

Qualifications
& Credit
Framework

Guidelines for writing credit-based units of assessment for the Qualifications and Credit Framework

Version 4



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1 Introduction to the guidelines

1.1 Background to the QCF

The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) and the qualifications regulators for Northern Ireland and for Wales worked together to develop the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The QCF is a framework designed to support a demand-led approach to skills based on the building up and transfer of credit awarded for learning in a flexible, responsive and inclusive manner.

The effectiveness of the new framework was evaluated in a series of tests and trials over a period of two years (April 2006 to May 2008). Evidence generated through the tests and trials, as well as the fast-track review programme (November 2007 to July 2008), led to a proposal for implementation within the QCF final business case. This was submitted to and signed off by the then Secretary of State for Innovation, University and Skills, John Denham, in November 2008.

1.2 Context of the guidelines

QCDA, the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) and the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) have developed this guidance for those stakeholders writing units of assessment to meet the requirements set out in the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*.¹

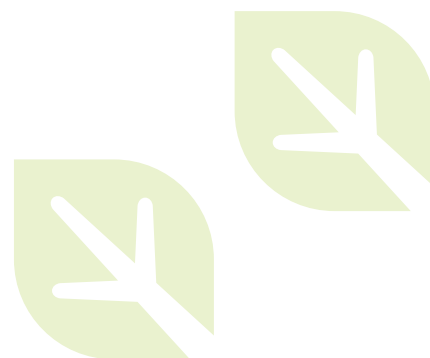
These guidelines focus on the principles and process of unit development and draw significantly on the documentation produced as a result of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) project, the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) project,² the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and additional guidance produced by QCDA during the first year of implementation of the QCF.

The qualifications regulators have produced guidance on designing inclusive vocational qualifications to ensure organisations develop units that do not discriminate. It is anticipated that stakeholders will use these guidelines alongside this set of guidance, when developing good quality units for the QCF.³

The information provided in shaded boxes throughout this document is taken directly from the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*.

1.3 Design specifications of QCF units from the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*

The design specifications for QCF units of assessment are set out in the template in Annex A. The template is divided into two sections. The first section is for the set of achievements based on the specifications detailed on the following pages. The second section of the template is for recording the additional information that accompanies the achievements. Some of the fields in the additional information section need to be completed such as the unit aim, while others are optional, such as the assessment requirements. Guidelines on completing the additional information section are available in Annex B.



¹ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726).

² See *Report of the NICATS project* (April 1996 – March 1999) at www.nicats.ac.uk under 'resources'.

³ *Fair access by design: Guidance for awarding bodies and regulatory authorities on designing inclusive vocational qualifications* (RTF/06/2656).

Definition of a unit

General

1.1 The qualifications regulators require all organisations operating within the QCF to comply with all those design specifications relevant to their responsibilities.

Units

1.2 Units form the building blocks of all qualifications in the QCF. All qualifications submitted for accreditation in the QCF must be built solely from units that are defined according to the design specifications set out in paragraphs 1.3 – 1.7.

1.3 All units must have a unit title that:

- a is clear, concise and reflects the content (the information in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria) of the unit
- b is meaningful in its own right and does not make reference to any information outside the unit, including other units, qualifications or standards
- c does not include reference to the levels of the QCF or to any terms that may be taken to refer to a level of achievement.

1.4 All units must contain learning outcomes that:

- a set out what a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do as the result of a process of learning
- b are clear and coherent, and expressed in language that is understandable by the learners for whom the unit is intended or by a helper or adviser where the learners themselves are not able to understand the learning outcomes

c are expressed in a manner that addresses individual learners in the third person and will make sense to a learner both before a unit is offered and after the learning outcomes have been achieved

d are capable of assessment and, in conjunction with the assessment criteria related to that outcome, set a clear assessment standard for the unit.

1.5 All units must contain assessment criteria that:

- a specify the standard a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that the learning outcomes of that unit have been achieved
- b relate to an individual learning outcome in language consistent with it
- c are sufficiently detailed to support reliable, valid and consistent judgements that a learning outcome has been achieved, without creating an undue assessment burden for learners or assessors
- d do not include references to methods of assessment or assessment specifications.

1.6 All units must identify a single level for the unit that:

- a represents the complexity, autonomy and/or range of achievement expressed within the unit
- b is determined by comparing the learning outcomes and assessment criteria against the QCF level descriptors (see Annex E of *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*)

c is a constant property of the unit, irrespective of the qualification in which it is located.

1.7 All units must identify a credit value for the unit which specifies the number of credits that will be awarded to a learner who has achieved the learning outcomes of the unit. This must be based on:

- a one credit for those learning outcomes achievable in 10 hours of learning
- b learning time being defined as the time taken by learners at the level of the unit, on average, to complete the learning outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the assessment criteria
- c the credit value of the unit remaining constant regardless of the method of assessment used or the qualification(s) to which it contributes.

1.8 No design features may be added to this standard format. The unit format also includes additional information about the unit. The list of additional information that organisations must submit is:

- a the purpose and aim(s) of the unit
- b the expiry date of the unit
- c details of the relationship between the unit and relevant national occupational standards or other professional standards or curricula (if appropriate)
- d any requirements about the way in which a unit must be assessed (if appropriate)
- e guidance for developing assessment arrangements for the unit (if needed)
- f support for the unit from a sector skills council (SSC) or other appropriate body (where required)
- g the location of the unit within the subject/sector classification system
- h the name of the recognised organisation submitting the unit
- i the date from which the unit is available for use by learners
- j the number of guided learning hours (GLH) for the unit (if needed).⁴

Units can be generic and applicable to a range of contexts and qualifications. It is useful to consider the potential diversity of uses of a set of achievements when writing units. A unit of assessment does not dictate a particular curriculum, approaches to teaching and learning or assessment methods.

These design specifications allow skills- or performance-related and knowledge- or understanding-related achievements from diverse contexts to be represented in a common format, making explicit how a learner achieves credit for a given unit. These sets of achievements can then be combined into coherent and meaningful qualifications.

⁴ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726), sections 1.1-8. For more information on additional information for QCF unit format, please see Annex A and Annex B of this publication.

Design specifications of a unit

- 1.10 Each unit must be capable of contributing towards at least one qualification. Units will not be 'active' and must not be made available to learners until they are included in the 'mandatory', 'optional' or 'credit from other units' section of a rule of combination in an accredited qualification.
- 1.11 To be recognised in accredited qualifications in the QCF, units must be placed in the QCF unit databank. Only organisations recognised by the qualifications regulators to do so may place units in the databank (see *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, section 3).
- 1.12 The qualifications regulators will make available to all organisations recognised to develop units for the QCF a standard template, based on the unit design features and additional information, within which all units must be developed. Organisations recognised to submit units to the unit databank are required to use this template.
- 1.13 Once a unit is placed in the QCF unit databank only the expiry date for that unit may be amended. It may be withdrawn if it does not feature in any accredited qualifications.
- 1.14 Recognised organisations must identify to what organisations their units are available and have a rationale for this. When submitting units to the QCF unit databank, they must specify their availability to one of the following:
 - a to all awarding organisations to award credit (shared units)
 - b restricted to specified awarding organisation(s) to award credit (restricted units).⁵

The regulatory arrangements for the QCF allow skills- or performance-related and knowledge- or understanding-related achievements from diverse contexts to be represented in a common format, making it explicit how a learner achieves credit for a unit. These sets of achievement are then combined into coherent and meaningful qualifications.⁶

A unit of assessment does not necessarily dictate a particular curriculum or the approaches to teaching and learning. In many instances units can be generic and applicable to a range of contexts and qualifications. It is useful to consider the potential diversity of uses of a set of achievements when writing units.

Units of assessment and assessment methods

In order to provide greater flexibility assessment methods used with units vary and are not prescribed in the QCF, although the choice of method is influenced by the type of achievement and the purpose of the qualification to which it contributes.

Each unit must be capable of being assessed independently from other units. Learners will be awarded the credit for each unit they achieve, irrespective of the unit's relationship to a qualification. This credit is awarded to recognise a set of achievements alone, and will be recorded by the awarding organisation on the personal learning record. For example, credits for a unit called 'Painting practice' could be independently awarded, recognising the skills associated with that one skill in the arts. However, a range of other units, relating to other skills such as drawing practice, would have to be achieved before a full qualification in art and design could be awarded. Learners can complete studies or undertake units over a period of time and in different learning environments. Once they achieve all of the units and credit set out in the rules of combination they are eligible to claim the qualification.

⁵ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726), sections 1.9-14.

⁶ The relationship between units and qualifications is defined more clearly in *Guidance for developing rules of combination for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, version 4 (QCDA/10/4727).

In this context awarding organisations are free to develop assessment arrangements that enable evidence from more than one unit to be generated and presented through a single process. Other awarding organisations may choose to offer assessment arrangements for the same set of units that separately assess each individual unit. Either approach is allowed within the QCF. So, for example, a large Diploma offered to full-time learners may include assessment activities that 'wrap around' two or three units, offering opportunities for 'clusters' of credits to be achieved towards the Diploma. A small Award may offer discrete assessment arrangements based on each individual unit within the qualification. Whichever approach is taken, the assessment activities must enable the learners to demonstrate achievement of all of the assessment criteria in the relevant units.

1.4 Process for developing and approving units of assessment

Expertise

- 3.1 The organisation must have procedures in place that ensure:
- that, for the units it decides to produce, it has access to individuals who have expertise in the relevant subject or sector area(s) and in the design and development of units
 - it has access to expertise in assessment and awarding to inform unit design
 - its staff and associates have access to training and guidance on the design and development of units
 - this expertise is used appropriately in the development of units.

Development

- 3.2 When developing units, the organisation must have procedures in place to:
- interrogate the unit databank to ensure that an existing unit, available to the unit developer, does not meet identified needs
 - use market research, labour market intelligence or evidence of learner demand, individual or social benefit where appropriate
 - involve awarding organisations, where it is not one of these
 - ensure accuracy and consistency in the determination of levels and credit values
 - ensure that all units developed meet the requirements set out in the design specifications in the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, section 1 (listed on pages 5–6 of this document)
 - review and sign off the quality of units prior to submission to the unit databank
 - submit signed off units to the databank in the format required by the qualifications regulators.

Ongoing review

- 3.3 The organisation must have procedures in place to:
- review the continued need for a unit
 - ensure continued accuracy and consistency in levels and credit values of its units, in particular considering units in comparison with other units in the unit databank

- c ensure the continued compliance of the unit with the requirements set out in the design specifications in the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, section 1 (listed on pages 5–6 of this document)
- d use evidence from the delivery, assessment and awarding of the unit, at appropriate times, as part of the review process.

3.4 The organisation must supply information about its units, and the processes used in their development and review, to the qualifications regulators in order to support their activities to ensure consistency across units.

3.5 The qualifications regulators will monitor the quality of units placed in the databank and may, after notifying relevant recognised organisations, require units to be reviewed or withdrawn from accredited qualifications and the databank if they fail to meet the regulatory requirements of the QCF.⁷

Models of unit development and validation processes

The process used to develop and validate units varies and is influenced by a range of factors, including the starting point for development. There are three starting points:

- developing new units that have no standards as a starting point
- developing new units from standards
- developing new units from non-QCF qualifications.

Whichever approach to developing and validating units is used, the involvement of a wide range of expertise and stakeholders from the start is recommended. This ensures unit development, content and the determining of level and credit value are informed by different experiences and perspectives.

⁷ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726), sections 3.1–5.

The process of designing and developing units was undertaken by writers who were ‘subject experts’ ... as well as being experienced in writing standards and specifications ... The process involved drafting units and constantly revisiting, and reviewing, what had been produced. Getting feedback from appropriate sources (other subject specialists and practitioners in particular) helped the process of refining the unit content.

