

STATUTORY GUIDANCE

Essential Digital Skills Conditions and Requirements

ofqual

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| About this document | 3 |
| Requirements set out in this document..... | 3 |
| Summary of requirements | 4 |
| Conditions and Requirements..... | 5 |
| Qualification Level Conditions | 5 |
| Assessment requirements | 17 |
| Requirements in relation to the specified levels of attainment to be used for EDS Qualifications..... | 19 |
| Assessment strategy requirements | 20 |

Introduction

About this document

This document is part of a suite of documents which sets out our regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering Essential Digital Skills Qualifications.

We have developed these requirements with the intention that Essential Digital Skills Qualifications should fulfil the following purposes:

- to enable learners to develop the digital skills they need for life, work, or further study as set out in the National Standards for Essential Digital Skills
- to provide reliable evidence of learners' attainment in relation to the National Standards for Essential Digital Skills

Requirements set out in this document

This document sets out the Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements for Essential Digital Skills Qualifications.

These conditions and requirements come into effect at 00.01am on Wednesday 24 April 2019.

With respect to all Essential Digital Skills Qualifications, awarding organisations must also comply with the following, except where specifically disapplied, as per Condition EDSQ2:

- our *General Conditions of Recognition*¹, which apply to all awarding organisations and qualifications, and
- all relevant Regulatory Documents.²

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook>

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-document-list>

Summary of requirements

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| Qualification Level Conditions |
| Condition EDSQ1 - Compliance with EDS National Standards |
| Condition EDSQ2 - Disapplication of certain General Conditions of Recognition applying to EDS Qualifications |
| Condition EDSQ3 - Assessment strategies |
| Condition EDSQ4 - Levels |
| Condition EDSQ5 - Technical Evaluation |
| Condition EDSQ6 - Total Qualification Time |
| Condition EDSQ7 - Assessment |
| Condition EDSQ8 - Standard setting |
| Condition EDSQ9 - Interpretation and Definitions |
| Requirements in relation to Essential Digital Skills Qualifications |
| Assessment requirements |
| Requirements in relation to the specified levels of attainment to be used for EDS Qualifications |
| Assessment strategy requirements |

Conditions and Requirements

Qualification Level Conditions

Condition EDSQ1 Compliance with EDS National Standards

- EDSQ1.1 In respect of each EDS Qualification which it makes available or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must –
- (a) comply with any requirements, and have regard to any guidance, contained in the EDS National Standards, and
 - (b) interpret the EDS National Standards in accordance with any requirements, and having regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.
- EDSQ1.2 In particular, in designing such a qualification an awarding organisation must ensure that the qualification covers all of the skills areas set out in the EDS National Standards.

Condition EDSQ2 Disapplication of certain General Conditions of Recognition applying to EDS Qualifications

EDSQ2.1 In respect of each EDS Qualification which an awarding organisation makes available, or proposes to make available, the following General Conditions of Recognition do not apply –

(a) Condition E7, and

(b) Condition E9.

Condition EDSQ3 Assessment strategies

- EDSQ3.1 In respect of each EDS Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must –
- (a) establish and maintain an assessment strategy for that qualification
 - (b) ensure that the assessment strategy complies with any requirements which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time, and
 - (c) have regard to any guidance in relation to assessment strategies which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.
- EDSQ3.2 In particular, an awarding organisation must ensure that the assessment strategy for an EDS Qualification sets out how the awarding organisation intends to secure, on an ongoing basis, compliance with its Conditions of Recognition in respect of the assessments for that qualification.
- EDSQ3.3 An awarding organisation must ensure that all assessments for an EDS Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, are designed, set, delivered and marked in compliance with its assessment strategy for that qualification.
- EDSQ3.4 An awarding organisation must –
- (a) keep under review its assessment strategy for an EDS Qualification, and revise it where necessary, so as to satisfy itself that the assessment strategy meets at all times the requirements of Conditions EDSQ3.1 and EDSQ3.2,
 - (b) review that assessment strategy promptly upon receiving a request from Ofqual to do so, and subsequently ensure that its assessment strategy complies with any requirements that Ofqual has communicated to it in writing, and
 - (c) promptly notify Ofqual of any revisions made by it to that assessment strategy.
- EDSQ3.5 An awarding organisation must –
- (a) upon receiving a request from Ofqual to do so, demonstrate to Ofqual's satisfaction that it has complied with its assessment strategy for an EDS Qualification in respect of any particular assessment for that qualification, or provide an explanation to Ofqual as to why it has not so complied, and

- (b) give effect to any recommendation that Ofqual may make in respect of its compliance with its assessment strategy.

Condition EDSQ4 Levels

EDSQ4.1 An awarding organisation must assign one of the following levels to each EDS Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, and assign the same level to each Component of that qualification –

- (a) Entry level 3.
- (b) Level 1.

