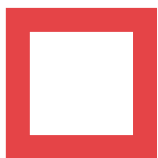




Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Quinquennial Review 2002



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Chapter 1: Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

- 1 Quinquennial Reviews are designed to pave the way for higher quality and better-integrated public services, more responsive to users' needs. In particular, this review of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) is an opportunity to re-examine its contribution to the delivery of education and skills policy.
- 2 Stage one of the Quinquennial Review, covered by this report, is an examination of the functions and remit of QCA. It considers whether these are still required and, if so, the best options for future delivery. Stage two will look at how QCA's management and organisational arrangements might be improved to deliver those functions.
- 3 The conclusions and recommendations in this report are informed by comments from a wide range of QCA stakeholders. Overall we had input from over 200 people in 100 organisations, including detailed interviews with over 70 people.

- 4 There was a high degree of consensus about what issues are important, and it is these to which we give most attention in the report. In some cases there was less consensus about what conclusions should be drawn, and here we have contributed rather more of our own analysis. We have also taken into account that QCA is a regulator, and it is inevitable that if it is doing its job properly some of the regulated might be biased towards giving unfairly negative views.

OVERALL FINDINGS

- 5 Much of the feedback was very positive about the professionalism of QCA and its staff. There was recognition of the difficulties of QCA's role: dealing with highly complex issues; in an area where reliability rates of 99.9% are still not regarded as good enough; and subject to intense political, media and public interest. In general most commentators, and the review team itself, felt that QCA has done a good job and is the right organisation to

deliver its future agenda. In Chapter 6 and annex J we list QCA's impressive achievements.

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 6 There was almost universal consensus that there is a continuing need for QCA, and that its NDPB status is right - visible independence from government, yet close enough to have the ear of Ministers. There was also widespread support for keeping together qualifications and curriculum, and general and vocational learning.
- 7 We considered the potential benefits of contracting out the development of mathematics statutory national tests, and concluded that the decision to keep these in-house should be reviewed. We also recommend that there should be a clearer rationale for deciding which materials QCA needs to publish itself.
- 8 There was no case apparent to us for merging QCA with any other body, or for privatisation of any activities over and above those discussed in the paragraph above.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Financial performance

- 9 We found that financial monitoring is satisfactory and that QCA's expenditure has been close to budget for the last four years. We noted and endorsed QCA's

increasing use of project management as a way of further improving financial and operational planning.

Service to stakeholders

- 10 QCA's activities impact on an enormous range of people and bodies, and it consults widely. However, there were two clear themes in what was said to the team: that steps should be put in place to make it easier for outsiders to communicate with the right people in QCA; and that QCA can be "conservative" and needs to be more responsive.

A potential wider role

- 11 Almost all consultees considered QCA to be very effective in dealing with detailed work, for example in interpreting and applying the curriculum. There was, though, a view that QCA should adopt a higher profile and more strategic role, particularly in debates about the maintenance of standards, and in promoting the social and economic benefits of learning and qualifications.

KEY ISSUES

Working with Awarding Bodies

- 12 The qualifications and examinations system is critical in developing the national skills base. QCA has had a central role in the success of the current system: developing the qualifications framework, ensuring the system is robust, and dealing effectively with failure.

- 13 The system is complex, involving around 100 awarding bodies of different sizes and with different strengths. This diversity requires a regulator with a strategic overview of the system. However, much of QCA's current role focuses on the detail of the qualifications. It was persuasively, and consistently, argued that QCA could take a step back and focus more on quality assuring the awarding bodies. We recommend that QCA and DfES appraise the scope for developing QCA's role in this way.

Managing the system of vocational qualifications

- 14 We encountered strong views from some quarters about vocational qualifications. We were told that QCA could be more responsive to employers' needs, and that the current system for accrediting qualifications is too protracted. There is a tension here, because there is a need to ensure standards and reliability, and because some of the delays are caused by other parties, despite QCA's best efforts to help and expedite. Nonetheless we do accept that there is scope and need for improvement. We recommend that QCA, with DfES, should review its capacity as respects vocational qualifications and current systems. DfES should also lead an assessment, with QCA and the Sector Skills Development Agency, of the wider

arrangements for vocational qualifications in light of the creation of Sector Skills Councils.

National tests

- 15 One apparent inconsistency in QCA's activity is the very different role it plays in the assessment system compared with its role in the qualifications system. In the latter it is essentially a regulator of delivery agents, and in the former QCA is itself the delivery agent.
- 16 There are cogent arguments both for and against change, and any transition would require very careful risk management. On balance we see merit in QCA continuing its strategic oversight of the tests, but the case for whether or not QCA should withdraw from direct delivery functions deserves further examination. These do not sit easily with its main roles of policy adviser and regulator, and QCA needs to tighten its focus on these. We recommend that QCA should provide advice so that DfES can decide how our concerns can best be met; and advise DfES on the feasibility of a change in QCA's role in relation to tests at KS 2 and 3. If the decision is to go ahead with changes, we think that 2005 is a reasonable target for the national tests. We also propose changes for key and basic skills tests from 2004.

Relationship with DfES

17 QCA's remit requires it to make contributions across the DfES agenda. It was therefore inevitable that we should hear of some areas where it was felt that the relationship might work better. Some outsiders complained that it was not always clear where the boundaries lay between DfES and QCA, and this made it difficult to know where and how to offer their points of view. We recognised that, because of the diversity in QCA's role, it would not be possible to define for once and for all, and for every future remit, how the relationship should work. We recommend instead that the guiding principles should be set out in a memorandum of understanding, and note that greater use of project management procedures will clarify particular roles. We also recommend that DfES nominate a single minister with lead responsibility for the relationship, and that stage 2 of the review includes the role of the DfES sponsor team.

Making the most of QCA's people

18 One of the most consistent messages we received was praise for the skills, expertise and commitment of QCA's people. Our final set of recommendations addresses ways to deploy these more effectively. We concluded that there might be a better balance between retaining expertise and bringing in 'new blood', with new ideas and recent experience of diverse areas of education and employment. Linked to this, stage two of the review will cover

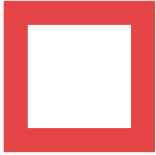
accommodation, and we recommend that as part of this it should also consider how recruitment issues are affected by QCA being based in central London, bearing in mind that the next review point in the lease is 2008.

19 QCA's Board was seen as high calibre, bringing an important set of skills into the organisation. We suggest that it may be possible to gain even more from the wide range of skills and experience of its members.

CONCLUSION

20 Finally, the Review team expresses its thanks everyone who contributed to the review. In particular we are grateful to staff in QCA itself, who provided us with information and views, were unfailingly helpful, and maintained their professionalism throughout.





Chapter 2: The Review

- 1 QCA is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) established under section 21 of the Education Act 1997. It is sponsored by the DfES to advise ministers on qualifications, curriculum, and assessment; regulate the quality and standard of qualifications; and help to implement government policy.
- 2 Cabinet Office guidance requires that each NDPB is reviewed every five years. This forms a major part of the programme for continuous improvement and is based on five principles: challenge; compare; consult; compete; and collaborate.
- 3 Quinquennial reviews are divided into two stages: the first addresses prior options and fundamental issues. It considers whether the functions of the NDPB are still needed, and if so, whether some or all of them could be performed better through other means than the existing arrangements. Then, if it is decided that the NDPB should continue, stage two considers how its management and organisational arrangements might be improved, to deliver those functions. Stage one of this review was announced in an answer to a parliamentary question, which also served as our terms of reference (annex A).
- 4 The review was led by Trevor Fellowes, a Divisional Manager in DfES with no previous involvement with QCA, and the team was a mix of Departmental staff and consultants from Pricewaterhouse Coopers. The work was overseen by a Steering Committee with membership drawn from DfES, other government departments and QCA itself (annex B). The total cost of the review was £120,000 comprising salary, travel and consultancy costs for the team, including £720 for the Steering Committee.
- 5 The approach taken to the review followed Cabinet Office guidelines and is described at annex C. This began with re-appraisal of the fundamental options for all or parts of QCA's functions, reported in chapter 5. These include: abolition; continued NDPB status; market testing; rationalisation or

merger with other bodies; privatisation; and strategic contracting out. For this the team consulted widely. This consultation drew out important views on QCA's performance, and these are recorded at chapters 6 and 7. In total the team conducted 69 interviews plus 6 focus groups with a cross section of QCA's stakeholders and personnel. Invitations to send written comments were sent to a wide range of stakeholders, and there was a designated website, which together elicited some 89 responses. A full list of those consulted is attached in annexes D and E, and the framework of questions used for the consultation is in annex F.





Chapter 3: Background

HISTORY

1 The first body with regulatory responsibility for school examinations was the Secondary Schools Examination Council, created in 1917. The first formal body with responsibility for curriculum was the Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations, created in 1964. Both organisations underwent a series of incarnations, and in 1988 two new bodies were established:

- the National Curriculum Council (NCC), to advise on the introduction of the first national curriculum; and
- the School Examination and Assessment Council (SEAC), to oversee school examinations and the statutory assessment of the new curriculum.

It is interesting to note that up to this time responsibility for qualifications and curriculum was with separate organisations.

2 The National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) was created in 1986

to develop a framework for vocational qualifications more related to skills needs. In 1993, to bring responsibility for the curriculum and its assessment under one roof, NCC and SEAC were merged to form the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA). Lord Dearing carried out a review of qualifications for 16-19 year olds and in 1996 emphasised the need for more coherence in the overall system of qualifications. The practical outcome was the merger of SCAA and NCVQ to form the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), to bring together responsibility for general and vocational qualifications. This merger reflected a wider change in government with the creation of the new Department for Education and Employment.

THE LEGAL BASIS

3 QCA was established under section 21 of the Education Act 1997, and section 22 specifies the general function of the Authority as “advancing education and training with a view to promoting quality and coherence”.

- 4 The Learning and Skills Act 2000, sections 96 -100, revised the law concerning the approval of qualifications for public funding purposes in England and Wales. As with precursor provisions, the Secretary of State exercises the power of approval directly, calling on QCA for advice on what should be approved.
- 5 Schedule 17 of the current Education Bill includes proposals to clarify and strengthen QCA's powers. These are broadly to enable QCA to: set criteria which will allow them to limit the number of qualifications accredited in similar subjects or for similar purposes; enter premises to check and copy documents to inform decisions about limiting the amount of examination fees; and set new conditions following accreditation, for instance to take account of policy developments without the need either to revoke accreditation or to wait until it lapses. There is also a proposal to enable QCA, in defined circumstances, to direct an awarding body if it has failed, or is likely to fail, to comply with the conditions of accreditation.
- 6 The statutory provisions are elaborated in remit letters issued by the Secretary of State. The first was issued in 1997 and since then the remit has evolved as QCA has been given new pieces of work and to meet new government priorities.

QCA'S ROLE

- 7 QCA's role covers learning and qualifications from 'cradle to grave'. Every individual is at some time in their lives affected by QCA: either as a school child;

a young person in school, college or workplace learning; or as a learning adult. It covers both general (academic) and vocational learning.

- 8 For the purposes of this review, we found it helpful to think of QCA as having three main functions:
- advising ministers on qualifications, curriculum, and assessment;
 - regulating the quality of qualifications and standards; and
 - delivering the national tests.
- 9 QCA describes its role as:

General

- advising the Secretary of State about issues to do with curriculum, qualifications and assessment; and supporting specific DfES initiatives (for example, the national strategies, Excellence in Cities, Adult and Basic Skills, and the Foundation Stage Profile);
- publishing specialist information, advice and guidance to support those working in qualifications, curriculum and assessment;

Curriculum

- monitoring and keeping under review the national curriculum, including the Foundation Stage;

National Assessment

- producing annual, high quality national curriculum tests, and collecting national data about the results of assessment;

External Qualifications

- developing criteria for the accreditation of qualifications, accrediting them into a national framework and keeping them under review;
- advising the Secretary of State on the approval of qualifications;
- establishing qualifications requirements, supporting the development and approval of national occupational standards and co-ordinating the development of qualifications in accordance with national policy; and

Quality Audit

- quality assuring the standards of qualifications and the processes of awarding.

