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

Version 3

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Contents

Section 1: Introduction to the guidelines

1.1 Context of the guidelines

This set of guidelines for writing credit-based units of assessment for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) will help submitting organisations interpret and apply the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*.[1] The qualifications regulators have produced guidance on designing inclusive vocational qualifications to ensure organisations develop units that do not discriminate.[2] It is anticipated that a range of stakeholders will use these guidelines when developing and writing good quality units for the QCF. The intention is to provide sufficiently detailed guidelines for those who have little or no experience in writing units of assessment against the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, and to provide a reference tool for those who are more experienced.

It is important to note that the tests and trials have led to the development of a considerable number of units, which have already been submitted to the QCF unit databank. Unit developers can refer to the unit databank for examples of how units have been written. The units can be found on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications at www.ndaq.org.uk by clicking on the 'Search for units' tab at the top of the page. Unit developers can also refer to the QCA website, which includes a library of high quality units developed during the tests and trials.

These guidelines focus on the principles and process of unit development as opposed to qualification development. The guidelines draw significantly on the documentation produced as a result of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) project, the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) project and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

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

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

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

1.2 Unit pro forma and the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*

The pro forma for a unit in the QCF can be found in Annex A. It is divided into two sections. The first section is for the set of achievements based on the specifications detailed on the following pages. The second section is for the additional information that accompanies the achievements, including the unit aims, relationship to relevant standards (where appropriate) and assessment requirements (where appropriate). Guidelines on additional information are available in Annex B.

Definition of a unit

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No design features may be added to this standard format. The unit format also includes additional information about the unit. The list of additional information that organisations must submit is:
- the purpose and aim(s) of the unit
- the expiry date of the unit
- details of the relationship between the unit and relevant national occupational standards or other professional standards or curricula (if appropriate)
- any requirements about the way in which a unit must be assessed (if appropriate)

- guidance for developing assessment arrangements for the unit (if needed)
- support for the unit from a sector skills council (SSC) or other appropriate body (where required)
- the location of the unit within the subject/sector classification system
- the name of the recognised organisation submitting the unit
- the date from which the unit is available for use by learners
- the number of guided learning hours (GLH) for the unit (if needed).[3]

Key features of a unit

All units must be developed to be capable of assessment independently of any other unit.

Each unit must be capable of contributing towards at least one qualification. Units will not be 'active' and must not be made available to learners until they are included in the 'Mandatory', 'Optional' or 'Credit from other units' section of a rule of combination in an accredited qualification.

To be recognised in accredited qualifications in the QCF, units must be placed in the QCF unit databank. Only organisations recognised by the qualifications regulators to do so may place units in the databank (see *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, section 3).

The qualifications regulators will make available to all organisations recognised to develop units for the QCF a standard pro forma, based on the unit design features and additional information, within which all units must be developed. Organisations recognised to submit units to the unit databank are required to use this pro forma.

Once a unit is placed in the QCF unit databank only the expiry date for that unit may be amended. It may be withdrawn if it does not feature in any accredited qualifications.

Recognised organisations must identify to whom their units are available and have a rationale for this. When submitting units to the QCF unit databank, they must specify their availability to one of the following:
- to all awarding organisations to award credit (shared units)
- restricted to specified awarding organisation(s) to award credit (restricted units).[4]

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

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

These specifications allow skills- or performance-related and knowledge- or understanding-related achievements from diverse contexts to be represented in a common format, making explicit how a learner achieves credit for a given unit. These sets of achievements can then be combined into coherent and meaningful qualifications.[5]

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

Units of assessment and assessment methods

The assessment methods used within units vary and are not necessarily prescribed, although the choice of method is influenced by the type of achievement and the purpose of the qualification to which it might contribute.

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

In this context awarding bodies will be free to develop assessment arrangements that enable evidence from more than one unit to be generated and presented through a single process. Other awarding bodies may choose to offer assessment for the same units through different arrangements that separately assess each individual unit. Either approach is permissible within the QCF. So, for example, a large Diploma offered to full-time learners may well include assessment activities that 'wrap around' two or three units and effectively offer opportunities for 'clusters' of credits to be achieved towards the Diploma. A small Award may offer discrete assessment arrangements based on each individual unit within the qualification. In both instances the units themselves may be identical.

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5   The relationship between units and qualifications is defined more clearly in *Guidance for developing rules of combination for the Qualifications and Credit Framework,* version 3 (QCA/08/3957).

1.3 Process for developing and approving units of assessment

Expertise

The organisation must have procedures in place that ensure:

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

Development

When developing units, the organisation must have procedures in place to:

- interrogate the unit databank to ensure that an existing unit, available to the unit developer, does not meet identified needs
- use provision planning tools wherever these exist, or use market research, labour market intelligence or evidence of learner demand, individual or social benefit where appropriate
- involve awarding organisations, where it is not itself an awarding organisation
- ensure accuracy and consistency in the determination of levels and credit values
- ensure that all units developed meet the requirements set out in the design features in *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, section 1 (listed on pages 4–6 of this document)
- review and sign off the quality of units prior to submission to the unit databank
- submit signed off units to the databank in the format required by the qualifications regulators.

Ongoing review

The organisation must have procedures in place to:

- review the continued need for a unit
- ensure continued accuracy and consistency in levels and credit values of its units, in particular considering units in comparison with other units in the unit databank
- ensure the continued compliance of the unit with the requirements set out in the design features in *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, section 1 (listed on pages 4–6 of this document)

- use evidence from the delivery, assessment and awarding of the unit, at appropriate times, as part of the review process.

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

The qualifications regulators will monitor the quality of units placed in the databank and may, after notifying relevant recognised organisations, require units to be reviewed or withdrawn from accredited qualifications and the databank if they fail to meet the regulatory requirements of the QCF.[6]

Models of unit development and validation processes

The process used to develop and validate units varies and is influenced by a range of factors, including the starting point for development. There are two prevalent starting points:
- developing new units, generally from a set of standards
- 'translating' existing qualifications into QCF unit- and credit-based qualifications.

In many cases, submitting bodies have found that it is possible to accommodate the development and approval of QCF units within existing validation processes, with only minor adjustments.

Whichever approach to developing and validating units is used, the involvement of a wide range of expertise and stakeholders from the start is recommended. Such involvement enables informed approaches to, and different perspectives on, unit development and content, and the determining of level and credit value.

> The process of designing and developing units was undertaken by writers who were 'subject experts' … as well as being experienced in writing standards and specifications … The process involved drafting units and constantly revisiting, and reviewing, what had been produced. Getting feedback from appropriate sources (other subject specialists and practitioners in particular) helped the process of refining the unit content.
>
> **Writing Units and Allocating Credit in Generic Learning Experiences, ASDAN**

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

Best practice includes:

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

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

> The process of peer-reviewing first drafts of units in a workshop environment worked well; it clearly facilitated the process of identifying examples of good practice, which could then be adapted to other units. This fostered the emergence of a shared technical and conceptual vocabulary and helped bring a measure of consistency to the different units in development.
>
> **New Adult Pathways in Visual Arts project,**
> **London's specialist designated institutions**

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

The two models of unit development and validation processes on the following page have been those most commonly used, albeit with some variations. They have both been used for different starting points. The models are followed by examples of how they have been applied; these examples are summaries of case studies, kindly provided from a selection of the QCF test and trial projects.

Model 1

Stage 1

One or two experts are designated to develop, or amend existing, units or qualifications in line with the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*. Experts identify learning outcomes to be assessed from a new or existing curriculum, a set of standards, an occupational role or from reviewing existing qualifications.

Stage 2

Units are drafted and then reviewed by other experts, such as end-users and awarding bodies.

Stage 3

Amendments are made based on recommendations from reviewers.

Stage 4

Final drafts are forwarded to the relevant sector body for support.

Model 2

Stage 1

A working group is established, comprising a range of appropriate expertise.

Stage 2

Selected members of the working group undertake to identify learning outcomes to be assessed from a new or existing curriculum, a set of standards, an occupational role or from reviewing existing qualifications, and they complete the initial drafting of units.

