



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



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FOR WALES



The rationalisation of qualifications 2005

*Annual report from the regulatory authorities in England, Wales and
Northern Ireland*

June 2005

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Foreword

The regulatory authorities in England (QCA), Wales (ACCAC) and Northern Ireland (CCEA) report annually to ministers on the accreditation and rationalisation of qualifications. This is the fifth report.

The report highlights the progress made by the regulatory authorities in addressing the needs of learners and the rationalisation of qualifications provision, as well as continued improvements to the accreditation process. The report outlines the developments made in sector areas to ensure that learners are provided with robust and valued qualifications.

The progress in accrediting qualifications should be considered within the context of significant projects being consulted on, or implemented, by the three regulatory authorities. Some of which, although not individually reported on within this document, are outlined below:

- The White Paper, *Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work*, released by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in March 2005, builds on the principles of the skills strategy published in 2003. The White Paper sets out the government's strategy in England to build on the progress already made in ensuring that employers and employees are furnished with the right skills to support success and to improve the employability of individuals. The White Paper also feeds into the recent *14–19 education and skills white paper* reported on below.
- The Welsh Assembly Government launched the *Skills and employment action plan for Wales 2005* in January. The actions take forward and build upon the work already emanating from the *Skills and employment action plan 2004*, supporting four main themes: improving mechanisms of workforce development, supplying new entrants to the labour market with the skills needed for employment, working with employers and employees to improve skills, helping more people into sustained employment.
- In Northern Ireland the Department for Employment and Learning have recently completed a consultation on proposals for a skills strategy. This emphasises the importance of identifying skills needs and ensuring that strategies are in place to meet the need.
- In February 2005 the DfES released the *14–19 education and skills white paper*, outlining proposals for the improvement of 14–19 provision in England. The White Paper emphasised the need to ensure that students leave education with functional skills in mathematics and English and to improve vocational education by introducing a specialised diploma as an alternative route to general certificates of education (GCSEs) and A levels. It also identified

the need to challenge more able students while ensuring that the needs of disengaged learners are also addressed. All this would be underpinned by extra funding for the training and development of staff and by encouraging collaboration between centres. The government have set a target of 10 years to develop and introduce the curriculum enhancements in which QCA will play a central role.

- In Wales, following consultation in 2002/3 on *Learning country: learning pathways 14–19*, the Welsh Assembly Government published an action plan aimed at bringing about substantial change for learners aged 14 to 19. The phased implementation of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification is one initiative that will have a significant impact on 14–19 learning. In July 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government published the document *Learning pathways 14–19 guidance* (available at www.learning.wales.gov.uk). This guidance details how Learning Pathways 14–19 will work in practice.
- A widespread consultation was undertaken to identify the particular needs of young people in Northern Ireland. CCEA is undertaking further work to ensure that an appropriate range of qualifications is available for 14- to 19-year-olds in full-time education.
- In 2004 QCA, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) launched a consultation to explore proposals for a framework for achievement in England. The vision is for a framework of units supported by a unit databank, each with a credit value and each capable of being used towards the achievements of a whole qualification. This will ensure systems that recognise learners' achievements, are responsive to the needs of individuals and employers, inclusive of a wide range of achievements, clear and accessible to learners and providers, cost-effective to use and to manage and valued by all users. QCA have now reported the results of the consultation to the DfES and aim to publish further details of the proposals for the framework in spring 2005.
- In 2003, following substantial development work, the Welsh Assembly Government launched the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The CQFW is a broad and inclusive framework and includes achievements in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), higher education and non-formal learning. It was established and is maintained jointly by ACCAC, Education and Learning Wales¹ (ELWa) and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). In January 2005, ACCAC published the discussion paper *Building on success: the development of qualifications and credit systems*. This paper, published with the support of ELWa and HEFCW, aimed to initiate discussion with key stakeholders regarding the future direction of the national qualifications framework in Wales in

¹ Education and Learning Wales (ELWa) is responsible for funding, planning and promoting all post-16 education and training in Wales with the exception of higher education.

light of proposals to replace the NQF in England. A report on the outcome of the discussions will be finalised in spring 2005.

- In Northern Ireland, a consultation is being undertaken on proposals for the development of a framework for recognising achievement. These proposals are in line with the principles being consulted on in England by QCA. CCEA will work with its partner regulatory authorities to ensure that a credit accumulation transfer system is in place across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and complements the Scottish system.

This report reflects the regulatory authorities' drive to ensure that the educational needs of England, Wales and Northern Ireland are addressed and that there is continued development of the systems and procedures required to assure high-quality and respected qualifications worldwide.

Ken Boston
Chief Executive, QCA

John Valentine Williams
Chief Executive, ACCAC

Gavin Boyd
Chief Executive, CCEA

Executive summary

1. The fifth annual report, from the regulatory authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to ministers, on the rationalisation of qualifications provides an overview of the range of work undertaken, and progress being made, during 2004 and 2005.
2. The streamlined accreditation system has continued to ensure that qualifications remain relevant and responsive to public and sector demand. In 2004 and 2005 this has included a further reduction in qualification accreditation times, the introduction of awarding body recognition updates and bi-annual plans.
3. In January 2005, the regulatory authorities issued final details of the the new 5-day accreditation process. It is underpinned by a web-based system that will guarantee to accredit qualifications within five days for those awarding bodies that have completed an application and shown themselves to have robust qualification development arrangements. In addition the regulatory authorities are working to underpin the standard accreditation process with a web-based system and it is expected that this will further reduce accreditation times. These web-based systems will offer the regulatory authorities a greater range of information, which they will be able to collect and publish on the openQUALS website to help learners make informed choices.
4. A market analysis research project, due to report in summer 2005, will further inform the regulatory authorities' understanding of the market for qualifications and provide strategic direction in addition to bi-annual plans.
5. The ongoing work to establish qualifications within sector and subject areas has continued during 2004 and 2005. Building on this, work has been undertaken to develop sector qualification strategies in order to ensure that qualifications are properly informed by sector needs.
6. In autumn 2004, the regulatory authorities consulted on seven proposed changes to the regulation of qualifications. The proposals underlined the regulatory authorities' review of its role in relation to the regulation of qualifications and signalled the intention to change the approach to accreditation and monitoring. This is in line with the recommendations made in the quinquennial review of QCA.
7. In April 2004, the revised regulatory criteria were published, together with the changes to the NQF in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The changes to the criteria were carried out in line with the policy of rationalisation and

now provide clear guidelines for the development and delivery of qualifications. Following on from this, the revised NQF now aligns with the Framework Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and allows for clearer comparability and progression across qualification types.

8. Since the autumn 2004 consultation event on *Proposed changes to the regulation of qualifications*, the regulatory authorities have taken forward proposals for a centre recognition project. This programme of work is at the pre-consultation stage with a range of seminars being held with awarding bodies and key stakeholders. The regulatory authorities expect to issue the full consultation in September 2005.

9. The enhanced sanctions policy, published at the end of March 2004, indicates the shift of emphasis in the approach to regulations. From June 2005, the regulatory authorities will impose a public sanction on any awarding body that has failed to comply with the requirements of the regulatory criteria. The autumn consultation on *Proposed changes to the regulation of qualifications* also considered the principle of developing and implementing a set of public performance measures and possible benchmarks for awarding bodies that would assist in ensuring consistent and effective practice across all awarding bodies.

The recognition of awarding bodies

1. A considerable amount of work is carried out by the regulatory authorities with prospective organisations before they can become recognised awarding bodies. For example, during 2004 and up to the end of April 2005:
 - 142 organisations contacted the regulatory authorities to enquire about the possibility of becoming recognised as awarding bodies
 - 29 of which attended early dialogue meetings to discuss the awarding body recognition process and alternative options in more detail
 - seven organisations submitted awarding body recognition applications, of which two were rejected as a result of insufficient early dialogue, and five are in progress.

As a result of robust recognition procedures that ensure all awarding bodies meet the specific criteria, only five of the 142 enquiries have translated into new applications.

Therefore, as of April 2005, there are now 115 recognised awarding bodies. During 2004 and up to the end of 2005:

- five new awarding bodies were recognised
 - two recognised awarding bodies withdrew from the NQF
 - one recognised awarding body became part of a new awarding body through a merger.
2. Over the course of 2004 the regulatory authorities also received 10 applications from existing recognised awarding bodies seeking to extend the range of qualifications they offer to encompass additional types, levels or sector and subject areas of qualification. Six of these extensions have been agreed and four are in progress.
 3. Analysis shows that awarding bodies still vary widely in terms of the scope of their operations. Figure 1 shows how awarding bodies differ in terms of the number of accredited qualifications offered. Seen in relation to the figures for 2003 (figure 2), the chart illustrates how the increase of accredited qualifications during 2004 (see paragraph 13) has not been a result of recognising more awarding bodies but of awarding bodies increasing their provision to meet emerging needs.

