



Department
for Education

Qualifications for 14-16 Year Olds and Performance Tables

**2016 Performance Tables:
Technical Guidance for Awarding
Organisations**

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Qualifications for 14-16 Year Olds: 2016 Performance Tables

Technical guidance for Awarding Organisations

Introduction

This document is an update of the 2015 Technical Guidance. It concerns the approval of non-GCSE/iGCSE qualifications for inclusion in the 2016 Key Stage 4 performance tables.

This is the third annual review of non-GCSE/iGCSE qualifications and the first process that will accept new qualifications. Awarding Organisations and employers are invited to develop high value qualifications in sectors which are not represented on the list of qualifications counting in the 2015 Key Stage 4 performance tables, such as environment/land-based and manufacturing. We also welcome proposals for new qualifications across all sectors that meet the required characteristics.

This document provides Awarding Organisations with the technical information they need to submit new and existing qualifications for approval for the 2016 performance tables.

Qualifications must be accredited by Ofqual before they can be considered for inclusion in the 2016 Key Stage 4 performance tables.

The characteristics that qualifications will need to demonstrate, if they are to be recognised in school performance tables, are:

- size;
- grading;
- external assessment;
- synoptic assessment;
- appropriate content;
- progression (required after the first year of awarding);
- proven track record (required after the first year of awarding).

The criteria for assessing each of these characteristics are set out in Section 1. Qualifications that demonstrate these characteristics are those which provide most pupils with successful progression to the next stage of education, training or employment.

This Technical Guidance contains one amendment to characteristics sought for the 2015 performance tables. The minimum requirement for external assessment has been increased to 30 GLH. This change was signalled in the 2015 Technical Guidance and means that qualifications that were approved for reporting in the 2015 performance tables with fewer than 30 GLH subject to external assessment will need to be re-developed to be considered for the 2016 performance tables.

There may be pupils for whom the most appropriate qualifications are not those included in the performance tables. Where it is in a pupil's best interest, the school is encouraged to teach qualifications not included on the list. Subject to a general suitability check, all qualifications accredited by Ofqual for teaching to 14-16 year olds will also be approved under section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to be funded for teaching in schools. Achievement data for all qualifications taken by 14-16 year olds, regardless of whether they are included in the Key Stage 4 performance tables, will be published by the DfE on an annual basis.

The list of qualifications that will count in the Key Stage 4 performance tables in 2016 will be published on the DfE website in November 2013. Until the list is finalised, schools should be advised to exercise caution in making changes to their timetables in anticipation of a particular qualification being approved.

Reform of GCSEs

The Secretary of State announced in February 2013 that GCSEs will be comprehensively reformed. GCSEs in English language, English literature, mathematics, the sciences, history and geography will be introduced from September 2015 and reported in performance tables from 2017. Other subjects will follow as soon as possible after that, with the aim that they should be available for first teaching from September 2016 and reported in performance tables from 2018. The DfE has asked Ofqual to consider the appropriate subject coverage of reformed GCSEs.

The content characteristic in future publications of KS4 Technical Guidance will seek evidence that any qualification being proposed for inclusion in performance tables does not have significant overlap with reformed GCSEs. This requirement will safeguard against duplication between qualifications admitted via the DfE annual list of high value vocational qualifications and the GCSE family of qualifications (including, as appropriate, iGCSEs). It will also ensure that all qualifications counting towards performance tables – whether vocational or academic – have genuine currency and recognition as valuable, distinctive and respected components of a secondary curriculum. This will benefit schools, employers and parents in identifying high value vocational qualifications and incentivising their take up.

In time, this will result in the phasing out of academic qualifications from the annual list of non-GCSE qualifications counting towards performance tables.

The DfE also launched a consultation in February 2013 setting out proposed improvements to the secondary school accountability system. This includes a proposal to publish a new 'average point score 8' measure, which will allow the inclusion of up to 3 non-GCSE/iGCSE qualifications from the approved list.

Background

Professor Alison Wolf carried out an independent review of vocational education that was published in March 2011. The review considered how to raise the standards of vocational education for 14-19 year olds and promote successful progression into the labour market and into higher level education and training routes.