Stage 3

The working group meets to discuss and review units; units are redrafted as required. This may happen more than once.

Stage 4

A validation meeting takes place, drawing on independent expertise to scrutinise units. This may also happen more than once if the units need to be reworked.

Stage 5

Units are amended as required and formally agreed (at a second validation panel if appropriate).

Model 1: Case study 1
Developing and validating vocationally related units in horticulture

In the tests and trials project, end-users identified areas of work not covered by the units available. The submitting body searched its existing credit-based units to seek any matches to these areas of work.

Stage 1
Units that were a match or a near match were reviewed by two subject experts (in this case relevant expertise within the submitting body) against QCF unit specifications and unit-writing guidance, and amended where necessary.

Units were then mapped to the national occupational standards (NOS) or the appropriate adult core curricula, and signposted to key skills.

Where matches were not found for units required, the two experts (also experienced in writing units against the specifications) developed units from scratch, using NOS wherever possible for the starting point and using the guidelines for writing units of assessment.

Stage 2
Drafted units were then reviewed by two other experts, independent of the submitting body and both end-users, with experience of delivery and assessment in this sector area, as well as experience of writing credit-based units. They were provided with copies of the guidelines for writing units of assessment and a standard reporting structure in which to record their comments.

Stage 3
Amendments to the units were made based on the comments of the independent reviewers and these drafts were then reviewed in discussion with a different end-user (in this case from the offender learning environment) to ensure that they could be used within the prison context.

Stage 4
Final drafts were then forwarded to Lantra, the sector skills council (SSC) for the environmental and land-based sector, for support before they could be submitted to the QCF.

Qualification and Unit Progression Project,
National Open College Network

Model 1: Case study 2
Converting existing health and safety qualifications to the QCF specifications

Stage 1
The chief assessors (CAs) for the existing Level 2 Health & Safety in the Workplace qualification were asked to review the units against the QCF specifications to decide the level and the credit value, and then feed back to the awarding body. The CAs were provided with the QCF support pack and sample units.

Stage 2
The outcomes of this review were read and discussed by two awarding body representatives. Initial reading showed that there was a discrepancy in how the different assessors viewed learning time.

Stage 3
The observations were fed back to the CAs and the remainder of the units were completed remotely. A meeting took place to review the exercise and evaluate how it had worked, and to finalise the credit and level for each unit. All of the work undertaken, and results attained, were recorded in detail.

Stage 4
The awarding body worked with ENTO [Employment National Training Organisation] throughout to ensure support for the units.

Level 2 Health & Safety in the Workplace qualification project, ASET

Model 2: Case study 1

Converting an existing art and design qualification to the QCF specifications

Stage 1

A working group was set up in January 2007 comprising a range of expertise from across the six University of the Arts London (UAL) colleges. The group included those with expertise in delivering unitised qualifications, writing units at pre-higher education (HE) levels and writing units for qualifications at HE levels within the HE credit framework.

Stage 2

Two members of the working group undertook the initial redrafting of the qualification, which involved a review of the rationale and course structure. The first drafts of the units were then written against the QCF specifications. The unit size and design were considered in line with the rationale for the qualification. It was estimated that the course would involve approximately 1,200 learning hours, which informed the eventual credit value of the units. Discrete packages of learning outcomes were identified and credit values allocated accordingly. Identifying the level against the QCF level descriptors was straightforward and the working group found that unitising the qualification across two levels (3 and 4) gave an opportunity to better reflect the progression of learning between the two levels.

Stage 3

The working group met three times between January and March to specifically discuss and review unit content, learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Stage 4

The first validation meeting took place in February 2007 comprising expertise external to the submitting body, including representation from HE and other end-users. The panel scrutinised the qualification and units, and made minor recommendations.

Stage 5

Amendments were made and submitted to a second validation meeting at the end of May where the units were formally agreed.

Level 4 Foundation Diploma in Art & Design project, UAL

Model 2: Case study 2
Developing and validating units in art and design for use across a regional partnership of providers

Stage 1
A working group was formed comprising representatives of the six providers involved in the project. The core members had expertise that included delivering and assessing and/or writing units for credit-based courses, and also project management. Additional subject specialists were co-opted into the group at specific stages.

Stage 2
The task of drawing up first drafts of the units was spread among the six providers. All of the working group representatives worked with their own providers and with subject specialists to draft units in the curriculum area they had been allocated. In some cases, the responsibility for the first draft of a unit was shared between providers. The draft units were uploaded to a virtual learning environment, but discussion on the units tended to be face to face.

Stage 3
Draft units were brought to regular meetings of the working group to be discussed and agreed by the wider group. This group discussed their application to the different teaching and learning contexts within the participating providers and they considered the quality assurance. The development team included the practitioners responsible for delivering the learning and assessment. The usability of the units was an important consideration. Once a lot of work had been completed on the drafted units, a unit writing expert from the awarding body project partner joined working group meetings to offer further guidance and support.

Stage 4
The final drafts of the units were presented to a peer review panel organised by the awarding body partner. This panel comprised representatives from the awarding body, the six providers and subject experts external to the project.

Stage 5
The units required minimal amendments and were then signed off by the awarding body.

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

An approach to writing units

At stages 1 and 2 of the models, the work is completed on the drafting of the units. Experts work to identify learning outcomes to be assessed, from a new or existing curriculum, from relevant standards or from an existing qualification, as appropriate. These experts must be familiar with the unit specifications.

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

Create a working title

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

Propose a level

Although the level of the unit will not be confirmed until after the learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been written it is important at this stage to refer to the QCF level descriptors and consider which level would be appropriate.[7] The level will be reviewed and determined towards the end of the unit writing process.

Write the learning outcomes

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

If the unit must be aligned to a set of standards, refer to the relevant standards for guidance when creating the learning outcomes.

Write the assessment criteria

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

Note 1: The learner must meet all of the assessment criteria for the judgement to be made that the learning outcome has been achieved.
Note 2: The assessment criteria should not include or make reference to the method of assessment. Methods of assessment are determined outside of the unit writing process.

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

Review learning outcomes and assessment criteria

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

Confirm the level

Having reviewed the learning outcomes and assessment criteria and made any necessary revisions, refer to the QCF level descriptors to confirm the unit level.[8]

Set the credit value

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

Review the unit details

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

Determine the unit title

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

Over time, confidence builds as people become more familiar with designing and developing units against the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*. Although the initial process may involve several stages of reviewing and revisiting units before they are finally approved, as people become more practised and experienced, and as the QCF unit databank builds, the process will inevitably be refined and streamlined.

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

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

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

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

The unit pro forma contains an additional field that enables any appropriate details of a relationship between the unit and NOS to be set out. This indicates that the learning outcomes have a relationship to the standards.

See section 3 for additional guidance on writing units using NOS.

1.5 Writing credit-based units for foundation learning tier provision

What is the foundation learning tier?

The foundation learning tier (FLT) is a programme that QCA and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) are working on together to reform education provision below level 2. By 2010 a revised set of credit-based units and qualifications will be in place with clear progression routes through Entry and level 1 to level 2.

Who is the reform for?

The reform is aimed at all learners working below level 2, for example:
- 14- to 19-year-olds for whom GCSEs are not appropriate
- adults with skills gaps
- adults and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

QCA's work on the FLT covers three main areas:
- the development of principles and guidance to support the delivery of learning programmes
- the development and accreditation of credit-based units and qualifications
- the development, with the LSC, of progression pathways.

What is the purpose of the reform?

The intention of the FLT reform is to enable awarding organisations to develop units and qualifications in response to learners' needs, making sure they reflect the central aim of improving progression and personalisation for individual learners. By 2010 there will be a complete set of provision at these levels within the QCF, allowing providers to tailor learning programmes to individual learners' needs. This will enable

learners to build up credits at their own pace, working towards the qualifications that will help them get to where they want to be.

How does this reform relate to qualification development?

With this aim in mind, new units and qualifications at Entry and level 1 have been developed as a part of the QCF tests and trials. All those writing units for the FLT will be developing them against the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, with the support, where required, of these unit writing guidelines.