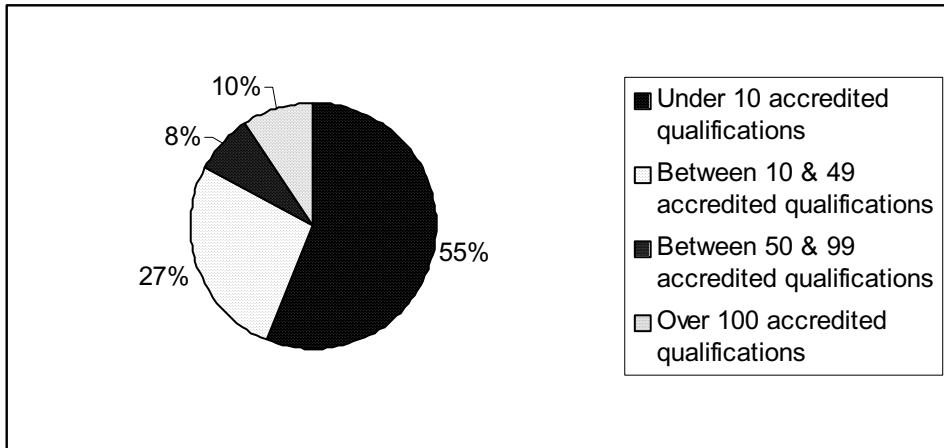


Figure 1: Breakdown of awarding bodies by number of accredited qualifications offered 2004

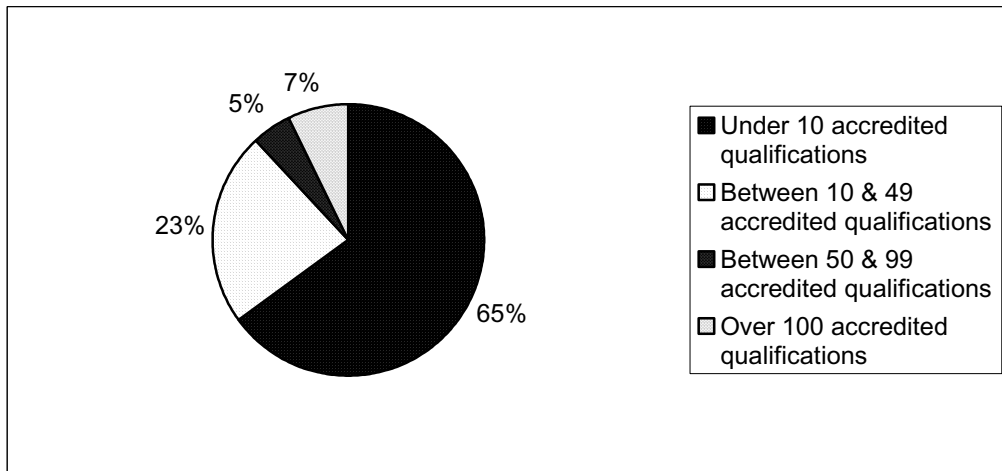


Figure 2: Breakdown of awarding bodies by number of accredited qualifications offered 2003

- Figure 3 shows awarding body coverage of sector and subject areas. This is further illustrated in appendix 1, where the number of awarding bodies offering particular qualification types in each of the sector and subject areas is shown.

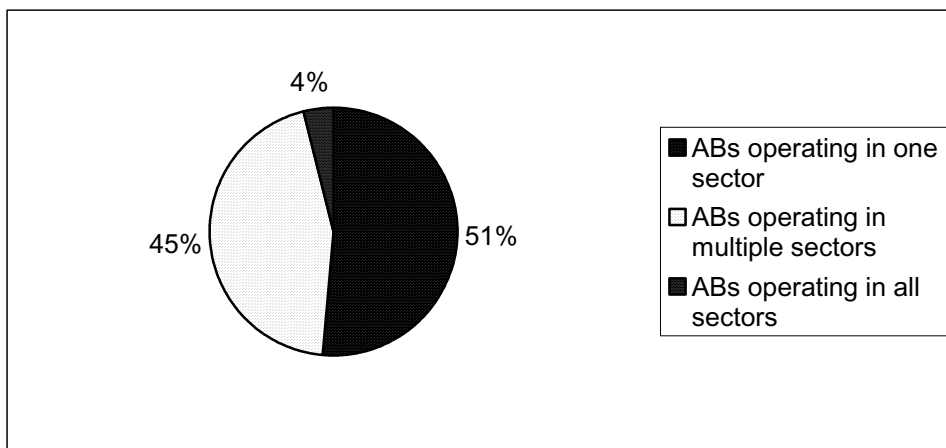


Figure 3: Breakdown of awarding bodies by sector and subject areas covered, 2004

5. In comparison with figure 3, appendix 1 shows that even though only four per cent of awarding bodies offer qualifications in all sector areas, no qualification type has qualifications in all the sector areas. However the success of a qualification type should not be measured by its coverage of sector and subject areas. By their very nature, qualification types such as key skills and basic skills are only classified in two second tier areas, while vocationally related qualification types cover by all but eight areas. Where awarding bodies only offer qualifications in one sector, it is likely that these are specialised awarding bodies offering specific vocational qualifications. There is no provision for NQF qualifications in sector area 11.5 Anthropology and 12.3 Linguistics and these are areas that qualifications could be extended into.

Awarding body recognition updates

6. A key aspect of the streamlined accreditation process implemented in autumn 2003 was the introduction of a requirement for all recognised awarding bodies to update the information originally provided at the recognition stage of the accreditation process. This is intended to ensure that awarding bodies comply with the revised regulatory criteria, and to form a baseline of information upon which further work to ensure compliance with the proposed framework changes can be based, subject to the results of the consultations. The updating process will also allow the regulatory authorities to develop a 'bank' of information on key aspects of awarding bodies' operations and is a prerequisite for access to the 5-day accreditation process (see paragraph 16). It is anticipated, subject to further consultation, that certain items of information, such as awarding body customer service statements, will be made available on the regulatory authorities' openQUALS website as an indicator of the quality standards demonstrated by recognised awarding bodies.
7. Six awarding bodies, offering a range of qualification types and sector and subject areas, took part in a pilot of the awarding body recognition update process during the spring and summer of 2004. As a result, a number of modifications have been made to ensure that updates are as streamlined and focused as possible, including linkage with existing monitoring work wherever practicable. The process is now being implemented across all 116 recognised awarding bodies and is due to be completed by March 2006.

Bi-annual plans

8. The streamlined accreditation process (see paragraph 6) introduced the concept of annual awarding body plans of provision, containing details of:
 - proposed new qualifications intended to be submitted for accreditation, extensions or amendments to existing qualifications
 - notification of any intention not to seek an extension for an existing qualification

- requests for early withdrawal of qualifications.

This requirement was changed to bi-annual plans in 2004 to better inform the overall programme for developing and accrediting qualifications.

- 9.** All recognised awarding bodies were contacted in August 2004 to request submission of their first bi-annual plan by 30 September. To date, 104 plans have been received and these have been circulated to regulatory authority officers responsible for specific sector and subject areas to inform future planning, particularly in relation to the development of sector qualification strategies (see paragraph 59). In 15 cases, proposed new qualifications represent expansion into areas outside the current approved scope of awarding bodies' operations. The regulatory authorities are in the process of contacting those awarding bodies to discuss the process of making an application demonstrating their ability to extend the range of their provision.
- 10.** Providing a bi-annual plan has become a formal condition of accreditation for those awarding bodies that have failed to provide such a plan. If they do not meet this condition, sanctions may be imposed (see paragraph 108).
- 11.** Awarding bodies were contacted in March 2005 to submit their second bi-annual plan. To date, 61 plans have been received.

The accreditation and rationalisation of qualifications

Accrediting qualifications

12. In 2004–5, 868 qualifications were accredited, bringing the total number of accredited qualifications to 4,877. These included:
- 96 GCE A level and AS levels
 - 15 GCSEs
 - 433 vocationally related qualifications (VRQs)
13. In 2004, 9,581,395 certificates were awarded from the 4,877 accredited qualifications. The proportional breakdown of the number of certificates awarded, by eight qualification types, is shown below in figure 4. The breakdown of this chart is shown in appendix 2, where the number of certificates awarded across these eight qualification types in 2003/4 is listed against the figures for the academic years 2001/2 and 2002/3. It can clearly be seen from this table that the number of certificates has continued to rise year on year. This rise has been significant in basic skills qualifications, which since their introduction in 2000, have come to be seen as essential tools to support the employability of under-skilled adult learners. 2003/4 also saw a considerable rise in the number of VRQ qualifications being awarded.

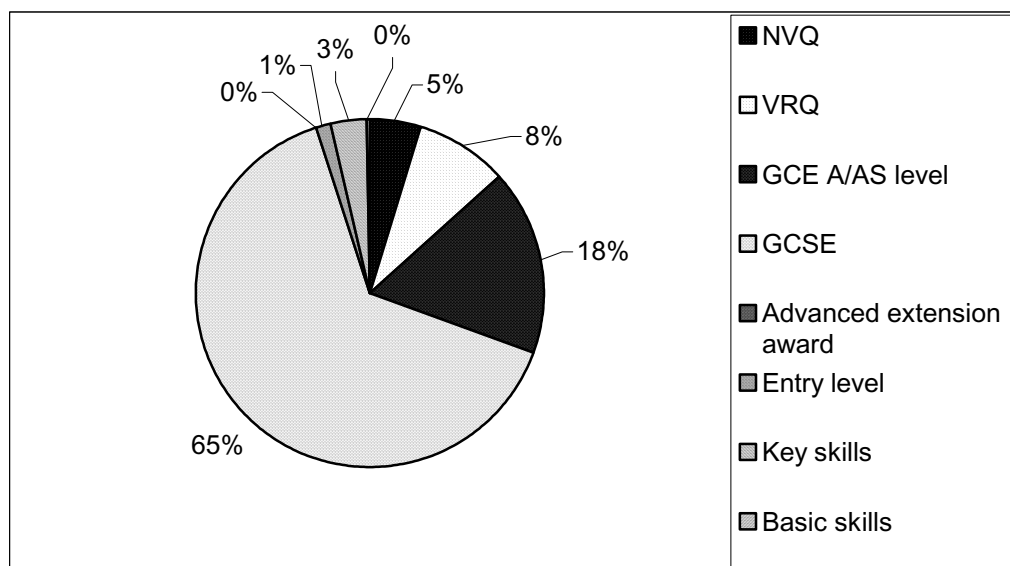


Figure 4: Percentage of certificates awarded by each qualification type 2004

Improvements to the accreditation process

14. Accreditation times during 2004 decreased significantly following the successful implementation of the streamlined accreditation process. During this time the average time to accredit a vocational qualification was eight weeks, compared to an average time of 14 weeks in 2003. This is significantly better than the 11 weeks predicted at the launch of the streamlined accreditation process. In the first quarter of 2005 this has continued to decrease, with VRQs and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) now being accredited within an average of six weeks.
15. Factors that have also contributed to these improvements have included:
- closer working relationships between the regulatory authorities, awarding bodies and sector skills councils (SSCs) in the development of emerging or interim sector qualification strategies (see paragraph 59)
 - changes to internal structures and the introduction of a new team within QCA to facilitate the effective development and accreditation of qualifications
 - the introduction of significant changes to the regulatory criteria (see paragraph 98)
 - greater understanding by awarding bodies of the regulatory requirements and streamlined accreditation process
 - improved communication links and numerous, individually tailored training events and presentations for awarding bodies, in relation to accreditation and regulatory requirements.