The DfE accepted all 27 of the recommendations in the report, including that:
'The DfE should distinguish clearly between those qualifications, both vocational and academic, which can contribute to performance indicators at Key Stage 4, and those which cannot.'

Following the Wolf Review, the DfE consulted on the characteristics to determine which qualifications should be included in performance tables as equivalent to a GCSE. In October 2011, the DfE published its response to the consultation and announced that:

'From 2014, only qualifications that are at least the size of a GCSE, high quality, rigorous and enable progression to a range of study and employment opportunities will be included in school performance tables for 14-16 year olds.'

Section 1: Characteristics and evidence requirements of qualifications that will feature in 2016 performance tables

Non-GCSE/iGCSE qualifications, accredited by Ofqual, will need to demonstrate relevant characteristics to be included in the 2016 Key Stage 4 performance tables. Each characteristic is described in detail below.

The DfE expects Awarding Organisations to demonstrate each of the relevant characteristics in the qualification specification. Where a qualification contains a number of pathways or options, all possible combinations will be required to demonstrate all relevant characteristics.

Characteristics required of all qualifications

Qualifications will need to demonstrate all five of the characteristics below (A to E) to be considered for inclusion on the 2016 list.

A. Appropriate size

Detail

- 1.1 Qualifications will need to be at least 120 Guided Learning Hours (GLH) in order to count in the Key Stage 4 performance tables.

Justification for this characteristic

- 1.2 The qualifications that young people study must be well understood and have 'currency' with schools, further education institutions and employers. In order to have currency, the qualification needs to be of sufficient size to ensure that meaningful teaching, study or training takes place. This supports the synoptic assessment characteristic to ensure students have a coherent programme of study.
- 1.3 Ofqual intend to introduce new conditions on Guided Learning Hours (GLH). Until that time and for the purposes of the 2016 Key Stage 4 performance tables, we will continue to use the existing GLH measure. The GLH value gives an indication of the time a member of staff will typically need to be present to teach or give guidance towards gaining a qualification. The GLH value for a full GCSE is 120 GLH and we have adopted this as the minimum value for all qualifications to be included in the performance tables.

How judgement will be reached

- 1.4 The GLH value is identified when a qualification is submitted for accreditation to Ofqual. The specification should include detail on how the total GLH is

reached, including a breakdown of units. For qualifications that have a range of total GLH dependent on the combination of units studied, the minimum overall size should be no less than 120 GLH.

B. Grading

Detail

- 1.5 To be included in performance tables, qualifications must be graded i.e. have a pass, merit, distinction structure or a more detailed scale. Grading must apply to the overall qualification, but individual units may also be graded.

Justification for this characteristic

- 1.6 Many vocational qualifications traditionally use grading. It is important for student motivation and to provide challenge, distinguishing between levels of student achievement and ensuring there is sufficient rigour in the qualification assessment.

How judgement will be reached

- 1.7 The grading/mark scheme must be available in the qualification specification submitted to Ofqual for accreditation. It must explain how final grades are derived from assessments, particularly where not all individual units or assessments are graded.

C. External assessment

Detail

- 1.8 Ofqual's definition of external assessment is:
"A form of independent assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are set by the Awarding Organisation, taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marked by the Awarding Organisation."
- 1.9 To be included in performance tables, qualifications must have a significant amount of content that is subject to external assessment, with a minimum amount as follows:

Qualification Overall Size	Minimum amount of content subject to external assessment
120-180 GLH	30 GLH
181-240 GLH	45 GLH
241 GLH & above	60 GLH

With the exception of linked Level 1 qualifications, these minimum values will apply to all qualifications submitted for inclusion on the 2016 performance tables list.

- 1.10 For a very small number of qualifications, in subjects such as art & design, external assessment may not be the most valid method of assessment. These qualifications will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and the expectation is that the approach taken in similar subject GCSE qualifications will be adopted. Advice may be sought from Ofqual as to whether any such qualifications could reasonably have been expected to accommodate external assessment. Awarding Organisations should clearly identify any such qualifications along with a clear explanation of how external assessment will be incorporated.