Section 2: How to approach each characteristic of the unit specifications

2.1 Unit title

All units must have a unit title that:

- is clear, concise and reflects the content (the information in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria) of the unit
- is meaningful in its own right and does not make reference to any information outside the unit, including other units, qualifications or standards
- does not include reference to the levels of the QCF or to any terms that may be taken to refer to a level of achievement.[9]

Why are unit titles important?

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

Bespoke Tailoring Apprenticeship Programme, Newham College

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

- **For unit and qualification developers:** A unit title should give a clear sense of the achievement in the unit to the different stakeholders that will be selecting and using the units, considering that it may be used in a range of qualifications. Clear titling enables these users to locate units that are suitable for their needs.
- **For employers, learning providers and learners:** The unit title will be recorded on the learner record (LR). It needs to give a clear representation of a learner's achievements to all who will access the LR for whatever purpose, whether employers checking qualification details for a job application, learning providers checking learner details for entrance to a course or the learners themselves.
- **For the purposes of facilitating credit accumulation and transfer (CAT):** Clear titling assists in the identification of units with common/similar content submitted by different awarding bodies, which in turn facilitates CAT. Where two units of the same title, level

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

and credit value exist in the unit databank, these units will be recognised as equivalent to each other and credits will be automatically transferable between these two units.

Key points to consider when writing unit titles

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

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

Can the same title be used at different levels?

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

Is there a restriction on the length of titles?

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

What to avoid in unit titles

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

Titles do not need to contain references to level, such as 'beginner's' or 'introduction to'. Reference to the level is unnecessary in the title as this information is included in the unit pro forma and on learner transcripts.

Titles should not refer to methods of assessment. This precludes the use of alternative assessment methods and, as a result, prevents the use of the unit with diverse target groups and contexts, and in different qualifications.

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

A unit may or may not need a title that is contextualised. In some

instances the learning achievements may be generic and transferable across different contexts, so a generic title is preferable; in other cases there is a need to incorporate the context to avoid misinterpretation, and to facilitate selection and use of appropriate units. For example, sets of achievements related to management, mentoring, coaching and so on can contain key terms that are general and applicable to a range of contexts. If the sets of achievements in those units are general enough to be transferred across contexts, the title can be decontextualised: 'mentoring skills', for example, suggests the unit could be used in a range of contexts and in different qualifications. However, where the achievements are specific to a context and/or target group, this should be identified in the title, for example, 'Mentoring skills for working with young people'.

There are instances when the title of a unit may not make sense without the context. For example, 'Working with other agencies' as a title is vague and meaningless, but add the context, 'Social work: working with other agencies' and it immediately becomes meaningful.

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

Is there a prescribed approach to language use in titles?

The choice of language structure within titles varies and cannot be prescribed. However, verbal phrases such as 'leading a team' would suggest achievement that contains applied practical skills, whereas noun phrases such as 'team leadership' could suggest a more theoretical set of achievements. The same could apply to 'managing projects' as opposed to 'project management'.

Here are some examples of unit titles where the title provides a good reflection of the unit content and is consistent with the unit level.

Know how to carry out safe working practices in construction. This is a 4-credit unit at level 1 where learners have to acquire knowledge about working safely in the construction environment.

Carry out safe working practices in construction. This is a 3-credit unit at level 1 where learners have to demonstrate the skills of working safely in the construction environment.

Preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector. This is a 6-credit unit at level 4 which expects learners to understand the key principles and practice of teaching and learning.

Agree transportation project requirements and prepare a brief. This is a substantial 24-credit unit at level 5 which expects learners to translate the ideas and aspirations of stakeholders into a brief for a transportation project.

Note in these examples how the language used, in terms of both content and context, helps to reflect the level of the unit.

There are situations where it is reasonable and acceptable to use the same title for a number of units within the same subject area, but at different levels. 'Managing personal finance' is the title of a 3-credit unit at Entry level and the title of a 3-credit unit at level 1. Another example of this is 'Medical terminology', a 6-credit unit at level 2 and also a 14-credit unit at level 3.

2.2   Level and unit level descriptors

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

Key features

All units must identify a single level for the unit that:
- represents the complexity, autonomy and/or range of achievement expressed within the unit
- is determined by comparing the learning outcomes and assessment criteria against the QCF level descriptors (see Annex E of *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*)
- is a constant property of the unit, irrespective of the qualification in which it is located.[10]

The level of a unit is determined by reviewing the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit against the level descriptors. Each unit has one level that is a constant property of the unit, irrespective of the qualification(s) within which the unit is placed.

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

Level descriptors

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

The level descriptors build on those developed through the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS), the existing level descriptors of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and a range of level descriptors from frameworks in the UK and internationally. The five upper levels are intended to be consistent with the levels of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The level descriptors provide a guideline on level to practitioners involved in the design and delivery of units. Unit developers should use their professional expertise to apply the level descriptors to their own subject area or context. Where appropriate, they should also use their knowledge and understanding of relevant levelling tools such as sector or subject-specific descriptors.

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

The indicators for each level are grouped into three categories:
- knowledge and understanding
- application and action
- autonomy and accountability.

All units are likely to reflect aspects of all three categories, although many units will focus on one or two of the three.

The descriptors describe the level rather than the characteristics of individual units, and there is no expectation that every unit in the QCF should have all of the characteristics of a given level.[11]

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11 For more information on using level descriptors from below Entry level 1 onwards, please refer to *Guidance for using unit level descriptors within the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, version 3 (QCA/08/3916), and Annex E of *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726).

The process of determining level

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

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

Guidance for using level descriptors within the Qualifications and Credit Framework, version 3 (QCA/08/3916) contains a suggested approach for checking the level of units, with five steps to guide unit developers to reaching a decision on the level.

Key points to consider when determining levels

> Identifying the level was straightforward. Referring to the QCF level descriptors, the working group found that unitising across two levels (3 and 4) gave an opportunity to better reflect the progression of learning that occurs in this qualification.
> **Level 4 Foundation Diploma in Art & Design project, UAL**

> Our experience is that it was helpful to develop units at two levels at the same time in order to check the appropriateness, to the different levels, of the units' content and scope.
> **Writing Units and Allocating Credit in Generic Learning Experiences, ASDAN**

A unit will only be assigned one level. Units with the same title may be written at different levels in some subject areas, using the same learning outcomes (with some variation where appropriate) but with different assessment criteria to reflect the different levels. The following example illustrates this.

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12 *Guidance for using unit level descriptors within the Qualifications and Credit Framework,* version 3 (QCA/08/3916).

Unit title: Studio photography

Level 2

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Use a light meter	1.1 Describe the difference between incident and reflective light
	1.2 Set the light meter to obtain light reading
	1.3 Select a correct exposure

Unit title: Studio photography

Level 3

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Use a light meter	1.1 Give examples of the best use of incident and reflective light readings for different lighting set-ups
	1.2 Set the light meter to obtain light reading in a range of situations
	1.3 Select an exposure for appropriate control of depth of field and image blur

How is level reflected in the unit content?

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

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

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

The learning outcomes and assessment criteria, once written, must be compared and matched with the statements in the expected level. Although it might be difficult to find a complete match, there must be a dominant level, and the majority of the learning outcomes / assessment criteria must reflect one level. This is a best-fit approach, although it should not preclude revisiting and rewriting some learning outcomes and assessment criteria to better reflect the level. If there is still not a dominant level, it will be necessary to review and redesign the unit.

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

Finally, it may be useful, when determining level, to cross-reference/benchmark against existing units at adjacent levels as well as units written by other submitting bodies in the same area of learning.

2.3 Credit value

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

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

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

Is there a maximum credit value for a unit?

There are no restrictions on the size (credit values) of units. However, as all learning outcomes in a unit have to be achieved to be awarded the credit value, and as a credit value once determined cannot be split, the larger the unit, the less flexibility there is for a learner to achieve in smaller steps. In other words, learners may complete a considerable amount of work and achieve some of the learning outcomes, but if, for whatever reason, they leave part way through the course/training, they would not receive any credits for what had been achieved.

