



Review of employability and study skills qualifications at Level 2 and above

Date of issue 27 August 2014

Audience Colleges and training and awarding organisations

Statement

1. In July 2014 we published a revised [Technical Guide for Awarding Organisations](#). This document sets out the principles and processes we use to identify which qualifications we will include in the publicly funded offer for adult learners. Paragraph 63 explains which qualifications we will approve for funding at Level 2 and above as follows:
 - a. 'At Level 2 and above we will only approve qualifications where the purpose of the qualification enables the individual to fulfil one of the following:
 - i. demonstrate the specialist knowledge and skills needed to carry out a specific job role
 - ii. enter an Apprenticeship
 - iii. work in a specific industry, occupation or occupational group or
 - iv. progress to the next level of vocational learning (including higher education)'
2. In advance of the 2014 Annual Review of the qualifications offer (see pages 9 and 10 of the [Technical Guidance](#)), we have begun an initial review of the offer at Level 2 and above to check that it aligns to the purposes outlined in paragraph 1a above.

3. Of the 5,318 qualifications currently approved for funding in the offer at Level 2 or above in the funding year 2014 to 2015, we have identified 174 that have been approved for funding but which either:
 - a. Include units that focus specifically on the skills to research and apply for jobs (for example, how to write a CV).
 - b. Include vocational content from a broad range of sectors but do not require the learner to focus on any one specific job role or sector.
 - c. Focus on the generic skills needed in any work environment (such as confidence, or working with others), rather than on the specific skills and knowledge needed for a particular job role or sector.
 - d. Include content on study skills.
4. The content of these qualifications suggests they may not focus on the type of purposes outlined in paragraph 1a above. Therefore we plan to carry out a series of discussions and workshops with colleges and training organisations, employers, learners and awarding organisations, alongside other stakeholders in the further education sector, to understand more about these qualifications and confirm whether or not they support learners towards the purposes identified above.
5. The outcomes of these discussions will feed into the 2014 Annual Review and the subsequent publication of the qualifications offer for the funding year 2015 to 2016 in January 2015.
6. On the basis of our expectations on qualifications at Level 2 and above, where a qualification focuses on the skills needed to research and apply for jobs, we do not intend to continue including it within the publicly funded offer. Nor do we intend to continue to include qualifications where there is no use of pathways to allow a learner to specialise in a particular sector or job role (which may lead to learners undertaking a series of short vocational tasters across multiple sectors).

7. Where a qualification does focus clearly on one sector or job role, but also has content that relates to the skills needed to research and apply for jobs, or the generic skills needed in the world of work, we need to better understand the value of such qualifications with employers. If appropriate, we may refine our business rules to continue to allow these where achievement of the qualification will support a learner towards entering a sector, or to progress within a sector. For example, we may apply a threshold for how much 'job search' activity a qualification can include, or a requirement to use pathways or rules of combination to ensure a certain proportion of the qualification relates to one specific sector or job role. Alternatively, we may determine that publicly funded qualifications at Level 2 should not include such non-vocational activity.
8. Where a qualification allows a learner to access learning at the next level, we will consider the inclusion of units on study skills. We will also examine in particular qualifications that are used for learners looking to enrol on a Quality Assurance Agency-regulated Access to Higher Education Diploma.
9. We are publishing today an initial list of the 174 qualifications that will be in scope for this review. For these we will set a 'Last Date for New Starts' (LDNS) of 28 February 2015. We may add other qualifications to this review over the remainder of 2014 and for such qualifications we will also set a LDNS of 28 February 2015.
10. The 174 qualifications do not include any that are 'automatically approved' (see paragraph 40, page 13 of the [Technical Guidance](#)) or any English or maths qualifications.
11. We will publish the outcomes of this review as part of the 2014 Annual Review. Where we identify within this review qualifications that we will continue to fund, we will extend their LDNS to the end of the funding year 2014 to 2015.