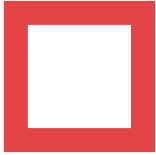
An extract from QCA's business plan, detailing their goals and objectives is at annex G. Further information on QCA's role and activity is available at www.qca.org.uk

QCA'S ORGANISATION

- 10 QCA comprises a Board of 8-13 persons (currently 12). All are non-executive except the Chairman, who is a part-time appointment, and the Chief Executive. There are four "policy" divisions (Curriculum, Qualifications, Quality Audit and Assessment), each with lead responsibility for one of the four main policy goals. Their work is supported by three "service" divisions (Communications and Knowledge Management, Corporate Services, and the Directorate), which carry out a mixture of policy and organisational infrastructure work.
- 11 The full complement of QCA staff is 597 split between the Curriculum Division (73); the Qualifications Division (136); the Quality Audit Division (70); the Assessment Division (75), and a further 18 who develop Mathematics Tests; and the "service" divisions — Communications and Knowledge Management Division (88), Corporate Services (112) and the Directorate (20). There is also a small office of 5 people in Northern Ireland. Within the Communications and Knowledge Management Division, 31 staff work on "policy" issues connected with research, statistics, and equal opportunities in education. An organisational chart is at annex H.

- 12 QCA works closely with the Awdurdod Cymwysterau Cwriculum ac Asecu Cymru (ACCAC) and the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) on curriculum and on qualifications issues. It also works jointly with the Scottish Qualifications Authority to manage the national occupational standards underpinning NVQs and their Scottish equivalents SVQs.





Chapter 4: The Context in which QCA Operates

- 1 The purpose of quinquennial reviews is to make sure that NDPBs continue to fit into the bigger picture of what government is trying to achieve; and that their role and approach remain relevant. So, any re-evaluation of their role must take into account changing government priorities - in the case of QCA especially those of DfES, although DTI, DCMS and the devolved administrations also have a significant interest. Similarly, it is necessary to look to the wider context of changes in society, technology and global markets. The Department places increasing emphasis upon the effectiveness of delivery and partnership working and QCA is only one of a number of bodies through which it works, so to be effective QCA needs to interact well with Ofsted, TTA, LSC, Sector Skills Councils and a wide range of other organisations.
- 2 The government's aim is to create a competitive economy and inclusive society. DfES aims to contribute to this by:
 - Creating opportunities for everyone to develop their learning;
 - Releasing potential in people to make the most of themselves; and
 - Achieving excellence in standards of education and level of skills.
- 3 QCA's contribution is essential to each of these, through developing and maintaining a sound system of qualifications, a rich curriculum, and excellent standards. The following table sets out how QCA's contribution links with the Department's more specific objectives (details of these can be found in DfES' recent strategy document¹).

¹ Education and Skills: Delivering Results, A Strategy to 2006; 2001

DfES objective	DfES policy priorities relevant to QCA
1 Give children an excellent start in education so that they have a better foundation for future learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Foundation Stage Curriculum • Literacy and Numeracy strategies • Enriched National Curriculum for primary school children
2 Enable all young people to develop and to equip themselves with the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed for life and work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national strategy to improve standards of performance at Key Stage 3 • A reformed school curriculum incorporating citizenship • A new flexible 14-16 curriculum • More coherent provision for 16-19 • Creating a wider range of opportunities for young people by increasing vocational options, including vocational GCSEs.
3 Encourage and enable adults to learn, improve their skills and enrich their lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive workforce development strategy • World class occupational standards and qualifications • High calibre qualifications to support increased participation in HE

4 DfES and QCA both carry out their roles in a world of new and evolving challenges. Some of the key areas are:

Economic

- the need to respond to changes in the skills required for individual and national success in global markets;
- the potential to exploit the developing international market for educational products, and to assess and respond to ideas and products developed elsewhere;
- the place of national qualifications in an increasingly international skills market, and in the light of moves towards harmonisation in the EU;
- the potential threat of multinational employers favouring their own in-house qualifications;

Social

- responding to demographic changes;
- facilitating Ministerial commitment to greater equality of opportunity and fairness in society through better and more accessible learning;
- meeting different customer expectations in a 'consumer age' in which individuals are increasingly knowledgeable and powerful;

The potential of ICT

- harnessing the opportunities provided by ICT;
- ensuring use of ICT does not create new barriers to learning for some customers;
- the implications if software providers were to develop learning packages with rival curricula and qualifications.



Chapter 5: Options appraisal

- 1 As required of any quinquennial review, we considered the following main options:
 - abolition;
 - continued NDPB status;
 - strategic contracting out or market test;
 - merger or rationalisation; and
 - privatisation.

ABOLITION

- 2 We distinguished two separate questions: whether QCA's functions need to be provided at all; and, if so, whether QCA is the best vehicle to deliver them.
- 3 In answering the first of our questions, there was a general consensus that if QCA were to be abolished, there would still be a need for a regulator of the qualifications system and a source of expert advice on the curriculum to inform national policy making. These functions are essential to the Government's objectives for raising standards of education and skills. The firmest views concerned QCA's regulatory functions. It was argued persuasively that public confidence in the external

qualifications system requires an independent regulator, free from political interference and market pressures. *We therefore recommend (1) that there is a continuing need for the main functions performed by QCA.*

- 4 In answer to our second question, some stakeholders did raise and discuss alternative arrangements for some of the functions performed by QCA. These were: publications (discussed later in this chapter, under "Contracting out"); the accreditation of qualifications; and the delivery of national tests (both of which are discussed in chapter 7). However, most commentators said that QCA is doing a good job. There was widespread support for our general *recommendation (2) that QCA should continue to exist, being an effective organisation for the discharge of its main functions.*
- 5 We also tested whether it is right that QCA should embrace both qualifications and the curriculum, and general and vocational learning. The former was welcomed

almost universally, and many commented on the improvements in ensuring that qualifications are a fair method of assessing and recording progress through the curriculum. There were doubts in some quarters as to whether the link between general and vocational learning has been so successful and this is discussed at chapter 7. However, the government's recent 14-19 Green Paper proposed a new flexible curriculum for 14-16 year olds to give young people access to a range of general, mixed and vocational options with clear progression routes. This will mean more young people learning vocational skills alongside general qualifications, and it was felt essential that a single body should oversee both modes of learning at this stage. No one suggested separating off vocational learning according to the age of the learner, and we discount that. *We therefore recommend (3) that QCA should continue to be responsible for both qualifications and the curriculum, and for general and vocational learning.*

CONTINUED NDPB STATUS

6 Having established the importance of its responsibilities for qualifications and the curriculum, and that (certainly in the main) QCA should continue to perform them, we considered whether NDPB (Non Departmental Public Body) status is the right model. There was a strong consensus that this 'arm's length' association with government allows QCA:

- to be seen as distanced from government, because it is under the immediate authority of an independent and well respected Board; but also
- to have the ear of Ministers;
- to consult effectively, NDPB grants a status which should mean that stakeholders and lobby groups can feel confident in making their views known;
- to have the capacity and standing to consider issues and develop ideas authoritatively. Being an NDPB should mean that an organisation is sufficiently well resourced, able to attract high calibre people, and able to perform its functions without being too driven by short term considerations.

7 Almost without exception everyone argued that NDPB status is essential to QCA's role in regulating the qualifications system. If this were to be done by either government itself or a private sector body, then their motives would be questioned. Any such system would be open to allegations that standards are being allowed (or even manipulated) to drop, whether or not that were the case. Independent quality assurance of the process of awarding qualifications is also seen as central to the maintenance of standards over time and across different awarding bodies.

8 There are similar advantages in curriculum advice to government being located in an NDPB. QCA's role here was seen as an important guarantor against a politicised curriculum, and their involvement means that much sensible change can be progressed without suspicions that there is

an underlying political motive. However, it was recognised that the curriculum is in many ways a less technical area than the regulation of qualifications and therefore a broader range of people will have opinions that deserve respect. For example, students, parents, the general public and the media are likely to have strong views as to whether the curriculum should cover world history and religious studies, and what aspects these should cover. Thus, it is entirely right that Ministers (on behalf of the public) should take key decisions on the broad content and shape of the curriculum.

- 9 Another reason why QCA has a less clear-cut role in relation to the curriculum is that it cannot be designed and operated as a free standing entity, because it is shaped very much by how it is delivered. This means that government must take advice from a broad range of other sources besides QCA, not least Ofsted, the General Teaching Council, the Learning and Skills Council, and (especially for vocational learning and to ensure that skills requirements are met) the new Sector Skills Councils.
- 10 These are complex areas but our *recommendation (4) is that NDPB status is the right model for QCA.*

- 11 There is then a subsidiary question, which is whether QCA (and the Department) have got the balance right in the way that they exercise this role. The Baker report on International Standards² considered that QCA should be more robust in providing independent advice to government. This is a very difficult area: no-one wants to stifle creative debate, but Ministers need to be able to seek QCA's advice on a confidential basis about issues which they are mulling over. Ministers should, and do, have the final word on policy, but it is QCA's role to work through the technical, practical and timing implications. Unless QCA is authoritative and assertive the standards and delivery agendas will be at risk. We believe that there is scope to enhance the balance, and that our recommendations 26 and 27 at chapter 7 for a memorandum of understanding and the greater use of project management will both clarify and strengthen QCA's contribution to debate.

STRATEGIC CONTRACTING OUT OR MARKET TEST

- 12 QCA contracts out a significant amount of its work. In 2001-02, QCA's overall expenditure was £85.6m, of which £57.5 m (67%) was contracted out to external suppliers. Much of the work relating to the development and administration of the

² Maintaining GCE A level Standards: Findings of an independent panel of experts; Jan 2002

statutory national curriculum tests, non-statutory tests for key and basic skills, the foundation stage, Key Stage 3 ICT tests and world-class tests, is contracted out. In the financial year 2001-02, contracts included the external marking of the statutory national curriculum tests (£21.4m), the development of national curriculum tests (£3.7m), and the printing and distribution of national tests (£4.4m). Overall, contracts relating to national tests amounted to £29.5m (34% of QCA's overall expenditure in 2001-02). Contractors included awarding bodies and specialists in practical aspects of testing e.g. developing tests to cater for those with special needs, distribution and data input. Much of QCA's publications work (such as printing and distributing) is also contracted out.

13 In addition, QCA contracts out work of much smaller financial value to external consultants to develop particular areas of work (for example, to provide expert advice on an issue, or draft a publication) and the value of these contracts will typically vary from £200 upwards. Currently, QCA has over 1000 external consultants on its books and each consultant is commissioned an average of 4-5 times per year with each contract costing an average £1500 - £2000 each. In 2001-02, QCA spent approximately £7m on such contracts with external consultants.

14 Over the last two years, QCA has standardised the format of its contracts and trained staff to write watertight contract specifications. In 2002, QCA will be

building on this work by developing a database of consultants. However, the cost of issuing such a large number of contracts is resource intensive and could potentially be reduced if QCA were to adopt a more strategic approach. *We therefore recommend (5) that QCA should review the way it commissions and manages contract work.*

Mathematics Tests

15 Uniquely, the mathematics tests are developed by an in-house team. The explanation is that a value-for-money study in April 1998 concluded that this would be more cost effective, not least because there were insufficient potential contractors. However, at chapter 7 we discuss the risks and downsides of QCA being involved in the contract management of tests, and these are even greater where QCA undertakes the delivery itself. Our understanding is that, in part as a result of nurturing by QCA, the capacity of the supply side has improved. *We therefore recommend (6) that the decision not to outsource mathematics be reviewed, and that even if the conclusion is that the time is still not ripe for change, QCA should develop a strategy by which to grow an external capability.*

Publications

16 QCA has a wholly owned subsidiary, QCA Enterprises Limited (QCAE). It is a company limited by guarantee and is solely a legal vehicle (employing no staff and owning no assets) that allows QCA to

trade and receive income from selling publications. It also generates income from licences for the National Database of Vocational Qualifications. Schools, LEAs and teacher training colleges are entitled to one free copy of most publications and a 50% discount on subsequent copies. In 2001-02, QCAE achieved total sales of £4.7m; a 5-fold increase on turnover on 1998. This resulted in a contribution to QCA of £2.9m (including £175,000 from licensing QCA intellectual property). This is equivalent to 5% of the Authority's Grant-in-Aid.