The 5-day accreditation process

16. In January 2005, following the autumn 2004 consultation on *Proposed changes to the regulation of qualifications* (see paragraph 95), the regulatory authorities issued final details of the new 5-day accreditation process, which will be web-based. This process has been limited to certain qualification types (mainly vocational) and may be extended to include others. It is aimed at rewarding awarding bodies that can show a good track record in delivering high-quality qualifications, with less regulatory scrutiny during the accreditation of their proposed qualifications. This process will guarantee that they will receive accreditation for their qualifications within five working days of their formal submission.
17. Access to the process is dependent on each awarding body meeting certain regulatory requirements aimed at ensuring the regulatory authorities have confidence in that awarding body's arrangements. In addition, awarding bodies must submit a successful application that clearly identifies that they have robust qualifications development arrangements. Due to a range of activities currently being put in place, the regulatory authorities expect

that over the next 12 to 24 months, the majority of awarding bodies will either have gained, or be in the process of applying for, access to the 5-day accreditation process.

18. Following the outcomes and implementation of the *14–19 education and skills white paper* in England and parallel 14–19 developments in Wales and Northern Ireland, the regulatory authorities will review whether the 5-day process should be extended to cover 14–19 qualifications.
19. In addition to the 5-day accreditation process, the regulatory authorities are currently working to underpin the standard accreditation process with a web-based system. It is expected that this should be operational by autumn 2005 and will therefore ensure that the majority of qualifications, regardless of type, will be accredited within a maximum of four to six weeks.
20. These changes will have a significant impact on the responsiveness of accredited qualifications, regardless of type, to be developed and accredited to meet the changing demands of the population and workforce of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Ensuring that qualifications continue to meet demand

21. Since the launch in 2003 of the policy 'Ensuring qualifications continue to meet demand', the regulatory authorities have removed 17 NVQs from certain awarding bodies that failed to achieve sufficient take-up after a specified period of time, even though they attracted significant take-up with other awarding bodies. The bulk of these NVQs were removed within the first two quarters after the policy was implemented. Naturally, the rate of removals has decreased after the initial exercise.
22. The policy was aimed at covering all qualification types. However, due to issues surrounding the consistent collection of take-up data across the other qualification types (non-NVQs), it has not been possible to extend the policy during 2004 as originally expected. In order to address this, the regulatory authorities have recently agreed to extend their data collection arrangements to capture other qualification types. This approach has recently been agreed with the relevant stakeholders and awarding bodies have been informed. Therefore, from summer 2005, the regulatory authorities will begin to remove any qualification with unjustifiably low take-up after specified periods of time in accordance with the original policy aim.
23. The regulatory authorities will also put in place arrangements to compare the take-up data for each qualification with an awarding body's predictions for take-up identified by them at the point of accreditation. These arrangements will form part of the web-based

accreditation process. The regulatory authorities will analyse these comparisons on a regular basis to assess whether an awarding body's arrangements for identifying the need for particular qualifications are robust. The outcomes of this analysis will be used to inform future accreditation decisions as well as whether an awarding body gains, or continues to have, access to the 5-day accreditation process.

24. During 2004 and 2005, the regulatory authorities have continued to work with awarding bodies and SSCs to ensure that only qualifications that continue to meet identified demands are accredited. Due to the introduction of awarding body bi-annual plans of provisions, the robustness of the early dialogue aspect of the accreditation process, the emergence of sector strategies and an initiative to encourage awarding bodies to reconsider the appropriateness of a range of qualification proposals, the ability to withdraw proposals from the accreditation process is no longer necessary.

Market analysis project

25. The regulatory authorities have commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to undertake a study of the market for qualifications in the UK. The remit of their investigation has been to:
- identify the structural characteristics of the supply and demand sides of the market
 - identify the size and characteristics of the private training market
 - investigate competition in the market
 - identify the drivers of change
 - highlight key trends
 - consider the possible implications for stakeholders.
26. Although all qualifications are within the scope of the study, the detailed analysis focused on vocational qualifications. The research methodology involved the collection of both primary and secondary data. The primary data collection involved interviews with recognised and unrecognised awarding bodies, employers, learning providers in all settings and learners, and was intended to fill any gaps identified in the secondary data. The secondary data collection consisted of desk research of all available documentation and publications that related to the study's remit.
27. The purpose of this substantial research project is to increase the regulatory authorities' understanding of how the qualifications market works, and the levers available to influence change. This understanding will enable the regulatory authorities to provide greater strategic direction to the qualifications system.
28. The final report will be issued to the regulatory authorities in summer 2005.

The rationalisation of qualifications by type

29. Appendix 3 provides details of the rationalisation of qualifications by qualification type. Different counting mechanisms are used to account for the variation in structure between qualification types. For example, NVQs can be accredited at five levels and each level has identical structures and content for each title. The content in general qualifications can vary within each qualification title and the level is inherent in the qualification type. To enable a consistent measure of progress across the different qualification types, figures for each qualification type have been presented against the baseline year and against 2004 figures, using three different levels of counting:
- by title – if a qualification title is used by more than one awarding body, it is counted only once. For example, an NVQ in administration at level 2 is counted as one title regardless of the number of awarding bodies offering that NVQ title. Where a title is used at more than one level of the NQF, each level is counted
 - by title and awarding body – the number of times different awarding bodies offering the same title is counted. For example, if three awarding bodies offered the above NVQ title, each would be counted
 - by title, awarding body and variants – where an awarding body offers different specifications within the same qualification these are counted (for example GCSE in English A and English B). Also, where an awarding body offers different sizes of a qualification at a given level, each is counted (for example, A level economics and AS level economics are counted separately).
30. In comparison with appendix 2, the figures indicate the continued rise in the number of qualifications achieved since 2002/3.

The rationalisation of 14–19 provision

31. The regulatory authorities continue to develop and pilot general qualifications to ensure a curriculum that provides learners with appropriate and relevant qualifications.

GCSEs

32. A number of GCSE pilot qualifications have been accredited in the past year. One awarding body, under contract to the regulatory authorities, has developed a GCSE in geography (short course and single award) which tests out a unitised, hybrid model combining vocational and general pathways and incorporating innovative curriculum developments and assessment methodologies. Another awarding body has developed a GCSE in applied French, consisting of a suite of two short courses plus a single award, intended as a replacement for the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) language units.

- 33.** First teaching for the pilot GCSE in applied French started in September 2004. The demand from schools to become pilot centres considerably exceeded what the awarding body could allow. A number of training events for teachers covering internal assessment and teacher assessment have been held. The awarding body has continued development work for the on-screen tests of listening and reading. There is considerable interest in this pilot qualification as teachers of modern foreign languages (MFL) are looking for alternatives to 'traditional' GCSE qualifications that will better meet the needs of learners. Although there are many vocationally-related qualifications available in MFL that are approved for use pre-16, the GCSE title is popular with pupils, parents and teachers.
- 34.** In Northern Ireland, a pilot of a two tier GCSE in mathematics, will take place from September 2005 (first teaching). The specification being developed will align the relevant GCSE in mathematics with the requirements of the key skill application of number at levels 1 and 2.
- 35.** The GCSE short course, citizenship studies, was accredited in 2001 for first teaching in 2002. Three awarding bodies offer a specification for the qualification. In the summer of 2003 just over 6,000 candidates were entered for the examination. 2004 saw an increase of 330 per cent with over 27,000 candidates taking the examination. In England, citizenship is a national curriculum subject with a programme of study at key stage 4. The GCSE qualification is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the subject and also on the status of the subject with students, staff and parents. It is anticipated that the numbers of centres using the qualification to give recognition to student achievement in the subject will continue to rise in coming years.
- 36.** The regulatory authorities have recently issued a contract to an awarding body to develop a pilot GCSE in history. This pilot will take forward new curriculum developments and make explicit links between history and the heritage industry. Further GCSE qualifications in sport and PE, and design and technology are under development and are likely to be accredited shortly.
- 37.** In Northern Ireland CCEA is piloting a number of GCSEs that support the revised curriculum requirements for key stage 4 that will be introduced from September 2006. These are learning for life and work and GCSE (single award) work-related qualifications in journalism, construction, hospitality and financial services.
- 38.** The regulatory authorities continue to work closely to monitor and develop the applied GCSE in art and design and conferences in December 2004 brought together those concerned to continue this development and debate.