Condition EDSQ5 Technical Evaluation

Evaluation before a qualification is made available

EDSQ5.1 Before first making available an EDS Qualification, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) promptly notify Ofqual that it proposes to make the qualification available,
- (b) comply with the terms of any written notice served by Ofqual requiring the awarding organisation to provide Ofqual with information, and
- (c) either –
 - (i) comply with any requirements specified to it by Ofqual in relation to the qualification, or
 - (ii) have received written confirmation from Ofqual that it has no such requirements.

EDSQ5.2 Where Ofqual specifies requirements in relation to a qualification under Condition EDSQ5.1(c), it may specify that the awarding organisation may make that qualification available before those requirements are complied with.

Ongoing evaluation

EDSQ5.3 In respect of each EDS Qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must –

- (a) comply with the terms of any written notice served by Ofqual requiring the awarding organisation to provide Ofqual with information, and
- (b) comply with any requirements specified to it by Ofqual in relation to the qualification.

Form and content of notices

EDSQ5.4 For the purposes of Conditions EDSQ5.1(b) and EDSQ5.3(a), a notice given by Ofqual may –

- (a) specify the time within which the information is to be provided,
- (b) specify a form in which the information is to be provided, and

- (c) require an awarding organisation to provide information whether that information is already in its possession or has to be created or obtained by it.

Condition EDSQ6 Total Qualification Time

- EDSQ6.1 In respect of each EDS Qualification that it makes available or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must –
- (a) design that qualification such that the number of hours for Guided Learning will be between 30 and 50 hours,
 - (b) based on its design, assign to that qualification the appropriate number of hours for Guided Learning, and
 - (c) assign to that qualification a number of hours for Total Qualification Time by applying the Total Qualification Time Criteria.
- EDSQ6.2 An awarding organisation must –
- (a) keep under review the number of hours it has assigned to each EDS Qualification for each of Total Qualification Time and Guided Learning,
 - (b) in particular, review the numbers of hours assigned following any revision to the –
 - (i) EDS National Standards, or
 - (ii) Total Qualification Time Criteria, and
 - (c) revise the number of hours that the awarding organisation has assigned, if appropriate.
- EDSQ6.3 Following any review by Ofqual of the number of hours assigned to a qualification in respect of Total Qualification Time or Guided Learning, an awarding organisation must revise that number in any manner required by Ofqual.

Interpretation

- EDSQ6.4 For the purposes of this Condition, references to a ‘qualification’ are references to the qualification as a whole and not to individual units.

Condition EDSQ7 Assessment

EDSQ7.1 An awarding organisation must ensure that in respect of each assessment for an EDS Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, it complies with any requirements, and has regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

Condition EDSQ8 Standard setting

- EDSQ8.1 An awarding organisation must ensure that the specification for each EDS Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, sets out specified levels of attainment which comply with any requirements which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.
- EDSQ8.2 In respect of each EDS Qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must comply with any requirements, and have regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time in relation to –
- (a) the promotion of consistency between the measurement of Learners' levels of attainment in that qualification and similar qualifications made available by other awarding organisations, and
 - (b) the setting of specified levels of attainment.
- EDSQ8.3 In setting the specified levels of attainment for an EDS Qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must have regard to an appropriate range of qualitative and quantitative evidence.
- EDSQ8.4 In respect of each EDS Qualification which it makes available, the range of evidence to which an awarding organisation has regard for the purposes of Condition EDSQ8.3 will only be appropriate if it includes evidence of –
- (a) the Level of Demand of the assessments for that qualification,
 - (b) the level of attainment demonstrated in those assessments by –
 - (i) an appropriately representative sample of Learners taking that qualification, or
 - (ii) individuals (whether Learners or otherwise) as part of robust technical pre-testing of those assessments,
 - (c) following the first time that a qualification designed in line with these Qualification Level Conditions is awarded, the level of attainment demonstrated by Learners who have previously been awarded that qualification.
- EDSQ8.5 An awarding organisation must maintain a record of –
- (a) the evidence to which it has had regard in setting the specified levels of attainment for each EDS Qualification which it makes available, and

(b) its rationale for the selection of and weight given to that evidence.

Condition EDSQ9 Interpretation and Definitions

- EDSQ9.1 The rules of interpretation and definitions outlined in General Condition J1 shall apply to the Qualification Level Conditions for EDS Qualifications.
- EDSQ9.2 Except in the circumstances described in Condition EDSQ9.3, the requirements imposed by the Qualification Level Conditions for EDS Qualifications apply in addition to the requirements imposed by the General Conditions of Recognition.
- EDSQ9.3 To the extent that there is any inconsistency between a requirement of such a Qualification Level Condition and a requirement of a General Condition of Recognition, such that an awarding organisation could not comply with both such requirements, the awarding organisation must comply with the requirement of the Qualification Level Condition and is not obliged to comply with the requirement of the General Condition of Recognition.
- EDSQ9.4 In these Conditions, the following words shall have the meaning given to them below (and cognate expressions should be construed accordingly)
-

EDS Qualification

A qualification in essential digital skills.

