

# **The Qualification Journey**

**From the Register of Regulated  
Qualifications to publication on the Learning  
Aim Reference Application (LARA)**

## **Guidance, Process and Information**

**Date: August 2012**

Audience details: Of interest to everyone involved in delivering Skills Funding Agency funded provision for Adult Learners.

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## 1. Purpose of Document

This document provides information on the Agency's Qualifications Funding Approval Process, describing the processes through which qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) are approved for funding for post-19 learners in England.

The document outlines the journey of a qualification from accreditation by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and addition to the [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) (The Register), its consideration by the Agency for funding approval and assigning of funding rates and publication on the Skills Funding Agency's [Learning Aim Reference Application \(LARA\)](#).

This document does not contain information on funding rules or learner eligibility. This information can be found on the [Skills Funding Agency Website](#).

## 2. Background and Introduction

Since 1 April 2010, the Skills Funding Agency has had the remit to approve qualifications for public funding for post-19 in England. This replaced the previous process where the Secretary of State approved qualifications under Section 97 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

In February 2012 the Agency completed a review of the Qualifications Funding Approval Process as a result of the announcement in *New Challenges, New Chances* (Skills Investment Statement 2011-2014), (December 2011):

*'Now that the funding transition to the QCF is complete, and in order to minimise the differentiation in the qualifications offer pre and post 19, more of the QCF will be opened up for public funding.'*

*The Skills Funding Agency will operate a simple and streamlined process through learner eligibility, entitlements and the funding system, rather than a complex set of rules and parameters.'*

This document reflects the outcomes of that review and explains the new process through which qualifications are approved for funding.

## 3. Provision in Scope

The Skills Funding Agency's Qualifications Funding Approval Process covers all publicly-funded regulated qualifications for post-19 learners in England.

The process is underpinned by the following three high level principles:

- That provision which the Agency directly funds should be part of a regulated framework.
- That provision should in the main be unit-based and credit-bearing.
- That provision is appropriate for public funding and not displacing sources of funding from other public bodies, employers or individuals.

In the main the Agency will focus funding on vocational qualifications in the QCF<sup>1</sup> and also support general qualifications, Adult Basic Skills and Functional Skills in the NQF.

The Qualifications Information Guide will be available on the [Skills Funding Agency website](#) showing full details of how the high level principles are applied, how qualifications are designated 'full' and related information on the publicly funded qualifications offer.

#### **4. Skills Funding Agency Qualifications Funding Approval Process - Overview**

The Agency's Qualifications Approval Process is overseen by the Strategic Approvals Panel (SAP) which meets quarterly. Membership includes representatives from the Association of Colleges, the Association of Employment Learning Providers, HOLEX, the Federation of Awarding Bodies, Ofqual, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Department for Education and Sector Skills Councils.

The Qualifications Funding Approval Process comprises three components:

- a.** An annual Stock Take of provision, which will run alongside the development and publication of the Skills Investment Statement, and result in a refreshed list of approved qualifications being published at the beginning of each calendar year for delivery in the new academic year.
- b.** A monthly Qualifications Funding Approval Process which starts when the Agency receives notification from Ofqual that a qualification has been accredited onto the Register. The Agency then checks the qualifications against the high level principles and associated criteria (for example, size and purpose) to determine which qualifications are to be approved for funding. The approved qualifications are then set a funding rate before being added to LARA.
- c.** An Exceptions Process whereby organisations are able at any time to request the Agency to review a decision with regards to the Funding Approval Process. More information regarding the Exceptions Process on the [Qualifications website](#).

The Agency no longer seeks Sector Skills Council (SSC) advice on a qualification-by-qualification basis with respect to the funding of QCF vocational qualifications. Instead, we will apply the principles listed above and we will also use qualification purpose and credit value in terms of identifying areas such as fullness. However, we do expect there to be employer support and end user demand for vocational qualifications.