39. In seeking to broaden the opportunities for all learners, QCA is working closely with the Arts Council of England to develop an innovative Arts Award that will receive full accreditation through partnership with an awarding body.
40. In line with concerns over the assessment burden, both GCSE music qualifications have been reviewed and the regulatory authorities are working with the awarding bodies concerned to make teacher assessment more manageable. Further teacher support materials are being developed to support new arrivals through music teaching at key stage 3 and key stage 4.
41. GCSEs in accounting, archaeology, social science and travel and tourism will be withdrawn following examinations in summer 2006. A range of alternative, non-GCSE provision has been identified. In addition, one awarding body has decided to withdraw GCSE qualifications in classical Greek, Latin, Russian and home economics (textiles). Alternative GCSE provision is available.
42. The range of applied GCSE qualifications has been extended through the accreditation of single and double award pilot qualifications in performing arts from two awarding bodies, as well as single and double award pilot qualifications in construction and the built environment from another awarding body. Both developments focus on innovation in assessment methodology.

General certificate of education (GCE) and advanced extension awards (AEAs)

43. A new AS/A level in critical thinking was accredited for first teaching in September 2005. Currently, the qualification is available only at AS level. Revised specifications in GCE AS/A level mathematics were taught for the first time in September 2004. These replaced specifications which were found to be too demanding on candidates in respect of the amount of content to be covered.
44. A GCE AS/A level in biology was fully accredited for teaching from September 2004. This specification, developed for an awarding body by Salters/Nuffield, had previously been piloted to try out an innovative approach to the assessment of practical work. The same awarding body also submitted a GCE stand-alone AS level in history, philosophy and ethics of science for piloting from September 2004. The assessment for this qualification is entirely by internal assessment, moderated by the awarding body and comprises one extended project.
45. In Northern Ireland, GCE moving image arts has been piloted at AS level. Work is now underway to extend this innovative qualification to a full A level. A major feature of this

qualification is the use of online assessment. GCE life and work is also being developed and will complement the GCSE development outlined above.

- 46.** Two further AEA's have been accredited in business and psychology. This followed successful trials in summer 2004, and the first live examinations will take place in summer 2005. The AEA in business was developed to be accessible to both students who are studying the advanced level GCE in business studies and those studying the advanced vocational certificate of education (VCE) in business. This is the first AEA of this type.
- 47.** Following extensive consultation with teachers and other stakeholders, VCEs have been updated, restructured as AS/A2 and retitled as GCE. Twenty-four specifications in 10 vocational areas have been accredited, well in advance of first teaching from September 2005. Three pilot specifications have also been accredited for use in Northern Ireland from September 2004. Revised qualifications were not developed in those vocational areas (retail, construction and the built environment, hospitality and catering, manufacturing) where candidate take-up was very low and where alternative qualifications existed.
- 48.** Three awarding bodies have rationalised their portfolios by withdrawing the availability of some AS/A2 units, which had a low candidature. This was partly because the units were not financially viable, but also because with such a small cohort of candidates, it was extremely difficult to set grade boundaries accurately and consistently.
- 49.** More significantly, some qualifications were withdrawn altogether, again because of low candidature. One awarding body withdrew their stand-alone AS in social policy, while another withdrew their GCE AS/A levels in Latin and classical Greek, together with their stand-alone AS level in European studies. Latin and classical Greek are traditional subjects, which have been offered for many years, and will continue to be offered by one awarding body. The two stand-alone AS level qualifications are not offered by any other awarding body and so will no longer be available. These two qualifications were first offered in 2000 and have never attracted much interest. Appropriate notice of all of these withdrawals was given to schools and colleges by the awarding bodies. They will therefore be phased out over the next one or two years.

Mathematics

50. Following the publication of *Making mathematics count* in February 2004, QCA was asked to take forward work on the recommendations made in the report. QCA is developing a curriculum component on financial capability incorporating mathematics, citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE). A report on equivalences of key mathematics qualifications has been completed. Work to develop curriculum and assessment pathways in mathematics will take into account developments resulting from the 14–19 reforms.

The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ)

51. In Wales, the WBQ is in its second year of piloting. The WBQ is currently offered at intermediate and advanced levels. At each level, candidates have to meet certain requirements for attaining key skills qualifications, general or vocational qualifications and fulfil curriculum requirements concerned with work-related education, personal and social education and community participation.
52. At both levels, the programmes are designed to be accomplished over two years. In the summer of 2004, however, a number of students involved in the pilot were awarded the Intermediate Baccalaureate Diploma, having completed all the requirements in just one year.
53. Initial conclusions indicate that the Baccalaureate programme appears to have made a successful start in the pilot centres and evidence indicates that students have gained much added value from their experience in it.

Key progress in sector and subject areas

The development of sector and subject areas

54. Sector and subject categories, containing first and second tier areas, were created in 2004 after QCA received a remit from ministers to develop sector and subject categories that all major education bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland could use. All these bodies have worked extremely closely and effectively in designing a set of categories that meet their particular needs (see appendix 4 for details).
55. All of the agencies or departments originally involved in developing the new sector and subject categories have agreed to review these categories annually to make sure that they continue to be useful and up to date. In October 2004, all qualifications were classified on the openQUALS website against their sector or subject area, which can now be used as a search criteria (see www.openquals.org.uk).
56. In the academic year 2003/4, 1,265,317 VRQ and NVQ certificates were awarded by awarding bodies again emphasising the need for and popularity of such qualifications.
57. The 10 qualifications that resulted in the most VRQ and NVQ awards in 2004 are shown in figure 5 below and demonstrate both the continuing success of, and the need for, qualifications that are mapped to sector standards. Most notably, qualifications aligned to sector area 8.0 Leisure, travel and tourism have achieved considerable success in terms of having four out of the 10 qualifications listed here. However, sector area 6.0 Information and communication technology should also be mentioned as it achieved the highest number of certificates awarded in the academic year 2003/4.

Qualification type	Sector and subject area	Title	Certificates
VRQ	06 – Information and Communication Technology	OCR Level 1 Certificate for IT Users	87,028
VRQ	07 – Retail and Commercial Enterprise	BIIAB Level 2 National Certificate for Licensees	56,633
VRQ	08 – Leisure, Travel and Tourism	IQL Level 2 Certificate in Swimming Pool Supervision and Rescue	32,349
VRQ	15 – Business, Administration and Law	IFS Level 3 Certificate in Mortgage Advice and Practice	29,200
VRQ	08 – Leisure, Travel and Tourism	1st4sport Level 1 Certificate in Coaching Football	27,415
NVQ	01 – Health, Public Services and Care	City & Guilds Level 2 NVQ in Care	25,565
VRQ	06 – Information and Communication Technology	City & Guilds Level 1 Certificate for IT Users	23,400
VRQ	08 – Leisure, Travel and Tourism	BST Level 1 Award in Sports Leadership	20,634
VRQ	06 – Information and Communication Technology	BCS Level 1 Certificate for IT Users	18,203
VRQ	08 – Leisure, Travel and Tourism	CYQ Level 2 Certificate in Fitness Instructing	14,801

Figure 5: The 10 qualifications that resulted in the most VRQ and NVQ awards in the academic year 2003/4.

58. Appendix 5 builds on the table above and shows how many certificates were awarded in 2004 for the main qualification types across all the second tier sector and subject areas, including qualifications with expired accreditation dates but still with valid certification periods.

Sector qualification strategies (SQSs)

59. Accurate information about sector needs and requirements are fundamental to the success of the vocational qualification reform programme and for ensuring that the appropriate mix of provision (qualifications, training and other learning experiences) are available to

learners. In this respect, QCA, working closely with other regulatory authorities, is supporting a programme of work to develop SQSs for each sector area.

- 60.** The work on SQSs is being carried out in partnership with SSCs and other recognised sector bodies. The purpose of each SQS is to:
- identify drivers for sector development in relation to qualifications and other learning provision
 - evaluate how well existing qualifications and other learning provision meets sector needs (current and future)
 - make proposals for any changes required, including a plan for development and implementation
 - bring coherence and shared direction to ongoing development work
 - provide a sound basis for future development and decision making in each sector
 - ensure sector proposals are communicated to, and supported by, key stakeholders.
- 61.** To ensure that qualifications development is properly informed by sector skills needs, SQSs will be based on sector skills agreements (SSAs) and/or other relevant labour market intelligence. It is intended that SQSs will become integral to SSAs, where appropriate and feasible². SQSs will also take account of emerging policy and practice from other relevant areas of work, which will become embedded within the sector specific proposals.
- 62.** At the end of March 2005, draft SQSs had been produced covering nine different sectors and progress is being made in others. Work is now underway to review these first nine SQSs and to consult with partners on the most appropriate ways of taking the work forward. Implementation of the outcomes from the review is expected by the end of June 2005.
- 63.** Qualification forums, with representation from awarding bodies, are being established to help support the development and implementation of SQSs in each sector. Additionally, transitional arrangements are being agreed with individual awarding bodies, which will facilitate convergence of individual awarding body plans with the emerging SQSs. The potential convergence of bi-annual plans of provision with this work is also being considered.
- 64.** The development of SQSs builds on the regulatory authorities' programme of work to establish qualifications in sectors and subjects. The reports from the 'qualification

² SSAs are being drawn up between SSCs employers and education/training suppliers in each sector and will provide a means for identifying priority skills needs and agreeing action to meet these needs. They are being drawn up by SSCs in collaboration with providers, regulators and funding agencies. SSAs will focus on national sectoral skills needs but will include a regional dimension. At the time of writing an initial tranche of SSAs are being produced covering the IT, construction, engineering and audio visual sectors.

requirements' projects were posted on the QCA website during 2003. As SQSs replace and update qualification requirements projects, these have now been removed from the QCA website. QCA will make SQSs available as they are produced.

