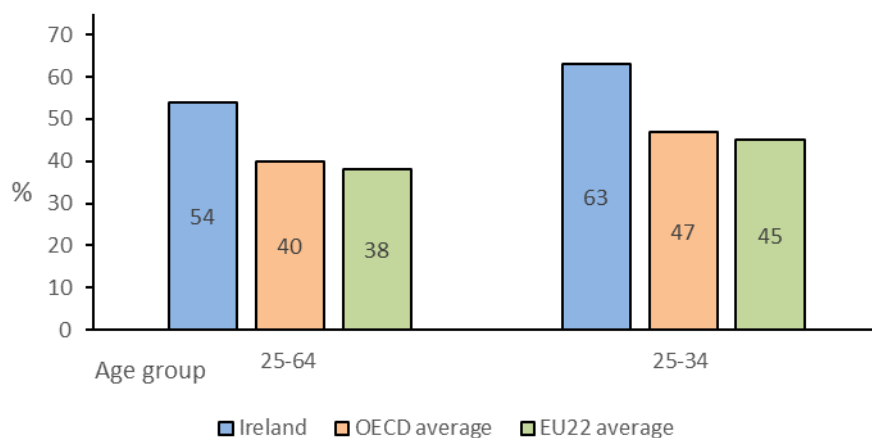
<sup>1</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020 OECD countries unanimously decided to invite Costa Rica to become a member of the Organisation. Costa Rica's accession, extending the OECD's membership to 38 countries, will take effect after the country has taken the appropriate steps at the national level to accede to the OECD Convention, and deposited its instrument of accession with the French government, the depository of the Convention.

## Educational attainment - other levels of education

Taking the adult population as a whole (aged 25-64), the rate of tertiary attainment in Ireland was above the OECD average (54% compared to 40%). Ireland ranked third for this indicator with Canada and Japan being the two top-ranked countries. The corresponding figure in 2021 was 54 percent, with Ireland being ranked third for this indicator. *EAG table A1.1.*

Among the younger age group of 25-34-year-olds Ireland ranked fourth in terms of tertiary attainment with 63 percent, well above the OECD average of 47 percent (or EU25 average of 45%). Figure A2. The Republic of Korea, Canada and Japan were the three top-ranked countries. The corresponding figure for this age group in 2021 was 63 percent, with Ireland being ranked fifth for this indicator. *EAG table A1.2.*

Figure A2: Population that has attained tertiary education, by age group, 2022



## Transition from education to work (A2)

On average across the OECD 14.7 percent of young people (aged 18-24) were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2022; in Ireland the corresponding figure was 9.3 percent, down from 12.1 percent in 2021. The three top-ranking countries for this indicator were the Netherlands, Iceland and Norway. In Ireland 33 percent of 18-24-year-olds were at work leaving Ireland ranked fifteenth. New Zealand, Israel and United Kingdom are the three top-ranking countries for this indicator with OECD and EU25 averages of 31 and 27 percent, respectively. 57 percent of 18-24-year-olds were in

education; Ireland was ranked seventeenth with OECD and EU25 averages of 54 and 60 percent, respectively. The three top-ranking countries for this indicator are Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Slovenia. *EAG table A2.1.*

### **Educational and skill attainment and the labour market (A3)**

It is well recognised that participation in the labour force, occupations held and earnings from employment are all strongly related to educational attainment.

Rates of employment for adults (25-34 year-olds) with below upper-secondary education fell from 44 percent in 2015 to 42 percent in 2022. Ireland ranked 36th for this indicator with Luxembourg and Iceland ranked top. The corresponding figures for those with upper-secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary attainment in Ireland were 68 percent in 2015 and 75 percent in 2022 with Ireland ranked 26th. The rates for tertiary graduates were 84 percent in 2015 and 90 percent in 2022 with Ireland ranked 8th. *EAG table A3.2.*

### **Individual labour market returns to education and social outcomes related to education (A4)**

In all OECD countries, adults with tertiary education earn more than adults with upper-secondary education who, in turn, earn more than adults with below upper-secondary education. In this way education may be viewed as an investment in future earnings with a 'premium' income arising from higher education and the associated skills and productivity of the person.