Justification for this characteristic

- 1.11 Evidence of rigorous assessment arrangements, including a substantial amount of external assessment, is a requirement for qualifications that are counted in performance tables and used in school accountability measures. This helps to ensure that vocational qualifications offer a comparable level of challenge to academic qualifications, and are seen to do so.

How judgement will be reached

- 1.12 Awarding Organisations will need to ensure that the specification contains sufficient detail in order that a judgement can be made. This should include information about the knowledge, skills and understanding that will be assessed, as well as details of the arrangements for assessment.

D. Synoptic assessment

Detail

- 1.13 In consultation with Awarding Organisations, the following definition for synoptic assessment has been agreed:
“A form of assessment which requires a candidate to demonstrate that s/he can identify and use effectively in an integrated way an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories, and knowledge from across the whole vocational area, which are relevant to a key task.”
- 1.14 We have not set a minimum contribution to the final grade that synoptic assessment must provide. It must be of sufficient size to meaningfully cover the full range of the qualification’s content. In addition, synoptic assessment does not necessarily need to be externally assessed as we recognise that in a vocational award this will be impracticable in many cases.

Justification for this characteristic

- 1.15 Synoptic assessment is vital to increase the level of challenge for students as it requires a broader comprehension. This will help ensure that vocational

qualifications are as challenging as academic ones. Taken with the minimum size requirement, adding synoptic assessment will ensure cohesiveness across a qualification and prevent qualifications from being treated as a series of disconnected components.

How judgement will be reached

- 1.16 Awarding Organisations will need to demonstrate in the specification how the qualification meets the agreed definition and includes synoptic assessment. This is particularly important for qualifications that don't have an explicit synoptic assessment or where synoptic assessment is deemed to be present in a wide range of assessments. Awarding Organisations may decide on the most appropriate format for incorporating this information into the specification, but it must be sufficiently detailed for a judgement to be made.

E. Appropriate content

Detail

- 1.17 Qualifications should be able to demonstrate that they will support young people to:
- develop a broad and comprehensive understanding of a particular curriculum area or vocational sector, whilst the acquisition of specialist knowledge and/or practical skills should be limited;
 - acquire a significant knowledge core which spans the curriculum area or vocational sector, as well as academic and study skills that will support progression within the area of study and more broadly; and
 - study subject matter that is appropriate for a qualification for this age group, particularly where a qualification was originally developed for the adult market.
- 1.18 Qualifications for Key Stage 4 learners should be focused on taught or supervised content delivery. A significant core of content must be aligned to the broad curriculum area or vocational sector. The qualification should not be dominated by specialist or skills-based content, whilst recognising this is important where appropriate and in proportion to the core of the qualification. The qualification's content should incorporate breadth and depth of study, as well as challenge and stretch that are appropriate to the level of the qualification. Qualifications may develop some practical skills, but these should be under-pinned by core knowledge and understanding. The content and/or structure of a qualification should not allow excessive specialisation through pathways which divert learners away from sufficient coverage of core knowledge in the area.

Justification for this characteristic

- 1.19 There has been significant growth in the number of new vocational qualifications developed and offered by Awarding Organisations. A lot of

these qualifications were originally developed for the adult market and are quite sector specific. These are not the type of qualifications that will, in general, provide young people with the broad knowledge and understanding needed to prepare them for further study. This is a vital additional check that the content of the qualifications is designed to ensure young people are obtaining a qualification that is suitable for their age.

How judgement will be reached

- 1.20 Awarding Organisations are expected to demonstrate within the specification that all components and combinations of the qualification meet this characteristic, as set out in the detailed definition. The specification should illustrate that there is:
- a significant proportion of knowledge acquisition compared to skills development; and
 - a significant proportion of core knowledge compared to specialist or generic knowledge.

Characteristics required of qualifications after their first year of awarding

Qualifications in the 2015 performance tables that are being awarded for the first time in 2013 will need to demonstrate characteristics F and G below to be included in the 2016 performance tables. All qualifications will be subject to periodic reviews of the progression and proven track record characteristics.