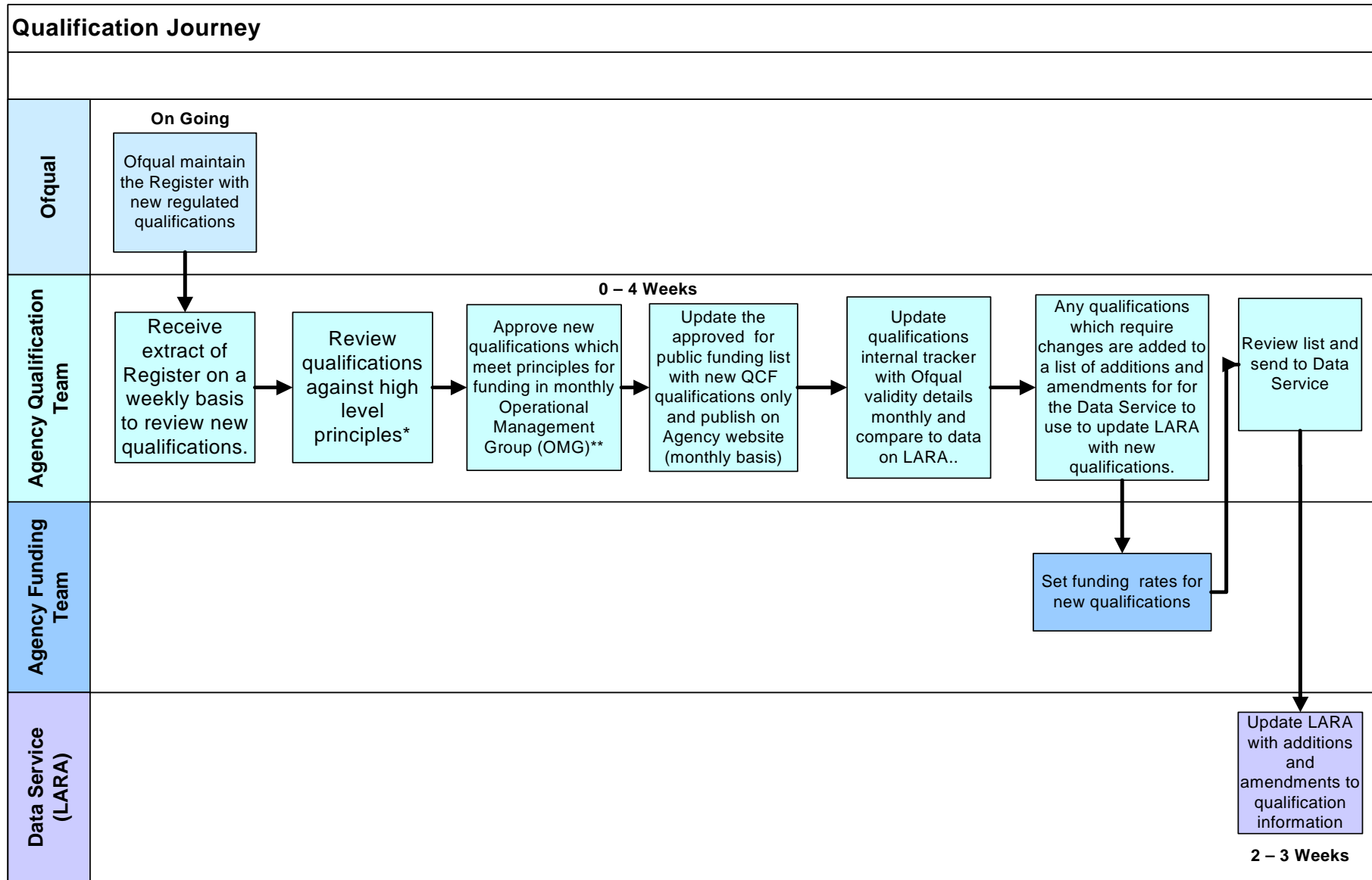
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<sup>1</sup> And non vocational qualifications at entry and level 1.