17 QCA has a statutory obligation to publish and disseminate information relating to the curriculum, qualifications and accreditation. We considered the following questions:

- Does QCA need a publishing arm or could other commercial organisations be more effective? Does QCA produce publications that go beyond its remit?
- Are they valued by teachers? What should be the balance between free and priced publications?
- Is it right that QCAE should generate substantial net income (£2.9m in 2001-02), given that its customers are (government funded) learning providers and students?
- Is the financial health of QCAE such that there is potential for a successful market test of publication activity?

(Financial information on QCAE is at annex I.)

18 Our conclusion is that it is part of QCA's remit to publish advice and guidance, and it is right that it should do so. We were also impressed by their website and this was commented upon favourably by teachers in particular. There is a wealth of expertise within QCA, which deserves to be disseminated, and there are interpretations and guidance, which teachers and learners want to hear from the Authority itself. However, we believe that QCA should restrict its publications to these areas. The tests for any publication which QCA produces should be: does it relate to QCA's objectives; is it necessary to produce an authoritative text, or would it be appropriate for others to publish it; if QCA did not produce it, would no-one else publish it; and would that matter? There is a very healthy and growing commercial market, producing high quality and trustworthy education material, and QCA should not be in competition with that.

19 We were also persuaded by those who argued that QCA should not sell its own publications at prices greater than is needed to cover its costs. (This would include the costs associated with its policy of free publications, of which we approve, and of full overheads - we were unable to establish whether these were covered in

the figures given to us by QCA.) However, QCA should be free to charge a commercial rate for material it decides not to publish itself, but makes available to others to do so. *We recommend (7) that QCA should only publish material itself which meets the tests which we have proposed; restricts its own prices to cost recovery; and makes other material available to other publishers at a fair but commercial rate.* In doing this, it will be important to examine the implications for QCA's Grant in Aid of not receiving a contribution from QCAE.

MERGER OR RATIONALISATION

- 20 We considered the potential for a full or partial merger between QCA and the other main government body with responsibility for oversight of educational standards, Ofsted. This would create a 'super-watchdog' responsible for all aspects of the guardianship of standards - as described in the curriculum; as delivered by schools and colleges; and as measured in tests and examinations.
- 21 There was little support for such a merger and we *recommend (8) that Ofsted and QCA should continue to operate as separate bodies carrying out their separate roles.* We did, however, find some uncertainty around the demarcation between the roles of the two bodies and these should be addressed to ensure that they work together effectively.

- 22 In the vocational sector, we considered whether the recent creation of the Sector Skills Councils will allow some rationalisation and this issue is discussed at Chapter 7 paragraphs 9-13.

PRIVATISATION

- 23 As discussed above QCA already contracts out much of its work. There may be scope to contract out the testing of mathematics and we have examined the case for privatising some of QCA's activity in publications. Beyond this we do not consider there to be any other significant areas that are candidates for privatisation. The view that QCA's functions should be the responsibility of the public sector is widely held. Privatisation of QCA's core functions would run the risk of undermining public confidence in the integrity of the qualifications system and curriculum development.





Chapter 6: Performance review - general

ACHIEVEMENTS

- 1 Annex J sets out QCA's main achievements over the 5 years since its inception. It is a long list and very commendable. Many of these developments have made a real and significant contribution to the way that people in this country learn. As such they have enhanced lives and strengthened the economy. Given our conclusion in the previous chapter under "Options Appraisal", that QCA is the right vehicle to discharge the functions it has been given, it follows that we believe that many of these achievements would never have happened, or less effectively, had QCA not been involved.
- 2 It is difficult to pick out individual examples, because so many have a particular importance, or had to be pushed through in difficult circumstances. We do recommend that readers turn to, and at least glance through, the annex. However, those which we would highlight are:

Curriculum

- developed the foundation stage curriculum;
- reviewed the national curriculum;
- substantially influenced the Government's current green paper 14-19: Extending opportunities, raising standards;

External Qualifications

- set up and maintained a national qualifications framework;
- completed the accreditation of A levels and vocational A levels;
- revised the criteria for GCSE qualifications;
- developed new qualifications to meet employers' and students' needs, including Vocational GCSEs and Technical Certificates for Modern Apprenticeships;
- developed new standards for literacy and numeracy;

National Assessment

- produced and delivered to schools all national tests for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 on time;
- led the development of World-Class Tests;

Quality Audit

- completed a review of the general qualifications operations of the three unitary awarding bodies.

3 It is against the history of these achievements that we turn to examine QCA's performance, and to assess whether there is scope for the organisation to improve as it moves forward to tackle new issues.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

4 QCA is a statutory body and prepares its accounts in accordance with the Education Act 1997 and the directions made by the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment. The QCA group consists of the Authority and a wholly owned subsidiary QCA Enterprises Limited (QCAE), which generates income from the sale of educational materials and licenses for the National Database of Vocational Qualifications.

5 QCA's main source of income is from the Department for Education and Skills in the form of Grant in Aid (2001-02: £72.9m). Other sources are: from the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (2001-02: £0.5m); from the Department of Higher and Further

Education Training and Employment Northern Ireland (2001-02: £0.3m); charges for NVQ certification (2001-02: £6.5m); income generated by QCAE (2001-02: £2.9m); CCEA (2001-02: £0.1m) and other (2001-02: £2.4m).

6 QCA's main expenditure streams are: programmes (2001-02: £56.6m); staff costs (2001-02: £17m); main premises rental (2001: £2.2m); other accommodation costs (2001-02: £3.1m); supplies and services (2001-02: £4.8m); and agency staff costs (2001-02: £1.9m).

7 The relative deployment of QCA's budgets against its business functions is as follows (2001-02):

Function	Budget (£m)
Curriculum	£8.6m
External Qualifications	£22.6m
National Assessment	£47.6m
Quality Audit	£6.7m

Further information on QCA's business functions, goals and objectives is given in Chapter 3 paragraphs 7 - 9 and annex G.

8 The deployment of budget against objectives is agreed with the DfES sponsoring team as part of the business planning process. Around 75-80% of the work is agreed up front and forms 'core funding'; the remaining 20-25% is for new work in response to changing priorities and requests from ministers. QCA provides DfES with a monthly report showing budget versus actual expenditure, and the sponsor team monitors variance on a monthly basis.

QCA budget versus actual expenditure		£ 000	
	Budget*	Actual	Variance
1997/98	40,000	32,000	8,000
1998/9	59,300	59,400	100
1999/2000	65,800	66,000	-200
2000/01	68,700	69,000	-300
2001-02 (Provisional)	85,600	85,600	

All figures provided by QCA

9 Apart from the first year, QCA’s budget management has been satisfactory (see table above) and its finance team has recently been strengthened. The policy driven nature of the work, and the need to respond to political and public concerns, means that planning is difficult and some fluctuations are inevitable. Our *recommendation (9) is to endorse QCA’s increasing use of project management*, which will be of some help in anticipating and scheduling costs. This also links to recommendations elsewhere in the report that greater use of programme management will enable QCA to be more precise when it gives advice about the feasibility of timescales, and in clarifying its role vis-à-vis DfES.

SERVICE TO STAKEHOLDERS

10 QCA works with, and for, many different organisations and so has a very wide and complex range of stakeholder relationships. Some stakeholders are ‘end users’ of QCA products - their education,

learning, working practices or business is affected by what QCA does. Others are ‘customers’ who utilise, or rely on QCA outputs. Still others are ‘delivery partners’, including government, and a large network of delivery agents. Some organisations have relationships with QCA that straddle all these categories. A summary of this stakeholder network is described in annex K.

11 QCA has carried out its own survey to check stakeholder satisfaction with their service and report that the results have been positive. It reviewed its liaison with partners in 1999 and 2001, and evaluated the usefulness and effectiveness of its communication with key stakeholders. Where weaknesses were identified, QCA has instigated a programme of improvement to strengthen communication and feedback. However, a significant number of people we heard from said how pleased they were to be consulted as part of the Quinquennial Review because they felt that QCA is not very interested in their opinion. Perhaps the explanation is that

our review was an opportunity to explore in more depth how customers feel about QCA as an organisation. A more pertinent point is that QCA is a regulator, and it is quite likely that some of the regulated were biased and unduly negative in what they said to us. Nonetheless *we recommend (10) that QCA should seek feedback from stakeholders on a more probing and regular basis.*

- 12 Each stakeholder group tended to raise points relevant to its own particular interests and these are summarised in paragraphs 13-17. However, there were two general points.
- There was a recurring view that QCA is not always an easy organisation to communicate with, because it is unclear how its different functions fit together, and how it relates to other organisations. Those who had looked at them did not find QCA's statement of its aims and objectives sufficiently clear, and indeed we adopted our own categorisation (chapter 3, paragraph 8). Several commentators said they were unclear about individual and team roles within QCA. They asked for more transparency about who does what, and who they need to contact for different purposes. Such comments are typically made of any large and complex organisation, but they deserve to be taken seriously nonetheless. *We recommend (11) that at stage 2 of this review steps are put in place to set out more clearly what it is that QCA does and to make it easier for outsiders to*

communicate with the right people.

- A significant range of people regard QCA as conservative. We think that this is not necessarily a bad thing, and it was typically said in the same breath as tributes to QCA's professionalism. QCA describes itself as "guardian of standards" and its job is to regulate for consistency. The scale of, and lead times for, qualifications are such that any changes need very careful assessment and planning. Changes to the curriculum are always sensitive, and practitioners invariably argued for a period of stability. It was those commentators, who acknowledged all this and still took issue with QCA's "conservatism", of whom we took most note. Their concerns focussed on a reported reluctance by QCA to explore new ideas, and to consider criticism or suggestions regarding their own procedures. *We recommend (12) that at stage 2 of the review consideration be given to whether QCA can be encouraged to become more responsive to new ideas, without undermining its role as "guardian of standards" and regulator.*

Learners, teachers, and educational institutions

- 13 QCA consults regularly with teachers and their representatives, and provides information, particularly on the curriculum and good practice, which is well regarded. However, there were concerns that QCA does not do enough to join up its various experts and the intelligence which they accrue from their consultations. Some

consultees said that a weakness of this silo approach is that QCA develops policies which are right for particular groups of learners at particular stages, but fails to take sufficient account of how the whole package fits together, which is essential for lifelong learning.

- 14 Teachers said that whilst QCA's guidance is useful, there is sometimes insufficient understanding of current teaching issues, or the needs of the diverse range of pupils. People in Further Education said there was insufficient awareness of their sector, different learning styles, and the needs of people trying to combine learning with a job.

Business

- 15 Employers rely on the curriculum and qualifications system to produce a pool of potential recruits with the right skills for the jobs available. There was a widespread feeling that QCA is insufficiently aware of its own key role in this and do not engage sufficiently with employers to understand their needs. Some felt that QCA sometimes tends to focus on the minutiae of the qualifications system and so lose sight of its end purpose. These points are consistent with findings in the PIU report on workforce development³; they will be picked up again in the next chapter.

Other NDPBs and delivery partners e.g. Ofsted, LSC, LEAs

- 16 There was a general sense, both from outside organisations and from within QCA, that there is scope for closer working. This, of course, is a comment not just on QCA but also the other parties, and reflects that there has been a lot of recent change in structures and senior personnel, so that new relationships need to be formed. *We recommend (13) that QCA should seek to promote closer relationships with Ofsted, the Learning and Skills Council, and the (as yet very new) Sector Skills Councils and Sector Skills Development Agency.*

Universities who use qualifications as entry criteria

- 17 The university entrance system relies on qualifications to select students. Admissions Officers need to feel confidence in qualification standards, and the system needs to deliver accurate results on time. Universities were generally content that QCA meets these requirements, especially through the A-level system. Some people questioned whether Higher Education has too much influence in shaping the curriculum and qualifications, and whether there is anything QCA could do about this. We did not pursue these points.

³ In Demand: Adult Skills in the 21st century. Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office Dec 2001

A WIDER ROLE FOR QCA?