As units are developed, submitting organisations will consider how a unit's size influences the opportunities for learners to accumulate achievement flexibly.

Definition of learning time

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

The function of learning time is to provide an indication of the volume of learning related to the achievement of specified outcomes.[15]

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

Credit is awarded for achievement, not for learning effort

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

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

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

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

The following is a definition of GLH taken from paragraph 59 of *Funding guidance for further education in 2006/07* (Learning and Skills Council, April 2006):

> Guided learning hours are defined as all times when a member of staff is present to give specific guidance towards the learning aim being studied on a programme. This definition includes lectures, tutorials and supervised study in, for example, open learning centres and learning workshops. It also includes time spent by staff assessing a learner's achievements, for example in the assessment of competence for National Vocational Qualifications. It does not include time spent by staff in the day-to-day marking of assignments or homework where the learner is not present. It does not include hours where supervision or assistance is of a general nature and is not specific to the study of the learners.

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

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

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

The process of estimating learning time and determining credit value

The process of determining credit value cannot be prescribed and is part of the holistic process of unit development, but the guiding principles will invariably be similar to those relating to determining level. The involvement of a panel or group of relevant experts will help the process and make sure that the credit value is recognised and accepted by the relevant stakeholders.

> As the unit writing team had extensive specialist subject knowledge and were experienced in writing and using credit-based units, the process of creating units with a credit value of 3 was largely holistic. A number of factors were constantly being balanced … [including] … the development of learning objectives and assessment criteria in close relation with the knowledge of delivering learning in the relevant contexts. Experienced judgements were continually being made throughout the unit writing process. Subsequent to this, credit values were subject to additional quality assurance checks with regard to their consistency by both the nominated working group members … and by the development officer … At none of these stages were there any major problems with the allocation of credit values to the units … It is inevitable that some units will be more intensive and demanding than others, even where they are broadly commensurate enough to be [allocated] … the same credit [value]. Additional checking for consistency can come at more advanced stages of the trial process by incorporating questions about this into focus groups and other forms of feedback from learners and tutors.
>
> **New Adult Pathways in Visual Arts project,**
> **London's specialist designated institutions**

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

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

1. Acquiring the knowledge of theories, concepts and procedures and identifying and practising the affective and psycho-motor skills that underpin effective leadership and management performance (guided learning).

2. Reading about, researching and developing an understanding of the theories, concepts, procedures and skills that underpin effective leadership and management practice (private study).

3. Researching and exploring specific practice in the learner's own workplace and in other workplaces (workplace learning).

4. Reflecting on own and others' performance, using this reflection to make judgements about that performance, and identifying what changes are needed and how these might be implemented (reflection).

5. Preparing for and writing or presenting the outcomes of prescribed assignments for assessment (assessment).

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

Institute of Leadership and Management

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

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

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

What should the learning time include?

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

Credit value should reflect only the learning time for the set of achievements in a given unit. The knowledge or skills that the learner may require prior to starting the learning for that unit is not considered within

the credit value. If there is a need for prerequisite or corequisite achievements, these achievements should be represented in other units. The requirement for other units to be achieved alongside or beforehand can then be specified in the rules of combination for a qualification.

Finally, if units are being written from existing qualifications, the experiences of users in terms of learning time will inform the decision on credit value. It may also be worth consulting other qualifications where comparability between achievements exists. If the credit value for similar achievement is significantly different, it is worth exploring the reasons for this and perhaps reviewing the estimates made.

2.4   Writing learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Introductory statements for learning outcomes and assessment criteria

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

All units must contain learning outcomes that relate to an individual learning outcome in language consistent with it.[16]

Examples of appropriate introductory statements that meet the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* are set out below. These are for illustrative purposes and these examples are in no way exhaustive. For learning outcomes, appropriate statements include:
1. The learner will …
2. The learner demonstrates/shows …

and for assessment criteria:
1. The learner can …
2. The learner is able to …

Important information when entering learning outcomes on the unit pro forma

Learning outcomes on the web-based accreditation system are sequenced in alphabetical order, which, in general, means sequenced by the numerical reference given to them. It must be remembered that if you have 10 or more learning outcomes, in order to have them sequence correctly, you need to give each one a two-digit reference, for example 01, 02, 03.

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

2.5   Writing learning outcomes

All units must contain learning outcomes that:
- set out what a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do as the result of a process of learning
- are clear and coherent, and expressed in language that is understandable by the learners for whom the unit is intended or by a helper or adviser where the learners themselves are not able to understand the learning outcomes
- are expressed in a manner that addresses individual learners in the third person and will make sense to a learner both before a unit is offered and after the learning outcomes have been achieved
- are capable of assessment and, in conjunction with the assessment criteria related to that outcome, set a clear assessment standard for the unit.[17]

The learning outcomes and assessment criteria should be written in a way that, when they are combined together, clearly articulates the learning achievement for which the credit will be awarded at the level assigned to the unit. It is expected that the number of learning outcomes will be consistent with the level and credit value of the unit. Since all learning outcomes must be achieved for credit to be awarded, unit developers need to ensure that the number of learning outcomes in a unit is not so large that it might limit the learners' opportunity to achieve. Very large units with substantial numbers of learning outcomes do not support flexible achievement and can create barriers to achievement.

Key points to consider when writing learning outcomes

What are the learners taking away?

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

Achievement not process

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

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

How do the outcomes relate to each other?

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

Here are some examples of coherent sets of learning outcomes:

Unit title: Produce plaster components

Level 2

At the end of the learning experience the learner will or will be able to:	
LO1	Interpret information for producing fibrous work from drawings and specifications
LO2	Select materials, components and equipment
LO3	Produce fibrous plaster components

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

Unit title: The principles of infection prevention and control

Level 2

At the end of the learning experience the learner will or will be able to:	
LO1	Understand roles and responsibilities in the prevention and control of infections
LO2	Understand legislation and policies relating to the prevention and control of infections
LO3	Understand systems and procedures relating to the prevention and control of infections
LO4	Understand the importance of risk assessment in relation to the prevention and control of infections
LO5	Understand the importance of using personal protective equipment (PPE) in the prevention and control of infections

Unit title: Managing and maintaining a Windows server 2003 environment

Level 3

At the end of the learning experience the learner will or will be able to:	
LO1	Manage and maintain physical and logical devices
LO2	Manage users, computers and groups
LO3	Manage and maintain access to resources
LO4	Manage and maintain a server environment
LO5	Manage and implement disaster recovery

Unit title: Art and design ideas development

Level 3

At the end of the learning experience the learner will or will be able to:	
LO1	Develop and interrogate through observation, drawing and recording a number of creative solutions to a given objective, proposal or subject
LO2	Identify, select and use appropriate media, materials and technologies for creative solutions
LO3	Solve problems through the application of art and design practical understanding

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

Level 3

At the end of the learning experience the learner will or will be able to:	
LO1	Understand and comply with responsibilities and requirements when carrying out activities in a work situation
LO2	Understand how to diagnose and repair complex faults in mobile air conditioning systems / climate control systems
LO3	Diagnose and repair complex faults in mobile air conditioning systems / climate control systems

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

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

Level 4

At the end of the learning experience the learner will or will be able to:	
LO1	Determine the nature and significance of process problems
LO2	Diagnose faults/causes and select solutions to process problems
LO3	Implement and evaluate chosen solutions
LO4	Maintain his/her own and others' safety

Unit title: Implement health, safety and environmental policy

Level 6

At the end of the learning experience the learner will or will be able to:	
LO1	Identify and present project hazards and assess risks
LO2	Implement methods and procedures to reduce project risks
LO3	Implement health and safety and environmental policies

How are learning outcomes written across levels?

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

How much detail should there be in the learning outcome?

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

Unit title: Assisting clients to access services

Level 3

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

Unit title: Assisting clients to access services

Level 3

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

How many learning outcomes are required?

The number of learning outcomes is not prescribed but should be informed by the level of the unit (and therefore the capability of the targeted learners) and a consideration of what constitutes a coherent set of learning outcomes within the subject area.