F. Progression

Detail

- 1.21 Awarding Organisations are to provide evidence that young people who complete the qualification are able to go on to study at a higher level in the same field of study and more broadly.

Justification for this characteristic

- 1.22 Professor Wolf's report recommended that young people should not specialise too early in one area. 14-16 year olds should be taking qualifications that provide the foundation for them to progress to a broad range of qualifications post-16.

How judgement will be reached

- 1.23 The DfE will be looking for qualitative evidence from Awarding Organisations that the qualification is a passport to study at the next level, both within the same vocational sector or curriculum area and more broadly. The evidence should demonstrate that the students' options will not be restricted by taking this qualification. Strong evidence will include written statements from

colleges or a range of published documents, such as handbooks or statements of entry requirements from 6th forms, colleges or Apprenticeship programmes. These should specify that the qualification is recognised and acceptable for entry to a range of post-16 options (for example, a Level 2 vocational qualification might be eligible to count as part of a 6th form college's requirements for students to have 5 GCSEs at A*-C). Correspondence between Awarding Organisations and centres will need to demonstrate evidence of progression for individual qualifications. Unsubstantiated assertions from Awarding Organisations will not be considered sufficient evidence.

- 1.24 Awarding Organisations will be asked to put forward evidence of progression for all qualifications that are in the 2015 performance tables and that are being awarded for the first time in 2013. Qualifications that are first awarded after 2013 and demonstrate all other characteristics except track record and progression will be included in the 2016 performance tables, with inclusion in future years subject to review. Our aim is to introduce a quantitative aspect of the progression characteristic in future years as the Key Stage 4 destinations measures are developed.

G. Proven track record

Detail

- 1.25 In order to determine track record, qualifications will need to have been completed by at least 100 young people and in at least five centres during the first year that they are awarded.

Justification for this characteristic

- 1.26 A low number of completions demonstrates that young people and schools do not, in general, see a qualification as a strong route to progression post-16, particularly in light of the recent growth in the numbers taking qualifications, and there is a risk that the qualification may not have sufficient currency.

How judgement will be reached

- 1.27 The DfE will use its records of completion data. Awarding Organisations may opt to provide completion data for a qualification, but it is not essential as DfE data will be used to make the final judgement.
- 1.28 Qualifications that are already included in the 2015 performance tables, and that are being awarded for the first time in 2013, will be subject to a review of track record based on the number of completions in 2013. Qualifications that are first awarded after 2013 and demonstrate all other characteristics except track record and progression will be included in the 2016 performance tables, with inclusion in future years subject to review.

Section 2: The process for approving accredited qualifications for inclusion in the 2016 performance tables

Qualifications that are not GCSEs, established iGCSEs¹ or AS levels will need to demonstrate the characteristics described in Section 1 in order to be included in the 2016 school performance tables. The process for approving these qualifications for inclusion is set out below, with a diagram of the process included at Annex B. Qualifications must be accredited by Ofqual before they can be considered for inclusion in performance tables.

Entry routes into the 2016 performance tables

2.1 Qualifications eligible to be included in the 2016 school performance tables must be available to new students from September 2014 and will fall into one of the following categories:

Qualifications included on the 2015 performance tables list:

- The qualification has not been amended in any way and demonstrates all characteristics required for the 2016 list (see paragraphs 2.2-2.3);
- The qualification is subject to a review of progression and proven track record following first award (see paragraphs 2.4-2.5);
- The qualification has been amended (see paragraphs 2.6-2.7).

Qualifications not included on the 2015 performance tables list:

- The qualification has been accredited by Ofqual (see paragraphs 2.8-2.9);
- The qualification is newly developed or recently amended and requires Ofqual accreditation (see paragraphs 2.10-2.11).

Linked Level 1 qualifications:

- The qualification is at Level 1 and is being submitted for inclusion on the list because it has a direct link to a Level 2 qualification that will be included in the 2016 performance tables (see paragraphs 2.12-2.14).

