

Acknowledgment of qualifications

Introduction

The introduction of universal pre-school provision and with it the requirement that pre-school leaders should have a minimum of a full Award at Level 5 to qualify for the standard capitation rate and a full Award at Level 7 to qualify for the higher capitation rate, has left a number of people with difficulties in getting recognition for their qualifications. There are 3 different categories:

1. Graduates of the Montessori College in Milltown, Dublin
2. Graduates from the Higher Diploma in Arts in Early Childhood Montessori Education run by St Nicholas Montessori College
3. Graduates from Diploma programmes in Montessori Education offered by Portobello College and Montessori Education Centre which pre-dated the colleges FETAC accreditation.

These difficulties were identified in 2010. In the absence of a workable solution, the D/CYA has decided that that anyone with these qualifications is giving an amnesty (once certain conditions are fulfilled) and allowed to qualify for the higher capitation rate (in the case of the 1st and 2nd category) and for the standard capitation rate (Montessori Diploma graduates).

2. Graduates of the Montessori College in Milltown, Dublin holding the 2 year diploma award.

The Montessori College in Milltown, Dublin is affiliated to the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and their diploma courses are not on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Most of the graduates who are participating in the ECCE scheme have the 2 year diploma and a decision on whether that 2 year award qualifies an individual for the higher capitation rate was deferred pending the outcome of the alignment process of the AMI award with the NFQ. That alignment process has been paused while the new agency, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, reviews all of its inherited policies in order to determine their consistency and continued appropriateness to its functions.

As the higher capitation rate was introduced to acknowledge that quality in an early years service is directly related to the qualifications of the staff working with children, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs will acknowledge the specialised pedagogical

training and is prepared to award the higher capitation rate to AMI graduates up to and including graduates in the 2009/2010 year (all other qualifying criteria being met). The cut-off year is because the requirement for a Level 7 qualification was known by 2010.

2. Graduates from the St Nicholas Higher Diploma in Arts in Early Childhood Montessori Education.

St Nicholas Montessori College in DunLaoghaire offers a range of HETAC accredited programmes in Montessori Education. Amongst these currently is a Level 8 Higher Diploma in Arts in Early Childhood Montessori Education which is offered as a post graduate one year course and is a major award at Level 8. The course was originally rejected as eligible for the higher capitation grant as the content did not equal the Bachelor degree offered over three years and did not require a relevant discipline as an undergraduate qualification for access to the programme. Since then a programmatic review of all St Nicholas awards has taken place in 2012 and new programmes at Level 7 and 8 have been agreed by HETAC. St Nicholas have revised the criteria for entry onto the Higher Diploma and now require a cognate undergraduate degree as an entry requirement.

The higher capitation rate was introduced to acknowledge that quality in an early year's service is directly related to the qualifications of the staff working with children. The pedagogical content of this course is at a much deeper level than that offered in Level 5 courses. For that reason, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs will acknowledge the specialised training and is prepared to award the higher capitation rate for pre-school leaders with this qualification (all other criteria being met).

3. Graduates from the Level 6 programme in Montessori Education offered by private colleges including Portobello College/Montessori Education Centre.

In 2005, Portobello College applied for and received accreditation for a suite of 6 component awards in Montessori Education at Level 6. They ran the programme in October 2005 with the first graduates receiving FETAC accredited awards in 2006. It wasn't possible to retrospectively assess programmes delivered prior to FETAC accreditation so graduates prior to 2006 have diplomas that were awarded by the colleges themselves. When the ECCE scheme was first introduced, there was an expectation that an RPL system would be introduced to allow individuals who held non-nationally accredited awards to demonstrate that they had sufficient depth of knowledge to be a pre-school leader and qualify for the standard capitation rate. Because there isn't an RPL system in place 3 years on from the introduction of the ECCE scheme, a person holding a non-nationally accredited qualification cannot get recognition for the course they attended. The D/CYA has decided that an amnesty should apply for people holding non-nationally accredited qualifications from Portobello and from the Montessori Education Centre that pre-dated FETAC accreditation and where the course was of, at least, a year's duration. These graduates are eligible for the standard capitation rate (all other conditions being met)