A key point to note is that learners must demonstrate achievement of all the learning outcomes before credit can be awarded. There is no award for anything less.

Units of assessment are intended to support flexible achievement and the accumulation of credit. If a unit contains a very large number of learning outcomes and consequently has a very high credit value, some learners may not be able to complete the unit. There are, however, some situations where a large number of learning outcomes is necessary in order to satisfy the need for coherence. For example the level 3 unit on medical terminology has 14 credits and 19 learning outcomes covering the range of systems in the body. In the interest of coherence learners are required to know the terminology across the full range.

Are the learning outcomes weighted?

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

Language in learning outcomes

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

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

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

There must be a clear correlation between the learning outcome and assessment criteria. In the first example on the following page, the use of a general verb (in this case 'know') means the assessment criteria given are observable and measurable demonstrations of that knowledge. In the second example, however, an action-specific verb (in this case 'describe') has been used. This limits the use of language in the assessment criteria because the measurable and observable demonstration of this learning outcome can only be description.

The act of 'identifying' or 'following procedures' or 'stating' does not demonstrate that the learner is able to 'describe what to do in an emergency situation' and the assessment criteria do not therefore correlate with the learning outcome.

Unit title: Independent living skills: dealing with emergencies

Entry 3

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

Unit title: Independent living skills: dealing with emergencies

Entry 3

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

How much detail is needed in the learning outcomes?

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

Do learning outcomes need to be context specific?

A learning outcome may be written in a general way, devoid of context-related detail, so that the unit is useable within a range of contexts, situations and with different target learners. Alternatively, it may be context specific, containing terminology and concepts that are important to a given context or occupation.

This first example is context free.

Unit title: Mentoring skills

Level 3

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

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

Unit title: Mentoring skills

Level 3

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

2.6 Writing assessment criteria

All units must contain assessment criteria that:

- specify the standard a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that the learning outcomes of that unit have been achieved

- relate to an individual learning outcome in language consistent with it

- are sufficiently detailed to support reliable, valid and consistent judgements that a learning outcome has been achieved, without creating an undue assessment burden for learners or assessors

- do not include any explicit references to the methods or instruments of assessment to be used.[18]

Key points to consider when writing assessment criteria

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

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

Working to the minimum helps to prevent over assessment of the unit.

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

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

Assessment criteria are guided by the level descriptors.[19] Appropriate language must be used to reflect the statements contained in the descriptor for the expected level.

How much detail should there be in assessment criteria?

Assessment criteria must contain sufficient detail to make it clear to the reader exactly what is expected of the learner to achieve the learning outcome at the level of the unit. There should be enough information in the assessment criteria to enable an effective judgement to be made about the level achieved. Where acquisition of range is needed to support this, examples should be given; it is preferable to include examples rather than the full range, which can be included in the additional information section (see Annex B).

Can the assessment method be part of the assessment criteria?

Assessment criteria should not be confused with, or refer to, assessment methods. The assessment criteria specify the standard a learner must meet: the assessment methods are the instruments/mechanisms used to provide evidence that the standard has been met.

Therefore, assessment criteria should be written so that they can be demonstrated through a range of assessment methods. This allows different users to determine the most appropriate assessment method for the context / target group.

In the first example that follows, the assessment criteria clearly relate to the learning outcome, and contain the qualitative detail, range and what is expected of the learner in the planning activity. In the second example, however, the assessment criteria simply state the assessment activities and the evidence, rather than indicating the standard to which those activities are completed. The learner could perform both activities badly and still achieve the assessment criteria.

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

Unit title: Organising and delivering a community event

Level 3

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria	
The learner will:	The learner can:	
1. Be able to plan a community event	1.1 Plan each stage of the event, describing and justifying required resources and activities, to include: (a) key personnel (b) technical resources (c) venue/location/accommodation (d) sources of finance 1.2 Set targets for the completion of each stage	✓

Unit title: Organising and delivering a community event

Level 3

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

It may be helpful to envisage the types of assessment activities/tasks that could be used to decide whether the students have achieved the learning outcomes. This will build up a picture of the evidence of assessment generated by the activity, which will, in turn, inform the assessment criteria.

What about writing the same unit title at different levels?

Where the same unit title is used at different levels with the same learning outcomes, assessment criteria must be clearly differentiated to reflect the statements in the descriptors at each level. It may be useful to imagine having to explain to two learners why one of them gained credits at level 2

and the other at level 3. The following examples show ways of expressing achievement through the levels.

Unit title: Drawing skills

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

Unit title: Understanding health and well-being

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

Unit title: Characteristics of typical measurement systems in clinical physiology

Learning outcome	The learner will: Know static and dynamic characteristics of typical measurement systems	
Level	**Level 2**	**Level 3**
Assessment criteria	List and describe static and dynamic characteristics of a measurement system, using appropriate illustrations and formulae where relevant	Use appropriate illustrations and formulae to demonstrate and justify measurements taken of these characteristics and perform calculations/measurements where relevant

Keeping the assessment criteria relevant

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

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

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

Are there certain words/phrases to avoid?

There are no rules to identify the correct verbs but it is essential to remember that assessment criteria must be demonstrable, observable and measurable. A list of verbs that are commonly used in assessment criteria can be found in Annex D.

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

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

Unit title: Working with learners with disabilities

Level 2

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

Unit title: Working with learners with disabilities

Level 2

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

With or without assistance?

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

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

Some examples of sets of assessment criteria:

Unit title: Causes and spread of infection

Level 2

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

Unit title: Medical terminology

Level 2

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
2. Know the meaning of medical terms relating to the body systems	2.1 Produce correct definitions of medical terms concerning the following body systems: • body structure • skeletal/locomotor • cardiovascular • lymphatic and immune system including body's response to infection • respiratory • digestive • urinary • reproductive 2.2 Match medical words against definitions correctly

Unit title: Know how to produce plaster components

Level 2

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

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

Unit title: Produce plaster components

Level 2

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

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

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

Level 3

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

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

Unit title: Art and design ideas development

Level 3

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
1. Develop and interrogate through observation, drawing and recording, a number of creative solutions to a given objective, proposal or subject	1.1 Use drawing and recording of observations to develop ideas and solutions 1.2 Use approaches to drawing to interrogate different ideas 1.3 Develop creative ideas and solutions to a given objective, proposal or subject

Unit title: Principles and practice of assessment

Level 4

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
3. Understand the strengths and limitations of a range of assessment methods, including, as appropriate, those which exploit new and emerging technologies	3.1 Evaluate a range of assessment methods with reference to the needs of particular learners and key concepts and principles of assessment 3.2 Use a range of assessment methods appropriately to ensure that learners produce assessment evidence that is valid, reliable, sufficient, authentic and current 3.3 Justify the use of peer and self-assessment to promote learner involvement and personal responsibility in the assessment of their learning

Unit title: Strategic performance management

Level 7

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

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

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

Unit title: Using touch

Entry level

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

Keeping the language in assessment criteria objective

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

For purposes of objectivity, it is important to avoid using qualifiers, which are subjective and open to interpretation, for example:
• good/bad
• fully
• effectively
• professionally
• competently
• imaginatively.