18 A number of people argued that there is a case for QCA to adopt a more strategic role and higher profile in a number of areas. The first was raised in the Baker report⁴ and replayed to us from several quarters. This is that debates about the maintenance of standards are of such fundamental importance that QCA needs to develop an even greater understanding and authority. We note that Baker found no evidence that standards have dropped, but it was put to us that QCA should do more to benchmark against international standards. Another suggestion was that there should be a visible, independent group responsible for the maintenance of standards. QCA might convene this and it should bring together the various bodies that have responsibility for different aspects of standards: notably Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate, but also others. *Our recommendation (14) is that QCA strengthens its capacity for intelligence gathering as respects standards, and then adopts a more visible and authoritative public stance.*

19 There were differing views about QCA's visibility and role in promoting messages about the curriculum and qualifications. There was no doubt that at the level of detail — explanation about interpretation and application of the curriculum, or the rules regarding examinations — QCA is very effective. It is recognised as the authoritative body and provides clear material that is used by practitioners. But at a more strategic level, QCA does not

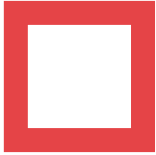
consider itself to have a role in promoting the value of learning (encouraging more people to strive for qualifications), or the concept of parity of esteem between general and vocational qualifications. *Our recommendation (15) is that, given its prowess and high standing amongst some of its stakeholders, QCA could, and should, do more in this area. We judge that this would not impede QCA's political neutrality.*

20 Some commentators said that QCA should do more future scenario planning e.g. what will today's 5 - 10 year olds need to know in 2020 and how will they learn it? Similarly there were some suggestions that QCA is not doing enough to exploit developments in ICT, and to address the social and economic issues set out in this report at chapter 4. In fact we did meet people in QCA who are thinking about such issues. Whether the organisation needs to do more, we leave as an open question, although there is a link to our recommendation 32 at chapter 7 regarding the Board.

21 Finally, we *recommend (16) that QCA should strengthen its press office.* This relates both to our proposals that QCA should adopt a wider role, and to its dealing with issues more generally. There is considerable public and media interest in education, and it is important that when stories break which relate to the curriculum or qualifications, QCA's interventions are timely, considered and authoritative.



⁴ Maintaining GCE A level Standards: Findings of an independent panel of experts; Jan 2002



Chapter 7: Key Issues

1 In this chapter we concentrate on the five issues which emerged as those of most importance:

- Working with the awarding bodies
- Managing the systems for vocational qualifications
- National tests
- Relationship with DfES
- Making the most of QCA's people

2 These all straddle both prior options considerations and performance review. Ultimately there is a common theme: the need to define the focus of QCA.

WORKING WITH THE AWARDING BODIES

3 There are three unitary awarding bodies in England offering both general and vocational qualifications, and around 100 offering vocational qualifications. Some of these awarding bodies operate across the UK. It is essential to the skills base, and to social inclusion, that the qualifications these bodies award are accredited into a

consistent framework, and that there is articulation between different types of awards from different bodies. A consistent framework means that individuals can accumulate different qualifications as their priorities and interests change, and that the 'currency' of what they have achieved is recognised. Ensuring that quality and fairness are maintained within these systems is important both for individuals and for 'UK plc'.

4 This country's general qualifications system is hugely successful, and highly regarded internationally. For this QCA must take much of the credit, along with its predecessors and the awarding bodies themselves. The total number of qualifications achieved by learners is some 8 million each year, and although there have (always) been some mistakes in the way examinations have been administered, and these increasingly attract publicity, the percentage is miniscule. Again QCA deserves praise, first for ensuring that the system is so robust, and second for acting effectively when there has been a failure.

- 5 However, a number of stakeholders argued that QCA's role should be modified so as to make the system even more robust. We did note that when problems occurred last year with one awarding body QCA took decisive action, and the government has sought new powers in the current Education Bill to give QCA even more capability in any future similar circumstances. There remains, though, a question as to whether QCA's efforts could be deployed more effectively in normal circumstances. Accreditation is a two-stage process: part A involves QCA assessing the capability of the awarding body, and at part B they look at the details of individual qualifications. A number of people asked: could, and should, QCA concentrate more on part A - assessing the capability of the awarding bodies?
- 6 On this question hangs a dilemma. When things have gone wrong, or when there is a risk that they could do so, the natural instinct is to get a tried and trusted organisation (in this case QCA) to become ever closer involved in every detail. Certainly we agree that QCA needs to be able to do that in extremis, and that the government was right to seek such powers in the current Bill. However, a comparison was made with the way in which in the 1970s vehicles were inspected as they came off the production line, but now car manufacturers have turned to quality assurance of the process. There is a danger that the more QCA becomes involved in signing off qualifications, the greater will be the tendency for some awarding bodies to ignore sorting out the detail for themselves. QCA might also become insufficiently distanced to 'see the wood for the trees' and it will become harder for them to criticise the final product.
- 7 Our sense is that it would be wrong to impose a single 'one size fits all' model. Particularly in the vocational area, there are currently some very small awarding bodies. They are not responsible for a sufficient number of qualifications to develop their capability, and with small teams they are vulnerable to losing their expertise through staff turnover. By contrast though, there are other organisations which it might well be possible to assess as worthy of a licence and then trust them to take full responsibility for all aspects of the qualification process. The threat of course is that should they fail, they lose the licence, and we would expect QCA to do some monitoring. We believe that such an approach would enhance the performance of the better awarding bodies, and allow QCA to focus its attention on those which merit least confidence. It might also allow a reduction in the number of vocational awarding bodies, because licensed awarding bodies would be expected to have the capability to respond to different specifications from different sectors. We therefore *recommend (17) that QCA and the DfES appraise the scope for greater quality assurance of awarding bodies and less involvement in the detail of individual qualifications.* Given the accreditation arrangements currently in place with Wales and Northern Ireland, DfES and QCA will need to consult with the devolved administrations and their regulatory bodies.

- 8 In regulating the awarding bodies, QCA needs to work with other regulatory bodies across the UK. We were encouraged to *recommend (18) that the common approach to conducting audits with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) should be resurrected*. Otherwise there is potential for duplication of effort and inconsistencies.

MANAGING THE SYSTEMS FOR VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- 9 The above discussion applies to all qualifications. In addition, there is a particular set of issues around QCA's role in relation to vocational qualifications. It was in this area that we encountered the most criticism of QCA. The following reports the main points made to us.
- The process for accrediting vocational qualifications is insufficiently responsive to the needs of industry. Some very significant employers (who are generally regarded as progressive in many ways) have withdrawn from the QCA framework of qualifications because they say it does not allow them to develop their staff in the best way. We were given an example in which an employer body identified the need for a qualification based on technical knowledge but also covering management, ICT, marketing and

customer care. It was said that QCA insisted that this was against its rules, rather than acknowledging the need and re-assessing its rules.

- The process is too protracted. It was described to us as: (a) in consultation with employer bodies, a National Training Organisation (NTO), or in future a Sector Skills Council (SSC) identifies a skills need and a requirement for a qualification; (b) the NTO/SSC makes a bid for funding to QCA (through the Projects and Standards Approval Group, PSAG); (c) an occupational standard is developed; and (d) this is checked by QCA (not from the employer perspective, but purely from its potential for qualification purposes); who then (e) pass it on to an awarding body; who (f) work up the qualification and return it to QCA for accreditation. The average time between the submission for funding and approval of a National Occupational Standard (stages b-d) is 18 months, of which approval takes between 4 and 12 weeks. QCA say that accreditation of NVQs (stage f) takes an average of 22 weeks, which is within the timescales to which Ministers gave a commitment during the passage of the Learning and Skills Act. However, one major awarding body had recorded the average time as 11 months.
- QCA was felt to have insufficient direct engagement with, and understanding

of, employers. It was said that they place more emphasis on general than vocational qualifications, and that they recruit most of their experts on crosscutting issues from schools backgrounds, rather than from Further Education and employers.

- Although QCA are credited with reducing the number from around 180, there is no evident rationale for why there are currently 98 vocational awarding bodies. (A further 49 are awaiting accreditation.) Some commentators argued that the programme of rationalisation should have achieved more, in a shorter time.

10 In reporting these criticisms we do not necessarily accept them all, and we acknowledge that it is not always in QCA's gift to do things differently. As with so many of the areas covered by this report, we detected tensions in what people want of QCA. It is expected to produce robust qualifications which carry esteem and are administered dependably, but that sits uncomfortably with pleas for more speed and responsiveness. Often the delay in accrediting qualifications, particularly on the vocational side, is because what the awarding body developed is unacceptable, and QCA has to help them work through the issues. Employers can be quick to criticise but less ready to be actively involved, so the charge that QCA has insufficient contact with them cuts both ways. As to the number of vocational awarding bodies, it can be argued that this reflects the diversity of the economy and

skill needs, and pending the present Bill, QCA have not had the statutory powers to impose any change.

11 However, the criticism of the system of vocational qualifications was of such weight that it cannot be dismissed. It also echoes what has previously been reported in the PIU study of Workforce Development,⁵ and the Hillier review of Occupational Standards⁶. Put at its simplest, the critics were saying that all is not right in the vocational arena and it is QCA's job to address this. They also argued that this is exactly where an NDPB should come into its own, being able to stand above the constant political and media obsession with schools and academic qualifications, make an independent assessment of what is needed, and present the case to government for change where it is needed. The recent creation of the Sector Skills development Agency (SSDA) and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) is a timely opportunity to consider change. Taking all this into account, *we recommend (19) that QCA should, with DfES, a) appraise its own capacity and role as respects vocational qualifications; and b) review the systems and make recommendations for change.*

12 A number of different models were put to us. It was beyond our remit (and beyond our capability in the time available) to take a view on their relative merits. However, everyone with whom we spoke about vocational qualifications said that the

⁵ In Demand: Adult Skills in the 21st century. Performance and Innovation Unit, Cabinet Office Dec 2001

⁶ UK National Occupational Standards Report of the Independent Review September 2001

SSDA and SSCs should play a much bigger role than the National Training Organisations. Several commentators suggested there should be a clearer separation of roles, with an SSC being solely responsible for determining the case for, and scope of, qualifications in its sector, and that the SSC should commission an awarding body to develop the qualification on its behalf. QCA's role would be to concentrate on quality assuring the capability of the awarding bodies. However, there are a number of issues which would need to be worked through, not least the arrangements for vocational areas not covered by an SSC, and how to ensure a consistent framework. Also, the SSCs are very new and need time to become established. We therefore *recommend (20) that DfES should lead an assessment, involving QCA and the Sector Skills Development Agency, of whether there would be benefits in changing the strategic arrangements for agreeing vocational qualifications in light of the creation of SSCs.*

- 13 Finally under this section, some particular issues were raised as respects QCA's interactions with the devolved administrations. Applications for SVQs are made separately from applications for NVQs, and the assessment of occupational standards is undertaken in

parallel by SQA and QCA with insufficient sharing of management information. We understand that a shared project management database has been launched to rectify this second point, but we *recommend (21) that QCA should assess the need for closer working with each of the devolved administrations, not least for the benefit of external stakeholders.*

TESTS

- 14 We considered whether QCA's role in respect of the national tests, and for basic and key skills tests, is the right one. For external qualifications such as GCSEs, A Levels and vocational awards, QCA's role is essentially to regulate and quality assure the awarding bodies. For the tests QCA is directly responsible for both development and delivery — there is no independent third party assessing quality. Some people asked why, if for other qualifications the government needs to be two removed in order to avoid the charge that it might be manipulating the standards, the same is not true for the tests? The very recent Durham review⁷ has questioned whether test standards have changed, and QCA needs to be able to respond to this with the authority of independence. Others argued that national tests are different and therefore can, and should, be administered

⁷ An update on research contained in: "Standards, achievement and educational performance: a cause for celebration?" by Peter Tymms and Carol Fitzgibbon in *Education Reform and the State. Twenty-five years of politics, policy and practice*; edited by Robert Phillips and John Furlong; Routledge Falmer; London; 2001

differently. They are not used by the student to gain entry to HE or jobs, but only to measure interim progress, and are intended to measure a school's performance as much as the pupil.