Key progress in health, public services and care

School support staff

65. During summer 2004, following ministerial concerns that the English school systems 340,000 strong workforce of school support staff had only limited access to qualifications, a new qualification was developed and accredited in less than two months. The new qualification is aimed at staff such as lunchtime supervisors and caretakers.
66. The qualification offers flexible learning and assessment built around a wide choice of NVQ units. The qualifications consist of either a three-unit certificate award or a four-unit diploma award. Each comprises a mandatory core and a range of optional units. Assessment follows the NVQ model, using evidence from candidate's day-to-day work. The Teacher Training Agency and the GMB union support the new qualification. The LSC has allocated funding for 10,000 places and four awarding bodies have agreed to offer the qualification.
67. Over the next two years the regulatory authorities will meet with stakeholders to monitor the qualification and assess how well it supports candidate recruitment and achievement.

Key progress in agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Health and safety for agriculture/horticulture

68. The Health and Safety Executive has worked closely with the relevant SSC (Lantra), the regulatory authorities and awarding bodies to develop common content on health and safety issues for those working in an agricultural/horticultural environment. The awarding bodies in the sector have agreed to submit qualifications based on the same content with the same unit and qualification titles, although the assessment methodology may vary, helping simplify the system for employers.
69. It has been agreed that further work in this area will be built into the larger health and safety SQS.

Key progress in information and technology

iTQ

70. The iTQ qualification is a new type of NVQ. It has a more flexible structure and assessment arrangements than most NVQs. It is based on the relevant national occupational standards (NOS) for IT users but is not written to directly match them, unlike most NVQs. Instead of a structure built around mandatory and optional units, the structure is made up of rules of combination and credit. This allows learners to construct a truly fit-for-purpose, bespoke qualification around their individual job roles and skills needs. The qualification offers a more flexible method of assessment, allowing simulation and enhanced use of expert witnesses to sign off assessment evidence. This means that the learners' managers can make a greater contribution to the assessment process.
71. The content of a range of relevant VRQs has been mapped to the knowledge, skills and understanding required for different units of the iTQ. Candidates holding these qualifications are then exempt from having to complete the relevant units, or components of units, of the NVQ.
72. In order to make maximum use of the NOS for IT users, on which the iTQ is based, e-skills UK (the SSC for the IT sector) has agreed that the NOS can be worded, formatted and presented differently by different awarding bodies to meet the requirements of different customer bases, as long as e-skills UK is confident that the meaning and intent of the standards is maintained.
73. The qualification is proving extremely popular with employers, who know this qualification by its marketing name iTQ, rather than the NVQ title with which it was accredited. We are currently investigating the possibility of including iTQ in the title of the qualification.

Key progress in retail and commercial enterprises

Flexible qualifications for assessors

74. The regulatory authorities, in partnership with Tesco, the LSC and one large awarding body have agreed flexible arrangements for assessing candidates taking NVQs in retail. Between May and October 2004, a pilot was run with three Tesco stores in Stoke-on-Trent, Uttoxeter and Solihull. The pilot examined the potential for Tesco's in-house company training and assessment procedures to meet the NOS for assessing and verifying NVQs. The in-house scheme was shown to match the standard required and the in-house assessors can now assess and sign off NVQ candidates' work, without also having to complete the usual assessor and verifier qualification.

75. The assessment strategy has been amended to accommodate this alternative approach on an organisation-by-organisation and qualification-by-qualification basis and Tesco is rolling the scheme out across 80 other stores. Another awarding body is also running a similar pilot in financial services, aimed at assessors for the level 2 NVQ in providing financial advice.
76. The outcomes of these and similar projects will inform the development of SQSs.

Key progress in leisure, travel and tourism

UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC)

77. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport provided funding for an organisation called Sports Coach UK to develop a UKCC. (Previously called the National Coaching Certificate). The purpose of the certificate is to increase the competency of sports coaches across the UK. The main deliverer and awarder of the certificate will be the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for sport. Some of these NGBs are also recognised by the regulatory authorities as awarding bodies. Most NGBs will work in conjunction with recognised awarding bodies to offer the qualification.
78. QCA is working closely with SkillsActive (the SSC for active leisure and learning) to bring the developments of the UKCC in line with the SQS for coaching. The UKCC offered by NGBs outside the NQF will be the same qualification offered within the NQF.
79. QCA are funding SkillsActive to develop common units in coaching, based on the content produced by Sports Coach UK. This work will also look at rules of combination and other areas such as cross sector needs.

Key progress in art and design and creative studies

Art and design and creative studies

80. In art and design, music and the arts, meetings took place in January 2004 in order to consider whether the qualifications available today are still relevant and to reconsider existing provision and identify areas for future development.
81. The findings indicate there is a need for a qualification that:
- responds to the needs of learners in the twenty first century, both as consumers and participants
 - has a structure which addresses the wider needs of the individual and supports their place and role in society

- reflects the changing nature and place of music and the arts within society, and recognises the shifting and blurring of traditional boundaries while maintaining the strengths of past experience and practice
 - is developed in partnership with, and is endorsed by, the wider art and design community.
- 82.** In addition, the regulatory authorities continue to review and accredit the music qualifications currently available, to ensure that they are both relevant, attractive and reflect sector needs. The regulatory authorities are also keen to ensure that all accredited music qualifications are recognised, as appropriate, within school league tables in England.
- 83.** A research project has been undertaken to explore the potential for common units and the assignment of credit values for graded examinations in music, dance and drama. The research shows that there is some real potential for developing common units, leading to the possibility of rationalising overall provision in due course.

Key progress in preparation for life and work

Adult literacy, adult numeracy and key skills qualifications

- 84.** The regulatory authorities take a central role in the development and review of the adult numeracy, adult literacy and key skills qualifications. Key skills are the skills most commonly required for success in a range of activities in education and training, at work and in life in general. They are applicable to young people and adults.
- 85.** In Northern Ireland an essential skills strategy has been introduced to address adult literacy and numeracy problems. An essential skills qualification at entry level has been accredited and a pilot of essential skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2 in communication and application of number is underway. Essential skills qualifications are based on the key skills standards, but use a different assessment model. Advice has now been provided on extending the provision for essential skills to information and communication technology (ICT) and level 3. This is in line with the Northern Ireland skills strategy (launched in November 2004).
- 86.** There are currently 18 awarding bodies that offer key skills qualifications and 10 awarding bodies who offer adult literacy and adult numeracy skills qualifications.
- 87.** 2004 saw the completion of the review of the key skills and the launch of the revised key skills qualifications of application of number, communication and ICT at levels 1–4. As a result of the review, the key skills units in working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving were accredited for piloting as full qualifications. The full

set of six qualifications, now available in the suite of key skills qualifications, provide a valuable platform for achievement based on one national standard. They are designed to support initiatives such as apprenticeship programmes, entry to employment (E2E), vocational learning in schools and general employability and they will be further developed to support the emerging 14–19 reforms.

- 88.** The review of key skills has also seen progress in greater and more flexible access to assessment in England, with the use of on-screen, on-demand testing of key and basic skills at levels 1 and 2. In Wales, the test component was removed from key skills from September 2004 although, in line with transition arrangements, candidates could have opted to take the test in November 2004 and January 2005. In England the test remains the assessment instrument for adult literacy and adult numeracy at levels 1 and 2 and candidates in Wales have also benefited from a more flexible approach.
- 89.** From September 2000 to September 2004, just over one million qualifications in these three areas were achieved (see appendix 2). The regulatory authorities anticipate that achievement figures will continue to rise because of improved assessment arrangements and other improvements that awarding bodies have been required to make to their relationships with centres.

Key progress in languages, literature and culture

Languages ladder assessment scheme

- 90.** The DfES has developed a new framework of reference to describe foreign language competence. This is related to national curriculum level descriptions, national language standards, the Common European Framework and the NQF. Under contract to the DfES, an awarding body is developing a related graded assessment scheme that will provide both centre-based awards and national qualifications. Pilot qualifications have been accredited at entry level and levels 1 and 2 in French, German and Spanish. These pilots will run during the 2004/5 academic year. The qualifications are not age-related and pilot centres cover primary, secondary and adult education. Over the next four years the awarding body will extend the scheme so that qualifications will become available in over 20 languages at several levels. Each qualification relates to one skill at one level in one language. This means that there are 36 pilot qualifications this year. The scheme will ultimately include hundreds of qualifications.

National Occupational Standards Board

- 91.** The National Occupational Standards Board oversees the standards programme and has approved revised arrangements for the dispersal of funds to sector bodies for occupational

standards development. In October 2004, the National Occupational Standards Board ratified the dispersal of £6.1 million to approximately 38 sector bodies for the development of updated national occupational standards.

