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Guidance on qualification titles within the Qualifications and Credit Framework

September 2009

Ofqual/09/4484

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Introduction

The *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726) set out the requirements that will apply to the organisations that operate within, and the qualifications that are accredited into, the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The requirements for the qualifications titles are set out in paragraph 1.18, which states:

Each qualification title submitted for accreditation in the QCF must be presented in a standard format that identifies the level, size and a precise and concise description of the content of the qualification.

Feedback on the implementation of the regulatory requirements governing titling within the QCF indicates that further guidance is necessary on particular issues raised by awarding organisations and/or sector skills councils. The qualifications regulators therefore decided to produce this additional guidance and involved a number of awarding organisations, sector skills councils and others in the production of this document. This guidance does not constitute additional regulatory requirements; however, it is intended to provide helpful and transparent confirmation of the regulators' position on a range of issues that have emerged subsequent to the implementation of the regulatory arrangements.

Guidance

1 Consistency in the wording of QCF titles

Awarding organisations are required to establish a title for their qualifications. The regulators confirm that the title of a qualification after the accreditation process has been completed is the 'accredited title', and there are stipulations on when and where it must appear. There are clear advantages in the accredited title being used consistently in formal documentation, on the *National Database of Accredited Qualifications* (NDAQ) and on qualifications certificates.

If an awarding organisation sees a value in adding to the accredited title for promotional or marketing purposes, the regulators allow a degree of flexibility for awarding organisations in how they represent qualifications within their promotional materials. However, this flexibility does not extend to the use of the accredited title on qualification certificates, which is required.

2 Avoiding duplication of titles

Paragraph 1.24 of the regulatory arrangements relates to rules of combination. Feedback from a number of stakeholders suggested that this paragraph could be interpreted as meaning that once an awarding organisation has a qualification accredited, no other awarding organisation could have a qualification accredited with

the same title. This is not the case. While the regulators have responsibility to ensure clarity and transparency for learners in qualifications titling, they do not want to unnecessarily or unfairly restrict an awarding organisation's freedom to submit qualification titles.

There is a balance between ensuring a rationalised qualification offer within the QCF and the freedom of awarding organisations to operate within an open market. In this context, awarding organisations will propose and develop qualification titles, and the regulators will make a decision through the accreditation process on their appropriateness. Sector skills councils have an important role for vocational qualifications by advising the regulators whether they 'approve of' qualifications. In this way, the regulators receive advice which helps them ensure that there is not an unsuitable number of qualification titles.

3 Additional size descriptors within the QCF

The rationale for agreeing the regulatory requirements of the titles of qualifications within the QCF was to ensure that titles were 'concise and precise', so as to limit complexity and ensure consistency across the framework. The regulators recognise, however, that the range of credit values that determine whether a QCF qualification is an Award, a Certificate or a Diploma is wide.

On this basis, the regulators accept that there may, on occasion, be a justification for allowing an additional size description within a title. Awarding organisations are therefore able to make a case to the regulators for adding a descriptor to the qualification title to supplement the representation of the size of a qualification given through the use of the terms 'Award', 'Certificate' or 'Diploma'. This, however, must not be at the expense of ensuring the integrity of the framework, and Award, Certificate or Diploma must always be used in the title. The regulators agree that the terms 'introductory' and 'extended' are permissible as additional size descriptors within the QCF.

Additional terms may only be applied when there is more than one qualification within the same size range at the same level and with the same indication of content for the qualification. The awarding organisation will need to explain why, if the content of the qualifications is the same, two qualifications of different size were put forward for accreditation. Decisions on the use of additional terms will be made on a case-by-case basis by the accreditation teams, and awarding organisations will be expected to provide a clear rationale for requesting to use an additional term.

An example of when this may be required is when an awarding organisation submits two qualifications for accreditation at the same level with similar titles, but there is a difference in size. In such cases, the term 'extended' could be used within the larger qualification, or 'introductory' in the smaller qualification.

4 Titling arrangements for National Vocational Qualifications

Paragraph 1.22 of the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* states that 'the acronym "NVQ" may be added as a bracketed addition to the qualification title...' if the qualification proposal meets the requirements in the *Operating rules for using the term 'NVQ' in a QCF qualification title*. The regulators now agree that the term 'NVQ' need not appear as a bracketed addition in the qualification title. The term may be used in the body of the title and no longer needs to appear in brackets. This decision does not constitute a change to the regulatory arrangements but allows for a more flexible approach.

5 Inclusion of awarding organisations' names in qualification titles

Awarding organisations are not asked to include their name in the title they submit to the regulators for accreditation. However, the qualification regulators will then include an acronym of the awarding body's name as part of the accredited title so that there is complete clarity about the organisation that offers and awards the qualification. An awarding organisation may propose to the qualifications regulators that the acronym included in the qualification title is extended to include an established awarding organisation name, as well as their official listing held by the regulators.

Note

The regulators recognise that the titling of qualifications has significant implications for the clarity and understanding of the QCF, particularly for learners, employers and other users. If you have any comments on this guidance or require any further clarification of regulatory arrangements that govern titling, please email qcf@ofqual.gov.uk.

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First published in 2009.

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