Any qualification that will no longer be available to new students from September 2014 (including Principal Learning qualifications) will not be included in the 2016 performance tables. Awarding Organisations should notify DfE of any change to the status of any such qualifications by 13 September 2013.

¹ Established iGCSE is defined as “Accredited versions of qualifications which were being offered as ‘iGCSE’ and were being taken in independent and/or international schools before June 2010 when Ministers announced that they would allow the use of accredited iGCSE qualifications in maintained schools”

Evidence requirements

The evidence required and the process for submission will be determined by the category of the qualification. Awarding Organisations should submit the relevant form (see paragraph 2.15) for any qualification to be considered for inclusion in the 2016 performance tables, irrespective of its category. The form must explain where the evidence of each of the required characteristics can be found. Where an Awarding Organisation's evidence is in the qualification specification, reference will need to be made to the specific location. For newly developed or recently amended qualifications, Ofqual accreditation must be obtained prior to the qualification being considered for inclusion in performance tables. Ofqual will pass the final accredited version of the specification and other relevant documentation to DfE.

DfE will consider for inclusion in performance tables all accredited qualifications where materials are submitted by 13 September 2013. Submissions made after this point will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The qualification is included on the 2015 performance tables list, has not been amended in any way and demonstrates all characteristics required for the 2016 list

- 2.2 Awarding Organisations should check that qualifications included on the 2015 performance tables list demonstrate the characteristics in this document, with particular reference to the external assessment characteristic.
- 2.3 For qualifications included on the 2015 performance tables list that have not been amended and demonstrate all characteristics, the relevant form should be submitted confirming that the Awarding Organisation wishes the qualification to count in the 2016 performance tables. No further evidence will be required.

The qualification is included on the 2015 performance tables list with future inclusion subject to a review of progression and proven track record

- 2.4 For qualifications awarded for the first time in 2013, evidence will be required of how the progression and proven track record characteristics are demonstrated. Awarding Organisations will need to submit the relevant form along with evidence of progression. Evidence of proven track record is held by DfE and this will be used to make final judgements.
- 2.5 No evidence will be required for qualifications awarded for the first time in 2014; they will continue to count in the 2016 performance tables. Inclusion in future years will be subject to demonstration of progression and proven track record in the first year of awarding. The relevant form should be submitted confirming that the Awarding Organisation wishes the qualification to count in the 2016 performance tables.

The qualification is included on the 2015 performance tables list, has been amended and requires Ofqual accreditation

- 2.6 Some qualifications that are included on the 2015 performance tables list may have been amended following publication of the list. This may be to comply with regulatory requirements, because the Awarding Organisation wishes to re-design the qualification or because the qualification does not demonstrate the 2016 characteristics in its present format. In all such cases, Awarding Organisations should ensure that the amended qualification is accredited by Ofqual.
- 2.7 Evidence will be required demonstrating that the amended qualification meets the size, grading, external assessment, synoptic assessment and appropriate content characteristics. If the qualification has already been awarded, a review of the progression and proven track record characteristics will also be undertaken. The relevant form should be submitted confirming that the Awarding Organisation wishes the qualification to be considered for the 2016 performance tables.

The qualification is not included on the 2015 performance tables list but has been accredited by Ofqual

- 2.8 For qualifications awarded for the first time in 2013, evidence will be required demonstrating that the qualification meets the size, grading, external assessment, synoptic assessment, appropriate content, progression and proven track record characteristics. Qualifications demonstrating these characteristics will be included in the 2016 performance tables. The relevant form should be submitted confirming that the Awarding Organisation wishes the qualification to be considered for the 2016 performance tables.
- 2.9 For qualifications awarded for the first time in 2014 or later, evidence will be required demonstrating that the qualification meets the size, grading, external assessment, synoptic assessment and appropriate content characteristics. Inclusion in future years will be subject to review of proven track record and progression characteristics in the first year of awarding. The relevant form should be submitted confirming that the Awarding Organisation wishes the qualification to be considered for the 2016 performance tables.