Apprenticeships

- 92.** QCA, LSC and SSDA are taking forward the first wave of projects with SSCs to examine the application of credit to apprenticeships. These projects form part of both the joint QCA/LSC programme plan for implementing the unit and credit based Framework for Achievement and the draft delivery plan for the apprenticeships reform programme in England.
- 93.** The work will examine how a unit-based credit system can support fit-for-purpose apprenticeships which meet sectoral needs within the overall design parameters recommended by the Modern Apprenticeship Advisory Committee report of September 2001. SSCs participating in the first wave are Skillset (broadcast, film, video, multimedia), People1st (hospitality), SEMTA (engineering) and CCISSC (cultural heritage). The first phase is due for completion by summer 2005.
- 94.** In Wales, work has begun with five awarding bodies, a number of SSCs and the Federation of Awarding Bodies on ascribing credit to units within and outside of the NQF. This work will facilitate the move to a more flexible, unit-based approach to apprenticeship frameworks and Modern Skills Diplomas which is being taken forward as part of the ELWa Workplace Learning Review.

Changes to the regulatory arrangements

Proposed changes to the regulation of qualifications

95. In autumn 2004, the regulatory authorities consulted on seven proposed changes which impact on the regulation of qualifications:
- level indicators for the revised NQF
 - a centre guidance leaflet
 - awarding body common data requirements
 - common approval process for all vocational and occupational qualifications
 - performance measures for awarding bodies
 - a 5-day accreditation process
 - sanctions for awarding bodies.
96. These proposals, and the principles for regulation outlined in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004*, are necessary to move to a more flexible and strategic, risk-based approach to regulation. They also lay the regulatory foundations for the proposed framework changes. The regulatory authorities are engaged in a fundamental rethinking and review of their regulatory role in relation to the regulation of qualifications. In doing so, particular attention has been given to the principles of good regulation established by the Better Regulation Task Force and the public sector reform agenda that is underpinned by the drive to reduce bureaucracy and the burden of regulation.
97. The revised approach to regulation will enhance the strategic aspect of the regulatory authorities' role. It will be characterised by less attention being given at the process level to the detail of individual qualifications and by more attention being given to establishing a whole system approach to the management and assessment of risk and assuring quality. This will embrace all aspects of the development and delivery of qualifications in order to drive system-wide improvement. The overriding intention is to develop a transparent approach to regulation that will allow those regulated to influence the allocation of resources and the nature and intensity of the relationship with the authorities. Rather than a 'one size fits all' approach, the nature and intensity of the regulatory relationship both in terms of accreditation and monitoring, will be proportionate and differentiated according to an analysis of the risks associated with particular awarding bodies, qualification types and different industry sectors. The primary operating principle will be that the higher the level of performance and lower the assessed level of risk, the lighter the level of external regulatory intervention. Resources would therefore only need to be deployed where they will add most value and scope for improvement, namely underperforming and high risk awarding bodies or qualifications.

Improving the regulatory criteria and the NQF

- 98.** Following consultation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which was completed in November 2003, the regulatory criteria have been revised and enhanced for ease of use and understanding. The revised criteria were published in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* in April 2004, together with changes to the original NQF, to improve its accessibility and transparency. The revised NQF aligns with the FHEQ and provides a broad indication of how the levels of NQF qualifications compare with qualifications awarded by higher education institutions. The changes allow for greater recognition across different types of qualifications and became fully enforceable on 1 September 2004.
- 99.** The increased number of levels in the revised NQF (entry level to level 8) provides for a more precise classification of higher level qualifications at levels 4 and 5 in the original NQF. Broad comparisons can be drawn between the revised NQF and the FHEQ from levels 4 to 8. Entry level and levels 1, 2 and 3 have not changed. Learners can make more informed decisions on the qualifications they need, by comparing the more precise levels of different qualifications and identifying clear progression routes between vocational and higher education qualifications.
- 100.** There is a transition period for implementation of the revised NQF until 1 January 2006, during which revised levels are being introduced in consultation with awarding bodies and SSCs. From 1 September 2004, new qualifications have been accredited against the revised NQF levels.
- 101.** With the exception of NVQs, there are approximately 300 higher level qualifications in the original NQF, which are being assigned revised NQF levels. Revised NQF levels have been published for approximately 200 of these qualifications. The revised NQF levels for the remaining qualifications are undergoing further review and will be published in summer 2005. Certificates with the revised levels will be used from 1 January 2006, which will allow a clear changeover date for certification of these qualifications.
- 102.** NVQs at levels 4 and 5 in the original NQF are not currently being allocated revised NQF levels, as the re-leveling of NVQs needs to be clearly linked with Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). Therefore, the regulatory authorities are consulting with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and will work with the SSCs and awarding bodies to consider this work, while maintaining the relationship between NVQs and SVQs.

- 103.** Information on transition arrangements for the revised NQF is being kept up-to-date on openQUALS, the free searchable qualifications database, for learners and all other NQF users. Information has been published on the regulatory authorities' websites and a fact sheet on the changes has been distributed to all centres. Awarding bodies and SSCs have also been issued with information on the changes, in a joint statement issued by the regulatory authorities.
- 104.** Level indicators for the revised NQF levels were also published in April 2004. These serve as a valuable guide for learners and other end users. They provide a guide to the range of qualifications and levels in the NQF, and give an overview of the learning and achievement that is recognised by qualifications at each of the nine levels. The level indicators will be kept under review and further consultation will be carried out with end users, to ensure that the language used is meaningful for learners, teachers, tutors, trainers and careers advisers.

Centre approval

- 105.** Coinciding with the 2004 annual report from the bureaucracy review group, the regulatory authorities decided to suspend the implementation of the new statutory criteria that expanded the scope of centre recognition and qualification approval across all awarding bodies and most qualification types. The aim was to work with awarding bodies and stakeholders to develop a common, yet tailored process for centre recognition and qualification approval that would:
- reduce bureaucracy and increase choice and flexibility for centres
 - improve the quality of centre performance
 - assist learners to make informed choices about which awarding bodies and centres to work with
 - reduce the recognition and approval burden on awarding bodies.
- 106.** Since October 2004 the regulatory authorities have met with every key stakeholder within the UK and have received significant support from all concerned for the proposals that include:
- reducing the burden on centres by underpinning the processes for centre recognition and approval with minimum requirements that are agreed and implemented across all awarding bodies
 - supporting the minimum requirements by the mutual acceptance of recognition and approval decisions across all awarding bodies, thus removing the need for centres to constantly re-supply the same information
 - ensuring a consistent approach to the duration and scope of centre recognition and approval by having no end cycle for centre recognition and approval

- implementing a consistent approach to recognition and approval visits. For centres entering the regulated qualifications framework for the first time, centre recognition applications will be subject to a mandatory visit aimed at supporting the application process
- providing the market with access to transparent fee details across awarding bodies that will be made available to centres on the regulatory authorities' websites
- taking forward and developing a common sanctions policy for centres, ensuring that only robust centres deliver accredited qualifications
- developing and utilising IT systems to provide an effective and efficient process
- putting in place arrangements to monitor awarding bodies' performance in this area ensuring consistent quality standards across awarding bodies
- providing a single source of information to help learners identify which centres deliver accredited qualifications and units on the openQUALS website
- migrating centres across to the new process rather than requiring centres to undergo further recognition or approval activities, subject to their respective awarding bodies stating that the centre meets the new agreed minimum recognition and approval requirements.

107. The regulatory authorities will continue to work with stakeholders over the summer to develop the proposals further prior to a formal consultation beginning in September 2005.

Sanctions and accreditation conditions

108. Following a comprehensive development and consultation programme during 2004 the regulatory authorities issued details of their revised sanctions policy in March 2005. The sanctions policy will be implemented at the end of June 2005

109. The policy contains details of nine public sanctions that can be imposed on awarding bodies if they fail to comply with the requirements of the statutory criteria. The sanctions fall into two categories:

- category 1: suspension of accreditation
- category 2: removal of accreditation.

110. The policy also contains details of how the regulatory authorities may use the powers outlined in the Education Act 2002 to direct an awarding body to take action.

111. The sanctions, which will normally be triggered by an awarding body's failure to comply with a condition of accreditation, received widespread support from all stakeholders including awarding bodies. The development and planned implementation of the sanctions

policy has prompted awarding bodies to work with the regulatory authorities to sign off as many conditions of accreditation as possible prior to June 2005. This has resulted in the number of active conditions of accreditation being reduced from 4,030 in August 2003 to just over 900 in February 2005. The regulatory authorities expect this number to continue to decline significantly over the next few months.

- 112.** Due to the significant reduction in the number of live conditions of accreditation and the incentive of preventing a public sanction being imposed, the regulatory authorities believe that awarding bodies will make every effort to ensure that the use of sanctions will be limited.

Monitoring

- 113.** Since September 2004, monitoring has been carried out against *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004*. The methodology has remained the same but is now more clearly aligned to the regulations, as they are grouped more effectively within the new regulatory document.
- 114.** Since October 2004, monitoring has also been aligned with the awarding body recognition update process and has concentrated on those awarding bodies that have not yet been monitored. The update has become the initial desk research that the regulatory authorities are now able to use to focus on the areas which are either not included in the update process, or on areas within the update that are unacceptable and therefore high risk.
- 115.** The methodology that the regulatory authorities' developed in order to allow awarding body recognition updates to be used in this way is also flexible enough to be used for focused monitoring based on risk assessment.

Performance measures

- 116.** In keeping with the objective of providing strategic direction and leadership to the system, the regulatory authorities intend to begin consultation with awarding bodies on the principles of performance measures in autumn 2005. These will provide the necessary benchmarks, information and knowledge to drive continuous system wide improvement, to support innovation and to identify and disseminate effective practice across the awarding body network. Performance measures have been established in the general qualifications field and we are exploring the scope for alignment while recognising that care will need to be taken to ensure that they are relevant and provide positive information of performance in the vocational arena. In doing so we will maximise the use of existing performance

management systems and data in order to avoid any unnecessary increase in the regulatory burden.