Using upper-secondary as a benchmark in 2021 adults aged 25-64 with short-cycle tertiary qualifications earned 23 percent more; those with a Bachelor's degree earned 47 percent more; and those with a Master's or Doctoral degree earned 84 percent more on average. The corresponding OECD averages were 22, 43 and 88 percent, respectively. *EAG table A4.1.*

## **B. Access to Education, Participation and Progression**

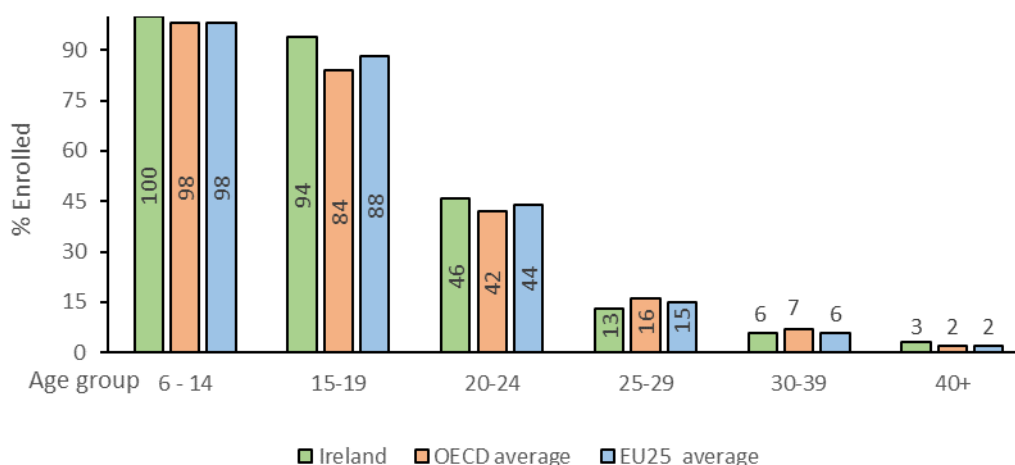
### **Participation outside of compulsory education (B1, B2, B3, B4)**

*Early childhood education:* EAG table B2.1 shows the enrolments rates of children aged under 2 and children aged 3 to 6 in pre-primary and primary education. For the 2021

academic year 100% of 5 and 6 year-olds were enrolled in either early childhood education or primary education. Ireland ranked joint 1st for this indicator along with France.

*Transition to adulthood and further/higher education:* The enrolment rates (at all levels) among 15-19 year-olds in Ireland, at 94 percent, exceed the OECD and EU25 averages and place Ireland at rank 3rd, with Lithuania and Slovenia ranked top. Ireland shares, in common with some other OECD countries, a pronounced pattern of completion of upper-secondary education and commencement of further and higher education around the age of 18. The enrolment rate for 20–24-year-olds was 46 percent, higher than the OECD average of 42 percent, illustrating a strong emphasis in Ireland on initial formal education and training with relatively less emphasis for older age groups. The three top-ranking countries for enrolment rates of 20-24-year-olds are Slovenia, the Netherlands and Greece. *EAG table B1.1.*

Figure B1: Participation in education, by age group, 2021



In Ireland women accounted for 35 percent of new entrants into short-cycle tertiary courses in STEM and 53 percent of new entrants in short-cycle tertiary courses in business, administration and law with OECD averages of 24 and 58 percent respectively. *EAG table B4.3.* In 2020 in Ireland the share of women amongst new entrants into short-cycle tertiary courses in STEM was 31% (*EAG 2022 Table B4.3*). The

2021 figures therefore represent an increase of 2 percent of female new entrants into short-cycle tertiary courses in STEM.

### C. Financial and Human Resources Invested in Education

#### Expenditure on education relative to national income or public spending (C4)

Public expenditure on education in Ireland stood at 10.8 percent of total public expenditure in 2020. Ireland was ranked third for this indicator with Chile and Mexico in the top ranks. The OECD average for 2020 was 9.2 percent. *EAG table C4.1.*

However, between 2019 and 2020 in Ireland government expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure fell by 10.6 percent. Ireland ranked 34<sup>th</sup> for this indicator. The average change in government expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure for all OECD countries between 2019 and 2020 was -6.5 percent. *EAG table C4.3.*