Writing Units and Allocating Credit in Generic Learning Experiences, ASDAN

Best practice includes:

- discussing units within working groups comprising a mix of people (nearly always including representatives from learning and training providers)
- input from people such as specialist practitioners with experience of delivering to and assessing learners
- input from people with curriculum expertise that is current and relevant
- input from awarding organisations, which is important because of their experience in writing units and developing credit values
- input from employers/industry, ensuring that the resulting units will be fit for purpose.

While the involvement of a range of expertise in the unit design and development process can occur in different ways at different stages, a review group/panel allows for discussion and debate and provides the opportunity to explore different perspectives in order to reach a consensus.

The process of peer-reviewing first drafts of units in a workshop environment worked well; it clearly facilitated the process of identifying examples of good practice, which could then be adapted to other units. This fostered the emergence of a shared technical and conceptual vocabulary and helped bring a measure of consistency to the different units in development.

New Adult Pathways in Visual Arts project, London's specialist designated institutions

Closer relationships were built and a management group formed which met in Savile Row chaired by the SSC Skillfast-UK with representation from awarding bodies, Newham College and from Savile Row tailoring companies. This enabled the programme and the units to be designed more closely to industry requirements with the projected outcome of increased employability.

Bespoke Tailoring Apprenticeship Programme, Newham College

An approach to writing units

Unit writing is a recursive process: at each stage of writing it is necessary to revisit the completed details to ensure that they are consistent with each other.

Create a working title

Create a working title⁸ based on the subject area. The final unit title must represent the content of the unit and can only be confirmed at the end of the unit writing process after the other unit details have been completed.

Propose a level

Although the level of the unit will not be confirmed until after the learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been written, it is important at this stage to refer to the QCF level descriptors and consider which level would be appropriate.⁹ The level will be reviewed and determined towards the end of the unit writing process.

Write the learning outcomes

Develop all of the learning outcomes for the unit. Learning outcomes should state the achievements learners will take away with them from the learning experience which they will be able to apply in the future.

If the unit is developed from a set of standards, refer to the relevant standards for guidance when creating the learning outcomes. It is important not to list the standards against the learning outcomes when the unit is submitted for web-based accreditation.

Write the assessment criteria

For each learning outcome write a set of assessment criteria. The set should be the minimum number of assessment criteria that will allow consistent and accurate judgements to be made about the achievement of the learning outcome.

The learner must be able to demonstrate all of the assessment criteria for the judgement to be made that the learning outcome has been achieved. The assessment criteria should not include or make reference to the method of assessment or assessment specifications. Methods of assessment are determined outside of the unit-writing process.

⁸ The web-based accreditation (WBA) system allows for 200 characters for unit titles and 500 characters for qualification titles. However, this is not a regulatory cap. If your title is longer than the system allows, discuss with Ofqual.

⁹ The QCF level descriptors can be found in Annex E of the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726).

Review learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Review the learning outcomes and assessment criteria with reference to the level. Make revisions as necessary. Expect to have to make some revisions to assessment criteria and/or learning outcomes to ensure the coherence of the unit.

Confirm the level

Having reviewed the learning outcomes and assessment criteria and made any necessary revisions, refer to the QCF level descriptors to confirm the unit level.

Set the credit value

Establish the credit value of the unit. The credit value is the number of credits that will be awarded to a learner for successful achievement of the unit. It is an estimate of the learning time it will take the learners to achieve the unit. It is advisable to search the QCF unit databank for similar or related units to compare credit values with the proposed unit.

Review the unit details

Review the unit details making sure that if there are any changes to the learning outcomes or assessment criteria, the credit value and level are reviewed. Make revisions as necessary.

Confirm the unit title

Revisit the unit title with reference to the other unit details. Ensure that the title reflects the unit.

As the QCF is implemented, confidence will build as people become more familiar with designing and developing units to meet the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*.

There are considerable benefits in sharing experiences and practice between organisations. Discussing with other organisations how they have approached the process, and the lessons they have learned, provides different perspectives and models that can then be adopted or adapted.

1.5 The relationship between NOS and credit-based units of assessment

Units that assess the knowledge and skills specified for a particular vocation or occupational area should be developed using national occupational standards (NOS), where they exist, as the starting point. This will ensure that the resulting units of assessment focus on the knowledge, skills and understanding, which, applied together, form the competence required by employers for certain roles and functions.

The unit format (see Annex A) contains an additional field that enables any appropriate details of a relationship between the unit and NOS to be set out. This indicates that the learning outcomes have a relationship to the standards.



2 How to approach each characteristic of the unit specifications

2.1 Unit title

- 1.3 All units must have a unit title that:
- is clear, concise and reflects the content (the information in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria) of the unit
 - is meaningful in its own right and does not make reference to any information outside the unit, including other units, qualifications or standards
 - does not include reference to the levels of the QCF or to any terms that may be taken to refer to a level of achievement.¹⁰

Why are unit titles important?

The unit title needs to be a description so that it 'does what it says on the tin' — useful, precise titles are important and easier to find. Titles inform both the learner and the potential employer or receiving institution about what the learner can do.

Bespoke Tailoring Apprenticeship Programme, Newham College

The units in the QCF will be submitted by a wide range of organisations. It is important to establish a clear and consistent approach to titling units:

- clear titling enables users to locate units that are suitable for their needs
- the unit title will be recorded on the unit certificate so it needs to give a clear representation of a learner's achievements

- clear titles assist in the identification of units with common/similar content that could facilitate credit accumulation and transfer (CAT), exemption and the recognition of prior learning; where two units of the same title, level and credit value exist in the unit databank, these units will be recognised as equivalent to each other and credits will be automatically transferable between these two units.

Key points to consider when writing unit titles

The unit title should be a summary of the achievement in the unit. It should be clear and unambiguous, and should reflect the achievements specified in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

If it is hard to identify a title that clearly summarises the achievement in the unit, this would suggest the need for a revision of the learning outcomes to ensure they form a coherent set.

Can the same title be used at different levels?

In some subject areas the same title is used for units written at different levels where the learning outcomes are the same or with slight variations, but the assessment criteria differ to reflect the different levels (see section 2.2 for examples of assessment criteria written at different levels).

Is there a restriction on the length of titles?

There is no fixed regulatory restriction on length and it might be difficult to keep the title succinct in order to reflect the full achievement in the unit. It is advisable to reach a balance between length and complexity, reflecting the unit's scope and content.

¹⁰ Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Ofqual/08/3726), section 1.3.

What to avoid in unit titles

A unit from the unit databank could be used across a range of qualifications and learning environments, and may have a different status within different qualifications. Therefore, a unit title should not contain qualification titles, numbers, module titles, codes or references to its status in a given qualification, such as the words 'core' or 'optional'. A unit must be free-standing so that it can be used outside the qualification. Any qualification-specific information should be presented within the rules of combination rather than within the unit title.

Titles must not contain references to level, such as 'beginner's' or 'introduction to'. Reference to the level is unnecessary in the title as this information is automatically included in the unit template when the unit is submitted to the web-based accreditation (WBA) system and on learner certificates and personal learning records. Titles must not refer to methods of assessment. This precludes the use of alternative assessment methods and, as a result, prevents the use of the unit with diverse target groups and contexts, and in different qualifications.

When should the context be included in the title of a unit?

A unit may or may not need a title that is contextualised. In some instances the learning achievements may be generic and transferable across different contexts, so a generic title is preferable; in other cases there is a need to incorporate the context to avoid misinterpretation, and to facilitate selection and use of appropriate units. For example, sets of achievements related to management, mentoring, coaching and so on can contain key terms that are general and

applicable to a range of contexts. If the sets of achievements in those units are general enough to be transferred across contexts, the title can be decontextualised: 'mentoring skills', for example, suggests the unit could be used in a range of contexts and in different qualifications. However, where the achievements are specific to a context and/or target group, this should be identified in the title, for example, 'Mentoring skills for working with young people'. There are instances when the title of a unit may not make sense without the context. For example, 'Working with other agencies' as a title is vague and meaningless, but add the context, 'Social work: working with other agencies' and it immediately becomes meaningful.

In each case, an informed decision needs to be made about the extent to which the skills and knowledge referred to in the unit are context specific or not. For example, we might ask whether 'Business skills for art and design' are a distinct set of skills, sufficiently different from general business skills to require units with a contextualised title, or whether they are general business skills that are being learned in an art and design context, but could be applied to any business context. Where the context is not included in the title, it can be referred to in the unit purpose and aims section of the additional information part of the template (Annex A).

2.2 Level and unit level descriptors

Level descriptors, with supporting guidance, have been produced for use within the QCF. Much of the following information is taken from the supporting guidance.

Key features

- 1.6 All units must identify a single level for the unit that:
- represents the complexity, autonomy and/or range of achievement expressed within the unit
 - is determined by comparing the learning outcomes and assessment criteria against the QCF level descriptors (see Annex E of *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*)
 - is a constant property of the unit, irrespective of the qualification in which it is located.¹¹

The level of a unit should be proposed in the initial stages of unit development in order to develop appropriate learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The level of the unit is then confirmed by reviewing the learning outcomes and assessment criteria against the level descriptors.

Level descriptors

The QCF level descriptors can be found in Annex E of the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726). The level descriptors provide a general, shared understanding of learning and achievement at each of the nine levels. As the framework aims to be inclusive, the level descriptors are designed to enable use across a wide range of learning contexts.

The level descriptors build on those developed through the NICATS, the existing level descriptors of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and a range of level descriptors from frameworks in the UK and internationally. The five upper levels are intended to be consistent with the levels of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The level descriptors provide a guideline on level to practitioners involved in the design and delivery of units. Unit developers should use their professional expertise to apply the level descriptors to their own subject area or context. Where appropriate, they should also use their knowledge and understanding of relevant levelling tools such as sector- or subject-specific descriptors.

The level descriptors are designed to guide the development of units to sit within the framework. They provide a set of constructs against which the unit and its proposed learning outcomes and assessment criteria can be compared in order to ensure that it matches the intended level.

The indicators for each level are grouped into three categories:

- knowledge and understanding
- application and action
- autonomy and accountability.

Units may reflect aspects of all three categories, although many units will focus on one or two of the three.

The descriptors describe the level rather than the characteristics of individual units, and there is no expectation that every unit in the QCF should have all of the characteristics of a given level.¹²

¹¹ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726), section 1.6.

¹² *Guidance for using unit level descriptors within the Qualifications and Credit Framework, version 4* (QCDA/10/4688), and Annex E of *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726).

The process of determining level

The process of using the level descriptors to develop units of assessment cannot be prescribed. However, the involvement of appropriate expertise is necessary to facilitate accuracy and help position the unit correctly in the QCF. This can be done by 'asking a panel of experts to reach a consensus about the level of the unit, through peer review, or using another form of independent expert evaluation'.¹² It is helpful if the discussion on determining level takes place at the same time as the discussion on determining credit value. Whichever approach is taken, it is important to involve people who:

- are familiar with the principles of credit, the unit template and specifications, and the level descriptors
- are experts in the body of knowledge and/or standards and/or sector occupations to which the unit achievement relates.

Guidance for using level descriptors within the Qualifications and Credit Framework, version 4 (QCDA/10/4688) contains a suggested approach for checking the level of units, with five steps to guide unit developers to reaching a decision on the level.

Our experience is that it was helpful to develop units at two levels at the same time in order to check the appropriateness, to the different levels, of the units' content and scope.

Writing Units and Allocating Credit in Generic Learning Experiences, ASDAN

A unit only has one level. Units with the same title may be written at different levels in some subject areas, using the same learning outcomes, with some variations but with different assessment criteria to reflect the different levels. The following example illustrates this.