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

Maintaining objectivity in assessment criteria often presents a challenge for those delivering and assessing in the creative arts. For example, the use of 'creatively' or 'imaginatively' in assessment criteria does not allow for an objective judgement – one assessor's 'imaginative' may be another assessor's 'run of the mill'. The following pages show good examples of how assessment criteria have been written for units in painting.[20]

Unit title: Painting practice

1. Be able to use painting materials	1.1 Accurately use basic materials such as acrylic or watercolour	1.1 Accurately and coherently use basic materials such as acrylic, watercolour or oil, to complete tasks such as contrasting use of translucency and opacity	1.1 Explore the potential of materials such as acrylic, watercolour or oil, in a complex task such as conveying the subtleties and nuances of paint
2. Be able to use painting techniques	2.1 Use basic techniques such as paint mixing or surface preparation, to complete simple tasks such as a single layered coloured image	2.1 Accurately and coherently use basic techniques such as layering or glazing to complete tasks such as contrasting use of translucency and opacity	2.1 Explore the potential of techniques such as layering and glazing in a complex task such as conveying the subtleties and nuances of paint application

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

3. Be able to apply the principles of painting	3.1 Describe and accurately apply basic principles such as basic tonal separation, organising a composition	3.1 Use a considered range of principles such as composition, tone or colour to produce a cohesive painted image	3.1 Synthesise a range of principles in painting to convey complex ideas such as expressing emotion, content, meaning
4. Understand how to reflect upon and develop work in painting	4.1 Identify a range of basic strategies through which work can be developed such as a simple tonal painting	4.1 Describe a range of considered strategies through which work can be developed such as a painting consisting of more than one layer	4.1 Evaluate areas of strength and weakness in personal work and identify a range of considered strategies to develop work

Writing assessment criteria for skills-related achievement

In skills-related achievement, the assessment criteria are often constrained by the activity that needs to be carried out to demonstrate that achievement. The performance of an activity task alone may be sufficient to reflect the level. For example, 'Switch on the computer' could be an assessment criterion in an Entry level 'Using IT' unit. In other instances it is necessary to qualify the activity with information on how well it is performed in order to reflect the level. The examples on the next page illustrate this.

Unit title: Mediation skills

Level 2

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

Unit title: Mediation skills

Level 3

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

In the next example, the assessment criteria specify the activity and the quality of performance that reflects the level, for example, the length of time the learner has to improvise and the quality of the movements. In the second example, the assessment criterion simply states the activity but not the quality of the performance. Therefore, the learner could perform in a very limited way but still claim to have addressed the assessment criterion.

Unit title: Movement improvisation

Level 3

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
1. Be able to improvise movement pieces from given stimuli	1.1 Improvise for over two minutes demonstrating simple and complex movements developed in response to given stimuli

✔

Unit title: Movement improvisation

Level 3

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

✗

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

Section 3: Writing units for the QCF using NOS

3.1 The relationship between NOS and QCF units and qualifications

The occupational standards directory states that national occupational standards (NOS) 'describe what an individual needs to do, know and understand in order to carry out a particular job role or function.'[21]

NOS are the outcome of functional analysis and relate to occupations or roles that normally involve learning and workplace practice to gain competence. Their development and stewardship is a core purpose for all sector bodies. NOS are an important reference point for the development of QCF units and qualifications, although this is not the only use for NOS. NOS are also used to:

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

It is important that NOS are represented sufficiently and explicitly in relevant units. Sector bodies need to be able to develop units for the QCF without diluting or undermining the aims of particular NOS. The impact and influence of statutory or legal obligations, and health and safety requirements, must also be made clear. This will enable employers and other users to feel confident that the units assess the essential knowledge and skills required for a given vocational area or occupation. It will also ensure that such units, combined with appropriate rules of combination, meet the requirements of the statutory regulations for external qualifications.

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

21 This can be found on a website run by the Skills Sector Development Agency, www.ukstandards.org.

The approach to translating NOS into learning outcomes and assessment criteria will vary, and consideration of other work on relationships between NOS and credit (for example, work carried out in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) project and recent research carried out by the Scottish Qualifications Authority) will be useful. It will be important to include people who are knowledgeable about the specific occupations and vocational areas in the process of unit development, including members of the relevant sector skills council (SSC), sector skills bodies, employer groups and those working in a particular sector.

Developing NOS to meet agreed quality criteria

Sectors develop NOS that meet agreed quality criteria, but the way they are written is not prescribed. This can mean significant differences in how NOS are expressed in different sectors. These differences reflect:

- a diversity in sector culture, language and history
- differences in legislative imperatives
- the nature of the skills and knowledge, and the constancy of underlying concepts in a given sector.

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

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

The format and information requirements for the design of units and qualifications for the QCF are standardised through the regulatory arrangements[22] rather than (as for NOS) a set of quality criteria[23], which allow different approaches to expression. The QCF requires the unit format to be standardised to work effectively so that credit for achieving units can be accumulated and transferred, and the same units can appear in more than one qualification. However, the content of units, for which learning outcomes and assessment criteria are specified, and how their achievement is assessed, is not prescribed and QCF units and qualifications do not necessarily prescribe when, where and how people learn.

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

23 Sector Skills Development Agency. *Quality criteria for the development and content of NOS,* approved by the UK NOS Board 24 November 2006.

3.2   Using NOS to design QCF units – some examples

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

Identifying potential units and learning outcomes from NOS

QCF units are units of assessment that can be used to measure whether a person has the necessary skills and/or knowledge and understanding to meet the requirements of an occupational standard. One simple way of distinguishing NOS from QCF units and qualifications is to see QCF units as the means of ensuring that individuals have met occupational standards (regardless of how these are expressed) through a process of learning and assessment that is transparent and objective.

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

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

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

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

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

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

QCF unit title: Work within your business environment

Level 2

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
2. Be able to access information about, and understand, own employment responsibilities and rights	2.1 Locate and access information about own employment responsibilities and rights
	2.2 Describe own employment responsibilities and rights
	2.3 Seek guidance to obtain needed information, when unsure about own employment responsibilities and rights
3. Be able to carry out own responsibilities to the employer in a way that is consistent with own contract of employment	3.1 Explain content of own contract of employment
	3.2 Complete any work tasks in a way that is consistent with own contract of employment

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

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

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

Once a unit writer has identified the skills and knowledge to be assessed, he or she has several options for writing units to assess achievement. A unit may contain learning outcomes and assessment criteria relating only to knowledge/attitudes or skills, or it may relate to a combination of both.

Skills and knowledge may be separated, for example, where acquisition of knowledge that introduces a person to an occupation or sector is a common precursor to, or requirement for, a work placement or job. In the case of the separation, this could result in more coherent units that can be summarised more easily by a title. It may also make it easier for learners to achieve the full qualification and the required competence in smaller steps.

It is essential to consider the flexible relationship between units and assessment methods when making these decisions – the fact that the knowledge and skills are separated into different units does not mean that they have to be assessed separately. The option is there for the units to be assessed using separate tasks or a single task. In other words, even though skills and knowledge may be contained in separate QCF units, this does not mean they have to be acquired and assessed separately.

The use of a single task to assess both units at the same time would offer the opportunity for learners to achieve both units or just one unit where they may be stronger in one area than the other. The rules of combination for a qualification would then be written in such a way as to ensure that both units were achieved before the learner achieved the full qualification, namely by identifying them as corequisite for achievement of the full qualification. The integrity of the NOS would be retained but the journey to achieving that qualification would allow for different paces of development of the relevant knowledge and skills.

Alternatively, elements of knowledge, understanding and skills could be combined into the same unit. There may be a range of reasons for grouping skills and knowledge together. For example, employers in a sector may wish to ensure that skills and knowledge are not separately assessed, so that how people learn at work is reflected in the unit itself.

It may be suitable to write some units that group together elementary skills and knowledge at lower levels to introduce a person to the occupation, and write separate skills and knowledge units at higher levels to offer scope for incremental achievement.

The NOS analysis may require or lead to the identification of skills common across a range of NOS tasks and activities, and the design of units that describe these in learning outcomes and assessment criteria. This can help to avoid duplication of units of assessment, as these units can be used to assess the identified skills in a variety of contexts. Such an approach may reduce the assessment burden on the learner and increase awareness of the transferability of the skills acquired. If a unit writer wishes to see application of such skills in specific contexts or tasks/activities, these can be identified in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in the case of the former and detailed in the assessment requirements for the unit in the case of the latter.

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

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

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

Support diversity:

- Interact with other people in a way that is sensitive to their individual needs and respects their background, abilities, values, customs and beliefs

- Learn from other people and use this to improve the way you work and interact with others

- Follow your organisation's procedures and legal requirements in relation to discrimination legislation

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Learning outcomes and assessment criteria are devised that enable the learner to observably demonstrate understanding and application of these values in a way which enables measurable assessment, as in the example on the following page.