#### Expenditure on education per pupil (C1.1)

Expenditure on education per primary student in Ireland was \$9,589 (PPP adjusted) in 2020, below the OECD average of \$10,658. Similarly, among secondary students Ireland was below the OECD average with expenditure of \$11,379 and \$11,942 respectively (refer to Table 1 below). *EAG table C1.1.*

Table 1: Annual expenditure on educational institutions per student, \$ (PPP adjusted), 2020

|                | Primary                | Secondary              | Tertiary (Incl. R&D)   | Primary to Tertiary    |
|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Ireland        | 9,589                  | 11,379                 | 17,400                 | 12,194                 |
| OECD average   | 10,658                 | 11,942                 | 18,105                 | 12,647                 |
| Ranking (OECD) | 23 <sup>rd</sup> of 36 | 19 <sup>th</sup> of 36 | 19 <sup>th</sup> of 37 | 18 <sup>th</sup> of 36 |



## D. The Learning Environment and Organisation of Schools

### Organisation of compulsory general education (D1)

Table 2 presents the average number of instruction days per year in general education in the academic year 2022/2023. For primary schools in Ireland there were an average of 181 days of instruction compared with an OECD average of 186, while at lower secondary level the average number of instruction days per year was 164, compared to the OECD average of 184. *EAG table D1.2.*

Table 2: average number of instruction days per year, 2022/2023

|                | Primary                | Lower secondary        |
|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Ireland        | 181                    | 164                    |
| OECD average   | 186                    | 184                    |
| Ranking (OECD) | 20 <sup>th</sup> of 34 | 33 <sup>rd</sup> of 34 |

### Ratio of students to academic staff (D7)

The ratio of students to academic staff in third level institutions in Ireland during the 2020/2021 academic year, as presented in table 7, was 22.8 , the second highest in the OECD where the average was 16.8. *EAG Table D7.1.*

Table 7: Student-staff ratio in higher education

|  | 2020/2021                     |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Ireland (publicly funded only)                 | 22.8                          |
| OECD average (public and private institutions) | 16.8                          |
| Rank position (OECD)                           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> highest of 29 |
| Highest-ranking OECD Countries                 | Colombia, Ireland, Belgium    |

### Teachers' salaries (D3)

EAG Table D3.1 summarises data on salary levels of teachers in 2022 at primary and secondary level in absolute amounts. The data reflect statutory entitlements based on minimum qualification requirements and relate to salaries scales for full-time teachers only. For Ireland the starting salaries for teachers at primary, lower- and upper-secondary level are set according to the common salary scale<sup>2</sup>, whereas internationally it varies by level within secondary. Secondly, teacher allowances based on qualifications are not included in the data for Ireland. Note: statutory salaries reported in this indicator are not the same as actual expenditures on salaries. Differences in taxation, pension provision and various non-salary benefits are not factored into these comparisons. Salary data is reported in US dollars adjusted for purchasing power parity. Refer to [Technical Note 5](#) for further details.

When examined by change over time salaries in 2022 for all teachers in Ireland (primary, lower and upper secondary) were 3 percent lower than in 2015, compared with the OECD averages of 5 percent higher for primary, 4 percent higher for lower secondary and 4 percent higher for upper secondary. *EAG table D3.7.*

<sup>2</sup> This is the case for primary and post-primary teachers who were appointed from the 1 January 2011 as they are on a common salary scale that incorporates previous additional allowances such as academic allowances. There is a difference in the salaries of primary and post-primary teachers appointed before 1 January 2011 as they started on different points of the common salary scale (primary on the second point and post-primary on the third point) and different academic allowances were added.

Table 8: Teachers' salaries after 15 years of experience, \$ (PPP adjusted), 2022

|                                | Primary                          | Lower-second Level               | Upper-second Level               |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Ireland                        | 60,902 <sup>2</sup>              | 61,948 <sup>2</sup>              | 61,948 <sup>2</sup>              |
| OECD average                   | 49,968                           | 51,613                           | 53,456                           |
| EU25 average                   | 46,894                           | 48,806                           | 50,082                           |
| Ranking                        | 8 <sup>th</sup> highest of 32    | 8 <sup>th</sup> highest of 32    | 10 <sup>th</sup> highest of 32   |
| Highest-Ranking OECD Countries | Luxembourg, Germany, Netherlands | Luxembourg, Germany, Netherlands | Luxembourg, Germany, Netherlands |