- 15 Making sure that the tests run smoothly is hugely demanding and very important. There is a very high risk in having to deliver such a large volume of tests to such tight timetables, and three years ago there was nearly a serious failure. QCA therefore has to put a significant amount of time and energy into ensuring that the process is entirely dependable and performs. With the exception of mathematics, the national tests are contracted out, but this would not absolve QCA from responsibility for any failure on the part of its contractors. Indeed it is quite possible that in such a case the contractor would allege that shortcuts were a result of QCA not paying enough.
- 16 There is an argument that if the current system works, why change it? Since the reliability of the tests is so important, is it wise to divest responsibility from the centre?
- 17 At this point it is important to be clear as to what advocates for change are suggesting. They do not propose that QCA sheds all responsibility for the tests, only for their delivery. QCA would retain its regulatory and quality assurance role, and continue to set and monitor the standards, and to analyse the implications of pupils' responses. This model is parallel with that for general qualifications and the awarding bodies, except that (as now) there would

only be one standard test for each subject at each level. Whether this would be delivered by just one organisation or a number is open to debate, but there are advantages in using several — foremost, the capacity to turn elsewhere if the performance of one organisation is suspect.

- 18 Our conclusion is that there are three reasons why a change to something like this model should be considered. First, we believe in the concept of regulation: having a body that can step back, take an independent view from those involved in day-to-day delivery, and strengthen the process through scrutiny and challenge. Second, there is the risk that if there were to be a failure, QCA's reputation would be damaged, and this would diminish its authority and effectiveness in other areas as well as the tests. Both these arguments point towards a clearer demarcation of roles.
- 19 The third reason for change links with the more general findings of this review. In summary, QCA has a huge agenda over the next five years: they have to work closely with the Department to improve our education system; alongside this they have to act as regulator, which is very demanding and attracts close scrutiny by the public and media; and we have been persuaded that QCA needs to take a more vigorous approach to vocational issues. In order to be successful on all these fronts, we believe that QCA needs to change organisationally: we have gleaned that QCA is a highly professional organisation but conservative; and that its role is not always clear and needs to be clarified.

20 In chapter 3 we described QCA as having three main functions:

- advising ministers on qualifications, curriculum, and assessment;
- regulating the quality of qualifications and standards; and
- delivering the tests.

In our view, the first two of these are QCA's core business. In our assessment of prior options it was these which almost everyone said must not be abolished and should continue to be performed uniquely by QCA. The same is not true of the third. Given the enormity of QCA's agenda and the ways in which it needs to change, we consider that QCA should not be distracted from its main focus on policy advice and regulation. The delivery of the national tests is outwith QCA's core business, takes a disproportionate amount of corporate energy, and there are alternatives.

21 Any change regarding the national tests will need very careful assessment and preparation.

- The planning and delivery of each test takes 14 months so any decision this year could not be implemented before 2004, and it might be best effected in stages over a period of years.
- The transfer of delivery functions away from QCA can only happen if there are other organisations capable of taking it

on. One of the reasons why QCA originally undertook to deliver the tests itself was because at that time there was no alternative. However, in contracting out they have a policy of "growing" the market's capability. As well as the organisations with whom QCA currently subcontract, some of the awarding bodies have signalled an interest, and there are some big private sector service providers involved in other areas of education.

- Arrangements would need to be agreed for covering the cost of the tests. At present schools get the tests for free and, unlike for public examinations, the costs are handled centrally through QCA. We believe it would be disproportionately burdensome to devolve the tests budget to schools.

22 We therefore *recommend (22) that QCA should provide advice to DfES on how our three areas of concern can best be addressed*. This should be completed by the end of the year, which will allow QCA's new Chief Executive to be fully involved. As part of this, our *recommendation (23) is that QCA should assess the feasibility (and risks) of divesting its direct responsibilities for the assembly of national test papers, their issue and collection, and arranging external marking (for KS 2 and 3.)* Finally, in this set of *linked recommendations (24), when the Department has QCA's advice and feasibility assessment, it should*

decide whether there should be changes in responsibility for delivery of the national tests. If the decision is to go ahead, 2005 would be a realistic target for implementing change.

- 23 In parallel with this, we *recommend (25) that there should be a feasibility assessment and then planning for transfer of the delivery of tests for key and basic skills. Given that these are as yet lesser in scale and still developing, we see advantage in this work proceeding with a view to commencement by 2004.*

RELATIONSHIP WITH DfES

- 24 DfES is not the only government department whose work interfaces with QCA — for instance DCMS, MoD, and DoH — and there is scope to strengthen the relationship with DTI. However, DfES is the most significant; it is to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills that QCA reports: and DfES is its paymaster, with a sponsoring team to monitor QCA's performance (and to report to the DfES accounting officer).
- 25 QCA's formal relationship with DfES is codified in five key documents: the Education Act 1997, QCA's remit letter, financial memorandum, corporate plan and business plan. The corporate plan sets out QCA's objectives over a three-year period and the business plan details programmes of work and resource implications for the year ahead. These plans are submitted to, and approved by, the Secretary of State each year. Both QCA and the DfES

sponsoring team considered these arrangements to work well. We were told that the business planning process has improved in recent years.

- 26 However, we identified a number of concerns about the relationship between DfES and QCA that suggests the two organisations are not working as well together as might be expected. A broad range of stakeholders and commentators said that they did not fully understand the respective roles of DfES and QCA, and who is responsible for what. Outsiders said that because they could not identify the key people, they could not input their own points of view. This appears to be a particular problem in respect of curriculum development projects, where the DfES has opted to lead on some initiatives, but asked QCA to take on others. The citizenship curriculum, key skills support programme and the literacy and numeracy strategies are examples of projects run in-house by DfES; the review of the national curriculum in 1999⁸ was led by QCA. On the plus side, we were told that this last example had worked very successfully, with good clarity about roles, and it might serve as a model.
- 27 As we unpicked each of these stories, we came to understand why the decision in some cases was that DfES should lead, and in others it should be QCA. Certainly the Department cannot leave all qualifications and curriculum issues to QCA because it needs to:

⁸ Developing the School Curriculum, QCA, May 1999

- advise ministers on strategy and on those issues which the Department itself is leading or playing a significant part;
- draft replies for the considerable volume of letters and parliamentary questions directed to ministers on qualifications and curriculum issues;
- make and consider links with other policies and developments;
- handle issues which are either outside QCA's remit or upon which it has been decided that the Department should lead: e.g. pilots to test the scope for increased flexibility, progress file, the citizenship agenda;
- run delivery programmes; e.g. Key Stage 3 and key skills.
- co-ordinate inputs from other advisory bodies — for instance QCA's thinking on qualifications must be linked to pedagogy and delivery, so that the views of Ofsted, the TTA, the GTC and others must be collated and considered;
- and, very importantly, the Department does need an in-house capability if it is to be an intelligent customer of QCA's advice.

28 Outside these specific areas there will always need to be some pragmatism. However, we believe that there is scope for improvement at two levels.

- First, *we recommend (26) that the guiding principles should be set out in a memorandum of understanding approved by Ministers.* This might in effect replace and refresh the remit letters, the original of which was issued in 1997. Since then there have been both regular and specific supplementaries. Each of these has concerned new pieces of work or new government priorities and there is a need for some 'housekeeping'.
- Second, *we recommend (27) that project management procedures should be applied by both DfES and QCA to all substantial curriculum and qualifications issues.* The choice of Senior Responsible Officer will signal which organisation is in the lead, and there will be clarity about other roles and sequencing.

These recommendations are consistent with advice from the Cabinet Office Delivery Unit.

29 There are 120 DfES staff listed in divisions working on qualifications and curriculum issues (not counting the Standards and Effectiveness Unit) and some 600 in QCA. Managing the interface deserves close attention.

30 We were told that contact between QCA and Ministers is less than that of its predecessors and some comparable

NDPBs. They do engage when there are specific issues, but there is limited opportunity to build a sense of trust. One reason for this is that, because of the broad span of QCA's responsibilities, it needs to engage with most DfES ministers. *We recommend (28) that it might be useful to both parties if DfES were to nominate a single Minister for lead responsibility for the relationship with QCA; that there should be periodic meetings, normally involving the Chairman and Chief Executive; and that at least once a year the Minister should meet the whole Board.*

31 Finally under this section, there were some questions about the role of the sponsoring team. Given that it is only possible to identify 75-80% of QCA's work 'up front' at the start of the year, and not all work can be costed, some people questioned the effectiveness of planning and review. Others said that this demonstrates that QCA are rightly allowed to respond to changing requirements. Our view is that the accuracy of forecasting will improve as QCA introduce more project management. This will considerably assist the sponsoring team and allow them to take a more strategic view of QCA's plans, priorities and performance.

32 There were questions about why the sponsoring team is located within the Qualifications and Young People's group (and remote, at Sheffield) and what this says about curriculum. We were not convinced by these doubts. However, *we do recommend (29) that the level of data provided to, and the role of, the sponsoring team be part of the stage 2 review. We*

took note of recommendations from the Cabinet Office on the need for improved management of agencies across government. This ties with an objective set by DfES in its own "Supporting Better Delivery programme", to introduce measures so that DfES, NDPBs and providers can get the best from each other in their contractual or partnership arrangements. One suggestion which was put to us is that the Department should bring together the financial and performance management of all its NDPBs, possibly within Learning Delivery and Standards Group.

MAKING THE MOST OF QCA'S PEOPLE

33 There was widespread praise for the skills, expertise and commitment of QCA people at every level. Many commentators saw the review as an opportunity to suggest how these might be deployed more effectively.

34 As has been referred to already, it was commonly argued that there should be some analysis of the respective roles of people in QCA and DfES, and the respective numbers engaged in curriculum and qualification issues. Some of our consultees suggested that there is scope to further reduce divisions between different QCA functions, and for less "silo-working". This would contribute to more customer focussed outcomes, by making sure that proposals in one area of activity took account of what is happening in other areas. Some consultees said that there is

a need to strengthen the understanding and recognition of vocational issues, and to bring in more people with experience of FE and non-standard learning. Some suggested that recruiting people from employment would enhance the organisation's consultations with employers. We did not explore, and were undecided, whether being based in Central London is an asset or impediment to recruiting the right type of people, but we were not persuaded by the argument that this is essential because QCA works to a Whitehall department — there are too many examples to the contrary. Stage two of quinquennial reviews look at accommodation costs as part of their consideration of value for money and efficiency, but in doing so we *recommend (30) that stage two should also address the best location for QCA if it is to recruit and retain the right people for its needs.* We understand that the next formal review point in QCA's lease is 2008 but decisions will need to be taken well in advance.

- 35 Some consultees raised the issue of how to achieve optimum balance between continuity of expertise, and new ideas and recent delivery experience. We noted that some other education NDPBs seem to attract more people on fixed term contracts, who regard a spell of such working as a potential boost to their career. QCA could also be more proactive at

seeking out secondment opportunities, into and out of the Department, and with other organisations, e.g. Ofsted, which will have the added benefit of lubricating relationships between these bodies.

- 36 Some of the issues in the above 2 paragraphs are out with the scope of a stage one quinquennial review but we *recommend (31) that they be considered seriously at stage two and that the new Chief Executive shares her/his assessment and action plan with the Secretary of State by the end of this financial year.*
- 37 We also considered the Board, interviewing several members, and including ex-members. They come from three broad constituencies: educationalists; learning providers; and employers/outsiders. A repeated comment from outsiders was that they were impressed by the calibre of board members, but wondered whether better use might be made of their skills and experience. It was said that much of their time was spent in considering well argued and well presented papers on technical issues, to which they could add little value. A recent "strategy awayday" was cited as having been useful in drawing out more of their own opinions. Similarly, we were surprised to learn that (except very recently through its audit sub-committee) the Board does not periodically take stock of the human capacity of its workforce and review

whether this is matched to business needs:
this seems to have been left to the Chief
Executive. *We therefore recommend (32)*
that the Board consider its own role, taking
account of this review.

- 38 A number of the recommendations in this
report apply to, or have implications for,
qualifications in Scotland, Wales and
Northern Ireland. This applies particularly
to recommendations 14-15, and 17-21.
We recommend (33) that in addressing
these issues QCA and DfES should
consult the devolved administrations and
other regulatory authorities.