QCF unit title: Work within your business environment

Level 2

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
5. Be able to support diversity in a business and administration work environment	5.1 Show interaction with other people, at work, that demonstrates: a) sensitivity to individual needs b) respect, as appropriate, for background, abilities, values, customs and beliefs 5.2 Obtain feedback or guidance from other people and use this to improve: a) own work b) own interaction with others 5.3 Describe own organisation's procedures and legal requirements in relation to discrimination legislation

Once the unit writer has identified what needs to be assessed to be able to judge whether a person has met an occupational standard, and decided how the skills and knowledge requirements are to be grouped into units, he or she should refer to section 2.4 on writing learning outcomes. This will help the writer find out whether the NOS as they stand provide sufficient information to devise learning outcomes and will explain how to use appropriate language in devising learning outcomes related to skills or knowledge.

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

Identification of assessment criteria within NOS may require more interpretation of the NOS than the identification of the information needed to write learning outcomes. This may be because in some cases, NOS do not provide the necessary level of detail. Where NOS are written in sufficient detail to include information that can be used or modified to generate assessment criteria, then the task of devising these is eased.

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

Methods of work

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

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

QCF unit title: Know how to prepare and mix concrete and mortars

Level 2

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
3. Know the different preparation and mixing concrete and mortars methods	3.1 Explain the mixing methods adopted to: • typical mix proportions and materials for different situations (bricks, blocks, below DPC work, existing structures, etc) • identify types of common mix proportions • use additives • mix by hand • mix by machine 3.2 Overcome preparation and mixing problems

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

NOS may provide some of the information needed for assessment criteria but lack sufficient detail to support a consistent judgement that a learning outcome has been achieved. In the following example, the learning outcome almost mirrors the NOS statement, and assessment criteria have been written that add sufficient detail to enable a judgement of achievement to be made.

Work within your business environment NOS 202 (Knowledge) (Council for Administration)

You will know:

1. How your organisation compares to other organisations in the sector

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QCF unit title: Work within your business environment

Level 2

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
9. Understand how own organisation compares to other organisations in the same sector	9.1 Describe role of own organisation and compare with other organisations in the same sector, to include: a) points of similarity b) points of difference

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

Erect masonry structures NOS Unit VR40 (ConstructionSkills)

Performance criteria	Scope of performance
You must be able to:	Evidence must be work-based
Comply with the given contract information to carry out the work efficiently to the required specification	Work skills to: • measure, mark out, lay, position and secure Use and maintain: • hand tools • portable power tools • ancillary equipment Erect masonry in brick and block and/or local materials to contractor's working instructions for: • cavity wall structures • blockwork structures • solid wall structures • door and window openings • joint finishes

QCF unit title: Erect complex masonry structures

Level 3

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The learner will:	The learner can:
4. Construct arches	4.1 Build rough arches to specification including: • skewbacks cut to correct angle to produce normal joint • cut bricks over arch within tolerance of normal joint • no face plane deviation to tolerance over arch and joints 4.2 Build axed arches to specification including: • skewbacks cut to correct angle to produce normal joint • voussoirs to radiate from centre point • bond maintained over arch • no face plane deviation to specification over arch and joints • careful selection of bricks to maintain appearance

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

The simple test which should be applied to all the assessment criteria in all units is 'can the learner do this badly but still meet the assessment criteria and get the credit for this unit?'. This test should be applied to all units drafted.

'Language in assessment criteria' in section 2.6 provides advice on using appropriate language in writing assessment criteria, which is pertinent to unit writers using NOS as their starting point.

Determining the level of units developed using NOS

At the point of establishing NOS, they are not necessarily associated with a particular level in the framework. In fact, to use a level as a starting point for establishing NOS would be limiting. NOS relate to job roles, proficiency and competence and job roles are not necessarily 'levelled', even though some NOS may have levels attributed to them. It cannot be assumed that all of the functions and responsibilities of a given role will be at the same level.

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

The number of credits to be achieved at the level of the qualification or above should be listed. This number must conform to the requirement that a majority of credits for the qualification come from the level of the qualification or above.[24]

Whether level has been assigned to NOS or not, unit writers should use the QCF level descriptors[25] to check the level of individual learning outcomes and whole units to ensure such units meet QCF requirements.

During the process of translating NOS into sets of learning outcomes and assessment criteria, there may be occasional learning outcomes that are not at the level determined for the unit as a whole. In such cases:

• a best-fit approach can be taken, where the unit as a whole has a dominant level but where one or two learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria are not consistent with the level. This 'best-fit' approach is useful where functional requirements to meet a standard include a minority of skills or knowledge at a different level from that which the standard requires overall

• it may be that the unit contains a mix of levels, so that it is impossible to identify a dominant level and so determine an overall level for the unit; in such cases the unit will need to be reviewed

• it may be preferable to write a lower- or higher-level unit in addition to the original unit, in order to clearly identify learning outcomes and assessment criteria at the appropriate level.

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24 *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726), section 1.19c.

25 *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726), Annex E.

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

Determining the credit value for units developed using NOS

The different purposes of NOS and of QCF units and qualifications, which are complementary but distinct, are described in section 3.1. These differences mean that there is no direct relationship between the content of NOS and the credit values determined for QCF units. Credit value is applied to learning achievements.

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

The process of determining credit value draws upon the experience and knowledge of professionals in the field to reach an understanding of the skills and experience that learners typically bring to a unit. Professionals explore and discuss the range of estimated learning time for different learners in different contexts, in order to reach a judgement on the time it takes on average for learners to achieve the unit, and so arrive at an agreed credit value for the unit.

It is important to consider that large units pose the risk of learners losing everything if they fail to achieve one assessment criterion. Dividing learning outcomes derived from NOS into several units does not enable learners to avoid essential learning achievement while appearing to have achieved qualifications. The rules of combination are there to ensure that all the units pertaining to essential NOS are a requirement of the qualification. A holistic approach to delivery and assessment is not jeopardised by having several small units instead of one large unit.

It should be remembered that determining credit value is not an exact scientific measure, but rather a professional judgement based on the value of a particular set of achievements. This professional judgement is reached through a systematic process that uses experience and knowledge (backed by data where available) to determine the value of the learning achievement.

Where the range of learners and learning contexts is extensive, and there is no easily defined average learner or typical structured learning programme that may help ascribe learning time to a unit, the importance of involving a range of expertise becomes apparent.

The kind of expertise and experience which can contribute to valid professional judgements could include employer/workplace

representatives, tutors and assessors with a range of experience and perspectives together with sector body staff, awarding body professional staff and external verifiers.

Cogent worked with the awarding body PAA/VQ-SET to identify current and future users of the units being developed, and the contexts in which the units might be taken. Users included in-house company providers, private training providers, and further education (FE) colleges. A representative from each type of training provider, each familiar with the original NOS and NVQ, was invited to form part of a working group to determine credit and level values for all of the units. This ensured that a consistent and broad understanding of the 'typical learner' was achieved across all of the individual units.

Cogent

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

A total of three meetings were held to assign credit and level to the units. At the end of the third meeting the credit values for all of the units were reviewed together to ensure consistency and to confirm the rationale for any atypical units. This was particularly useful as the group's understanding of and approach to credit had developed considerably over the course of the work.

Cogent

As the comment above illustrates, skill and confidence in determining credit values grows with practice and experience. Feedback from centres, external verifiers and others may provide useful data that can support the credit value or inform a review of units.

3.3 Checklist for writing units using NOS

This checklist summarises what you should keep in mind when writing units for the QCF using NOS.

The relationship between qualifications and NOS

- NOS describe what an individual needs to do, know and understand in order to carry out a particular job role or function.
- Qualifications should be developed independently of NOS. There should be a 'step' between NOS and developing units for the QCF.
- NOS are no longer regarded as synonymous with qualifications.
- QCF units and qualifications can accommodate and reflect the content and aims of NOS.
- QCF units are units of assessment that are used to measure whether a person has the necessary skills and/or knowledge and understanding to meet the requirements of an occupational standard.