Unit title: Customer Service Skills

Level 1

Credit value 3

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Understand the benefits to the organisation of good customer service	1.1 Outline reasons why good customer service is important for an organisation
2. Understand the possible consequences of poor customer service	2.1 Give examples of how poor customer service can impact upon customers, the organisation and staff
3. Understand the value of first impressions	3.1 Outline why it is important to make a good impression 3.2 Give examples of how to create a positive first impression when communicating: a) face to face b) on the telephone c) in writing (including by email)
4. Understand positive verbal and non-verbal interaction with customers	4.1 Identify appropriate and inappropriate ways of communicating verbally with customers in commonly met situations. 4.2 Give examples of types of non-verbal communication
5. Understand that respect for the individual is at the heart of good customer service	5.1 Outline why it is important to maintain customer confidentiality 5.2 Indicate ways in which s/he can respect individual customer needs from a diversity of cultures and backgrounds
6. Understand own role in dealing with complaints from customers	6.1 List the types of complaints that are commonly made by customers 6.2 Identify appropriate people that need to be informed in response to a complaint made by a customer 6.3 Give examples of positive ways of dealing with complaints made by customers



Unit title: Customer Service Skills

Level 2

Credit value 3

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Understand the benefits to the organisation of good customer service	1.1 Describe how good customer service promotes customers' confidence in the organisation 1.2 Explain why good customer service is important for an organisation
2. Understand the possible consequences of poor customer service	2.1 Describe how poor customer service can impact upon organisational efficiency and staff morale 2.2 Explain the effects of poor customer service on an organisation's reputation
3. Understand the value of first impressions	3.1 Explain why it is important to make a good first impression 3.2 Describe ways of creating a positive first impression when communicating: a) face to face b) on the telephone c) in writing (including by e-mail)
4. Understand positive verbal and non-verbal interaction with customers	4.1 Describe appropriate and inappropriate ways of communicating verbally with customers in commonly met situations 4.2 Describe what is meant by non-verbal communication 4.3 Illustrate ways in which non-verbal communication can be used positively to support face-to-face communication
5. Understand that respect for the individual is at the heart of good customer service	5.1 Explain why it is important to maintain customer confidentiality and the factors that need to be taken into account 5.2 Describe ways of respecting individual customer needs from a diversity of cultures and backgrounds
6. Understand how to deal with complaints from customers	6.1 Explain best practice in dealing with complaints from customers 6.2 Explain how to deal with a specific complaint situation 6.3 Explain what needs to be included in a report on an incident of complaint from a customer 6.4 Describe the procedure for taking action on the report

How is level reflected in the unit content?

The language used in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit is crucial to communicating the level of that unit. It is the achievement expressed within the learning outcomes and assessment criteria that determines the level. The level is not determined by the context for which a unit has been written, the target groups with whom the unit may be used or the level of the qualification in which the unit may sit. For example, a unit called 'Principles of management' may be determined as level 4 achievement, based on a best-fit match between the learning outcomes/assessment criteria and the level descriptors. Once the level of that unit has been determined as level 4, based on the learning outcomes/assessment criteria, it remains the same regardless of the context in which the unit is used.

It is important to note that assessment criteria will need to be sufficiently detailed to enable experts to make judgements about the level of the unit. If agreement on level cannot be reached, it may be because insufficient detail is provided. Alternatively, it may be that the unit contains a mix of levels, making it difficult to identify a dominant level for the unit. In these cases the unit will need to be reviewed.

Does there need to be a complete match between learning outcomes/assessment criteria and descriptors for a given level?

It may be useful, when determining level, to cross-reference/benchmark against existing units at adjacent levels as well as units written by other submitting organisations in the same area of learning. The learning outcomes and assessment criteria, once written, must be compared and matched with the statements in the expected level. Although it might be difficult to find a complete

match, there must be a dominant level, and the majority of the learning outcomes/assessment criteria must reflect one level. This is a best-fit approach, although it should not preclude revisiting and rewriting some learning outcomes and assessment criteria to better reflect the level. Some examples of Entry level units are included in Annex C. You can also find advice on developing units at level 4 and above in Annex D. If there is still not a dominant level, it will be necessary to review and redesign the unit.

It is important for unit developers to consider that a single unit need not address all three of the broad categories of the descriptors, nor all of the elements and indicators in any one of the categories.

2.3 Credit value

- 1.7 All units must identify a credit value for the unit which specifies the number of credits that will be awarded to a learner who has achieved the learning outcomes of the unit. This must be based on:
 - a one credit for those learning outcomes achievable in 10 hours of learning
 - b learning time being defined as the time taken by learners at the level of the unit, on average, to complete the learning outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the assessment criteria
 - c the credit value of the unit remaining constant, regardless of the method of assessment used or the qualification(s) to which it contributes.¹³

All units must have a credit value. The minimum credit value that may be determined for a unit is one, and credits can only be awarded in whole numbers.

¹³ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Ofqual/08/3726)*, section 1.7.

Is there a maximum credit value for a unit?

There are no restrictions on the size (credit values) of units. However, as all learning outcomes in a unit have to be achieved to be awarded the credit value, the larger the unit, the less flexibility there is for a learner to achieve in smaller steps.

Definition of learning time

Learning time is defined as the time taken by learners at the level of the unit, on average, to complete the learning outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the assessment criteria.¹⁴

The function of learning time is to provide an indication of the volume of learning related to the achievement of specified outcomes.

Learning time is not an exact, scientific measure but a judgement made and agreed by those who are informed and experienced in the relevant area of achievement and who understand the contexts in which the learning can take place. The concept of learning time is applicable to learning in diverse contexts.

This judgement of learning time does not determine the time actually taken by any individual learner; the real time varies and is influenced by factors such as the individual's learning style and prior learning. It is important to emphasise that learning time is not the amount of time served, for example the number of hours a learner rehearses for a performance or the number of hours a learner spends training in the workplace. Nor is learning time the hours that a learner attends a course or the sum of hours of actual participation in learning activities.

How does learning time differ from guided learning hours (GLH)?

GLH represents only those hours in which a tutor, trainer or facilitator is present and contributing to the learning process. In some organisations this is referred to as 'contact time'. Learning time, in comparison, is an estimate of all the time required to achieve the learning outcomes. This may be the same as contact time but it is more likely to include time outside of the contact time necessary to acquire knowledge and/or develop skills. Learning time should address all learning relevant to the learning outcomes, regardless of where, when and how the learning has taken place. There is no assumed relationship between GLH and learning time. However, it would be reasonable to expect units at lower levels to have GLH constituting a significant proportion of the learning time.

In theory there are possible ambiguities in defining learning hours especially for studio-based visual art and design courses. Guided learning hours appear to be more objectively defined; learning hours where non-guided learning is taken into account can be more difficult to work out and will in practice vary between students on the same course who are learning towards accreditation for the same unit. In the QCF ... learning is separated from time served ... This could pose problems in relation to the making and doing activities that are typically associated with art and design learning. In practice this has not proved to be a problem in the unit development process.

New Adult Pathways in Visual Arts project, London's specialist designated institutions

¹⁴ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Ofqual/08/3726)*, section 1.7b.

The process of estimating learning time and determining credit value

The credit value of a unit is arrived at by estimating the learning time and dividing it by 10. Where the estimated learning time cannot be divided exactly by 10, it must be rounded up or down because credit value can only be represented in whole numbers. It is a best estimate, which gives a fixed value to the set of achievements in a unit.

Once a unit has been given a credit value, it is fixed for the life of the unit, regardless of the context or target group with which it is then used.

The processes of estimating learning time and of determining credit value are similar to those relating to determining level. They cannot be prescribed as they are a part of the holistic process of unit development. The involvement of a panel or group of relevant experts will help the process and make sure that the credit value is recognised and accepted by relevant stakeholders.

There is no one agreed set of principles or methodology for estimating learning time. It is not an exact science and there are no simple formulae. The credit values of units in the databank to date have been arrived at through discussion between professionals as part of the overall unit development and validation process, drawing on expertise in subject areas, and in the delivery and involvement in other credit-based unit frameworks. The following is an example of the approach taken by one project, drawing on experience of the CQFW.

In establishing the credit value of a unit, we assessed the time it would take to work through five distinct phases, which we believe are common to all our units. These are:

1. Acquiring the knowledge of theories, concepts and procedures and identifying and practising the affective and psychomotor skills that underpin effective leadership and management performance (guided learning).
2. Reading about, researching and developing an understanding of the theories, concepts, procedures and skills that underpin effective leadership and management practice (private study).
3. Researching and exploring specific practice in the learner's own workplace and in other workplaces (workplace learning).
4. Reflecting on own and others' performance, using this reflection to make judgements about that performance, and identifying what changes are needed and how these might be implemented (reflection).
5. Preparing for and writing or presenting the outcomes of prescribed assignments for assessment (assessment).

The amount of time needed by learners to progress through each of these phases is assessed ... by drawing on the experience of expert practitioners, in order to determine the credit value of the unit.

Institute of Leadership and Management

Key points to consider when estimating learning time to determine credit value

Developers writing units from existing qualifications should use the experiences of users to inform the decision on credit value. It may also be worth consulting other qualifications where comparability between achievements exists. If the credit value for similar achievement is significantly different, it is worth exploring the reasons for this and perhaps reviewing the estimates made.

The process of determining credit value focuses on the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a unit, not the mode of delivery used to support the learners in achieving those learning outcomes nor the context of delivery.

Credit value should reflect only the learning time for the set of achievements in a given unit. The knowledge or skills that the learner may require prior to starting the learning for that unit is not considered within the credit value. The requirement for other units to be achieved alongside or beforehand can then be specified in the rules of combination for a qualification.

2.4 Writing learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Introductory statements for learning outcomes and assessment criteria

All units must contain learning outcomes that are expressed in a manner that refer to individual learners in the third person and that will make sense to a learner both before a unit is offered and after the learning outcomes have been achieved.

All units must contain assessment criteria that relate to an individual learning outcome in language consistent with it.¹⁵

Each individual learning outcome must follow on from the statement:

'The learner who is awarded credit for this unit will ...' or the shortened form:

'The learner will ...'

Each learning outcome should begin with:

'know', 'understand' or 'be able to'.

Each individual assessment criterion must follow on from the statement:

'Assessment of this learning outcome requires the learner to show that they can ...' or the shortened form:

'The learner can ...'

Important information when entering learning outcomes into the web-based accreditation system

Learning outcomes on the WBA system are sequenced in alphabetical order, which, in general, means sequenced by the numerical reference given to them. If you have 10 or more learning outcomes, in order to have them sequence correctly, you need to give each one a two-digit reference, for example 01, 02, 03.



¹⁵ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Ofqual/08/3726)*, sections 1.4c and 1.5b.

2.5 Writing learning outcomes

- 1.4 All units must contain learning outcomes that:
- a set out what a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do as the result of a process of learning
 - b are clear and coherent, and expressed in language that is understandable by the learners for whom the unit is intended or by a helper or adviser where the learners themselves are not able to understand the learning outcomes
 - c are expressed in a manner that addresses individual learners in the third person and will make sense to a learner both before a unit is offered and after the learning outcomes have been achieved
 - d are capable of assessment and, in conjunction with the assessment criteria related to that outcome, set a clear assessment standard for the unit.¹⁶

The learning outcomes and assessment criteria should be written in a way that, when they are combined together, clearly articulates the learning achievement for which the credit will be awarded at the level assigned to the unit.

Since all learning outcomes must be achieved for credit to be awarded, unit developers need to ensure that there are not too many learning outcomes in a unit. Splitting the learning outcomes amongst several smaller units might be preferable. This will provide the option of assessment of smaller 'chunks' of learning so that if learners are unable to complete the full qualification, they may still be awarded credits for the units they have achieved.

Key points to consider when writing learning outcomes

What are the learners taking away?

Learning outcomes are the key achievements that learners will be able to take away with them and apply in other situations. When identifying learning outcomes the question to ask is: 'What will learners know, understand or be able to do as a result of this learning experience?' The answer should take the form of a series of statements that express the results of the learning process.