Chapter 8: Summary of Recommendations

- 1 There is a continuing need for the main functions performed by QCA.
 - 2 QCA should continue to exist, being an effective organisation for the discharge of its main functions.
 - 3 QCA should continue to be responsible for both qualifications and the curriculum, and for general and vocational learning.
 - 4 NDPB status is the right model for QCA.
 - 5 QCA should review the way it commissions and manages contract work.
 - 6 The decision not to outsource development of mathematics tests should be reviewed, and, even if the conclusion is that the time is still not ripe for change, QCA should develop a strategy by which to grow an external capability.
 - 7 QCA should only publish material itself which meets the following tests:
 - does it relate to QCA's objectives;
 - is it necessary to produce an authoritative text, or would it be appropriate for others to publish it;
 - if QCA did not produce it, would no-one else publish it; and
 - would it matter if it were not published?
- It should restrict its own prices to cost recovery; and make material not meeting the tests available to other publishers at a fair but commercial rate.
- 8 Ofsted and QCA should continue to operate as separate bodies carrying out their separate roles
 - 9 The review endorses QCA's increasing use of project management as one means of anticipating and scheduling costs.
 - 10 QCA should seek feedback from stakeholders about its services on a more probing and regular basis.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>11 Stage 2 of this review should put in place steps to set out more clearly what it is that QCA does and to make it easier for outsiders to communicate with the right people.</p> | <p>19 QCA should, with DfES, a) appraise its own capacity and role as respects vocational qualifications; and b) review the systems and make recommendations for change.</p> |
| <p>12 Stage 2 of the review should consider whether QCA can be encouraged to become more responsive to new ideas, without undermining its role as “guardian of standards” and regulator.</p> | <p>20 DfES should lead an assessment, involving QCA and the Sector Skills Development Agency, of whether there would be benefits in changing the strategic arrangements for agreeing vocational qualifications in light of the creation of SSCs.</p> |
| <p>13 QCA should seek to promote closer relationships with Ofsted, the Learning and Skills Council, and the (as yet very new) Sector Skills Councils and Sector Skills Development Agency.</p> | <p>21 QCA should assess the need for closer working with each of the devolved administrations on vocational qualifications, not least for the benefit of external stakeholders.</p> |
| <p>14 QCA should strengthen its capacity for intelligence gathering as respects standards, and then adopt a more visible and authoritative public stance.</p> | <p>22 QCA should provide advice to DfES on how our three areas of concern about national tests (detailed in Chapter 7 paragraphs 18 —19) can best be addressed.</p> |
| <p>15 Given its prowess and high standing amongst some of its stakeholders, QCA should do more to promote the value of learning and parity of esteem between general and vocational qualifications.</p> | <p>23 QCA should assess the feasibility (and risks) of divesting its direct responsibilities for the assembly of national test papers, their issue and collection, and arranging external marking (for KS 2 and 3.)</p> |
| <p>16 QCA should strengthen its press office.</p> | <p>24 When the Department has QCA’s advice and feasibility assessment, it should decide whether there should be changes in responsibility for delivery of the national tests.</p> |
| <p>17 QCA and the DfES should appraise the scope for greater quality assurance of awarding bodies and less involvement by QCA in the detail of individual qualifications.</p> | |
| <p>18 The common approach to conducting audits of awarding bodies with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) should be resurrected.</p> | |

- 25 There should be a feasibility assessment and then planning for transfer of the delivery of tests for key and basic skills. Given that these are as yet lesser in scale and still developing, we see advantage in this work proceeding with a view to commencement by 2004.
- 26 The principles guiding how QCA works with DfES should be set out in a memorandum of understanding approved by Ministers
- 27 Project management procedures should be applied by both DfES and QCA to all substantial curriculum and qualifications issues.
- 28 DfES should consider nominating a single Minister for lead responsibility for the relationship with QCA; there should be periodic meetings, normally involving the Chairman and Chief Executive; and that at least once a year the Minister should meet the whole Board.
- 29 Stage 2 of the review should examine the level of data provided to, and the role of, the DfES sponsor team.
- 30 Stage 2 of the review, should address the best location for QCA if it is to recruit and retain the right people for its needs.
- 31 Stage 2 of the review should seriously consider issues around making the most of QCA people. The new Chief Executive should share her/his assessment and action plan with the Secretary of State by the end of this financial year.
- 32 The QCA Board should consider its own role, taking account of this review.
- 33 In addressing these recommendations, particularly numbers 14-15 and 17-21, QCA and DfES should consult the devolved administrations and other regulatory authorities.





Annex A

WRITTEN ANSWER TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION ON 18TH DECEMBER 2001

QUALIFICATIONS AND CURRICULUM AUTHORITY

Jim Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Skills what plans she has to announce the quinquennial review of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. [24366]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: In accordance with the Government's policy of conducting quinquennial reviews of all non-departmental public bodies, my Department is today beginning a review of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Following Cabinet Office guidelines, the terms of reference for the first stage of the review will be:

- to review the role and functions of QCA as outlined in its remit letter, the efficiency and effectiveness with which they have been carried out and how these functions contribute to the delivery of wider DfES and Government objectives;
- to consider the likely need for these functions in the future and whether there is a need for any reduction or expansion in the functions undertaken by QCA;
- to consider what QCA's customers and other interested parties think about its

role, performance and responsiveness to their needs;

- to consider whether continued NDPB status is the best way of delivering these functions or whether some, or all, of the functions could be delivered more efficiently and effectively within an alternative organisational framework, including by another private, public or voluntary body or otherwise within Government; and
- to consider the powers, remit, objectives and status of QCA and the membership and role of the Board.

We should welcome comments on those matters to be covered by the review from all those with an interest in the work of QCA. Comments, which may be made public unless respondents specifically request otherwise, should be sent by 28 February 2002 to:

Ellie Reynolds
Department for Education and Skills
E3c
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
or by e-mail to:
ellie.reynolds@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

We have asked that this first stage of the review should be completed by spring 2002.



Annex B

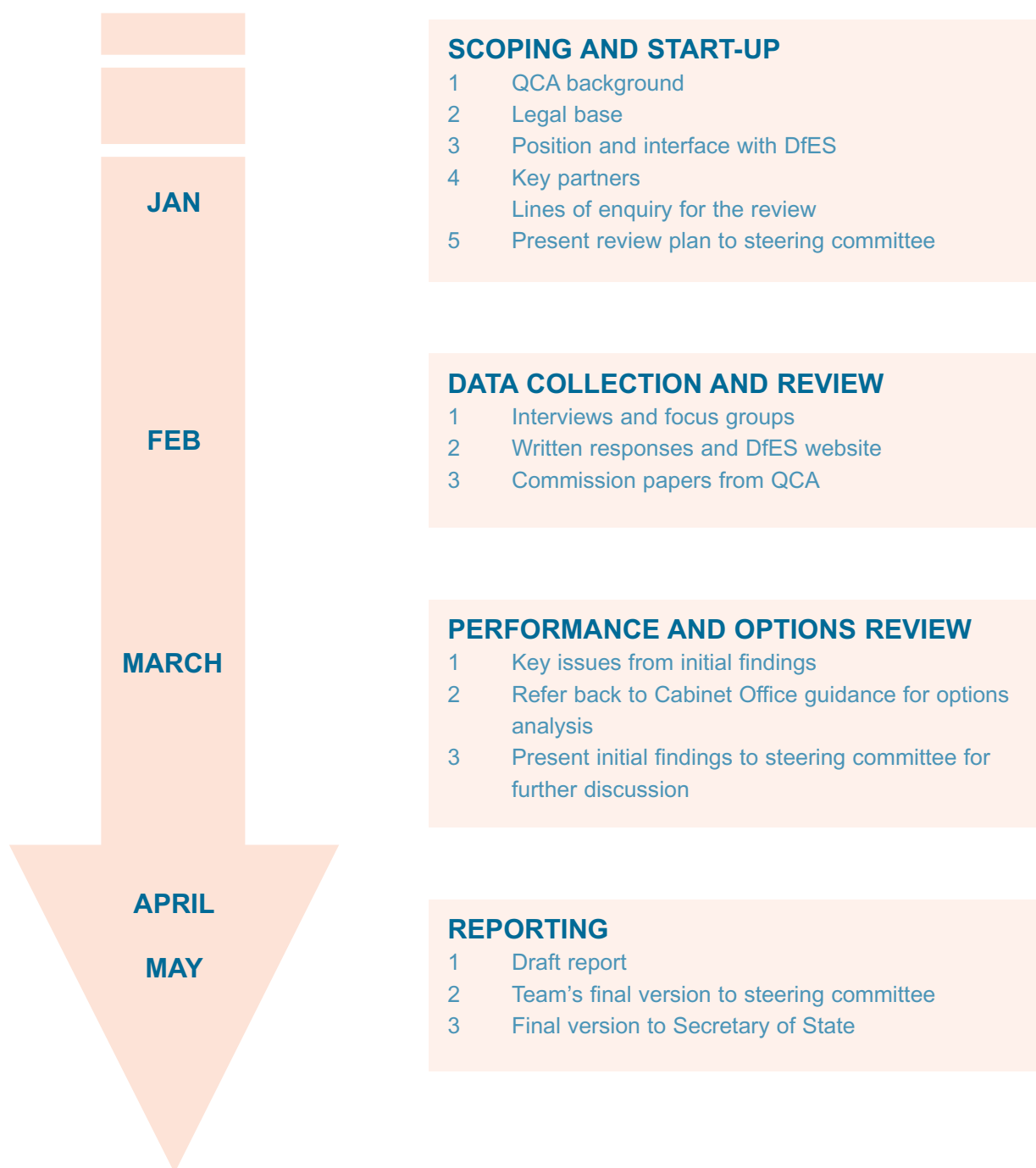
STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Name	Organisation
Rob Hull Chair	Qualifications and Young Peoples Policy Department for Education and Skills
Alistair Aitken	Skills and Vocational Qualifications Unit Scottish Executive
Rosemary Banner	Cabinet Office
Patrick Diamond	No. 10 Downing Street
Beverley Evans	QCA
Gillian Ferguson	Treasury
Peter Houten	Finance and Analytical Services Directorate Department for Education and Skills
Pat Jackson	Strategy and Competitiveness Unit DTI
Sara Marshall	Sponsoring Division Department for Education and Skills
Harry Mason	Lifelong Qualifications and Learning Branch Department for Employment and Learning
Michael Parkinson	National Assembly for Wales
Robert Rogerson	Efficiency Division Department for Education and Skills
Dugald Sandeman	Learning and Skills Council
David Taylor	Ofsted
Imogen Wilde	Schools Directorate Department for Education and Skills



Annex C

REVIEW METHODOLOGY





Annex D

CATEGORIES OF STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

DfES
QCA
Awarding Bodies
National Training Organisations

Local Education Authorities
Non Departmental Public Bodies/Agencies
Government Departments
Subject Associations
Business Associations
Teachers/Learning Providers
Independents

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

No	Name	Organisation	Category
1	Chris Humphries, Susan Fifer and Keith Brooker	City and Guilds	Awarding Body
2	Dr Ron McLone, Greg Watson and Simon Sharp	Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations	Awarding Body
3	John Kerr	Edexcel	Awarding Body
4	John Milner	Joint Council for General Qualifications	Awarding Body
5	Kathleen Tattersall, Carolyn Adams	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance	Awarding Body
6	Bert Clough	Trades Union Congress	Business Association
7	Judy Whittaker	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	Business Association
8	Alan Cranston, Paul Roberts, Cheow-Lay Wee and Ann Roberts	Early Years and Childcare Unit	DfES
9	Anita Straker	National Director KS3	DfES
10	Anne Jackson	Strategy and Innovation Unit	DfES
11	Barry Brooks	Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit: Standards, Quality and Curriculum	DfES