Identifying potential units and learning outcomes from NOS

The unit writer's task is to:
- identify what needs to be assessed to be able to judge whether a person has met an occupational standard
- devise QCF units that express the identified skills/knowledge as learning outcomes and assessment criteria, to enable that judgement to be made.

Where NOS are expressed as statements of activities and tasks, it will be necessary to:
- identify the specific skills and knowledge required to be able to conduct these tasks satisfactorily
- identify and write sets of learning outcomes and suitable assessment criteria to draft QCF units.

A unit may be written that:
- groups skills and knowledge together
- separates skills and knowledge so that it is possible to assess their achievement discretely.

Even though skills and knowledge may be contained in separate QCF units, this does not mean they have to be acquired and assessed separately.

Identification of skills and/or knowledge common across a range of NOS tasks and activities could:
- lead to units being designed that recognise common skills/knowledge across NOS
- help to avoid duplication of QCF units

- reduce the assessment burden on the learner
- increase awareness of the transferability of the skills/knowledge acquired.

Determining the level of units developed using NOS

- Job roles are not necessarily 'levelled', even though NOS may have levels attributed to them.
- Units of assessment might be required at a number of different levels in designing a qualification to meet NOS requirements for one occupation. Rules of combination for the QCF recognise this and allow units to be combined at different levels to make up a qualification.
- Whether or not a level has been assigned to NOS, unit writers should use the QCF level descriptors to check the level of individual learning outcomes and whole units to ensure such units meet QCF requirements.
- There is scope to include one or two learning outcomes and assessment criteria in a unit that are at a different level from the unit overall. However, the unit must clearly have a dominant level.
- This best-fit approach is useful where functional requirements to meet a standard include a minority of skills or knowledge at a different level from that which the standard requires overall.

Determining credit values for units developed using NOS

There is no direct relationship between the content of NOS and the credit values determined for QCF units.

You will need to:
- draw upon the experience and knowledge of a range of professionals in the field to identify and agree the skills, knowledge and experience that learners typically bring to a unit
- identify and agree any prerequisite skills and knowledge
- explore and discuss the range of estimated learning time for different learners in different contexts
- reach a professional judgement on the time it takes on average for learners to achieve the unit
- arrive at an agreed credit value for the unit.

Also, you will need an understanding of learners who may take the unit for particular employment purposes and contexts.

Title	
Level	
Credit value	

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
1.	1.1
	1.2
2.	2.1
	2.2
3. etc	3.1
	3.2 etc

Additional information about the unit	
Unit purpose and aim(s)	
Unit expiry date	
Details of the relationship between the unit and relevant national occupational standards or other professional standards or curricula (if appropriate)	
Assessment requirements or guidance specified by a sector or regulatory body (if appropriate)	
Support for the unit from a sector skills council or other appropriate body (if required)	
Location of the unit within the subject/sector classification system	
Name of the organisation submitting the unit	
Availability for use	
Unit available from	
Unit guided learning hours	

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

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

Additional information about the unit

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

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

Unit purpose and aim(s)*

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

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

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

Unit expiry date*

This is the date that the unit will cease to be active within the unit databank, from which it may not be used in developing qualifications or awarded to learners. In the future it is envisaged that unit expiry dates will

be set at five years from the date of entry to the unit databank, unless the submitting body selects a date before this.

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

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

If there are relevant NOS, the submitting body (in consultation with relevant partners) will describe the relationship of the standards, in an appropriate manner. This might be done through:
- a general reference to the set of NOS relevant to the unit
- a hyperlink to the relevant section of the NOS directory
- a more detailed identification of the particular standard(s) that relate to each learning outcome.

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

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

The tests and trials offer the opportunity to explore different approaches to completing this section. Further guidance could be developed at a later stage if it appears that certain approaches are particularly effective in communicating this information.

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

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

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

Assessment requirements or guidance specified by a sector or regulatory body (if appropriate)

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

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

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

The following might be identified:
• the method of assessment for the unit
• the physical requirements of the assessment centre or location
• any particular assessment instruments that must be applied
• the qualifications or professional status of any assessor.

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

This is an optional field. This field is used to name the sector body or other organisation that has supported the development of the unit and its submission to the unit databank.

The field will allow more than one organisation to be listed. If a unit falls clearly within the 'footprint' of a sector skills council, then this is the body that must endorse the unit and it is expected that this field will be completed.

Location of the unit within the subject/sector classification system

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

Name of the organisation submitting the unit

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

Availability for use*

Each unit must be identified within one of three categories of availability to:
- all awarding bodies to award credit (shared units)
- a defined number of awarding bodies to award credit (restricted units)
- only the awarding body that submitted the unit to award credit (private/owned units).

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

Unit available from

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

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

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

Unit guided learning hours

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

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

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

Annex D: Examples of verbs that are commonly used in assessment criteria

The following table is provided with a set of caveats.

- The verbs are not specific to any given level, although some are used more frequently at the level under which they are listed, such as 'analyse' at level 3.
- The combination of a verb and qualifying information provide the criteria at a given level.
- This is a set of examples, not an exhaustive list, and should be used as guidance.
- Suggestions of verbs have not been provided for every area of learning.

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

Glossary

assessment criteria	Descriptions of the requirements a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved
CAT	Credit accumulation and transfer; the system by which learners can accumulate and transfer credits over a period of time in differing locations and contexts, in order to gain qualifications
competence	The 'proven/demonstrated' – and individual – capacity to use know-how, skills, qualifications or knowledge in order to meet usual – and changing – occupational situations and requirements. The notion of competence may include formal qualification as well as elements such as the capacity to transfer skills and knowledge to a new occupational situation, or the capacity to innovate. The level or kind of competence may be assessed by evaluating the individual's ability to use his or her skills. Competences can be specialised (such as the control of computerised processes), methodological (ability to think and decide, and capacity to innovate), or social (language and communication skills, and teamwork), CEDEFOP 2007 (see 'References', page 85)
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales
credit	An award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of the designated learning outcomes of a unit
credit rating	The process of ascribing credit retrospectively to existing qualifications for the purposes of translating all achievement into the 'currency' of credit
credit value	The number of credits that may be awarded to a learner for the successful achievement of the learning outcomes of a unit

delivery	The process through which the learning provider enables the learner to achieve
evidence	The body of assessed material, generated in the learning process, which demonstrates achievement of the learning outcomes
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
FLT	Foundation learning tier. A new reform aimed at reviewing and restructuring the offer available for learners at Entry level and level 1
GLH	Guided learning hours; the number of hours of teacher-supervised or directed study time required to teach a qualification or unit of a qualification
knowledge	Knowledge encompasses tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is knowledge that the learner possesses which influences cognitive processing but that he or she does not necessarily express and/or is not aware of. Explicit knowledge is knowledge a learner can consciously inspect, including tacit knowledge that converts into an explicit form by becoming an 'object of thought', CEDEFOP 2007 (see 'References', page 85)
learning outcome	A statement of what a learner can be expected to know, understand or do as a result of a process of learning
learning time	The amount of time a learner at the level of the unit is expected to take, on average, to complete the learning outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the assessment criteria
level descriptors for the QCF	A set of statements that enable achievements to be located at a particular level in the framework
LR	Learner record; a record of all units, qualifications and credits a learner has achieved on the QCF
NDAQ	National Database of Accredited Qualifications; the database that contains details of all QCA qualifications, including those submitted to the QCF; sample units can be found by using the unit search facility
NICATS	Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System

NOS	National occupational standards; these describe what a person needs to do, know and understand in a job to carry out the role in a consistent and competent way
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
skill	The relevant knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job and/or the product of education, training and experience which, together with relevant know-how, is the characteristic of technical knowledge
SLB	Sector lead body
SSC	Sector Skills Council
submitting body	Any organisation submitting units to the QCF unit databank; in year one of tests and trials this has included awarding bodies, sector skills councils and sector lead bodies, learning providers, professional bodies and employers
unique learner number	A unique number that is used to identify an individual learner
unit	A coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria with a title, credit value and level

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