The qualification is not included on the 2015 performance tables list, is newly developed or recently amended and requires Ofqual accreditation

- 2.10 New qualifications may be developed or existing qualifications be amended to demonstrate the characteristics required for inclusion in the 2016 performance tables. The Awarding Organisation will need to submit a qualification proposal to Ofqual through RITS. This should include a qualification specification and other materials to allow Ofqual to make an accreditation judgement.

- 2.11 In addition, the relevant form should be submitted with evidence of how the qualification demonstrates the required characteristics. Evidence of the size, grading, external assessment, synoptic assessment and appropriate content characteristics are required for all qualifications. For qualifications awarded for the first time in 2013, evidence will also be required of how the progression and proven track record characteristics are demonstrated.

The qualification is at Level 1 and is being submitted for inclusion on the list because it has a direct link to a Level 2 qualification that will be included in the 2016 performance tables

- 2.12 A Level 1 qualification may be included in the 2016 performance tables on the basis of a direct link to a Level 2 qualification that has been approved for inclusion. Evidence will be required of the existence and rationale for claiming a direct link.
- 2.13 A direct link may be demonstrated by:
- a single specification covering qualifications at Levels 1 and 2;
 - a specific reference to the link between the Level 1 and Level 2 versions of the qualification within the specification approved by Ofqual at the point of accreditation;
 - Level 1 and Level 2 versions of a qualification with the same units (at the appropriate level) and the same name.
- 2.14 Awarding Organisations will be required to submit the relevant form for all such Level 1 qualifications, irrespective of whether they were included on the 2015 performance tables list.

Key dates

March 2013	Publication of technical guidance on submissions to the 2016 performance tables
2 April 2013	Forms and submission details made available to Awarding Organisations Process opens for Awarding Organisations to submit qualifications for inclusion in the 2016 performance tables
13 September 2013	Deadline for new or amended qualifications to be accredited by Ofqual Deadline for all forms to be submitted for qualifications to be included in the 2016 performance tables
End November 2013	Publication of the list of qualifications included in the 2016 performance tables
6 December 2013	Deadline for Awarding Organisations to request a review of decisions about 2016 performance tables
End January 2014	Amendments to the list of qualifications made where relevant following review process