**Diagram One** (below) illustrates the monthly approval process.

**Diagram Two** (which follows) illustrates the high level process across both QCF and NQF qualifications.

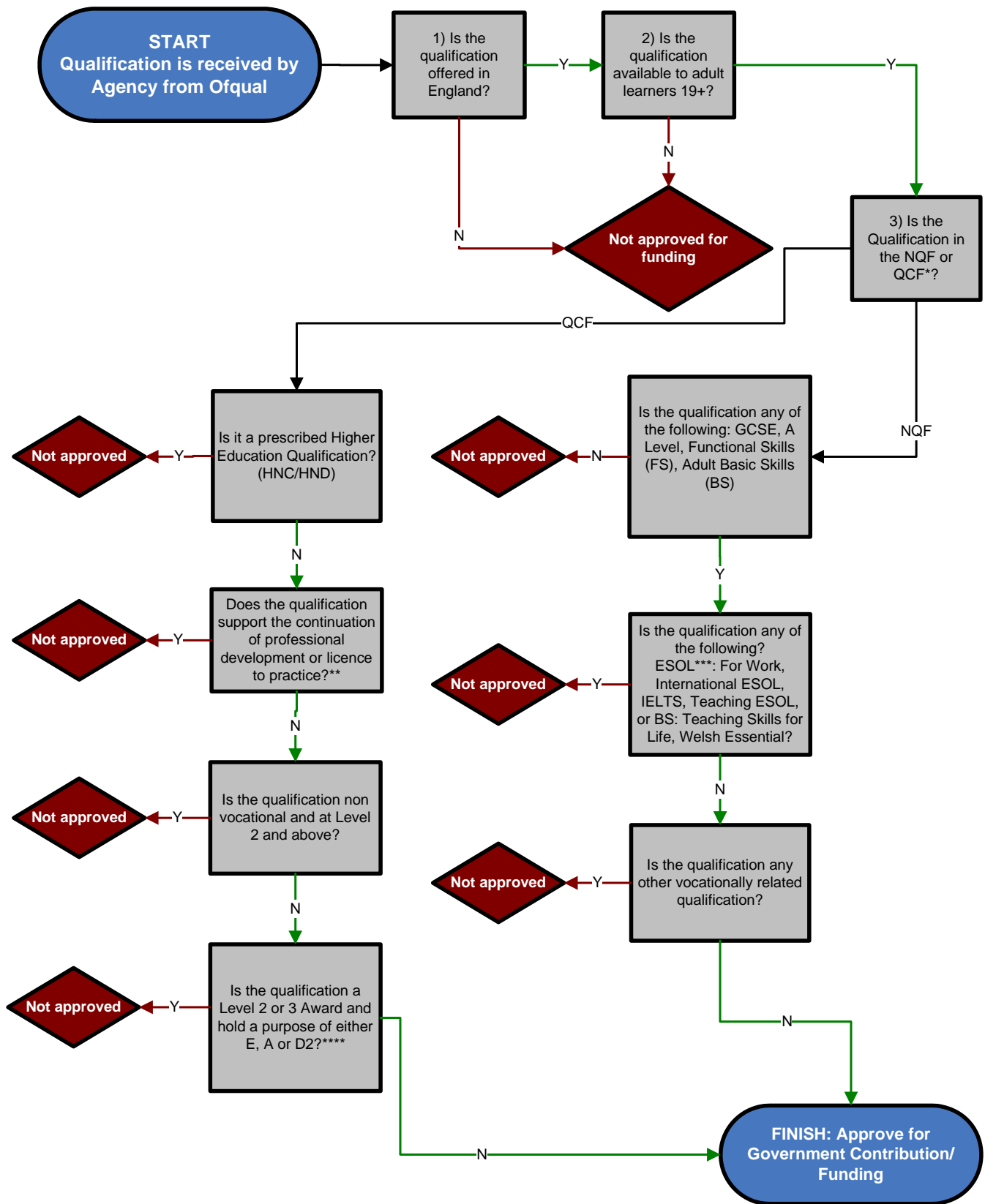
# Diagram One – The Monthly Funding Approval Process



\*See Diagram 2 – The High Level Process

\*\* OMG – An internal group who meet monthly to oversee new qualifications being approved for government contribution.