Achievement not process

Learning outcomes must articulate what a learner will achieve at the end of the learning experience, and not the learning process or the activities incorporated in the learning process. Once the unit is available, it might be used in a range of courses, in diverse contexts and with different target groups.

How do the learning outcomes relate to each other?

Learning outcomes should form a coherent group of statements that relate to each other, and the title of the unit and should be consistent with the unit level and credit value. They should avoid repetition and overlap.

¹⁶ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Ofqual/08/3726)*, section 1.4.

Here are some examples of coherent sets of learning outcomes:

Unit title: Diagnose and repair complex faults in mobile air conditioning systems/ climate control systems

Level 3

The learner who is awarded credit for this unit will:

- L01 Understand and comply with responsibilities and requirements when carrying out activities in a work situation
- L02 Understand how to diagnose and repair complex faults in mobile air conditioning systems/climate control systems
- L03 Be able to diagnose and repair complex faults in mobile air conditioning systems/climate control systems

Note that the unit above includes a combination of knowledge-based and skills-based learning outcomes.

Unit title: Produce plaster components

Level 2

The learner who is awarded credit for this unit will:

- L01 Be able to interpret information for producing fibrous work from drawings and specifications
- L02 Be able to select materials, components and equipment
- L03 Be able to produce fibrous plaster components

Note that the unit above is a skills-based unit whereas the following unit is a knowledge-based unit.

Unit title: The principles of infection prevention and control

Level 2

The learner who is awarded credit for this unit will:

- L01 Understand roles and responsibilities in the prevention and control of infections
- L02 Understand legislation and policies relating to the prevention and control of infections
- L03 Understand systems and procedures relating to the prevention and control of infections
- L04 Understand the importance of risk assessment in relation to the prevention and control of infections
- L05 Understand the importance of using personal protective equipment (PPE) in the prevention and control of infections

Unit title: Managing and maintaining a Windows server 2003 environment

Level 3

The learner who is awarded credit for this unit will:

- L01 Be able to manage and maintain physical and logical devices
- L02 Be able to manage users, computers and groups
- L03 Be able to manage and maintain access to resources
- L04 Be able to manage and maintain a server environment
- L05 Be able to manage and implement disaster recovery



Unit title: Art and design ideas development

Level 3

The learner who is awarded credit for this unit will:

-
- L01 Be able to develop and interrogate through observation, drawing and recording a number of creative solutions to a given objective, proposal or subject
-
- L02 Be able to identify, select and use appropriate media, materials and technologies for creative solutions
-
- L03 Be able to solve problems through the application of art and design practical understanding
-

Unit title: Solving process problems in chemical, pharmaceutical and petrochemical environments

Level 4

The learner who is awarded credit for this unit will:

-
- L01 Be able to determine the nature and significance of process problems
-
- L02 Be able to diagnose faults/causes and select solutions to process problems
-
- L03 Be able to implement and evaluate chosen solutions
-
- L04 Be able to maintain own and others' safety
-

Unit title: Implement health, safety and environmental policy

Level 6

The learner who is awarded credit for this unit will:

-
- L01 Be able to identify and present project hazards and assess risks
-
- L02 Be able to implement methods and procedures to reduce project risks
-
- L03 Be able to implement health and safety and environmental policies
-

How are learning outcomes written across levels?

Where units of the same title are written at different levels, the learning outcomes may remain the same, with the difference in level of achievement reflected in the assessment criteria (see the examples in section 2.2). It may still be necessary to modify, add or delete learning outcomes that are not achievable at the lower levels or are assumed at the higher levels.


How much detail should there be in the learning outcome?

If a learning outcome includes more than one sentence or clause, this could mean that the learning outcome is trying to cover too much. It is preferable to separate the sentences/clauses into two learning outcomes, which should clarify the achievements and also make assessment easier. The following examples show how this can be done.




Unit title: Assisting clients to access services

Level 3

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to recognise situations requiring immediate action and referral	1.1 Identify a range of potential situations requiring immediate action and referral
2. Be able to advise client on options available	1.2 Make appropriate referrals as required
	2.1 Inform client of the options available to them and the possible actions open to them
	2.2 Advise client on how to access the information they need to support these options and actions

Unit title: Assisting clients to access services

Level 3

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to recognise situations requiring immediate action and referral, and advise client on options available	1.1 Identify a range of potential situations requiring immediate action and referral
	1.2 Make appropriate referrals as required
	1.3 Inform client of the options available to them and the possible actions open to them
	1.4 Advise client on how to access the information they need to support these options and actions



Do learning outcomes need to be context specific?

A learning outcome may be written in a general way, without context-related detail, so that the unit is useable within a range of contexts, situations and with different target learners. Alternatively, it may contain references to a specific context, where the skills or knowledge are specialised to that context.

This first example is context free.

Unit title: Mentoring skills

Level 3

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Understand the aims and principles of mentoring	1.1 Explain the aims and principles of mentoring and how it is different from other methods of support (counselling, coaching, therapy)
2. Understand the potential benefits of mentoring	2.1 Explain a range of potential benefits of mentoring

This second example, in the same general curriculum area, is context specific.

Unit title: Mentoring skills for working with young people

Level 3

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Understand the aims and principles of mentoring young people	1.1 Explain the aims and principles of mentoring young people and how it is different from other methods of support for young people (counselling, coaching, therapy)
2. Understand the potential benefits of mentoring young people	2.1 Explain a range of potential benefits of mentoring young people

How many learning outcomes are required?

The QCF regulations do not prescribe the number of learning outcomes in a unit, but good practice shows that it should be informed by the level of the unit and a consideration of what constitutes a coherent set of learning outcomes within the subject area.

A key point to note is that learners must demonstrate achievement of all the learning outcomes before credit can be awarded. There is no award for partial completion of the learning outcomes. Units of assessment are intended to support flexible achievement and the accumulation of credit. If a unit contains a very large number of learning outcomes and consequently has a very high credit value, some learners may not be able to complete the unit.

Are the learning outcomes weighted?

All of the learning outcomes within a unit are of equal importance and they must all be achieved for the credit to be awarded.

Language in learning outcomes

The key features of a clear learning outcome are a verb, such as 'understand', and defined content, for example 'the range of services available in a library'. The verb chosen will depend largely on whether the set of learning outcomes relates to a body of knowledge/understanding (such as 'know', 'understand') or a set of skills/competences ('know how to', 'be able to').

Learning outcomes must state the end result rather than the learning process or the learning activities. For example, 'understand' should be used rather than 'develop an understanding of'. The language used must reflect completed achievement (a 'changed state') rather than an unfinished process.

How does the language used in learning outcomes affect the way assessment criteria are written?

The learning outcomes must be written in a way that is general and does not limit the assessment criteria to repeating the learning outcome. In the first example on the following page, the use of 'know' allows a set of assessment criteria to be written that are observable and measurable demonstrations of that knowledge.


In the second example, the use of 'describe' in the learning outcome limits the use of language in the assessment criteria to 'describe' because the measurable and observable demonstration of the learning outcome can only be description. The act of 'identifying' or 'following procedures' or 'stating' do not demonstrate that the learner is able to 'describe what to do in an emergency situation' and the assessment criteria in this example do not correlate with the learning outcome.



Unit title: Independent living skills: dealing with emergencies

Entry 3


Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Know what to do in an emergency situation for water	1.1 Identify the location of the water stopcock 1.2 Follow procedures and demonstrate what to do in an emergency with water
2. Know what to do in an emergency situation for electricity	2.1 Identify the location of the electricity fuse box 2.2 Follow procedures and demonstrate what to do in an emergency with electricity
3. Know what to do in an emergency situation for gas	3.1 State what to do when there is a gas leak



Unit title: Independent living skills: dealing with emergencies

Entry 3

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Describe what to do in an emergency situation for water	1.1 Identify the location of the water stopcock 1.2 Follow procedures and demonstrate what to do in an emergency with water
2. Describe what to do in an emergency situation for electricity	2.1 Identify the location of the electricity fuse box 2.2 Follow procedures and demonstrate what to do in an emergency with electricity
3. Describe what to do in an emergency situation for gas	3.1 State what to do when there is a gas leak



How much detail is needed in the learning outcomes?

Learning outcomes should be simple, general, succinct statements that describe understanding, knowledge or a skill, without additional qualitative or quantitative information. Such detail should be used in the corresponding assessment criteria to articulate the standard and level of the learner's achievement.

2.6 Writing assessment criteria

1.5 All units must contain assessment criteria that:

- a specify the standard a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that the learning outcomes of that unit have been achieved
- b relate to an individual learning outcome in language consistent with it
- c are sufficiently detailed to support reliable, valid and consistent judgements that a learning outcome has been achieved, without creating an undue assessment burden for learners or assessors
- d do not include any explicit references to the methods or instruments of assessment to be used.¹⁷

Key points to consider when writing assessment criteria

A set of assessment criteria should be written for each learning outcome. The number of assessment criteria is not prescribed by the regulatory arrangements for the QCF but there must be at least one assessment criterion for each learning outcome.

There is no maximum number of assessment criteria: it should be the minimum number that will support consistent and accurate assessment judgements.

Working to the minimum helps to prevent over-assessment of the learner.

Assessment criteria should be observable, measurable and provide qualitative information that reflects the standard expected when the learner is assessed. The language used in assessment criteria must be explicit, unambiguous and objective.

Assessment criteria are guided by the level descriptors.¹⁸ Appropriate language must be used to reflect the statements contained in the descriptor for the expected level.

How much detail should there be in assessment criteria?

Assessment criteria must make clear how learners need to be able to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcome. There should be enough information in the assessment criteria to enable an effective judgement to be made about whether the learning outcome has been achieved.

The key question to ask when deciding how much detail is required in the assessment criteria is 'can the learner do this badly but still meet the assessment criteria and get the credit for the unit?'

Can the assessment method be part of the assessment criteria?

No, assessment criteria should not be confused with, or refer to, assessment methods or assessment specifications. The assessment criteria specify the standard a learner must meet: the assessment methods are the instruments/mechanisms used to provide evidence that the standard has been met.

¹⁷ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Ofqual/08/3726)*, section 1.5.

¹⁸ For level descriptors, see Annex E of *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Ofqual/08/3726)*.


Assessment criteria should be written in a way that allows different users to determine the most appropriate assessment method/s to use for the context/target group.

In the first example that follows, the assessment criteria clearly relate to the learning outcome, and contain the qualitative detail and what is expected

of the learner in the planning activity. In the second example, the assessment criteria simply state the assessment activities and the evidence, rather than indicating the standard to which those activities are completed. The learner could perform both activities badly and still achieve the assessment criteria.


Unit title: Organising and delivering a community event

Level 3

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
<p>The learner will:</p> <p>1. Be able to plan a community event</p> 	<p>The learner can:</p> <p>1.1 Plan each stage of the event, describing and justifying required resources and activities, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) key personnel b) technical resources c) venue/location/accommodation d) sources of finance <p>1.2 Set targets for the completion of each stage</p>

Unit title: Organising and delivering a community event

Level 3

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
<p>The learner will:</p> <p>1. Be able to plan a community event</p> 	<p>The learner can:</p> <p>1.1 Undertake a project to deliver an event</p> <p>1.2 Record the planning and organisation of the event in an action plan or annotated diary</p>



What about writing the same unit title at different levels?

Where the same unit title is used at different levels with the same learning outcomes, assessment criteria must be clearly differentiated to reflect the statements in the descriptors at each level. It may be useful to imagine having to explain to two learners why one of them gained credits at level 2 and the other at level 3. The following examples show ways of expressing achievement through the levels.

