



Skills Funding
Agency

2013 Annual Review of Qualifications

Review of qualifications with low demand, and process for awarding organisations to provide feedback on funding decisions

October 2013

Of interest to colleges, training organisations and awarding organisations

Purpose

1. On 30 October we published [a list of 542 qualifications with fewer than 100 publicly-funded adult enrolments each year over the last two years](#). We do not intend to make these available for funding for new enrolments for the 2014/15 funding year.
2. This document sets out the process and timescales for awarding organisations to notify us where they believe that a qualification appearing on this list of '[low demand qualifications](#)' should still be available for funding in 2014/15.

Introduction

3. Each year, we carry out a review of the publicly-funded qualifications offer. This document focuses on one particular aspect of the review, which is where we look at qualifications with low demand to inform the 2014/15 qualifications offer. It explains how awarding organisations can notify us if they believe a qualification with low demand should remain eligible for public funding, and it sets out the evidence we require.
4. Low-demand qualifications in scope for our review are those delivered outside of an Apprenticeship by colleges and training organisations through their adult skills budget allocation where the qualification:
 - i. has been available for delivery on or before 1 October 2011, and
 - ii. has had fewer than 100 publicly-funded enrolments in the funding year 2011/12 *and* fewer than 100 publicly-funded enrolments in the funding year 2012/13.
5. We [published a list of these 'low demand' qualifications](#) on our website on 30 October. We intend to remove these qualifications from the 2014/15 publicly-funded offer unless there are clear, mitigating reasons and evidence as to why they should be retained.
6. Therefore, for qualifications with 'low demand' we have set out a process to offer awarding organisations the opportunity to contact us and provide us with evidence of why a particular qualification with low publicly-funded enrolments should still be available for publicly-funded new starts in 2014/15.
7. Separate to this process of reviewing qualifications with low demand, we have also identified 669 qualifications which have been available for two or more years

(available for delivery on or before 1 October 2011), but which have not been used by colleges or training organisations as part of their adult skills budget allocation and for which there are no publicly-funded enrolments. On 30 October we published a [list of these qualifications on our website](#). As these qualifications are not being used, they will not be available for public funding for any new starts after 31 July 2014.

8. Please note that our intention to remove funding for qualifications with no demand or low demand does not relate to the use or availability of qualifications within Apprenticeships. If a qualification forms part of an Apprenticeship Framework then it continues to be available for delivery for new starts within an Apprenticeship, regardless of this process.

Notification process

9. We are asking colleges, training providers and awarding organisations to check the [list of qualifications with low demand](#) which we do not intend to fund in 2014/15.
10. Where removal of funding for new starts for a qualification from this list will have an adverse, unreasonable or uneven impact on an individual and/or organisation, we are asking for awarding organisations to alert us to this, drawing together evidence from colleges, training organisations and employers/ employer representative bodies. Where a qualification is expected to attract 100 or more publicly-funded adult enrolments each year, we also wish to include this in the qualifications offer. Again, we are asking for awarding organisations to alert us where this is the case, providing relevant evidence to support this.
11. Please note that we will not accept submissions from colleges or training organisations. We will only accept submissions from the awarding organisation that owns the qualification. This is a change from our last annual review, where we asked training organisations, colleges and awarding organisations all to notify us directly. This led to multiple requests for the same qualification. To minimise bureaucracy, this year we are asking awarding organisations to consolidate feedback and evidence from colleges and training organisations that use their qualifications, and then to provide us with a single request for each qualification.

Criteria

12. There are five criteria against which we will consider including a qualification that currently has low demand within the 2014/15 qualifications offer.
13. Four of these relate to where there is likely to be an adverse, unreasonable or uneven impact on an individual and/or organisation. These four are defined as situations where removing funding of the qualification will result in:
 1. limited or no availability of, and access to, learning at that level in that sector when there is an identified need (for example, specialist qualifications)
 2. impact on a particular group of learners as a result of there being no alternative provision
 3. destabilising and/or reducing the number of colleges and training organisations in a region or sector
 4. impact on a particular employer or group of employers.
14. The fifth criteria is where there is an anticipated increase in enrolments to above 100 each year for a particular qualification that currently has low enrolments.
15. In bringing a qualification to our attention, you need to provide evidence to support the criteria described in paragraphs 13 and 14.
16. Evidence should take the form of letters of support from relevant organisations. By relevant, we mean that the organisation is linked to the purpose of the qualification. For example, if the qualification relates to educational progression, it should be from further or higher education institutions. If the qualification supports employment, it should be from employers, employer representative organisations or organisations that support individuals into employment. If the evidence relates to increased enrolments, this must be from providers on the [Register of Training Organisations](#) that currently have an adult skills budget allocation.
17. Letters of support should explain why removal of the qualification will lead to one or more of the situations defined above. For example:
 - there are no suitable alternative qualifications at that level in that sector (and why any alternative qualifications at that level and in that sector are not suitable)
 - a specified group of learners would suffer from the loss of that qualification due to lack of alternative provision
 - an employer or groups of employers would be adversely impacted by the loss of the qualification