- 117.** The regulatory authorities will also work with the SQA and appropriate inspection agencies to explore the scope for synergy in these areas.

Providing users with the information they need

118. The regulatory authorities' revised principles for regulation, contained in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004*, made clear that the regulatory authorities are committed to providing learners and the public with more information about accredited qualifications. This section provides details of some of the developments that have taken place in relation to this commitment.

OpenQUALS website

119. Development of the openQUALS website (www.openquals.org.uk) continued in 2004 with the addition of sector and subject areas (see paragraph 55 and appendix 4 for details of the sector and subject areas). Since autumn 2004 users have been able to search for qualifications via one of the 50 second tier sector areas. This new search facility, illustrated below (figure 6), allows users to search for qualifications quickly and easily by simply 'clicking' on the sectors they are interested in. In the last year openQUALS received over 8 million hits.

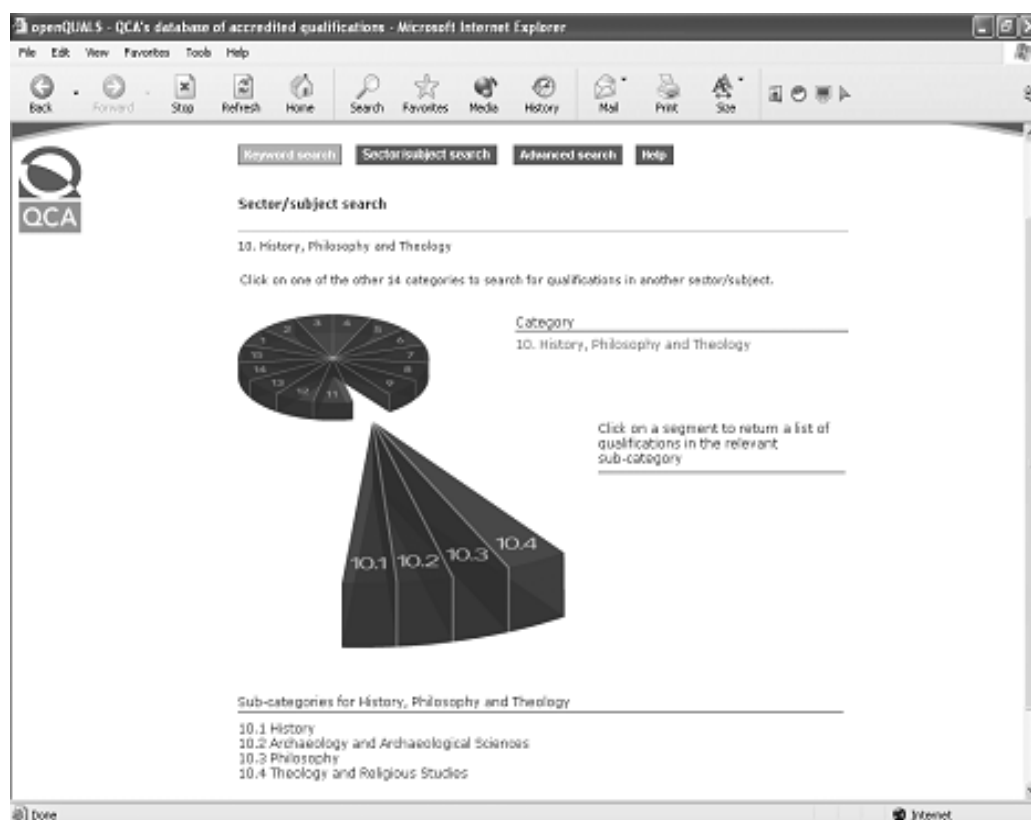


Figure 6: Screenshot of sector and subject area search wheel on openQUALS website

- 120.** Developments are already underway to substantially enhance openQUALS further during 2005 and early 2006. This will ensure that learners and centres are able to make more informed choices about the qualifications and awarding bodies that best suit their needs. The proposed enhancements include providing:
- a brief description, in 200 words or less, of the purpose and aims of each qualification and unit
 - details of the assessment methods, guided learning hours and grading system for each unit and qualification
 - details of clear progression routes for qualifications (submitted via the web-based accreditation process – see paragraph 19)
 - details of which approved centres in England, Wales and Northern Ireland offer which accredited qualification. These will include web-links and contact details for each centre as well as links to relevant reports from the various inspection bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
 - details of each awarding bodies' customer service statements (which include details of fees charged for registering and certificating learners), appeals arrangements and equal opportunity policies
 - access to the latest public monitoring report for each awarding body and eventually details of their performance against performance indicators (see paragraph 121), and whether the awarding body has access to the 5-day accreditation process (see paragraph 16).

Performance indicators

- 121.** The work to include all accredited qualifications in school and college performance tables in England has continued throughout 2004. The phase one report, which concerned qualifications for 14- to 16-year-olds was implemented, with performance figures for these qualifications being posted on the openQUALS website on 1 August 2004.
- 122.** The extension of performance indicator scores to qualifications available for use post-16 has continued, in liaison with the DfES. Points have been allocated to all qualifications up to level 3 of the NQF which have been approved for use for 16- to 19-year-olds in readiness for a pilot exercise taking place early in 2005. These will not be included on the openQUALS database until the results of the pilot have been evaluated and the post-16 tables go live.

Public reporting

- 123.** Over the next two months, the regulatory authorities will begin to publish, on a consistent and regular basis, the outcomes of monitoring activities for each awarding body. The

publication of these reports will not only provide learners and the public with more information to make more informed choices, but will also act as an incentive to ensure that awarding bodies continue to strive towards high-quality delivery and development of accredited qualifications.

- 124.** In addition, the regulatory authorities are committed to publishing details of any sanctions imposed on awarding bodies, following the introduction of the revised sanctions policy in June 2005.

Market data

- 125.** The regulatory authorities are working with relevant government agencies and awarding bodies to establish common data definitions and collection arrangements across the awarding bodies. Recently, significant inroads have been made with regard to the collection of take-up data for vocational and other types of qualifications. These arrangements will be built upon and extended across other qualification types during 2005. The regulatory authorities are committed to working with awarding bodies and other relevant stakeholders to establish arrangements to publish regular qualification take-up data. It is anticipated that such data could be broken down in a variety of ways to meet the needs of various audiences. For example, by qualification type and sector and subject areas.

Appendix 1: Number of awarding bodies offering particular qualifications in each of the sector and subject areas

	Basic skills	Key skills	Entry level	GCSE	GCE AS	GCE	AEA	Higher level	OG	GNVQ	VCE AS	VCE	NVQ	OQ	VRQ
1.1 Medicine and Dentistry															1
1.2 Nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine													2		4
1.3 Health and Social Care			2	5	4	4		7	4	3	3	3	8		22
1.4 Public Services								2					7		10
1.5 Child Development and Well Being			5					2					4		6
2.1 Science			5	5	5	5	2	1	1	3		3	3		3
2.2 Mathematics and Statistics			5	5	5	5	1		2				1		
3.1 Agriculture			2					1		1			1		4
3.2 Horticulture and Forestry								1					2	1	4
3.3 Animal Care and Veterinary Science								1					5		8
3.4 Environmental Conservation			1	1	1	1		3	1				5		4
4.1 Engineering				5	4	4		1		3	3	3	8	1	4
4.2 Manufacturing Technologies			5	5	5	5		3		3		3	15		10
4.3 Transportation Operations and Maintenance			3	1				1					10		8
5.1 Architecture													1		1
5.2 Building and Construction				2				3		3		3	10		7
5.3 Urban, Rural and Regional Planning								1					1		
6.1 ICT Practitioners			6	5	5	5		4	2	3	3	3	3		6
6.2 ICT for Users			4	5	1	1		1	2				5		8
7.1 Retailing and Wholesaling			1					2		2		2	4	2	4
7.2 Warehousing and Distribution								2					9		2
7.3 Service Enterprises			1					2					7		9
7.4 Hospitality and Catering			5	4	2	2		2		3		3	5		9
8.1 Sport, Leisure and Recreation			5	5	4	4		2	2			3	5		17
8.2 Travel and Tourism			2	5	3	3		2		3		3	4		8

	Basic skills	Key skills	Entry level	GCSE	GCE AS	GCE	AEA	Higher level	OG	GNVQ	VCE AS	VCE	NVQ	OQ	VRQ
9.1 Performing Arts			4	5	5	5		7	13	3		3			12
9.2 Crafts, Creative Arts and Design			5	5	5	5		3	8	3		3	4		8
9.3 Media and Communication			2	4	5	4		1	2	3		3	2		6
9.4 Publishing and Information Services													2		3
10.1 History			5	5	5	5	1								
10.2 Archaeology and Archaeological Sciences				1	1	1			1						1
10.3 Philosophy					2	2									
10.4 Theology and Religious Studies			5	5	5	5	1								2
11.1 Geography			5	5	5	5	1								1
11.2 Sociology and Social Policy			2	3	3	3	1		1						
11.3 Politics					4	4									
11.4 Economics				3	5	5	1								
11.5 Anthropology															
12.1 Languages, Literature and Culture of the British Isles			6	5	5	5	3	2	3				1		6
12.2 Other Languages, Literature and Culture								9						17	6
12.3 Linguistics															
13.1 Teaching and Lecturing	11	17	15	4	3	3			10					1	3
13.2 Direct Learning Support		3	9						2						6
14.1 Foundations for Learning and Life				2	2	2		1					5		13
14.2 Preparation for Work			1					1					12		9
15.1 Accounting and Finance			3	5	5	5	1	8		3	3	3	13		14
15.2 Administration								3					3		6
15.3 Business Management				1	3	3		1							2
15.4 Marketing and Sales								3					3		6
15.5 Law and Legal Services				1	3	3		1							2