Unit title: Drawing skills

Learning outcome			
The learner will: Be able to understand and use tone in drawing			
Level	1	2	3
Assessment criteria	Use tone clearly and purposefully to suggest light and form	Use a range of tones that acknowledge light source, form, mood and texture	Make subtle use of tone which acknowledges light source, accurate modelling of form, awareness of textures and ambience

Unit title: Understanding health and well-being

Learning outcome			
The learner will: Understand the political and social context of health and well-being			
Level	1	2	3
Assessment criteria	List the government priorities for health promotion and health education	Identify the main points in government policies to improve the effectiveness of the NHS, especially in relation to preventative health care and health education	Explain the government thinking on how to improve the effectiveness of the NHS, especially in relation to preventative health care and health education

Unit title: Characteristics of typical measurement systems in clinical physiology

Learning outcome

The learner will: Know static and dynamic characteristics of typical measurement systems

Level	2	3
Assessment criteria	List and describe static and dynamic characteristics of a measurement system, using appropriate illustrations and formulae where relevant	Use appropriate illustrations and formulae to demonstrate and justify measurements taken of these characteristics and perform calculations/measurements where relevant

Keeping the assessment criteria relevant

Each separate part of an assessment criterion should be a measurable demonstration of how the learner is achieving that learning outcome at that level. There must be a clear link between each part of the assessment criterion and the learning outcome. The assessment criteria should not move beyond the learning outcome.

The assessment criteria must relate to an individual learner's achievement

Learners must demonstrate their individual achievement of the assessment criteria. Assessment criteria that address groups of learners may undermine assessment of the individual's achievement. The use of phrases such as 'participate in a group activity to' or 'participate in a discussion to' are not only incorporating the assessment activity into the assessment criterion, but there is also no guarantee that learners' participation in that activity will provide evidence of their individual achievement of the learning outcome.


Are there certain words/phrases to avoid?

The use of words/phrases such as 'understand', 'demonstrate an understanding' or 'know' must be avoided as these concepts cannot be observed and evidenced. It is what the learners do to demonstrate their understanding, recognition or knowledge that must be expressed in the criteria so that it can be observed and measured.

In the first example below, each part of the assessment criterion reflects the level and allows an objective decision to be made. In the second example, use of the verb 'discuss' in assessment criterion 1.2 will give the impression that the learner talks or writes about the use of IT for disabled people, but discussion alone gives no clear indication of the level.


Unit title: Working with learners with disabilities

Level 2

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Know the different aids available to support disabled people 	1.1 Describe the main aids available to different groups of disabled people 1.2 Describe the information technology available to support disabled people

Unit title: Working with learners with disabilities

Level 2

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Know the different aids available to support disabled people 	1.1 Describe the main aids available to different groups of disabled people 1.2 Discuss the information technology available for disabled people

Are there certain words/phrases to use?

Some verbs are more commonly used in assessment criteria for units at particular levels than at other levels.

However, this does not mean that use of one of these verbs in an assessment criterion identifies the unit as being at a particular level, nor does it mean that the use of one of these verbs will necessarily be inappropriate in assessment criteria for units at another level. The meaning of an assessment criterion depends on all of the words in the criterion, not just on the verb. It is the meanings of the assessment criteria in a unit that need to be considered in determining the unit's level, not just the verbs. For example, the word 'identify' could be used at low or high levels, depending on the nature of what has to be 'identified' and the level of cognitive skills required.

Different unit developers can approach their task in different ways. Some like to refer to a list of verbs associated with particular levels, while others avoid such lists and prefer to try to identify appropriate verbs from the principles. A list of verbs associated with particular levels is provided below for unit developers in the first of these groups.

The list is illustrative rather than prescriptive and needs to be reviewed in the light of the advice immediately above that all of the words in an assessment criterion contribute to the detail required to make a judgement about achievement, not just the verb, and that it is the meanings of all of the assessment criteria in a unit that determine the unit's level.

Entry level 3	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Define	Define	Apply	Analyse
Demonstrate	Demonstrate	Assess	Apply
Give (examples of ...)	Give (examples of ...)	Classify	Clarify
Identify	Identify	Compare	Classify
Indicate	Indicate	Define	Critically compare
Locate	Locate	Demonstrate	Demonstrate
Outline	Outline	Describe	Develop (a plan/idea which ...)
State	State	Differentiate	Diagnose
Use	Use	Distinguish	Differentiate
		Estimate	Distinguish
		Give (positive and negative points of ...)	Draw conclusions (which ...)
		Illustrate	Estimate
		Perform	Evaluate
		Select	Explain
		Use (a range of ...)	Extrapolate
			Implement
			Interpret
			Judge
			Justify
			Perform
			Review and revise
			Summarise

With or without assistance?

Learners are entitled to support or supervision at all levels, but assessment criteria should not rely on degrees of support to differentiate achievement from one level to the next. The use of phrases such as 'with assistance', 'with guidance' or 'independently' are subjective, open to interpretation and do not enable consistent assessment practice.

Tutor support is an integral part of the learning process, but the assessment criteria must articulate what learners have to do themselves to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcome. Remember that the learning outcome sets out the achievement that the learners will take away with them and be able to use or apply again.

Where a learner can achieve assessment criteria only with assistance from a tutor or assessor it is necessary to find a lower level unit, or a unit with learning outcomes that more aptly describe what the learner can do without assistance. Note that special assessment arrangements for learners with learning disabilities or physical disabilities do not come into the category of achieving the assessment criteria only with assistance; the assistance provided is invariably with a skill, such as handwriting, while the learning achievement being assessed is something different.

The example below demonstrates how, even at a basic level, it is possible to identify learner achievement without reference to assistance.

Unit title: Using touch

Entry level

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to initiate touch	1.1 Perform an action that demonstrates communication through touch
2. Be able to match objects through touch	2.1 Communicate recognition of similarities between a variety of objects through touch
3. Be able to replicate tactile gestures	3.1 Imitate strokes, pats, prods, gentle pinching, effleurage and basic massage techniques

Some examples of sets of assessment criteria:

Unit title: Causes and spread of infection

Level 2

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Understand the causes of infection	1.1 Identify the differences between bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites 1.2 Identify common illnesses and infections caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites 1.3 Describe what is meant by 'infection' and 'colonisation' 1.4 Explain what is meant by 'systemic infection' and 'localised infection' 1.5 Identify poor practices that may lead to the spread of infection

Unit title: Medical terminology

Level 2

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
2. Know the meaning of medical terms relating to the body systems	2.1 Produce definitions of medical terms concerning the following body systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• body structure• skeletal/locomotor• cardiovascular• lymphatic and immune system including body's response to infection• respiratory• digestive• urinary• reproductive. 2.2 Match medical words against definitions

Unit title: Know how to produce plaster components

Level 2

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Know how to interpret information for producing fibrous work from drawings and specifications	1.1 List different types of information sources for use in selecting plasters and reinforcements 1.2 State the purpose of information sources in selecting clusters and reinforcements 1.3 Explain how moulded outlines are produced from drawings and squeezes to form panel, cornice and beam case 1.4 State the methods used for geometrical setting out of moulding outlines 1.5 Calculate quantities of material required

Compare the knowledge-based learning outcomes and related assessment criteria on the previous page to that of the skills-based example below.

Unit title: Produce plaster components

Level 2

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to interpret information for producing fibrous work from drawings and specifications	1.1 Interpret drawings for the positioning of completed components including cornice, dado, panel mouldings and plain-face slab 1.2 Identify basic geometry and setting out procedures for cornice, dado, panel mouldings and plain-face slab 1.3 Produce mould outlines from drawings 1.4 Calculate quantities from given information sources

The previous examples are all level 2 units. Compare the language of the assessment criteria with the following units at level 3.

Unit title: Diagnose and repair complex faults in mobile air conditioning systems / climate control systems

Level 3

Credit value 4

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Understand and comply with responsibilities and requirements when carrying out activities in a work situation	1.1 Interpret legislative, regulatory and organisational requirements and procedures relevant to workplace practices
	1.2 Carry out all diagnostic and rectification activities following manufacturer instructions, your workplace procedures, health and safety and other regulations and guidelines
	1.3 Wear suitable personal protective equipment and use vehicle coverings when handling refrigerants, servicing air conditioning systems, flushing, diagnosing and carrying out rectification activities
	1.4 Work in a way which minimises the risk of damage to other vehicles, damage to other components and units, contact with leakages, contact with hazardous substances, any refrigerant emissions and personal or third party injury
	1.5 Dispose of any waste material following current legal and environmental requirements
	1.6 Explain the importance of working to agreed timescales, keeping others informed of progress and documenting diagnostic and rectification information
	1.7 Ensure records identifying deviations and refrigerant types are accurate, complete and passed to the relevant person(s) promptly in the format required and in accordance with any legal requirements

Note that in this example the learning outcome combines knowledge and skills: this is reflected in the assessment criteria.

Unit title: Strategic performance management

Level 7

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to set performance targets of teams to meet strategic objectives	1.1 Assess the links between team performance and strategic objectives 1.2 Evaluate tools and techniques available to set team performance targets 1.3 Assess the value of team performance tools to measure future team performance

Keeping the language in assessment criteria objective

It is advisable to avoid using comparative terminology where possible. Use of the terms 'more complex', 'more detailed' or 'wider range', for example, begs the questions 'more complex/detailed than what?' or 'a wider range than what?' This would inevitably require subjective interpretation.

For purposes of objectivity, it is important to avoid using qualifiers that are subjective and open to interpretation, for example:

- good/bad
- fully
- effectively
- professionally
- competently
- imaginatively
- correctly.

It is preferable to give examples, if necessary, to qualify what is meant by 'good' in a subject at a particular level.

Maintaining objectivity in assessment criteria often presents a challenge for those delivering and assessing in the creative and performing arts. For example, the use of 'creatively' or 'imaginatively' in assessment criteria does not allow for an objective judgement — one assessor's 'imaginative' may be another assessor's 'run of the mill'. The following pages show good examples of how assessment criteria have been written for units in painting at different levels.¹⁹



¹⁹ This is taken from units developed through the *New Adult Pathways in Visual Arts* project by London's specialist designated institutions.

Unit title: Painting practice

Learning outcomes The learner will:	Assessment criteria The learner can:		
1. Be able to use painting materials	1.1 Accurately use basic materials such as acrylic or watercolour	1.1 Accurately and coherently use basic materials such as acrylic, watercolour or oil, to complete tasks such as contrasting use of translucency and opacity	1.1 Explore the potential of materials such as acrylic, watercolour or oil, in a complex task such as conveying the subtleties and nuances of paint
2. Be able to use painting techniques	2.1 Use basic techniques such as paint mixing or surface preparation, to complete simple tasks such as a single layered coloured image	2.1 Accurately and coherently use basic techniques such as layering or glazing to complete tasks such as contrasting use of translucency and opacity	2.1 Explore the potential of techniques such as layering and glazing in a complex task such as conveying the subtleties and nuances of paint application
3. Be able to apply the principles of painting	3.1 Describe and accurately apply basic principles such as basic tonal separation, organising a composition	3.1 Use a considered range of principles such as composition, tone or colour to produce a cohesive painted image	3.1 Synthesise a range of principles in painting to convey complex ideas such as expressing emotion, content, meaning
4. Understand how to reflect upon and develop work in painting	4.1 Identify a range of basic strategies through which work can be developed such as a simple tonal painting	4.1 Describe a range of considered strategies through which work can be developed such as a painting consisting of more than one layer	4.1 Evaluate areas of strength and weakness in personal work and identify a range of considered strategies to develop work

Writing assessment criteria for skills-related achievement


In skills-related achievement, the assessment criteria are often constrained by the activity that needs to be carried out to demonstrate that achievement. The performance of an activity alone may be sufficient to reflect the level.

For example, 'switch on the computer' could be an assessment criterion in an Entry level 'Using IT' unit. In other instances it is necessary to qualify the activity with information on how well it is performed in order to reflect the level. The examples below illustrate this.