## Technical Notes

1. *Data source:* The data drawn from the Labour Force Survey or the European Survey on Income and Living Conditions, together with data on GDP and population, have been drawn directly from Eurostat or the Central Statistics Office. Data on enrolment, graduates, entrants, expenditure and numbers of teachers have been supplied by the Statistics Section of the Department of Education, while data on statutory teacher salaries, working hours and surveys of school accountability have been provided by the Inspectorate following consultation with relevant sections of the Department. Data from the Programme of International Student Assessment were gathered by the Educational Research Centre in Ireland but sourced directly from the OECD.
2. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the statutory requirements on organisation of teachers' teaching time may have been adjusted temporarily in some countries. Data available at <http://stats.oecd.org>, Education at a Glance Database. Also, there are five different definitions of teaching time that countries reported to the OECD – typical teaching time (teaching time required from most teachers when no specific circumstances apply to teachers), maximum teaching time, minimum teaching time, average planned teaching time and actual teaching time. Ireland reports typical teaching time.
3. *Average class size* at junior cycle was previously estimated from data provided by the Post- Primary Timetables Database. During one reference week in September, all schools were asked to provide class-size information for all periods of instruction (classes). The total number of pupils in attendance in all periods of instruction is divided by the total number of periods of instruction during the reference week. This data source is no longer available. Table 6 :  
\*Public secondary schools in Ireland include all voluntary secondary schools (both fee-paying and non-fee-paying) along with community and comprehensive and schools. \*\*Lower secondary only (based on Department of Education Teacher Timetable Database).
4. *PTR for second level* in EAG differs from the figure shown in the DES Statistical Report (13.1) for the same year (2017/2018), due to the inclusion of pupils and teachers in other settings such as STTC, Youthreach and SOLAS.
5. *Teachers' Salaries:* Data on statutory teacher salaries are based on the salary scales and are derived from the 2021 NESLI Survey on Teachers and the Curriculum Data. Data presented in EAG 2022 for starting salary (or salary with

minimum qualification) refers to the first point on the scale on revised salary scale for new entrants to teaching at primary and post-primary level in accordance with Circular 0032/2013 and Circular 0005/2014. Unlike teachers appointed prior to 1 January 2011, the reported data do not include any additional allowances including qualification allowances. These were cut from the salaries of all new entrants to teaching in 2012.

6. *Number of days a teacher teaches per year:* The minimum school year for pre-primary and primary education is 183 days; for secondary education it is 167 days. In actuality, minimum = maximum.
7. For most indicators, an OECD average is shown along with an OECD total measure. The OECD average is calculated as the unweighted mean of the data values of all OECD countries for which data are available or can be estimated. It refers to an average of data values at the level of the national systems and can be used to determine how an indicator value for a given country compares with the value for a typical or average country. It does not take into account the absolute size of the education system in each country. The OECD total measure is calculated as a weighted mean of the data values of all OECD countries for which data are available or can be estimated. It reflects the value for a given indicator when the OECD area is considered as a whole.

As of 2021, the OECD comprised 37 member countries of which 22 are members of the European Union. These are referred to as the EU25 (Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Slovenia, Spain and Sweden). Hence, there are five EU member states (27 minus 22) that are not members of the OECD (and are not included in EAG) while there are 14 OECD member countries that are not members of the European Union but are included in EAG. Data for a number of countries that are in partnership with the OECD including China, Russia and Brazil, are shown in some tables but these are shown separately within the table and are not included in the calculation of the OECD averages. On 28 April 2020, Colombia had formally become an OECD Member, the 37th country to do so in the Organisation's near 60-year history. On 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020 OECD countries unanimously decided to invite Costa Rica to become a member of the Organisation.

<sup>1</sup>Costa Rica's accession, extending the OECD's membership to 38 countries, will take effect after the country has taken the appropriate steps at the national level

to accede to the OECD Convention, and deposited its instrument of accession with the French government, the depository of the Convention.

Comparative data on education and training may be accessed at the following website: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> and follow links to Database -> Population and Social Conditions -> Education and Training.