12	Brian Glickman	Effective Partnerships	DfES
13	Celia Johnson	School and College Qualifications Division	DfES
14	David Hargreaves	Adviser (ex-CEO QCA)	DfES
15	David Normington	Permanent Secretary	DfES
16	Derek Grover, Hugh Tollyfield and Simon Perryman	Director of Adult Learning Group	DfES
17	DfES Focus Groups	Covering the following policy areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Skills • QCA Sponsorship • Quality assurance and awarding bodies • Vocational qualifications policy and National Occupational Standards • Assessment • Curriculum • Special educational needs 	DfES
18	Estelle Morris	Secretary of State for Education and Skills	DfES
19	Imogen Wilde	Director Curriculum and Communications Group	DfES
20	Ivan Lewis	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Young People and Learning	DfES
21	John Healey	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Adult Skills	DfES
22	Judy Sebba	Pupil Standards Division	DfES
23	Nick Baxter	Parents and Performance Division	DfES
24	Peter Housden	Director General Schools Directorate	DfES
25	Peter Shaw	Director General Youth Directorate	DfES
26	Rob Hull	Director of Qualifications and Young People Group	DfES
27	Sara Marshall	Qualifications for Work Division & Sponsoring Division	DfES
28	Stephen Crowne	Director Standards and Effectiveness Unit	DfES
29	Stephen Timms	Minister of State for School Standards	DfES
30	Trevor Cook, Jane Mayhew and Simon Pritchett	Press Office	DfES

31	Will Cavendish	Special Adviser	DfES
32	Heather Rabatts	4 Learning (ex-board member QCA)	Independent
33	Lord Dearing	House of Lords	Independent
34	Nick Tate	Winchester College (ex- CEO QCA)	Independent
35	Adrian Anderson	National Training Organisations National Council	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
36	Aileen Ponton, George Brown	Scottish Qualifications Authority	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
37	Chris Gale and Terry Pearson	National Governors' Council	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
38	David Taylor	Ofsted	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
39	David Young	Universities UK	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
40	Gavin Boyd	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (Northern Ireland)	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
41	John Taylor	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
42	John Valentine Williams	Awdurdod Cymwysterau Cwriculum ac Asecu Cymru	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
43	Martin Lamb	Learning and Skills Council	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
44	Maureen Burns	General Teaching Council	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
45	Peter Wright	Quality Assurance Agency	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
46	Ralph Tabberer	Teacher Training Association	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
47	Richard Handover	Adult Learning Inspectorate	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
48	Alistair Aitken	Scottish Executive	Government Department
49	Carol Sweetenham	Performance and Innovation Unit, Workforce Development, Cabinet Office	Government Department
50	Emma Scott	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	Government Department

51	Francesca Osowska	Scottish Executive	Government Department
52	Harry Mason, Deirdre McGill, Catherine Bell and Billy Nelson	Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland)	Government Department
53	Michael Barber	Cabinet Office Delivery Unit	Government Department
54	Michael Parkinson and Julian Pritchard	National Assembly for Wales	Government Department
55	Pat Jackson	Department of Trade and Industry	Government Department
56	Patrick Diamond	No.10 Policy Unit	Government Department
57	Stuart Taylor	Her Majesty s Treasury	Government Department
58	Ann Dukes Head Teacher Southwater County Infant School Ted Wragg School of Education University of Exeter	Board Members	QCA
59	Beverley Evans	Chief Officer	QCA
60	Bill Kelly	Head of Quality Audit	QCA
61	Chris Jones	Head of Curriculum	QCA
62	Dame Patricia Morgan-Webb Principal and Chief Executive New College Nottingham	Board Member	QCA
63	Ian McAllister Chairman, Network Rail	Deputy Chairman	QCA
64	Keith Weller	Head of Qualifications	QCA
65	QCA Focus Groups	From across the grade levels and divisions	QCA
66	Sir David Brown Chairman Motorola Ltd	Board Member	QCA
67	Sir William Stubbs	Chairman	QCA
68	Sue Bennett, David Ackland and Chris Walker	Head of Directorate, Head of Corporate Services, Head of Communications and Knowledge Management	QCA
69	Tim Cornford	Head of Assessment	QCA
70	John Dunford	Secondary Heads Association	Teachers/Learning Providers
71	Lord Sutherland	University of Edinburgh	Teachers/Learning Providers
72	Teacher Focus Group		Teachers/Learning Providers



Annex E

WRITTEN COMMENTS RECEIVED

No	Organisation	Category
1	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance	Awarding Body
2	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network	Awarding Body
3	Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music	Awarding Body
4	Association of Medical Secretaries Practice Managers Administrators and Receptionists	Awarding Body
5	Awarding Body Consortium	Awarding Body
6	Chadwick House Group Ltd	Awarding Body
7	Chartered Institute of Building	Awarding Body
8	Chartered Institute of Housing	Awarding Body
9	Chartered Institute of Marketing	Awarding Body
10	City and Guilds	Awarding Body
11	Engineering Marine Training Association Awards Ltd	Awarding Body
12	Edexcel	Awarding Body
13	Federation of Awarding Bodies	Awarding Body
14	Institute of Credit Management	Awarding Body
15	Institute of Financial Services	Awarding Body
16	Institute of Leadership and Management	Awarding Body
17	Institute of Linguistics Educational Trust	Awarding Body
18	Institute of Logistics and Transport	Awarding Body
19	International Curriculum and Assessment Agency	Awarding Body
20	Joint Council for General Qualifications	Awarding Body
21	Joint Examining Board	Awarding Body
22	London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examinations Board	Awarding Body
23	National Association of Estate Agents	Awarding Body
24	Northern College of Further Education	Awarding Body
25	Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations	Awarding Body
26	Qualifications for Industry Ltd	Awarding Body
27	The Institute of Sales and Marketing Management	Awarding Body
28	University Vocational Awards Council	Awarding Body

29	Vocational Qualifications in Science Engineering and Technology	Awarding Body
30	Confederation of British Industry	Business Association
31	Federation of Small Businesses	Business Association
32	Institute of Directors	Business Association
33	Curriculum Division	DfES
34	David Gleave	DfES
35	Lynda Lawrence	DfES
36	Lord Dearing House of Lords	Independent
37	Association of Chief Education Officers and Society of Education Officers	Local Education Authority
38	Bedfordshire County Council	Local Education Authority
39	Bexley Council	Local Education Authority
40	Birmingham City Council Education Service	Local Education Authority
41	Bradford LEA	Local Education Authority
42	Buckinghamshire LEA	Local Education Authority
43	Kent County Council	Local Education Authority
44	Kingston Upon Hull Learning Services	Local Education Authority
45	Medway Council	Local Education Authority
46	Salford LEA	Local Education Authority
47	St.Helens LEA	Local Education Authority
48	Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council	Local Education Authority
49	Surrey County Council	Local Education Authority
50	Warwickshire County Council	Local Education Authority
51	Adult Learning Inspectorate	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
52	Learning and Skills Council	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
53	Learning and Skills Development Agency	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
54	University for Industry Ltd	Non Departmental Public Body/Agency
55	Chemical Manufacturing and Processing	National Training Organisation
56	Civil Aviation Authority	National Training Organisation
57	Construction Industry Training Board	National Training Organisation
58	Distributive NTO	National Training Organisation
59	e-Skills NTO	National Training Organisation
60	Glass NTO	National Training Organisation
61	Housing Potential	National Training Organisation

62	LANTRA	National Training Organisation
63	Local Government National Training Organisation	National Training Organisation
64	Road Haulage and Distribution Training Council	National Training Organisation
65	JTL, Training Managing Agent for the electrical contracting industry in England and Wales.	Training Management Agent
66	Trade Partners UK, Department of Trade and Industry	Government Department
67	British Association for Local History	Subject Association
68	Free Church Education Unit	Subject Association
69	Incorporated Society of Musicians	Subject Association
70	Institute of Career Guidance	Subject Association
71	Institute of Physics	Subject Association
72	National Association for Environmental Education (UK)	Subject Association
73	National Society for Education in Art and Design	Subject Association
74	Nuffield Curriculum Centre	Subject Association
75	Royal Academy of Engineering	Subject Association
76	School Science Service	Subject Association
77	The Association for Science Education	Subject Association
78	Association of Colleges	Teachers /Learning Providers
79	Association of Teachers and Lecturers	Teachers /Learning Providers
80	The Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference	Teachers /Learning Providers
81	Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools	Teachers /Learning Providers
82	National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools	Teachers /Learning Providers
83	National Governors Council	Teachers /Learning Providers
84	National Union of Teachers	Teachers /Learning Providers
85	Secondary Heads Association	Teachers /Learning Providers
86	Torridon School	Teachers /Learning Providers
87	University of Gloucestershire	Teachers /Learning Providers
88	Royal National Institute for the Blind	Charity
89	Dr KB Everard	Independent



Annex F

REVIEW FRAMEWORK

The review team used these questions as a framework for interviews and the website consultation, and attached them to letters inviting comments.

1 FUNCTION

- 1.1 What in your view are the main purposes of QCA?
- 1.2 How might these change in the future?
- 1.3 How clearly are the respective roles of QCA and your organisation defined?
- 1.4 How effective are the relationships between QCA and its partners e.g. DfES, Ofsted, Awarding Bodies, LSC, TTA, GTC, etc.
- 1.5 Are the differences in the arrangements by which QCA operates in different areas appropriate? (e.g. qualifications cf. curriculum issues; and as respects national tests, GCSE, A-level & GNVQ, vocational qualifications.)

2 DELIVERY

- 2.1 What are QCA's strengths / weaknesses? What issues need to be tackled?

- 2.2 How well has bringing the different functions of QCA together worked (e.g. assessment, curriculum and regulation); and similarly the merger of vocational and general qualifications worked?

- 2.3 Does QCA contribute to; the take-up of qualifications; parity of esteem; and equality of opportunity?

- 2.4 How has QCA helped your organisation in its work?

3 MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

- 3.1 Is there a continuing need for QCA's functions to be carried out at all?
- 3.2 If so, what are the advantages of QCA being an NDPB?
- 3.3 Are there any of QCA's services which might be better provided in another way? (e.g. by the private sector, by bodies at regional or other levels)



Annex G

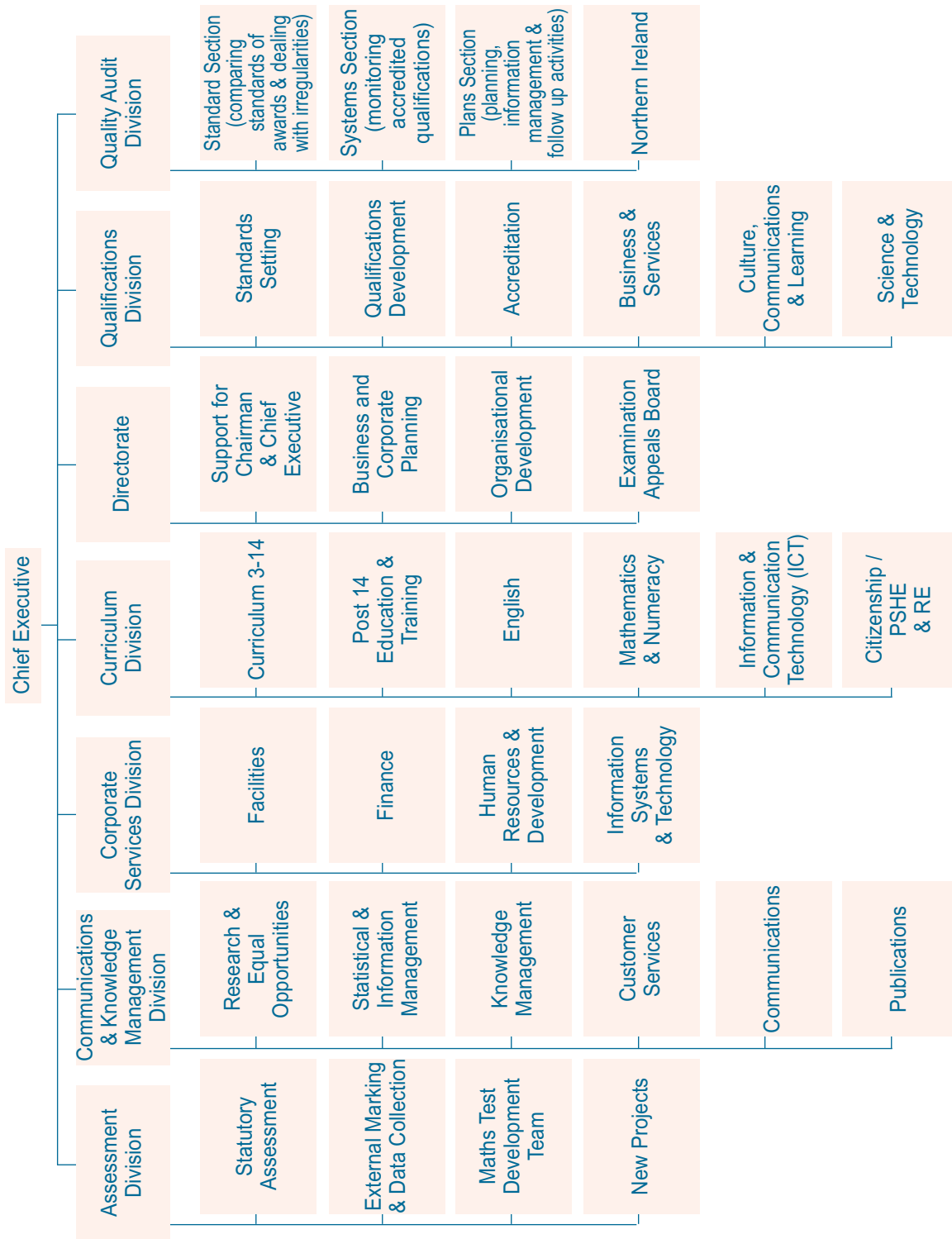
QCA'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Advice To provide Ministers with advice on matters relating to education and training.	Evidence To collect and analyse appropriate data to inform QCA's business.	Guidance To provide partners with information, support and guidance.	Organisational Development To develop and maintain effective systems and processes that enable QCA to achieve its goals.	Resource Management To manage resources effectively and efficiently.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To monitor, develop and support the curriculum, including the national curriculum, to prepare young people for the opportunities and challenges of their current and future lives. 2. To secure the development of qualifications founded on world-class quality standards and to accredit them into an accessible, comprehensive and coherent national framework. 3. To regulate external qualifications and national tests in order to maintain and improve standards of awards and awarding bodies' practices. 4. To develop and report on assessments that measure learners' achievements in relation to national standards. 5. To develop and maintain QCA's strategic direction. 6. To provide responsive systems for managing knowledge within QCA and to communicate effectively with all stakeholders. 7. To provide effective and efficient internal systems, HR, finance, facilities and IST that enable QCA to achieve its goals. 				
Advice To provide Ministers with advice on matters relating to education and training.	Evidence To collect and analyse appropriate data to inform QCA's business.	Guidance To provide partners with information, support and guidance.	Organisational Development To develop and maintain effective systems and processes that enable QCA to achieve its goals.	Resource Management To manage resources effectively and efficiently.