Appendix 2: Number of certificates by qualification type

Category and type of qualification	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4
NVQs	378,540	401,778	462,998
VRQs	228,340	344,912	802,319
GCE A/AS level	1,632,352	1,687,016	1,675,391
GCSE	6,046,857	6,153,960	6,161,914
Advanced extension award	not known	3,572	3,594
Entry level	125,275	124,806	122,369
Key skills	296,600	361,155	314,904
Basic skills	not known	13,119	37,906
Total	8,707,964	9,090,318	9,581,395

Notes

1 GCSE and A level data based on summer examinations, prior to enquiries about results and appeals

2 No basic skills or AEA results available for 2001/2. Key skills figures are October 2001 to September 2002 from DfES

Appendix 3: Breakdown of the accreditation and rationalisation of qualifications by qualification type

Category and type of qualification	Baseline year position as at 31 December 1999 unless otherwise stated			Position as at 31 December 2003			Position as at 31 December 2004		
	Qualifications			Qualifications			Qualifications		
	titles	titles x awarding bodies	titles x awarding bodies x variants	titles	titles x awarding bodies	titles x awarding bodies x variants	titles	titles x awarding bodies	titles x awarding bodies x variants
NVQ level 1	78	158	158	55	117	117	60	126	126
NVQ level 2	305	543	543	254	428	428	258	418	418
NVQ level 3	300	575	575	297	480	480	287	462	462
NVQ level 4	128	276	276	127	213	213	111	189	189
NVQ level 5	11	45	45	13	35	35	16	38	38
NVQ total	822	1597	1597	746	1273	1273	732	1233	1233
Other occupational (eg assessor and verifier awards)	not known	not known	not known	17	83	83	18	76	91
GCE A/AS level	99	275	477	83	185	401	114	205	497
GCSE (including GCSEs in vocational subjects)	120	362	457	93	228	346	106	281	361
Advanced Extension Award	17 ⁽²⁰⁰¹⁾	17 ⁽²⁰⁰¹⁾	17	17	17	17	18	18	18
Other (eg graded music, free-standing maths, sign language)	28 ⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾	50 ⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾	not known ⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾	126	186	200	82	125	240
Vocational A level (AVCE)	14	42	93	14	41	92	14	44	92
GNVQ (foundation and intermediate)	26	77	77	27	77	77	14	33	75
VRQs	1743 ¹	1743 ¹	1743 ¹	708	813	913	1351	1351	1346
Higher-level vocational qualifications	not known ²	not known ²	not known ²	119	156	205	281	281	285
Entry level	29 ⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾	76 ⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾	75 ⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾	94	121	130	92	167	197
Key Skills	12	550	550	12	216	216	9	172	381
Basic skills	6 ⁽²⁰⁰¹⁾	20 ⁽²⁰⁰¹⁾	20 ⁽²⁰⁰¹⁾	6	56	56	8	61	61
TOTAL	2910³	4789³	5086³	2062	3452	4009	2839	4047	4877

¹ In December 1999, the accreditation of 'other' vocationally related qualifications had just begun. The figure in the table therefore originates from the qualifications listed under Schedule 2a and Section 400 at the time (funding arrangements previous to sections 96-97).

² No formal figures for the number of non-prescribed higher education qualifications in existence were available to the regulatory authorities on commencement of accrediting higher-level vocational qualifications.

Appendix 4: Sector and subject areas

Area	First Tier	Area	Second Tier
1.	<u>Health, Public Services and Care</u>	1.1	Medicine and Dentistry
		1.2	Nursing and Subjects and Vocations Allied to Medicine
		1.3	Health and Social Care
		1.4	Public Services
		1.5	Child Development and Well Being
2.	<u>Science and Mathematics</u>	2.1	Science
		2.2	Mathematics and Statistics
3.	<u>Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care</u>	3.1	Agriculture
		3.2	Horticulture and Forestry
		3.3	Animal Care and Veterinary Science
		3.4	Environmental Conservation
4.	<u>Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies</u>	4.1	Engineering
		4.2	Manufacturing Technologies
		4.3	Transportation Operations and Maintenance
5.	<u>Construction, Planning and the Built Environment</u>	5.1	Architecture
		5.2	Building and Construction
		5.3	Urban, Rural and Regional Planning
6.	<u>Information and Communication Technology</u>	6.1	ICT Practitioners
		6.2	ICT for Users
7.	<u>Retail and Commercial Enterprise</u>	7.1	Retailing and Wholesaling
		7.2	Warehousing and Distribution
		7.3	Service Enterprises
		7.4	Hospitality and Catering
8.	<u>Leisure, Travel and Tourism</u>	8.1	Sport, Leisure and Recreation
		8.2	Travel and Tourism
9.	<u>Arts, Media and Publishing</u>	9.1	Performing Arts
		9.2	Crafts, Creative Arts and Design
		9.3	Media and Communication
		9.4	Publishing and Information Services
10.	<u>History, Philosophy and Theology</u>	10.1	History
		10.2	Archaeology and Archaeological Sciences
		10.3	Philosophy
		10.4	Theology and Religious Studies
11.	<u>Social Sciences</u>	11.1	Geography
		11.2	Sociology and Social Policy
		11.3	Politics
		11.4	Economics
		11.5	Anthropology
12.	<u>Languages, Literature and Culture</u>	12.1	Languages, Literature and Culture of the British Isles
		12.2	Other Languages, Literature and Culture
		12.3	Linguistics
13.	<u>Education and Training</u>	13.1	Teaching and Lecturing
		13.2	Direct Learning Support
14.	<u>Preparation for Life and Work</u>	14.1	Foundations for Learning and Life
		14.2	Preparation for Work
15.	<u>Business, Administration and Law</u>	15.1	Accounting and Finance
		15.2	Administration
		15.3	Business Management
		15.4	Marketing and Sales
		15.5	Law and Legal Services

Appendix 5: Number of certificates awarded in 2004 by sector and subject area

	AEA	Entry level	GCE	GCE AS	GCSE	VCE	VCE AS	VRQ	NVQ
1.1 Medicine and Dentistry								33	
1.2 Nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine								4,567	2,707
1.3 Health and Social Care						12,575	481	37,129	58,535
1.4 Public Services								24,939	4,014
1.5 Child Development and Well Being								27,381	28,025
2.1 Science	331	17,236	160,147	117,659	1,264,035	1,362		1,192	267
2.2 Mathematics and Statistics	800	15,030	55,848	54,034	753,682				2
3.1 Agriculture								1,044	798
3.2 Horticulture and Forestry								1,761	1,831
3.3 Animal Care and Veterinary Science								12,634	3,755
3.4 Environmental Conservation								196	1,678
4.1 Engineering						1,089	1	21,292	24,313
4.2 Manufacturing Technologies			16,640	20,049	952	19,027		7,638	28,669
4.3 Transportation Operations and Maintenance								22,641	16,238
5.1 Architecture									
5.2 Building and Construction						417		26,811	30,863
5.3 Urban, Rural and Regional Planning									2
6.1 ICT Practitioners		8,631	14,979	20,421	191,825	20,005	5,738	9,618	1,736
6.2 ICT for Users			7,860	9,424				152,539	6,647
7.1 Retailing and Wholesaling								459	8,591
7.2 Warehousing and Distribution								974	8,730
7.3 Service Enterprises								23,200	30,083
7.4 Hospitality and Catering		2,320	1,138	1,418	43,636	553		71,918	33,322
8.1 Sport, Leisure and Recreation		12,265	18,668	21,600	154,047	3,737		149,481	5,206

	AEA	Entry level	GCE	GCE AS	GCSE	VCE	VCE AS	VRQ	NVQ
8.2 Travel and Tourism						7,290		10,772	6,679
9.1 Performing Arts		653	26,554	26,977	163,482	1,299		34,136	
9.2 Crafts, Creative Arts and Design		2,252	37,780	52,168	653,026	3,778		9,910	299
9.3 Media and Communication		5,867	28,676	51,625	38,745	1,902		3,221	145
9.4 Publishing and Information Services									695
10.1 History	333	4,484	42,870	47,105	227,920				
10.2 Archaeology and Archaeological Sciences								24	
10.3 Philosophy	195								
10.4 Theology and Religious Studies	31	8,285	14,173	18,675	374,540			89	
11.1 Geography	193	3,053	33,599	33,977	222,946			84	
11.2 Sociology and Social Policy		2,377	24,702	32,446	41,522				
11.3 Politics			9,927						
11.4 Economics	243		17,371	18,395	6,122				
11.5 Anthropology									
12.1 Languages, Literature and Culture of the British Isles	1,005	21,586	96,434	95,855	1,297,806				
12.2 Other Languages, Literature and Culture	462	16,769	23,689	71,051	550,601			3,359	156
12.3 Linguistics									
13.1 Teaching and Lecturing								3,951	41
13.2 Direct Learning Support								5,967	5,132
14.1 Foundations for Learning and Life			52,951	73,562	25,716				5,445
14.2 Preparation for Work								1,307	
15.1 Accounting and Finance								88,061	14,535
15.2 Administration								3,577	54,124
15.3 Business Management		692	31,318	35,230	122,867	17,131	1,323	23,518	10,996
15.4 Marketing and Sales			12,912	18,301				1,671	120
15.5 Law and Legal Services						324			
All other subjects		896	6,966	22,185	28,444		15,225	15,225	68,619