Unit title: Mediation skills

Level 2


Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will: 1. Be able to introduce a face-to-face mediation	The learner can: 1.1 Welcome the disputants, introduce self, the process and the aim of the mediation 1.2 Outline to the disputants the mediator's role 1.3 Identify the ground rules



Unit title: Mediation skills

Level 3

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will: 1. Be able to introduce a face-to-face mediation	The learner can: 1.1 Welcome the disputants and introduce self and the process, explaining to them the steps involved 1.2 Use appropriate body language and explain the outcome of the session 1.3 Explain to the disputants the mediator's role, mentioning accurate, ethical and professional standards used when mediating 1.4 Explain the ground rules and potential outcomes if the ground rules are not adhered to




In the next example, the assessment criteria specify the activity and the quality of performance that reflects the level, for example, the length of time the learner has to improvise and the quality of the movements. In

the second example, the assessment criterion simply states the activity but not the quality of the performance. Therefore, the learner could perform in a very limited way but still claim to have addressed the assessment criterion.


Unit title: Movement improvisation

Level 3

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will: 1. Be able to improvise movement pieces from given stimuli 	The learner can: 1.1 Improvise movement pieces, demonstrating simple and complex movements which clearly express a response to given stimuli

Unit title: Movement improvisation

Level 3

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will: 1. Be able to improvise movement pieces from given stimuli 	The learner can: 1.1 Improvise movements from given stimuli

The key question to ask when deciding how much detail is required in the assessment criteria is 'can the learner do this badly but still meet the assessment criteria and get the credit for the unit?'



3 Writing units for the QCF using NOS

3.1 The relationship between NOS and QCF units and qualifications

The occupational standards directory states that NOS 'describe what an individual needs to do, know and understand in order to carry out a particular job, role or function.'²⁰

NOS are an important reference point for the development of QCF units and qualifications, although this is not the only use for NOS.

NOS are also used to:

- describe good practice in particular areas of work
- provide managers with a tool for a wide variety of workforce management and quality control functions
- offer a framework for training and development.

It is important that NOS are represented sufficiently and explicitly in relevant units.

The impact and influence of statutory or legal obligations, and health and safety requirements, must also be made clear. This will enable employers and other users to feel confident that the units assess the essential knowledge and skills required for a given vocational area or occupation. It will also ensure that such units, combined with appropriate rules of combination, meet the requirements of the statutory regulations for external qualifications.

It will be important to include people who are knowledgeable about the specific occupations and vocational areas in the process of unit development, including members of the relevant SSC, sector skills body (SSB), employer groups and those working in a particular sector.

The use of NOS to inform the development of learning outcomes and assessment criteria for credit-based units will also help to reduce

duplication of achievement across different sectors and occupational areas through identifying achievements that are common requirements for different roles and occupational areas. These could include problem solving, working with others and communication skills. These common units can then be used in different qualifications and to facilitate credit transfer. This can enhance flexibility in employment and opportunities for progression.

Developing NOS to meet agreed quality criteria

There are significant differences in how NOS are expressed in different sectors. This variation in the way NOS are written can affect the task of writing units using NOS as a starting point, and means that this guidance offers a set of principles rather than a specific methodology.

NOS are no longer regarded as synonymous with qualifications, and qualifications should be developed independently of NOS. QCF units and appropriate rules of combination for qualifications can accommodate and reflect the content and aims of NOS.

The format and information requirements for the design of units and qualifications for the QCF are standardised through the regulatory arrangements²¹ rather than (as for NOS) a set of quality criteria²², which allow different approaches to expression. The QCF requires the unit format to be standardised to work effectively so that credit for achieving units can be accumulated and transferred, and the same units can appear in more than one qualification. However, the content of units, for which learning outcomes and assessment criteria are specified, and how their achievement is assessed, is not prescribed and QCF units and qualifications do not necessarily prescribe when, where and how people learn.

²⁰ This can be found at Sector Skills, www.ukstandards.org.uk

²¹ *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726).

²² Quality criteria for the development and content of NOS, approved by the UK NOS Board 24 November 2006.

3.2 Using NOS to design QCF units – some examples

This section explains how a preliminary and detailed analysis of the NOS to be used can help the unit writer explore the options for unit design, identify what is likely to be involved and the expertise needed for the task.

Identifying potential units and learning outcomes from NOS

It is not possible to simply 'cut and paste' NOS statements into QCF units to create learning outcomes and assessment criteria, as NOS often do not describe the 'demonstrable, observable and measurable' criteria required for assessing achievement. This information can be interpreted from NOS but it may need to be identified and added by subject and/or experienced practitioners from the field.

NOS are often written as statements of activities, and/or tasks and associated underpinning knowledge, or as statements of skill and/or knowledge, or a combination of both. Personal attributes or attitudes may also be identified.

The unit writer's task is to:

- identify what needs to be assessed to be able to judge whether a person has met an occupational standard
- devise QCF units that express the identified skills/knowledge as learning outcomes and assessment criteria, to enable judgements to be made.

Whether this information is to hand and clearly expressed in the NOS will vary from one set of NOS to another. For example, where NOS are expressed as statements of activities and tasks, it will be necessary to identify the specific skills and knowledge required to be able to conduct these tasks and then identify and write sets of learning outcomes and suitable assessment criteria to draft QCF units. This information may be implicit in the NOS and may need some articulation by the unit writer. This is illustrated by the following example.

Work within your business environment NOS 202 6-9: Apply your employment responsibilities and rights (Council for Administration)

- Access information about your employment rights and responsibilities.
- Carry out your responsibilities to your employer in a way that is consistent with your contract of employment.
- Understand your employment rights.
- Seek guidance when you are unsure about your employment responsibilities and rights.

Unit title: Work within your business environment

Level 2

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to access information about, and understand, own employment responsibilities and rights	1.1 Locate and access information about own employment responsibilities and rights 1.2 Describe own employment responsibilities and rights 1.3 Seek guidance to obtain needed information, when unsure about own employment responsibilities and rights
2. Be able to carry out own responsibilities to the employer in a way that is consistent with own contract of employment	2.1 Explain content of own contract of employment

Where skills and knowledge statements are expressed in the NOS, identifying learning outcomes may be a less complex task.

In identifying what needs to be assessed to be able to judge whether a person has met an occupational standard, the unit writer needs to be able to discriminate between the different elements of competence. 'Competence' should not be confused with 'skill', which is one of the elements (along with 'knowledge' and 'understanding') required to prove competence.

The definition included in the glossary helps to unpick the general notion of 'competence,' as often expressed in NOS, in order to pinpoint identifiable knowledge and skills that are required to contribute to proving competence. Such knowledge and skills can then be expressed in learning outcomes in QCF units.

Ideally knowledge and skills should be combined when writing QCF units of assessment, but there may be certain cases in which knowledge might need to be separated and separately assessed. For example, the requirements of the specification for

the revised National Apprenticeship Service means that a certain proportion of the training has to take place 'off the job' and this may result in units based on learning outcomes that are knowledge only.

There may be justification for developing separate units to reflect the wider contextual or theoretical content that the individual may need to understand, varying according to level, to be fully competent. This relates to research that suggests that it is possible to develop 'knowledge only' units, but more difficult to develop 'skills only' units, because of the inherent knowledge required to perform skills; hence the need to make a clear distinction between the core knowledge required to perform a particular job role and underpinning knowledge, which might provide the broader context.

Once a unit writer has identified the skills and knowledge to be assessed, he or she has several options for writing units to assess achievement. A unit may contain learning outcomes and assessment criteria relating only to knowledge or skills but in many cases it is more appropriate to contain a combination of both.

I quality-checked the units to ensure consistent language and style and also wrote a few additional units that were needed. Having the overview meant I could identify additional units needed, and common themes and learning outcomes. This meant, for example, extracting 'mixing concrete and mortars' from a range of units and designing a stand-alone unit ... and then seeing how that unit could be used in other trade qualifications. 'Mixing concrete and mortars' featured in many of the 'Trowel occupations' and 'Roof slating and tiling' units, so there was a clear rationale for removing the duplicated criteria and developing them as two stand-alone units. This rationale encouraged the development of other stand-alone units that can be used across apprenticeships.

ConstructionSkills

A sector may legitimately wish to include elements in NOS that relate to values or attitudes, as in the following example.

Work within your business environment NOS 202 13-15 (Council For Administration)

Support diversity:

- Interact with other people in a way that is sensitive to their individual needs and respects their background, abilities, values, customs and beliefs.
- Learn from other people and use this to improve the way you work and interact with others.
- Follow your organisation's procedures and legal requirements in relation to discrimination legislation.



Learning outcomes and assessment criteria are devised that enable the learner to observably demonstrate understanding and application of these values in a way that can be measured, as in the example below.

Unit title: Work within your business environment

Level 2

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to support diversity in a business and administration work environment	1.1 Interact with other people at work, demonstrating: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> sensitivity to individual needs respect, as appropriate, for background, abilities, values, customs and beliefs 1.2 Obtain feedback or guidance from other people and use this to improve: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> own work own interaction with others 1.3 Describe own organisation's procedures and legal requirements in relation to discrimination legislation

Once the unit writer has identified what needs to be assessed to be able to judge whether a person has met an occupational standard, and decided how the skills and knowledge requirements are to be grouped into units, he or she should refer to section 2.4 on writing learning outcomes.

Developing assessment criteria to enable assessment of achievement of learning outcomes at the appropriate level

Identification of assessment criteria from NOS may require more interpretation than the identification of the information needed to write learning outcomes as NOS may not provide the necessary level of detail.

Prepare and mix concrete and mortars NOS Unit VR36. Scope of knowledge and understanding: Selection of resources. Performance criteria 2 (ConstructionSkills)

Methods of work

Application of knowledge for safe work practices, procedures, skills and transference of competence, relating to the area of work and material used, to:

- gauge and mix concrete and mortars by hand and mixer
- use hand tools, mixing plant and equipment
- work with crane-handled or mechanically-handled loads.

Unit title: Know how to prepare and mix concrete and mortars

Level 2

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Know the different preparation and mixing concrete and mortars methods	1.1 Explain the mixing methods adopted to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• typical mix proportions and materials for different situations (bricks, blocks, below DPC work, existing structures, etc)• identify types of common mix proportions• use additives• mix by hand• mix by machine 1.2 Overcome preparation and mixing problems

In cases where NOS are expressed as a set of activities or tasks, the requirements of the task should be analysed to devise appropriate assessment criteria. The resulting assessment criteria must then identify and make explicit the standard of skills and/or knowledge to be assessed.

NOS may provide some of the information needed for assessment criteria but lack sufficient detail to support a consistent judgement that a learning outcome has been achieved.

In the following example the learning outcomes and assessment criteria were developed using the NOS and additional material from a training manual developed by the sector body to accompany the existing National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). One learning outcome only (of six) is shown for illustration. The resulting assessment criteria now address the 'demonstrable, observable and measurable' requirement for assessment criteria set out in these guidelines.

Erect masonry structures NOS Unit VR40 (ConstructionSkills)

Performance criteria

You must be able to: Comply with the given contract information to carry out the work efficiently to the required specification

Scope of performance

Evidence must be work-based.

Work skills to:

- measure, mark out, lay, position and secure.

Use and maintain:

- hand tools
- portable power tools
- ancillary equipment.

Erect masonry in brick and block and/or local materials to contractor's working instructions for:

- cavity wall structures
- blockwork structures
- solid wall structures
- door and window openings
- joint finishes.

Unit title: Erect complex masonry structures

Level 3

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to construct arches	1.1 Build rough arches to specification, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• skewbacks cut to correct angle to produce normal joint• cut bricks over arch within tolerance of normal joint• no face plane deviation to tolerance over arch and joints. 1.2 Build axed arches to specification, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• skewbacks cut to correct angle to produce normal joint• voussoirs to radiate from centre point• bond maintained over arch• no face plane deviation to specification over arch and joints• careful selection of bricks to maintain appearance.