## Diagram Two – The High Level Process – how we determine if a qualification is approved for funding.



\* National Qualifications Framework & Qualifications and Credit Framework

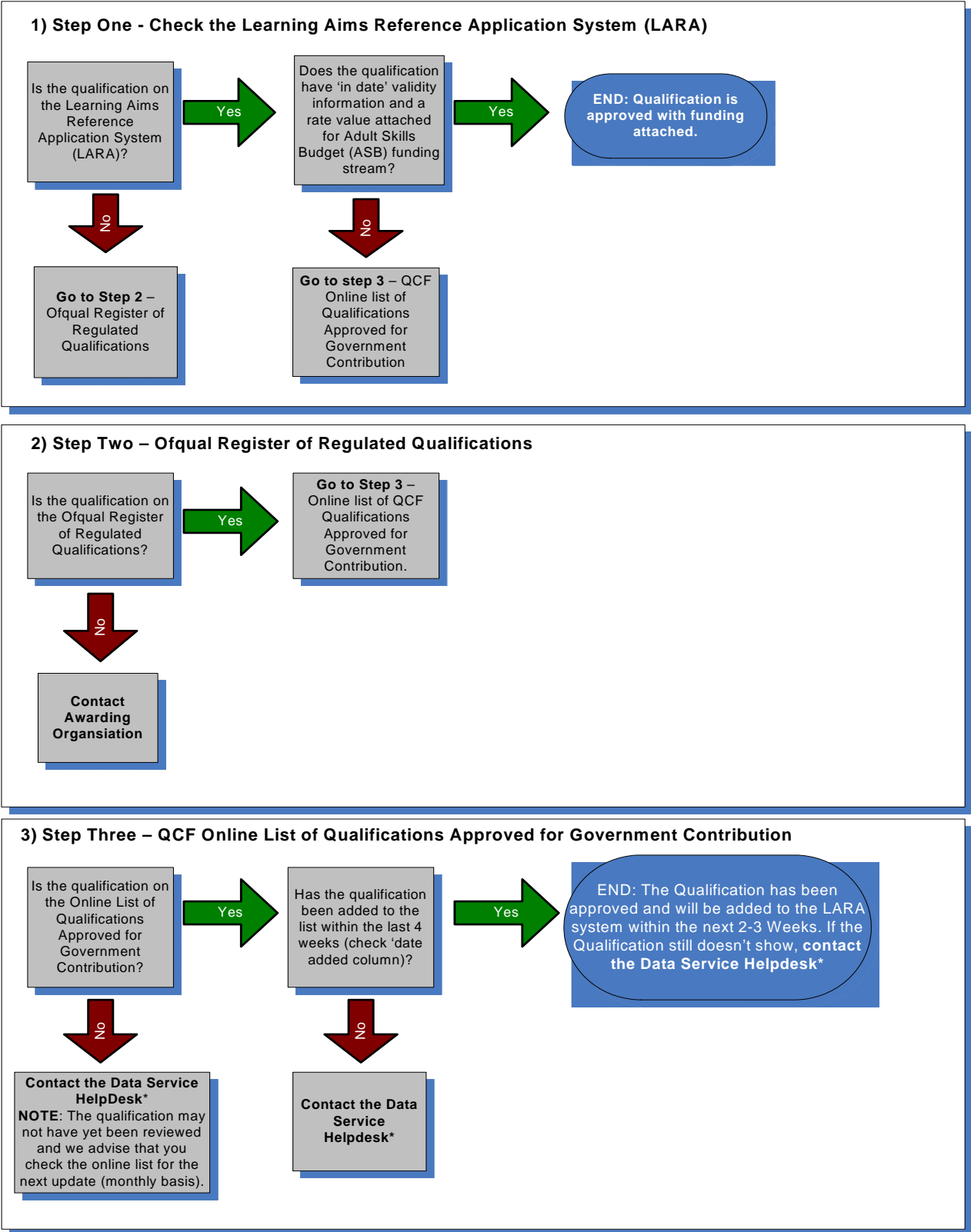
\*\* Licence to Practice also includes ineligible provision such as Food Safety, Food Hygiene, Health and Safety, First Aid, HACCP, COSSH, Security, Vendor Specific, Graded.

\*\*\* English for Speakers of Other Languages, IELTS - International English Language Testing System

\*\*\*\* E. Updating and continuing professional development (CPD), A. Recognise personal growth and engagement in learning, D2. Confirm the ability to meet a 'licence to practice' or other legal requirements made by the relevant sector, professional or industry.

