

Grandfathering Declaration Extension – Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I know if I have signed a grandfathering declaration or not?

If you signed the original Grandfathering Declaration you should have a copy in your possession or in the possession of your employer. Recognised Grandfathering Declarations are those that were dated on or before 30 June 2016 and were stamped by the local CCC. If you do not have this, your local County Childcare Committee (CCC) will have their own copy and should be able to assist.

2. What is an appropriate qualification?

If you work with children in a centre-based early learning and care service, an appropriate qualification is one which meets the minimum requirements as set out in the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, i.e. a major award in early learning and care / early childhood care and education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Minister. Further information on appropriate qualifications can be found on the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's (DCEDIY) website: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/297c05-early-years-recognised-qualifications/>

If you are Tusla-registered childminder, under the commitments in the National Action Plan for Childminding (www.gov.ie/childminding) an appropriate qualification will be the Foundation Training programme that will be developed in the coming months under the Action Plan.

3. How long is the extension for?

The duration of the extension has not yet been confirmed. It will depend on a number of factors such as the duration of appropriate courses. However, it is likely to be at least 1 year to allow participants to complete courses part-time while working. Further details will be made available through CCCs in the coming weeks.

4. Will there be funding available? If yes, what will it be for?

The original 4 rounds of the Learner Fund were not available to those who signed the grandfathering declaration. This was due to the fact that they were afforded an additional five years after the minimum qualifications requirement came into force to either leave the sector or obtain a relevant qualification. However, there may be some supports available to prospective students depending on the course. Further details will be made available through CCCs. The DCEDIY also encourages employers to provide reasonable accommodations and assistance to their staff regarding any remaining course fees.

5. Can I move between services while on the extension?

Yes. This has always been an option since the beginning of the grandfathering period and will continue to be the case. However, you must inform your CCC if you move services during the extension period, so that they can continue to contact you in relation to the extension.

6. Can staff who signed a Grandfather Declaration be paid a lower rate of pay?

The DCEDIY is not the employer of early learning and care practitioners. Pay and conditions are a matter for employers.

7. Will HR advice be available to services regarding staff who will not apply for the extension and leave by September 2021?

The County Childcare Committees will be in a position to provide some practical advice to services. Specialist HR advice may also be available from representative bodies for service providers.

8. How long do I have to get my qualification?

This depends on the duration of the extension, which is yet to be confirmed.

9. Will eligible staff seeking to extend the Grandfathering Declaration have to register with their local CCC? If yes, how will they do this?

Yes. In order to apply for the grandfathering extension, you will be asked initially just to make contact with your local CCC to talk through your situation and support needs for undertaking an appropriate qualification. At a later date you will have to provide your CCC with confirmation of enrolment in an appropriate course. After enrolment on an appropriate course, your CCC will issue an extension letter which will be formally approved by the DCEDIY. This letter will be acceptable for the purposes of Tusla inspections.

10. Can staff be redeployed within a service, perhaps AIM?

The deployment of staff within a service is a matter for the service provider. A staff member who avails of the extension to the Grandfathering Declaration can be employed on the same basis as under the terms of the original Grandfathering Declaration, which includes the possibility of providing additional assistance under the AIM programme.

For staff who do not take up the opportunity of this extension, it will remain possible to employ those staff in roles that do not require a minimum qualification, such as in school-age childcare or in roles that do not involve working with children.

11. Could a clear step-by-step guide for the exit strategy for those leaving be provided?

The CCC is available to provide some practical advice to services. Specialist HR advice may also be available from representative bodies for service providers.

12. If there are current staff employed unqualified who haven't signed a Grandfathering Declaration can they avail of the same terms?

No. Under the 2016 Regulations, there should be no other unqualified staff employed to work directly with preschool children. This extension is only available to those who signed the original Grandfathering Declaration.

There is currently no qualification requirement for school-age childcare.

13. How will it be covered by Tusla until I get my qualification?

An amendment to the 2016 Regulations will be made by the Minister for Children in advance of the 31 August 2021 deadline. This amendment will clarify the status from a regulatory perspective. Tusla's function is to inspect services in terms of their compliance with the regulations. Therefore, they will take into account the Grandfathering Declaration extension. Nevertheless, as with the current Grandfathering Declarations, it will be necessary for the staff member and service to have a letter from DCEDIY, stamped by the local CCC, confirming their status. These letters will be issued when extensions are granted.

14. What qualifications are available in my area?

Depending on where you are based, there may be a number of courses in your area. There might also be online options available. For further information on this, please contact your local CCC.

15. I am an experienced practitioner. Is my experience sufficient to meet the minimum requirements?

No. Experience on its own does not suffice as an alternative to the minimum qualifications requirement. The recognition of prior experience or learning should be discussed with your education/training provider.

16. Are older QQI or FETAC modules (those over 5 years) still valid? Who will assess this and help identify what additional modules I need to complete?

Generally, QQI (formerly FETAC) modules have an expiry date. As such, some older modules may now be invalid. Queries on this should be directed to QQI (<https://www.qqi.ie/>) or discussed with your education / training provider.

17. I have completed several QQI level 5 modules. How do I know if these suffice?

For level 5 major awards conferred by QQI, your award certificate should clearly indicate whether you have received a major or minor award. If this is not clear, your education/training provider should be able to clarify this matter for you. Alternatively, you could contact QQI (<https://www.qqi.ie/>) who will be able to confirm.

18. What is the difference between a minor and major award?

A minor award generally covers a specific area of study. They are limited in duration and content. Several (usually 8) minor awards make up a major award. A major award in early learning and care normally involves the completion of three mandatory modules and a selection of optional modules. Further information on this can be found on QQI's website (<https://www.qqi.ie/>). Details on the QQI Level 5 major award in Early Childhood Care and Education can be found at:

<https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/AwardDetails?awardCode=5M2009>

19. If I signed the grandfathering declaration and have left the sector, can I avail of the extension and return to working in the sector?

No. This extension is only available to those working in the sector.

20. If I signed the grandfathering declaration and am currently working in School-Age Childcare or in a role within an Early Learning and Care service that does not involve working with children, can I avail of the extension, to allow me also to work with children in Early Learning and Care?

Yes, provided you undertake an appropriate qualification for Early Learning and Care.