

# FAQs about the forest machine operator courses

## 1. Who can apply to do the forest machine operator courses?

Anyone over the age of 17 is eligible to apply. It is recommended applicants with no experience of the forest harvesting industry hold a minimum of a [Level 5 Forestry](#) qualification or equivalent.

## 2. What previous qualifications are required to do the course?

Applicants are required to have completed manual handling training, occupational first aid and chainsaw courses before applying. These courses are completed as part of the Level 5&6 Forestry course at Ballyhaise College.

## 3. How long will the course take?

The minimum length of time for each course is approximately 12 weeks. This includes completing simulator tasks, mentor days, an induction period (4 weeks) and on site work experience (6 weeks). This time may be extended depending on a candidate's experience and initiative. You must complete the forwarder operator course before progressing to the harvester operator course.

## 4. How much does the course cost?

The student must cover the cost of course registration and administration charges of approximately €330.00. This includes application process, QQI certification for component minor award, email/phone/postal correspondence, QQI registration and results verification, exam administration and invigilation, simulator access. Machine operation assessment is organised for registered participants who have successfully completed all other parts of the course. This does not include the cost to the mentor for the use of the machine for onsite work experience hence the importance of the induction period.

## 5. How do I apply for the course?

An application form is available directly from Teagasc Ballyhaise College, Co. Cavan.

## 6. What is the QQI?

QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) is an awarding body facilitating providers of education and training programmes in issuing certificates (parchments) to people who have reached the standard for a QQI award. The certificate is a formal confirmation by QQI that the named person has demonstrated the knowledge, skill and competence required to achieve the named award.

## 7. Is there a recognised qualification?

All certificates issued by QQI list awards on the NFQ (National Framework of Qualifications). This ensures the certificate is nationally and internationally recognised and has many potential uses; for example, for further / higher education or employment in Ireland or abroad.

The Forest Forwarder Operator course is a QQI Level 5 Minor Component Award and the Forest Harvester Operator Course is a QQI Level 6 Minor Component Award.

## 8. How does a person get the certification?

In order for learners to obtain a certificate, certain conditions must to be met:

- The Provider's programme must be validated by QQI.
- The Provider must assess learners in a fair and consistent way
- Learners must achieve a pass/successful grade or higher in their assessments.

### **9. Who does the QQI certification?**

Teagasc is a registered provider for QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) Awards and as such adheres to all the relevant quality assurance standards necessary to provide valid educational programmes on the national framework of qualifications. Teagasc operates an internal Educational Management System which records assessments and material put forward for internal and external verification of awards.

### **10. Are there some elements of this course that are compulsory, in order to get QQI?**

Learners must successfully complete assessments for all the learning outcomes outlined in the course specifications. This includes simulator tasks, theory examination, specific mentor days, on site experience with a recognised mentor and forest machine operator assessment. Full details are available in the course prospectus.

### **11. How does QQI compare with City& Guilds/NPTC Certification?**

The QQI qualification provides additional specialised forestry knowledge and skills relating to safety, environment and site operations which are considered to be essential when working in forest harvesting but are not included in the existing NPTC/C&G certification. The QQI qualification complements the existing City & Guilds/NPTC qualification; it is not intended to replace existing City & Guilds/NPTC certification.

### **12. Can one get City& Guilds/NPTC still, without doing the course?**

You can still get an NPTC/C&G qualification independently at any time. If you decide to do the QQI award you will have to complete a practical machine operation assessment with a designated QQI assessor.

### **13. If an existing operator already has City& Guilds/NPTC, is there any need to do the course and get QQI certification?**

There is currently no obligation to get QQI certification and existing NPTC/C&G qualifications are still valid to work in forest harvesting operations.

### **14. What is the benefit in having both different certifications as a machine operator?**

The QQI certification provides access to a structured career path with opportunities for progression to higher qualifications if desired. The QQI certification also addresses gaps in forestry knowledge relating to machine operation & production oriented skills, timber skills, silviculture, environment, health & safety and operations management.

### **15. If a person only wants to learn some aspects of the course programme, how does that work?**

The course programme manual is available for self-directed learning and reference. You can access this material at any time without participating formally in a course or course assessment. Access to the programme material is available online and through the course administrator at Ballyhaise College

### **16. How does an operator's manager get access to what's going on?**

The course requires participation in training days away from the usual work site and completion of specific tasks. Communication and discussion with managers should take place before registering for the programme.

### **17. Will a trainee operator get paid while being trained?**

As part of the current practical learning period policy students on work placement receive an allowance of €120.00 per week. Any additional payment is at the discretion of the host mentor. (Payment usually corresponds with the trainee's experience and initiative)

### **18. Can a trainee choose their mentor?**

For induction and on site work experience to be considered as part of the programme requirements, new mentors must be registered with the QQI training provider (Teagasc) and fulfil the necessary criteria. You must give mentor details when applying for the component award.

Participants in the Level 5 Forestry course at Ballyhaise who do the FMO course as an elective component award will be provided with a list of potential mentors who are already registered with Teagasc.

### **19. Does a trainee have to do simulator training?**

Trainees are required to complete a series of tasks on the simulator as part of the course programme. These are arranged once the trainee has formally registered on the course.

### **20. Can existing operators have access to course material?**

The course material is available from the course coordinator at Ballyhaise College.

### **21. For an experienced operator, with NPTC, is it hard to get QQI Qualification and what would the benefit be?**

Operators with C&G/NPTC forest machine qualifications will have to complete a practical machine operation assessment with a designated QQI assessor, but any prior experience should be an advantage. Theoretical examination, mentor days, and a written logbook/record of site experience need to be completed to achieve QQI qualification. Operational skills and availability of a mentor and a machine will be a distinct advantage. The course material will be available in advance so you can consider if it is the right option for you and your circumstances before committing to the assessment process.

### **22. On what type of machine will I be trained?**

The age and condition of the machines will depend on what the mentor has available on a particular site. This can vary but every effort is made to make sure registered mentors have suitable machinery available for training which would reflect the type of machine used on daily basis for commercial timber production. At no time should operator safety be compromised and work should cease immediately if machines are deemed unsuitable for the work being carried out.