8. The methodology used when compiling expenditure on education is laid out in a detailed manual on concepts, definitions and classifications published by the OECD. Expenditure covers not just government expenditure but also expenditure by households, by other private sources and international expenditure.

A review of data sources and methods undertaken in 2019 and early 2020 has resulted in a number of significant changes to the estimates provided to the OECD. In particular:

- Retirement expenditure no longer includes pensions paid to former employees resulting in a fall in public expenditure in the primary and post-primary sectors in particular.
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- Improved estimates of household expenditure resulting in increases in private expenditure across all sectors.
- Revised estimates of expenditure on research and development to bring it into line with the UOE manual.

As a result of these revisions (2017 data reported in 2020) the overall figure for education expenditure has been revised upwards while the split between public and private expenditure has shifted and is now more in line with the OECD average. The OECD average is 83% public and 17% private while the revised split for Ireland is 82.5% public and 17.5% private; previously this had been 91% public and 9% private.

It is important to note that due to these extensive revisions expenditure data pre-2015 is not comparable with expenditure data post-2015. Revised estimates for 2015 and 2016 have been updated on the OECD website available [here](#).

9. *Number of hours a teacher teaches per day*: For primary education: (5 hours 40 minutes) - (40 minutes breaks and recreation) = 5 hours; for secondary education, 22 hours per week (maximum) are required = 4.4 teaching hours on average per day.
10. *Teacher working time* refers to the normal working hours of a full-time teacher. According to formal policy in a given country, working time can variously refer only to the time directly associated with teaching (and other curricular activities for students such as assignments and tests, but excluding annual examinations) or the time directly associated with teaching and hours devoted to other activities related to teaching, such as lesson preparation, counselling students, correcting assignments and tests, professional development, meetings with parents, staff meetings and general school tasks. Working time does not include paid overtime.

## 11. ISCED Coding (as applied to Ireland)

| <i>ISCED-2011 Level</i> | <i>Level of Education</i>    | <i>Description</i>   |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| ISCED 0                 | Pre-primary                  | The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. Early Start classes in primary schools   |
| ISCED 1                 | Primary                      | All classes in National Schools including junior and senior infant classes plus 1 <sup>st</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> class. The information provided in indicators D1 focused on the period of 1 <sup>st</sup> Class to 6 <sup>th</sup> Class: the six years of compulsory education in primary education: It should be noted that ISCED 1 includes the two years of infant education but the data in relation to Infants for Indicator D1 was not requested. This is because the infant classes fall outside the definition of compulsory schooling |
| ISCED 2                 | Lower Secondary              | Junior Cycle + some FETAC NFQ level 2 courses  |
| ISCED 3                 | Upper Secondary              | Senior Cycle + BIM, Teagasc, Solas, Fáilte programmes at NFQ levels 4 and 5; General: Transition Year, Leaving Certificate, LCVP, LCA and VTOS; Vocational: some SOLAS programmes  |
| ISCED 4                 | Post-secondary, non-tertiary | Post-Leaving Certificate courses + apprenticeships + Fáilte, Teagasc programmes at NFQ levels 5 or 6 (but not Higher Certificate). ISCED 4C programmes are not designed to lead directly to ISCED 5A or 5B. These programmes lead directly to labour market or other ISCED 4 programmes. Examples include apprenticeships, Teagasc farming or horticulture certificate/diploma and the National Craft Certificate at NFQ levels 5 or 6   |
| ISCED 5                 | Tertiary                     | NFQ levels 6 (higher). First Higher Certificate (typically 2 yrs)  |
| ISCED 6                 | Tertiary                     | NFQ levels 7 & 8. Ordinary Bachelor Degree (typically 3 yrs); Second Ordinary Bachelor Degree (3 yrs). First Honours Bachelor's Degree (3-4 yrs); Honours Bachelor's Degree in (Veterinary) Medicine/Dental Science/Architecture (5-6 yrs); Second Postgraduate Diploma (1 yr)   |



|         |                 |   |
|---------|-----------------|---|
| ISCED 7 | Tertiary        | NFQ level 9. Master's Degree (taught) (1 yr); Master's Degree (whether taught or by research) (2 yrs) |
| ISCED 8 | Tertiary<br>PhD | Doctoral Degree (PhD)   |