Annex H

QCA ORGANISATION CHART





Annex I

QCAE

Financial performance of QCA Enterprises Limited

QCA Enterprises Limited (QCAE) is a company limited by guarantee, which acts as QCA's trading arm, primarily for publications. Maintained schools, independent schools, LEAs and TTAs are entitled to a free allocation of most publications

shortly after publication. Thereafter, they will be entitled to a 50% discount on priced publications. Bulk buying may attract a greater discount. There is no discount on NVQ and GNVQ related publications. QCA also provide free publications.

QCAE's profits are covenanted to QCA on an annual basis under deed of covenant. QCAE therefore incur no tax liability.

Year	Turnover (£000)	% increase on prior year	Profit (£000)	% increase on prior year
31/3/1997	303	-	128	-
31/3/1998	1,095	261	571	346
31/3/1999	3,715	239	2,148	323
31/3/2000	3,633	-2	1,830	-15
31/3/2001	5,437	50	2,873	57

QCAE has continued to grow from 1997, showing significant increases in turnover and profits. Despite providing free and discounted publications, QCAE continue to operate with

healthy profit margins.

In comparison to industry averages, QCAE performs very well (see table below).

Ratio	QCAE 31/3/2001	Lower	Median	Upper
Profit/sales	52.84	-6.68	2.83	15.38
Profit/capital employed	9577	-0.73	10.09	48.69
Profit/total assets	131.61	-7.92	2.49	16.07
Sales/total assets	249.06	50	117.98	192.31

It should be noted that QCAE is a legal entity to enable QCA to trade and receive income; it owns no staff and no assets. This means that

profit figures do not account for the full costs of producing publications. Staff costs, for example, are borne by QCA.



Annex J

QCA ACHIEVEMENTS

As set out to the Review by QCA.

To develop the curriculum

QCA has been a lead player in the development of the foundation stage curriculum. In 1998, it carried out a review of early years education, which led to the establishment of a set of curriculum aims and “early learning goals” for children from the age of three to the end of the reception year. Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage (published by QCA and DfES) followed in May 2000 with over 200,000 copies made available to practitioners, students and training establishments by May 2001.

Following advice based on its monitoring programme to Ministers in 1998 that the national curriculum was over-loaded and inflexible, QCA conducted a comprehensive review of the national curriculum and submitted its report and recommendations to the Secretary of State in August 1999. The proposals were accepted.

Following the review of the national curriculum, QCA has established an extensive monitoring and evaluation programme for the curriculum in a range of settings, schools and colleges. The programme includes visits, meetings and conferences with practitioners and others involved in education, LEAs, and training and

central agencies as well as research surveys and questionnaires. Specific activities resulting from this programme include:

- a series of curriculum development projects in a range of subjects to provide advice and guidance on how to enhance teaching and learning in these subjects;
- an international seminar on the arts and creativity;
- work with teachers in schools to identify ways to enhance pupils’ creativity;
- a review of international algebra curricula;
- investigations into science provision internationally and scientific literacy;
- identification of effective practice in PE and the development of a website to share good practice.

Drawing on its 14-19 curriculum monitoring programme, QCA has given advice to Ministers on developing proposals for a coherent 14-19 phase of education and training which substantially influenced the Government’s current green paper *14-19: Extending opportunities, raising standards*.

Achievements in the accreditation and development of qualifications

Following advice to the Secretary of State in 1998, QCA has set up and now maintains a

national qualifications framework, to enable it to regulate the content, assessment and awarding of qualifications and make progression routes between qualifications clearer. In this function, QCA has achieved the following:

- published in September 2000 comprehensive arrangements for the statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland which were distributed to awarding bodies, national training organisations and other key partners
- completed the accreditation of A levels and vocational A levels by April 2001. Over 90 per cent of GCSE submissions (207 out of 216) were accredited by April 2001 and, by April 2002, 3000 qualifications had been accredited overall.
- initiated work on rationalising qualifications in A and AS levels, GCSEs, NVQs and other vocationally-related qualifications (as laid out in its annual report to ministers on the rationalisation of qualifications)
- maintained a comprehensive system for developing national occupational standards by either developing new sets of standards or accrediting standards that are submitted

Further achievements have included the following:

- By November 2000, QCA had revised the criteria for GCSE qualifications in the light of the review of the national curriculum and post-16 qualifications.
- QCA worked with the unitary awarding bodies to develop and accredit new advanced level awards. The revised AS, A level, and vocational AS and A levels were introduced in September 2000.
- QCA published in February 2001 the first edition of the unified code of practice, which brought together the requirements for GCSE, GCE, VCE and GNVQ.
- QCA has developed new qualifications to meet employers' and students' needs, including Advanced Extension Awards, Vocational GCSEs, and Technical Certificates for modern apprenticeships.
- In September 1999, QCA published a *Childcare framework document* following the development of a national childcare framework with NTOs and other key partners.
- QCA has developed and published new standards for adult literacy and numeracy, which form the basis of the new qualifications (available since September 2001) for adults in literacy and numeracy. These standards were written to align with the key skills.
- The new key skills qualifications (developed in partnership with ACCAC

and CCEA) were introduced in September 2000. QCA also published new versions of the “wider” key skills: working with others (improving own learning and performance; and problem solving) and developed a new personal skills development unit at level 5.

- QCA has consulted widely and advised ministers in June 2000 on the development of a graduation certificate at advanced level. Subsequent work in this area has contributed to the thinking behind an overarching award which appears in the green paper 14-19: *Extending opportunities, raising standards*.

Achievements in quality assurance

QCA has set up and fulfilled a comprehensive system of scrutiny and quality assurance procedures, which has included:

- quality assurance reports produced for NTOs and awarding bodies;
- scrutinies of GCSE, GCE A and AS level and GNVQ examinations;
- a regular programme of five-yearly reviews on subjects;
- a review of the standards over the last 20 years in five subjects;
- investigating allegations of malpractice in all qualifications (in some cases, in collaboration with DfES, ACCAC, SQA)

QCA led the ‘Access to Scripts’ initiative where candidates may see their marked scripts;

QCA has completed a review of the general qualifications operation of the three unitary awarding bodies — OCR, AQA, and Edexcel.

To secure a rigorous system of assessment

QCA has produced and delivered to schools all national tests for key stages 1, 2 and 3 on time.

QCA reviewed national curriculum assessment arrangements and submitted a report with advice to Ministers, which was accepted in October 2000.

QCA is engaged in an on-going programme of work to develop coherent methodologies and approaches to assessment across the national testing and qualifications systems.

QCA has led the development of World-Class tests.

To inform policy and practice through research and evaluation

An internal review of the national qualifications framework was completed and the results fed into the programme for the accreditation of qualifications.

As part of its “Advisory Group on Research into Assessment and Qualifications” programme, QCA has produced a series of research reports to inform policy development, including:

- *ICT in coursework in General Qualifications* (2000)
- an analysis of patterns of underachievement in education and the production of a report on pupil grouping and its relationship with gender, ethnicity and social class (2001)

QCA has produced an annual research commentary, *Observations on trends in the education and training system*, which reports on trends in, and the key characteristics of the education and training system through statistical monitoring and analysis.

To provide guidance and support

QCA published a range of publications to help support learning, which include the following:

- *Learning outcomes from careers education and guidance* (1999);
- *Learning through work-related contexts — a guide to successful practice* (1999);
- *Preparation for working life* (1999);
- a suite of *Schemes of Work* in national curriculum subjects at key stages 1 and 2 (1998-1999);
- a suite of *Schemes of Work* in national curriculum subjects at key stages 3 (1999);
- guidance on the implementation of the national literacy strategy across all national curriculum subjects (2001).

QCA has a comprehensive programme of publishing on the Internet, which includes:

- its main website contains information about all of QCA's core activities and many of QCA's paper-based publications are available to down-load in electronic format;

- in partnership with DfES, it developed the National Curriculum meta-tagging system which provides the core for the *Curriculum On-line* project;
- it produced a new website *National curriculum in action* that became publicly available in June 2001 to show what the national curriculum looks like in practice using pupils' work and case study material.

To support school improvement, QCA has produced the following:

- since 1998, an annual *Autumn Package* of performance information for key stages 1 to 4;
- since 2000, the *Testbase CD-ROM* to enable teachers to see how pupils performed in national tests on a question-by-question basis.



Annex K

QCA STAKEHOLDERS

QCA stakeholder groups	People and organisations in this group
<p>End users - those whose education, learning, working practices, or business are affected by what QCA does</p>	<p>Learners Children and their families Young people learning at school, college or work Adult Learners</p> <p>Those whose work is delivering learning Teachers Trainers Teacher unions</p> <p>Employers Business and industry NTOs/SSCs Sector Advisory Groups Business organisations</p>
<p>Customers — those who utilise QCA outputs in their own work</p>	<p>DfES Awarding bodies Schools, colleges, NTOs, NDPBs Educational Publishers Council British Educational Suppliers Association Professional Associations Schools, colleges and training organisations</p>
<p>Government Partners — with whom QCA works to develop and policy or to whom QCA provide advice</p>	<p>Government departments DfES DTI DCMS Cabinet Office No 10 Scottish Executive DELNI National Assembly for Wales</p>

QCA stakeholder groups	People and organisations in this group
<p>Delivery partners — organisations with whom QCA works to develop or deliver government policy</p>	<p>Quality assurance bodies Ofsted ALI QAA</p> <p>Regional and local bodies LSC Local authorities (LEA advisers)</p> <p>National teaching bodies TTA (QCA observer on TTA board) GTC</p> <p>Learning material providers Ufi BBC BECTA BSA</p> <p>Other regulatory bodies ACCAC SQA CCEA</p> <p>Awarding Bodies</p> <p>Subject Associations</p> <p>Professional associations</p> <p>Contractors e.g. distributors of statutory test materials</p>

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