Where there is a need to provide more detail on the range and scope of achievement as indicated in the standards, this could be reflected in the assessment criteria through the citing of limited examples, but then including the full range in the additional information accompanying the unit format.

'Language in assessment criteria' in section 2.6 provides advice on using appropriate language in writing assessment criteria, which applies to all unit development regardless of the starting point.

Determining the level of units developed using NOS

NOS relate to job roles, proficiency and competence and job roles are not necessarily 'levelled', even though some NOS may have levels attributed to them. It cannot be assumed that all of the functions and responsibilities of a given role will be at the same level.

Units of assessment might be required at a number of different levels in designing a qualification to meet NOS requirements for one occupation. Rules of combination for the QCF recognise this and allow units at different levels to be combined to make up a qualification.

Whether level has been assigned to NOS or not, unit writers should use the QCF level descriptors to check the level of individual learning outcomes and whole units to ensure such units meet QCF requirements. There may be occasional learning outcomes that are not at the level determined for the unit as a whole. In such cases a best-fit approach can be taken, where the unit as a whole has a dominant level but where one or two learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria are not consistent with the level.

If the unit contains a mix of levels to the extent that it is impossible to identify a dominant level for the unit, the unit will need to be reviewed. It may be preferable to write a lower- or higher-level unit in addition to the original unit, in order to clearly identify and group learning outcomes and assessment criteria at the appropriate level.

If agreement on level cannot be reached, it may be that insufficient detail is provided in the assessment criteria to enable experts to make judgements about the level of the unit.

Determining the credit value for units developed using NOS

The different purposes of NOS and of QCF units and qualifications, mean that there is no direct relationship between the content of NOS and the credit values determined for QCF units. Credit value is applied to learning achievements.

Once units have been written from NOS, unit writers should follow the process and advice contained in these guidelines on determining credit values for units (see section 2.3), which apply to any units designed for the QCF, regardless of origin.

It is important to consider that large units pose the risk of learners losing everything if they cannot demonstrate achievement of one assessment criterion. The rules of combination are there to ensure that all the units pertaining to essential NOS are a requirement of the qualification. A holistic approach to delivery and assessment is not jeopardised by having several small units instead of one large unit.

Because determining credit value for units developed from NOS is a new experience and skill, it is particularly important to review the process and judgements reached in the light of developing experience and practice. Many unit developers have found it valuable and necessary to review credit values across units at key points in the process, drawing on ever-increasing knowledge and experience. This review process also supports an examination of consistency of credit value across units.



4 Checklist for writing units of assessment

When a draft unit has been written, consider the following:

- Is the unit title clear and unambiguous?
- Does the unit title make sense and give a clear indication of the content of the unit?
- Do the learning outcomes reflect the unit title and are they a coherent set?
- Are the learning outcomes and assessment criteria directly related to each other?
- Are the learning outcomes and assessment criteria consistent with the level attributed to the unit?
- Are the assessment criteria sufficiently detailed to allow a judgement to be made that the learning outcomes have or have not been met in a given assessment?
Can the learner perform badly but still meet the assessment criteria and get the credit for the unit?
- Is the unit written in a way that makes it accessible to the different stakeholders?
- Does the credit value reflect the learning time required to achieve the unit?

Annex A: QCF unit format

Title	
Level	
Credit value	
Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
1.	1.1 1.2
2.	2.1 2.2
3. etc	3.1 3.2 etc
Additional information about the unit	
Unit purpose and aim(s)*	
Unit expiry date*	
Details of the relationship between the unit and relevant national occupational standards or other professional standards or curricula (if appropriate)	
Requirements about the way a unit might be assessed (if appropriate)	
Support for the unit from an SSC or other appropriate body (if required)	
Location of the unit within the subject/sector classification system	
Name of the organisation submitting the unit	
Availability for use by*	
Date from which the unit is available for use by learners	
Unit guided learning hours	

The fields in the 'additional information about the unit' section marked with an asterisk (*) must be completed.

Annex B: Additional information for the QCF unit format

This annex identifies each field in the second part of the unit template under the heading of 'additional information about the unit' and offers instructions on how to complete each field.

The fields marked with an asterisk (*) must be completed. The fields without an asterisk are optional and the need for this information will vary between units of assessment.

Additional information about the unit

In this context, 'additional' means additional to the information in the first part of the unit template, as defined in *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (sections 1.1–14, Ofqual/08/3726). Some information is additional because it is not required in all cases; some information is additional because it is added after the first part of the template has been completed.

The relevant additional information must be completed before the unit is submitted to the unit databank.

Unit purpose and aim(s)*

This field can be used to supplement the information in the unit title. It is intended to provide additional information about the unit to users. Unit aims will be displayed to users, so this should be a succinct statement that clearly summarises the learning outcomes of the unit.

Unit aims should include any information about the status of the unit in relation to 'licence to practise' or entry requirements for professional bodies. Contexts for use of a unit where the title is context-free can be described, and information can be given about the purpose of the unit. It should not make reference to any other unit, nor to any particular qualification to which it might

relate. It should not include any aims other than those represented through the learning outcomes of the unit.

This field is called 'Purpose and aim of unit' in the web-based accreditation system for capturing data about units and qualifications.

Unit expiry date*

This is the date that the unit will cease to be active within the unit databank, from which it may not be used in developing qualifications or awarded to learners. In the future it is envisaged that unit expiry dates will be set at five years from the date of entry to the unit databank, unless the submitting body selects a date before this.

Details of the relationship between the unit and the relevant NOS or other professional standards or curricula (if appropriate)

This is an optional field and does not need to be completed if there are no relevant NOS or other professional standards or curricula.

If there are relevant NOS, the submitting body (in consultation with relevant partners) will describe the relationship of the standards, in an appropriate manner. This might be done through:

- a general reference to the set of NOS relevant to the unit
- a hyperlink to the relevant section of the NOS directory
- a more detailed identification of the particular standard(s) that relate to each learning outcome.

It is not appropriate to include statements about a proportion or percentage of coverage of standards in the unit.

The collection of this information will support the decision-making process for awarding organisations when deciding whether to accept units for the purpose of credit transfer into different qualifications. It will also aid understanding of how the unit of assessment links to NOS.

Other professional standards or curricula might include:

- occupational or professional standards developed by sector bodies but not classified as NOS
- professional body standards
- curriculum or subject standards
- functional skills standards
- other national or international standards, such as British Standards Institution (BSI) or International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards.

If a relevant set of NOS does not exist, additional standards may be identified in this field. However, this field may not be used to present an alternative set of standards to NOS if relevant NOS exist.

A description of the relationship between the unit of assessment and the appropriate standards or curricula should be provided in a similar way to the way in which the relationship between a unit and NOS is expressed, following the previous guidance about this.

Requirements about the way a unit might be assessed (if appropriate)

This is an optional field and should only be completed if a particular approach to assessment is required in order to meet the requirements of one or more qualifications.

It should be emphasised that all of this information must relate explicitly to the unit in question. It cannot relate to the qualification(s) within which the unit might be located.

The qualifications themselves should not be identified in this field. This will be done for each relevant qualification as part of the information submitted for accreditation and public display about that qualification, using a descriptive field.

The following might be identified:

- the method/s of assessment for the unit
- the moderation and/or standardisation processes for assessment of the unit
- the physical requirements of the assessment centre or location
- any particular assessment instruments that must be applied
- the qualifications or professional status of any assessor.

Support for the unit from a sector skills council or other appropriate body

This is an optional field. It is used to name sector bodies or other organisations if one or more of them supported the development of the unit and its submission to the unit databank. Completion of the field provides information about this support to new potential users of the unit who are considering including the unit in rules of combination for new qualifications.

If a unit falls clearly within the 'footprint' of an SSC, then this is the body that must support the unit and it is expected that this field will be completed.

Location of the unit within the subject/sector classification system

The submitting body will identify the relevant subject/sector classification code for the unit. This code must be drawn from the second tier of the subject/sector classification system. This is available as a drop-down menu in the web-based accreditation system. A unit must be classified in one second-tier sector/subject area but may be classified within up to five sector/subject areas.

Name of the organisation submitting the unit

This is the name of the recognised organisation that submits the unit to the unit databank. This is automatically populated on the system.

Availability for use by*

Each unit must be identified within one of two categories of availability to:

- all awarding bodies to award credit (shared units)
- restricted to specified awarding organisations to award credit (restricted units).

If 'restricted units' is selected, the submitting body will list all the other recognised awarding bodies permitted to award the unit.

Date from which the unit is available for use by learners

If this field is left blank, the availability of the unit will be set by the date of submission to the databank. The submitting body may set an availability date after the date of submission to the databank. This indicates that the unit will not be available for delivery to learners before the 'Unit available from' date.

The purpose of this date is to enable awarding bodies to coordinate the release of full qualifications with the availability of units to centres and learners.

The expiry date of the unit will be set from the date of entry to the databank, not the date that it is available for delivery.

Unit guided learning hours

The guided learning hours (GLH) field is not required in all circumstances, but if information on GLH is needed for a range of other purposes, such as for most qualifications to be included in secondary school Achievement and Attainment Tables and for inclusion in the Diploma catalogue, then it will be provided in many cases.

Annex C: Examples of entry level units

Unit title: Serving Food and Drink

Entry 3

Credit value 2

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to serve food and drink to customers	1.1 List the stages in serving the customer food and drink 1.2 Serve food and drink to customers, politely, safely and hygienically
2. Be able to work as part of a food and drink service team	2.1 State how to work well as part of a food and drink service team 2.2 Work with others to serve food and drink 2.3 Assist in the preparation/assembly of food and drink 2.4 Assist in the safe and hygienic preparation, maintenance and cleaning of service areas

Unit title: Time and Money

Entry 1

Credit value 8

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Know how to plan using time	1.1 Match your regular daily activities to the time of the day 1.2 Use a planner to mark events for the week 1.3 Name the season in which some familiar events take place
2. Know how to use money in familiar situations	2.1 Identify the name and value of common coins and money 2.2 Select an appropriate coin or note for payment 2.3 Count (up to 10) the number of items purchased 2.4 Identify some weekly spending needs 2.5 Classify spending into essential and luxury items 2.6 Identify some different methods for paying for goods 2.7 State some ways that you can keep your money safe

Unit title: Getting to a destination safely and on time

Entry 3

Credit value 1

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Know about options for travelling to and from a specific destination	1.1 Identify possible options for travelling to and from their destination 1.2 Choose the most appropriate option for travelling 1.3 Identify an alternative option to use if required 1.4 Identify who to contact if they are going to be late or unable to go
2. Be able to plan and carry out a journey to arrive at a destination safely and on time	2.1 Plan a safe route and the time needed to complete their journey 2.2 Identify who to contact if they need help with their journey 2.3 Make a journey using their chosen travel option to their destination safely 2.4 Arrive at their destination on time

Annex D: Developing QCF units at level 4 and above

Higher Levels

The QCF identifies nine levels of achievement, from Entry level through levels 1 to 8. Levels 4 to 8 of the QCF are equivalent in challenge to levels 4 to 8 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) (FHEQ). In the context of this section 'higher level' refers to levels 4 to 8 of the QCF.

The regulatory arrangements for the QCF make no distinction between units or qualifications at different levels of the framework. In developing units at higher levels of the QCF, organisations need to be aware that there are no particular regulatory requirements of the QCF that relate to the higher levels of the framework. Although there may be particular factors that influence the development of units at higher levels, these units will be subject to the same regulatory arrangements as all other units in the QCF.