# 5. Checking a Qualification's Progress

**Diagram Three** - shows a visual step by step guide to checking a qualification's progress to being funded.



\* The Data Service Help Desk – If you have any queries regarding a qualifications' progress, in terms of addition to LARA, validity details, funding details, approval of government contribution etc, please contact the Data Service Desk by phoning **08702 670 001** or emailing **servicedesk@thedata-service.org.uk**  
 Details of the Agency's Exceptions Process can be found on the **QCF Website**



## 5a. Steps to take to check where a qualification is in the Qualification Journey

The following steps provide additional details to support the Visual Step-by-Step Guide. Each step provides summary detail along with related links to further information in the process.

### Step 1: Data Source

Awarding Organisations will be able to advise on what they are intending to develop and what stage the qualification development is at.

[The Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) is another source which can be used to check for published information on regulated qualifications and includes details of recognised awarding organisations. Specific queries should be sent by e-mail to [Ofqual](#).

### Step 2: Confirmed Qualification

It is possible to check if a qualification<sup>2</sup> has been approved for public funding by consulting the online list of QCF qualifications approved for public funding [here, or by looking at](#) the [Learning Aim Reference Application \(LARA\)](#).

### Step 3: LARA update

Check the funding status of a qualification by searching the LARA system<sup>3</sup>.

**Please note:** It is possible for generic details of a qualification to show on LARA with no funding rates applied. This is likely if the qualification is still going through the funding approval process. Equally it is possible for different funding programs to have funding rates showing on the Learning Aims Database (LAD), for example 16-18, as each program goes through a separate approval process.

If the funding information is still not showing on LARA two weeks after being listed on the list of QCF qualifications approved for public funding, the [Data Service](#) should be contacted by email to the [Service Desk](#) or telephone 0870 267 0054.

### Step 4: Unresolved query

If the qualification has been published on LARA but you have a query that relates to Adult Learner Responsive, for example a QCF qualification is not showing on the online list of QCF qualifications approved for public funding five weeks after appearing on LARA, again please e-mail the Data Service [Service Desk](#) or telephone 0870 267 0054.

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<sup>2</sup> Currently only QCF qualifications are published on a confirmed list.

<sup>3</sup> Further into the document, a link to the LARA Guidance can be found which explains searching qualification details

## 6. Key Information about the Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA)

As part of the enhancements to the Data Service data collection systems, the Learning Aim Database (LAD) has been replaced by the Learning Aim Reference Application (LARA).

LARA is the repository for the learning aims from 2011/12 onwards, and any data that is not relevant for the 2011/12 collection has not been carried forward to the LARA system.

The Data Service published Release 1 of LARA on 31 July 2011:  
<https://gateway.imservices.org.uk/sites/lara/Pages/Welcome.aspx>

A LARA user guide has been published and is available to download from the [LARA Useful Links Page](#).

Some key information regarding funding and validity details can be found below:

**NOTE: for qualifications approved for funding for learners 19+, QCF, NQF and QAA, refer to the funding streams ADULT\_LR and ER\_OTHER**

### Validity Details Field information

Field Name	Explanation
Start Date	For the 2011/12 academic years onwards, this identifies when this aim, on this funding model (or collection) is first valid
Last Date for New Starts	No new starts are permitted after this date for this aim on this funding model (or collection). This date is updated around April each year to reflect annual rollover and availability for the academic year commencing August XX
End Date	Learners must not have aims in ILR data on this funding model (or collection) which continue after this date or with end dates after this date
Created Date	Date the record was created
Modified Date	Date the record was last modified

### Funding Details Field Information

Field Name	Explanation
Effective From	Date the record is effective from
Effective To	Date the record is effective to
Program Weighting Factor	Program Weighting Factor for this aim on this funding model (collection)
Values Desc	Primary Funding Value
Values Value	For Example 145.000
Values UOM	Standard Learning Numbers expressed in Guided Learning Hours.

## 7. Related Links

Please find below related links which provide additional information about the Funding Approval Process.

[Ofqual - The Register of Regulated Qualifications](#)

[Learning Aim Reference Application](#)

[Qualifications Website](#)

[Skills Funding Agency](#)

[The Data Service](#)

[Quality Assurance Agency](#)

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