- entry data or letters of support from colleges and training organisations that they are looking to enrol a certain number of adult learners on a given qualification and would be drawing down funding for this through an adult skills budget allocation.

How to notify us

18. To notify us of qualifications where removal of funding will lead to an adverse, unreasonable or uneven impact, or where publicly-funded adult enrolments are expected to exceed 100 each year, awarding organisations should complete [notification form\(s\)](#) and [summary of notification form](#) (available on our [website](#)) and email these, together with evidence, to qualifications@sfa.bis.gov.uk by Friday 29 November 2013.
19. To support awarding organisations with this process, we will provide the Responsible Officer of each awarding organisation with numbers of publicly-funded enrolments for qualifications they offer which have low demand.
20. Late submission of forms, evidence or other supporting information may mean we are unable to confirm the qualification as being part of the qualifications offer in 2014/15.
21. Please use one notification form for each qualification you are alerting us to. In addition to the notification forms, please complete and return the [summary of notifications form](#), so that we can check to ensure we've received all forms.
22. You will receive an automatic email confirming we have received your email. If you do not receive this confirmation please send a separate email, as it may be that your email has been rejected due to size restrictions.
23. Once we have received your submission we will check to see if it is eligible for consideration as part of this process. We will let you know within three days of receiving your submission whether it is eligible for consideration. We can only consider a notification that meets the following criteria:
 - it is based on the criteria set out in paragraphs 13 and 14
 - the qualification is on [the list of qualifications with low demand](#)
 - the evidence provided relates to funding for learners aged 19 and older.
24. If we can consider the notification, we will undertake a risk impact assessment to consider learner profile (gender, age, learning difficulties and disabilities and ethnicity) and provider profile.

25. If appropriate, we may seek external advice on the qualification. This may be the relevant sector skills council or other appropriate employer-led body where it is a vocational or occupational qualification. We will ask them to provide, in writing, any relevant evidence regarding continuation of funding for the qualification.
26. We will submit details of notifications, evidence, the results of risk impact assessments and recommendations to the Qualifications Advisory Group (QAG). This group includes bodies that represent awarding organisations, colleges and training organisations. For more information on QAG, see our [Qualifications Information Guide](#).
27. The group will review the evidence and consider whether removal of funding for new starts in a qualification in 2014/15 will result in an adverse, unreasonable or uneven impact upon an individual or organisation (as defined in paragraph 13 above).
28. Taking into account the advice of the group we will confirm whether a qualification should still be available for funding for new starts in 2014/15. Where we decide that a qualification should still be available for funding in 2014/15, its funding will be extended to 31 July 2015 or its operational end-date (whichever is the sooner).
29. The outcomes of this process will be made available by the end of January 2014, when we will publish the 2014/15 qualifications offer. In advance of this, by 17 January 2014 we will write to each awarding organisation that submits a notification form to advise them of the outcome for their qualifications.
30. Through this process we are seeking feedback directly from the sector, and indirectly through representatives on QAG to minimise the risk of an adverse impact on individuals or organisations. Once we have received this input from the sector, our decision on which qualifications are available for public funding for new starts in 2014/15 will be final. There is no further mechanism within this review for organisations to request that qualifications with low demand are made available for public funding in 2014/15. Therefore, it is important that organisations take this opportunity to inform us if a particular qualification with low demand should still be available for public funding in 2014/15.

Useful links

[Qualifications Information Guide](#)

[Register of Training Organisations](#)

[Funding Rules](#)

[Notification Forms](#)

[Note to sector outlining this process](#)

[Information on funding for learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities](#)



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