Factors influencing the development of units at higher levels

The following factors may influence the development of units at higher levels of the QCF. There is no suggestion that these factors influence all higher level units, simply that they are more likely to have an impact on units at levels 4 to 8 of the QCF than units at lower levels:

- Units at higher levels within the QCF are less likely to be developed on the basis of occupational standards (as the majority of these standards relate to lower levels of achievement within the QCF)
- Units at higher levels are more likely to be related to standards set by professional bodies and/or associations as these bodies have a clearer remit for standards development at these higher levels

- The learning outcomes and assessment criteria for units at higher levels are more likely to be based on knowledge or understanding, than on the development of skills
- Units at higher levels are more likely to be assessed through assignments, examinations and tests rather than through assessment of performance in the workplace
- Evidence from the QCF tests and trials, as well as from other credit systems, suggests that the distinction between the levels of units at higher levels is more difficult to establish than for units at lower levels
- Evidence from the QCF tests and trials, as well as from other credit systems, suggests that the credit value of units at higher levels of achievement will, on average, be higher than for units at lower levels
- The influence of higher education credit systems may have an impact on unit development at level 4 of the QCF and above. In particular the credit values and levels of QCF units may be influenced by the desire to facilitate the transferability of credits between QCF qualifications and higher education institutions.
- The funding arrangements for provision leading to units at higher levels of the QCF may well be different from those at lower levels. This could have an impact on unit development at higher levels of the QCF.

Each of these possible influences is now considered in turn in developing guidance for the development of units at higher levels.

Occupational standards

Many units in the QCF are based on occupational standards. Of these, the majority are based on NOS, which inform the development of qualifications in the QCF, the NQF and the SCQF. The QCF regulations require that, wherever possible, a unit should be derived from a relevant set of standards. In this respect, professional and occupational standards fulfil exactly the same role as NOS within the QCF.

Irrespective of the nature of the relevant standards and the level of a unit, the process of unit development in the QCF demands that the relevant standards are 'translated' into the QCF unit format. In other words the standards themselves do not constitute the unit, but are the basis on which the unit is developed. In this respect, the relationship between occupational standards of any kind and higher levels of the QCF is identical to the relationship between standards and units at other levels of the framework.

Professional body standards

Most QCF units that are based on NOS are located either at level 2 or level 3 of the framework. Where standards are developed by a professional body or association it is more likely that units based on these standards will be located at higher levels of the QCF. Such professional standards may still be developed by an SSC or SSB, but may also be developed by other standard-setting bodies, including professional bodies.

No distinction is made between these 'higher level' professional standards and NOS. Both will be used as the basis for unit development and both will require 'translation' into the standard QCF unit format. The QCF unit databank now includes a number of higher level units based on professional standards, and examples of such units will be included in the updated guidance on writing units.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Within QCF level descriptors it is possible to detect a gradual shift away from practical skills based on physical actions at lower levels towards more cerebral knowledge based on mental actions as one moves to the higher levels of the QCF. As the basis of the level descriptors reflects a hierarchy of skills and knowledge (Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning is a source for these and other level descriptors) this gradual shift in focus is reflected as you move up the levels of the QCF.

One possible impact of this shifting focus across different levels is that it becomes more difficult to develop precise and easily measurable learning outcomes and assessment criteria at higher levels of achievement. There is a danger that assessment criteria at higher levels either become repetitive, or that they fail to establish an explicit assessment standard for the unit. There are now examples of higher level units in the QCF databank that use a variety of different assessment criteria to establish a clear assessment standard for the unit.

Assessment

Although the method of assessment is not a technical feature of the unit, evidence from unit sampling to date suggests that some awarding organisations are developing units to be assessed exclusively through tests or examinations. Such units tend to be developed at higher levels of the QCF and are more likely to assess validly the development of knowledge and/or understanding rather than the acquisition of skills.

Such an approach to unit development is entirely consistent with the regulatory requirements of the QCF. However, it should also be noted that the requirements for assessment of such units are exactly the same as for other levels of the QCF: all the learning outcomes of the unit must be achieved to the required assessment standard in order for credit(s) to be awarded for that unit.

Levels

Although the QCF is based on nine levels of achievement, evidence from the QCF test and trial programme suggests that it is actually more difficult to establish meaningful distinctions between units at higher levels of the framework. Evidence from the SCQF also seems to confirm this trend: as one proceeds up the levels of the framework the ability to make clear and unambiguous distinctions between the levels of different units becomes harder.

One possible explanation for this difficulty is the historical rather than behavioural basis of distinctions between levels at the higher 'end' of the QCF. In other words, although the distinctions between the first four levels of achievement (Entry level to level 3) are based on qualitatively different and easily observable distinctions in the actions of learning, distinctions between the top five levels of the QCF are derived from distinctions between years of study in higher education.

It is possible that the reason why it becomes practically more difficult to distinguish between levels of achievement as one proceeds up the levels of the QCF is that the distinctions between levels 4 to 8 are theoretically less easy to establish. Although the levels of the QCF are nearly always presented as a neat and even set of 'stages' in a hierarchy of achievements, perhaps in reality these stages get progressively 'narrower' as one goes up through the levels. The difficulty in identifying the difference between a unit at level 6 and one at level 7 may actually be a reflection of reality.

Having noted this difficulty, there are now examples of units at higher levels that establish clear distinctions between levels and relate this to the QCF level descriptors. It also seems to be easier to make these distinctions for units with relatively large credit values. The more detailed the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for higher level units, the easier it seems to be to locate these units at a particular level of the QCF. Such detailed content leads logically to higher credit values.

Credit value

Evidence both from the test and trial programme and from unit sampling reports suggest that as one proceeds upwards through the levels of the QCF, the average credit value of units seems to increase. There is a sound basis for this increase in credit values. The QCF level descriptors lead us through a set of linguistic concepts (for example from 'simple' to 'complex', from 'familiar' to 'changing' contexts) that imply an increasing 'weight' of observable distinctions in learner achievement as one progresses up through the levels. In these circumstances it is reasonable to expect that units at higher levels of the QCF will have, on average, higher credit values than units at lower levels. The examples in the updated unit writing guidance will reflect this trend.

Credit values in higher education credit systems

There is no restriction on unit credit values at any level of the QCF. However, there is a practical reason why higher credit values might be expected at levels 4 to 8 of the QCF, and this is again due to alignment with higher education credit systems. In England, the funding methodology for part-time learners in higher education links the allocation of resources to the credit value of modules, setting a minimum credit value of 20 for fundable provision, rising in multiples of 20 to a full-time equivalent 120 credits per annum. This funding decision is leading to a rapid convergence of credit systems in higher education (in England at least) around these multiples of 20 credits for individual modules.

Evidence from recent unit sampling reports suggests that unit-submitting organisations in the QCF are also starting to converge around this 20 credit 'norm' in order to maximise credit transfer opportunities for learners between the QCF and higher education. Again, this trend will be illustrated in the examples of higher level units in the updated guidelines on unit writing. However, it should be noted that smaller units with credit values of multiples of 4, 5 or 10 (added together to make 20 credits) can also be transferred to higher education and not risk being too large.

Funding

For further information on funding units, refer to *LSC funding guidance 2008/09: funding principles, rules and regulations (final version)* from www.lsc.gov.uk.



Unit title: Control Transportation Project Quality Standards, Progress and Costs

Level 6

Credit value 24

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to control projects against agreed quality standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1.1 Identify quality standards and passing them on to people responsible for implementing them before they start work on the project1.2 Specify the responsibilities which individuals have for maintaining quality standards1.3 Set up and implement systems for inspecting and controlling the quality of work and record the outcomes1.4 Ensure that work which fails to meet the requirements and specified quality standards is identified and rectified1.5 Inform decision makers regularly about significant variations in quality standards, programme and safety implications, and suggest solutions1.6 Agree amendments to the project requirements and specifications and record them accurately
2. Be able to maintain contract compliance with legal and statutory requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1 Identify legal and statutory requirements from available information and clarify them where there is uncertainty2.2 Brief staff about their legal and statutory responsibilities and the implementation thereof before they start work on the project2.3 Implement monitoring systems, collect information regularly and summarise it accurately2.4 Identify situations which do not comply with legal and statutory requirements, investigate the circumstances thoroughly and take appropriate corrective action2.5 Identify any new legislation and statutory requirements which may have an impact on the project, summarising the important details and passing this on to relevant people

3. Be able to control contract progress against agreed programmes

- 3.1 Implement systems to monitor and record the progress of the project against the agreed programmes, collect information regularly and summarise it accurately
- 3.2 Identify inadequately and inappropriately specified resources, inform decision makers and specify and obtain alternative resources
- 3.3 Identify and quantify any variations from planned progress which have occurred, or which may occur, and which could disrupt the programme
- 3.4 Investigate the circumstances of any variations thoroughly and agreeing and implement appropriate corrective action
- 3.5 Recommend options which are most likely to to optimise project outcomes and pass these on to relevant people
- 3.6 Regularly inform decision makers about progress, changes to the operational programme, resource needs, and suggest the decisions and actions that need to be taken

4. Be able to control project costs against agreed budgets

- 4.1 Implement appropriate financial control systems
- 4.2 Ensure that the correct work values and cost data are calculated
- 4.3 Monitor cost data and ensuring that the project conforms to budget
- 4.4 Investigate any variations thoroughly and agree and implement appropriate corrective action with decision makers

Glossary

assessment criteria	Descriptions of the requirements a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved
CAT	Credit accumulation and transfer, the system by which learners can accumulate and transfer credits over a period of time in differing locations and contexts, in order to gain qualifications
competence	The 'proven/demonstrated' — and individual — capacity to use know-how, skills, qualifications or knowledge in order to meet usual — and changing — occupational situations and requirements. The notion of competence may include formal qualification as well as elements such as the capacity to transfer skills and knowledge to a new occupational situation, or the capacity to innovate. The level or kind of competence may be assessed by evaluating the individual's ability to use his or her skills. Competences can be specialised (such as the control of computerised processes), methodological (ability to think and decide, and capacity to innovate), or social (language and communication skills, and teamwork), CEDEFOP 2007 (see 'References', page 65)
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales
credit	An award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of the designated learning outcomes of a unit
credit value	The number of credits that may be awarded to a learner for the successful achievement of the learning outcomes of a unit
delivery	The process through which the learning provider enables the learner to achieve
evidence	The body of assessed material, generated in the learning process, which demonstrates achievement of the learning outcomes
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
GLH	Guided learning hours, the number of hours of teacher-supervised or directed study time required to teach a qualification or unit of a qualification
knowledge	Knowledge encompasses tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is knowledge that the learner possesses which influences cognitive processing but that he or she does not necessarily express and/or is not aware of. Explicit knowledge is knowledge a learner can consciously inspect, including tacit knowledge that converts into an explicit form by becoming an 'object of thought', CEDEFOP 2007 (see 'References', page 65)
learning outcome	A statement of what a learner can be expected to know, understand or do as a result of a process of learning

learning time	The amount of time a learner at the level of the unit is expected to take, on average, to complete the learning outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the assessment criteria
level descriptors for the QCF	A set of statements that enable achievements to be located at a particular level in the framework
Personal Learning Record	A record of all units, qualifications and credits a learner has achieved on the QCF
NDAQ	National Database of Accredited Qualifications, the database that contains details of all QCDA qualifications, including those submitted to the QCF; sample units can be found by using the unit search facility
NICATS	Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
NOS	National occupational standards, these describe what a person needs to do, know and understand in a job to carry out the role in a consistent and competent way
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
skill	The relevant knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job and/or the product of education, training and experience which, together with relevant know-how, is the characteristic of technical knowledge
SSC	Sector skills council
submitting body	Any organisation submitting units to the QCF unit databank; in year 1 of tests and trials this has included awarding bodies, sector skills councils and sector lead bodies, learning providers, professional bodies and employers
unique learner number	A unique number that is used to identify an individual learner
unit	A coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria with a title, credit value and level

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The Qualifications and Credit Framework will form part of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The CQFW embraces all post-16 and higher education in Wales. Further details can be found at www.cqfw.net.

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