

What is the QCF?

The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) provides a new way of recognising achievement through the award of credit for units and qualifications; it has been designed to simplify the current qualifications systems making it easier to understand and more responsive to employer and learner needs.

What are the anticipated benefits of the QCF?

Simplicity - the consistent approach to titling will make it easier to understand and recognise the differences between qualifications.

Flexibility - learners and providers will have access to more flexible ways of learning through credit transfer and accumulation

Employer-recognition - employers will be able to have their in-house training accredited and recognised

Will qualifications look different in the QCF?

All qualifications in the QCF will have standardised titles which clearly show their level, size and content:

- Levels range from Entry to Level 8 (as with the current National Qualifications Framework)
- Qualification size will be shown in terms of Credit:
 - Award = 1-12 Credits
 - Certificate = 13-36 Credits
 - Diploma = 37 Credits or more
- Qualification content will be clearly expressed in the qualification title

Each qualification, and unit within it, will have a Credit value and a Level. The level of a unit is not determined by the qualification it is in so qualifications can contain units which are at different levels.

What is Credit?

When learners complete units or qualifications they will achieve Credit; Credit is determined by how long it would take the average learner to complete all the Learning Outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the Assessment Criteria, where one Credit is equal to 10 hours notional learning time.

What is the difference between Learning Time and Guided Learning Hours?

Learning Time is the average time taken by learners to complete all the Learning Outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the Assessment Criteria.

Guided Learning Hours (GLH), sometimes referred to as 'contact time,' are the number of hours of teacher-supervised or directed study time required to teach a qualification or unit of a qualification

What will happen to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)?

The NQF will continue to operate until the end of December 2010; the latest date any candidates will be able to be registered on qualifications in the NQF will be 31st December 2010; this date may be earlier for qualifications which have already been migrated to the QCF. From this date registered candidates will have the usual run out time to complete their qualifications; 1 year for Level 1, 2 years for Level 2 and 3 years for Levels 3 to 5.

What happens after December 2010?

Qualifications are currently being migrated across from the NQF to the QCF so the QCF will eventually replace the NQF and from 1st January 2011 all candidate registrations will be on QCF qualifications.

What will happen to NVQs?

The QCF does not contain qualification types as there are currently in the NQF; instead qualifications are defined in terms of size (i.e. Award, Certificate or Diploma) and level. However, in some cases it will be possible for NVQ to appear within a qualification title, provided that these qualifications meet the appropriate criteria as defined by Ofqual. In many cases current qualifications will look very similar when they are transferred to the QCF.

Information about the operating rules for using the term 'NVO' in a QCF qualification title can be found on the Ofqual website.

How will the existing qualifications I offer be affected?

Existing Qualifications (NVOs or VROs) will not be extended beyond 31st December 2010, so any candidates wishing to complete existing qualifications must be registered prior to this; this date may be earlier for qualifications which have already been migrated to the QCF. To find out when the qualifications you offer will be migrated to the QCF check PAA\VO-SET's Migration Timetables which can be found on the QCF section of the PAA\VO-SET Website www.paa-uk.org

How can I find out about qualifications and units in the QCF?

Qualifications and units which have been accredited onto the QCF can be found on the Regulatory Authorities National Database of Accredited Qualifications: www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk; use the Qualification Type filter and select QCF.

Can learners and providers create their own qualifications?

Learners can take any number or cluster of units offered by providers; however they will not be able to combine them and rename them as their own qualification. A qualification will be achieved by gaining the units specified by the appropriate 'Rules of Combination.'

What are Rules of Combination (RoC)?

ROCs show the credits that need to be achieved, through a combination of particular units, so that the qualification can be awarded; these are developed by Sector Skills Councils, Awarding Organisations and other approved organisations.

What is a Learner Record?

The Learner Record will be an electronic record of units, credit and qualifications achieved by a learner; and for this learners will need to have a Unique Learner Number (ULN). The Learner Registration Service (LRS) is responsible for issuing ULNs and Centres will need to register with the LRS to obtain ULNs for their learners. When learners are registered or certificated Awarding Organisations will need to be informed of learners ULNs so that learner records can be populated with QCF achievements.

Where can I find out more?

The following links provide further information about the QCF:

Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) - <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/19674.aspx>

- For information on Credit and Level within the QCF and the anticipated benefits of the new framework.

Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual) - <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/51.aspx>

- For information on the Regulatory Arrangements for the QCF.

MIAP - <http://www.miap.gov.uk/>

- For information on the Learner Registration Service (LRS), the UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP) and Unique Learner Numbers (ULNs).

If you have any other questions about the QCF not included in this Q & A please email info@paa-uk.org