Further information

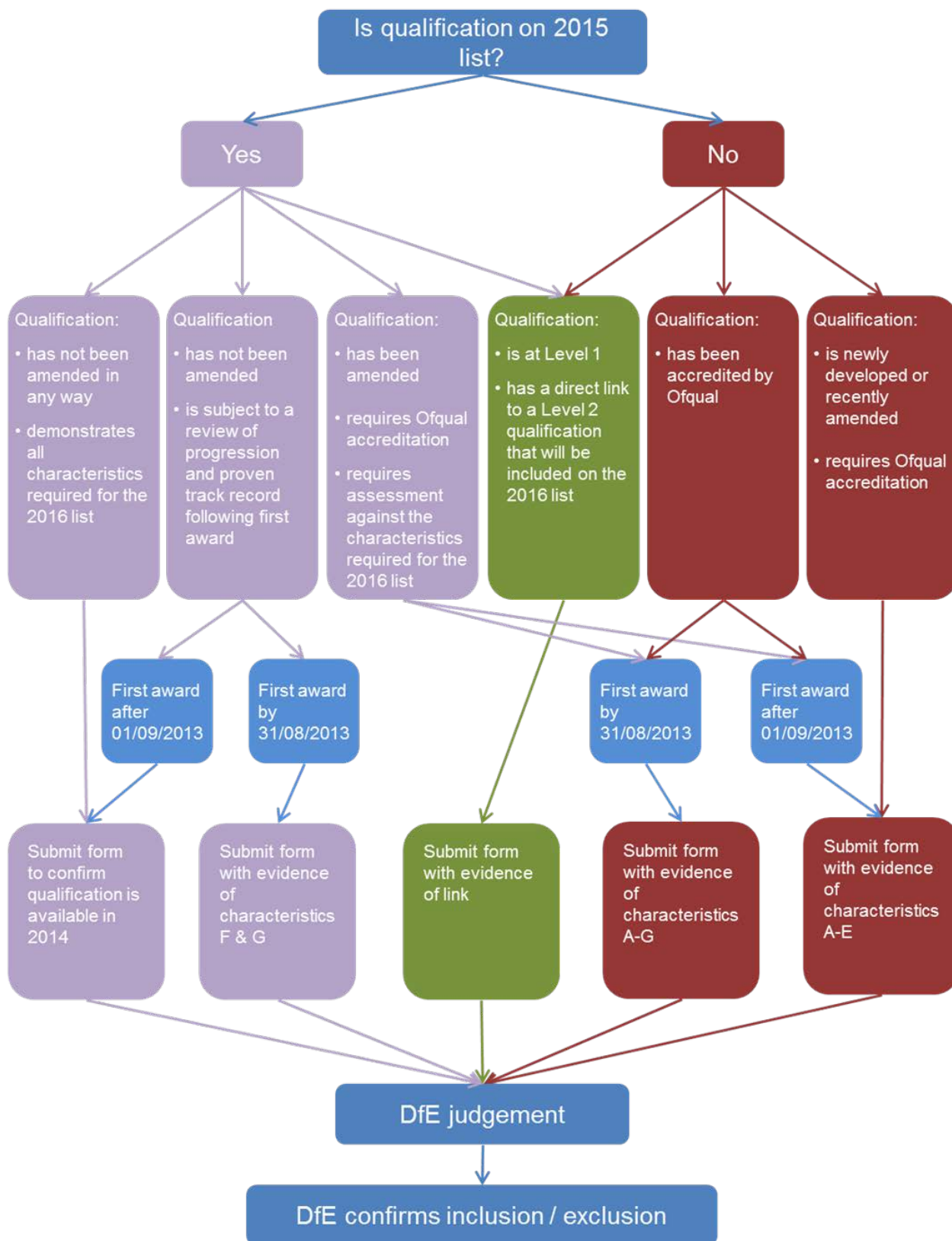
- 2.15 DfE will make operational details, including forms and submission addresses, available to Awarding Organisations when the process opens on 2 April.
- 2.16 Awarding Organisations will be notified of outcomes for their qualifications in advance of publication of the 2016 performance tables list.
- 2.17 Awarding Organisations will have the opportunity to request reviews of decisions if they disagree with the assessments of the evidence submitted. The deadline for doing this will be 6 December 2013. Evidence will be considered a second time by an independent reviewer who was not involved in the original assessment. Any subsequent amendments to the list of qualifications to be included in the 2016 performance tables will be made by the end of January 2014.

Annex A: Summary of Evidence Requirements

A summary of the evidence required for each of the categories is given below. In all cases, a form should be submitted by 13 September 2013.

CATEGORY OF QUALIFICATION	CHARACTERISTICS – EVIDENCE REQUIRED?							EVIDENCE REQUIREMENT
	SIZE	GRADING	EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT	SYNOPTIC ASSESSMENT	APPROPRIATE CONTENT	PROGRESSION	PROVEN TRACK RECORD	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
The qualification is included on the 2015 performance tables list, has not been amended in any way and demonstrates all characteristics required for the 2016 list								Completed form
The qualification is included on the 2015 performance tables list with future inclusion subject to a review of progression and proven track record						✓	✓	Completed form Evidence of characteristics F-G
The qualification is included on the 2015 performance tables list, has been amended and requires Ofqual accreditation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	?	Completed form Evidence of characteristics A-E Evidence of characteristics F-G if qualification awarded before 31.8.13
The qualification is not included on the 2015 performance tables list but has been accredited by Ofqual	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	?	Completed form Evidence of characteristics A-E Evidence of characteristics F-G if qualification awarded before 31.8.13
The qualification is not included on the 2015 performance tables list, is newly developed or recently amended and requires Ofqual accreditation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			Completed form Evidence of characteristics A-E
The qualification is at Level 1 and has a direct link to a Level 2 qualification that will be included in the 2016 performance tables								Completed form Evidence of link

Annex B: Process for submission of qualifications for 2016 performance tables





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