EDS National Standards

The National Standards for Essential Digital Skills, published by the Department for Education and revised from time to time.

Assessment requirements

Condition EDSQ7.1 allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the assessment of EDS Qualifications.

We set out our requirements for the purposes of Condition EDSQ7.1 below.

Setting assessments

An awarding organisation must set all assessments for an EDS Qualification that it makes available.

Adaptations at Entry level 3

An awarding organisation may permit a Centre to adapt questions or tasks in assessments at Entry level 3 for the purpose of making those assessments more accessible to Learners.

Where an awarding organisation permits a Centre to adapt questions or tasks, such adaptations must relate only to the context presented by that question or task. An awarding organisation must not permit a Centre to amend –

- (a) the knowledge, skills or understanding that a Learner is required to demonstrate in the question or task,
- (b) the Level of Demand of the question or task, or
- (c) any specified conditions under which the assessment must be completed, including in particular the time within which the assessment must be completed (unless any such amendment is part of a Reasonable Adjustment or for the purposes of Special Consideration).

Assessment structure

With respect to Condition G1.3, an awarding organisation must ensure that the criteria against which Learners' performance will be differentiated in each assessment for each EDS Qualification require the allocation of numerical marks based on the level of attainment each Learner has demonstrated.

Marking of assessments

Evidence generated by a Learner in an assessment for an EDS qualification may be marked –

- (a) by the awarding organisation or a person connected to the awarding organisation,
- (b) by a Centre, or
- (c) through a combination of (a) and (b).

In any event, the awarding organisation must demonstrate to Ofqual's satisfaction in its assessment strategy that –

- (a) it has taken all reasonable steps to identify the risk of any Adverse Effect which may result from its approach to marking assessments (and to Moderation where appropriate), and
- (b) where such a risk is identified, it has taken all reasonable steps to prevent that Adverse Effect or, where it cannot be prevented, to mitigate that Adverse Effect.

Guidance for Centres

Under Condition G9.2(a) an awarding organisation must ensure that every assessment for a qualification which it makes available is fit for purpose on delivery.

Under Condition C2.5 an awarding organisation must provide effective guidance to a Centre in respect of the parts of the delivery of a qualification that the Centre undertakes.

Under Condition H1.1 an awarding organisation must ensure that the criteria against which Learners' performance will be differentiated are applied accurately and consistently by all Assessors.

Taking these obligations together, and without prejudice to any other action that they might require, an awarding organisation must provide effective guidance to Centres in respect of the adaptation, delivery and marking by Centres, as relevant, of assessments for an EDS Qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available.

Requirements in relation to the specified levels of attainment to be used for EDS Qualifications

Condition EDSQ8.1 and EDSQ8.2(b) allows us to specify requirements and guidance in relation to the specified levels of attainment for EDS qualifications and the setting of specified levels of attainment for EDS Qualifications.

We set out below our requirements for the purposes of Condition EDSQ8.1 and EDSQ8.2(b).

Specified level of attainment in EDS Qualifications

In relation to each EDS Qualification, an awarding organisation must ensure that there shall be a single specified level of attainment – 'Pass'.

An awarding organisation must ensure that a Learner is issued a result of 'Fail' where he or she does not meet the criteria to be awarded a Pass.

Setting the specified level of attainment

In setting the specified levels of attainment for an EDS Qualification, an awarding organisation must ensure that these are set for the qualification as a whole.

Assessment strategy requirements

Condition EDSQ3.1(a) requires an awarding organisation to establish and maintain an assessment strategy for each EDS Qualification which it makes available or proposes to make available. Condition EDSQ3.2 requires an awarding organisation to ensure that the assessment strategy for an EDS Qualification sets out how the awarding organisation intends to secure, on an ongoing basis, compliance with its Conditions of Recognition in respect of the assessments for that qualification.

Condition EDSQ3.1(b) requires an awarding organisation to have regard to any requirements in relation to assessment strategies published by Ofqual. We set out our requirements for the purposes of Condition EDSQ3.1(b) below.

General requirements

An assessment strategy for an EDS Qualification must provide a comprehensive picture of the steps and approach an awarding organisation will take to secure compliance with its Conditions of Recognition in relation to the design, delivery and marking of assessments for, and the award of, that qualification.

An assessment strategy must present a logical and coherent narrative that includes clear and concise evidence demonstrating how an awarding organisation will seek to ensure that the qualification, and the assessments for it, are fit for purpose. In particular, it must include information and evidence to show how the awarding organisation promotes and acts on feedback between the different stages of the qualification development cycle so as to continuously improve the assessments for that qualification.

Detailed requirements

We set out below our detailed requirements on the specific information and evidence an awarding organisation must include in its assessment strategy. The amount of information and evidence that can be included may vary across the areas identified, depending on the relevant point in the qualification development cycle to which a particular item pertains and the extent to which Ofqual has determined the regulatory approach in relation to a particular issue.

These detailed requirements are intended to indicate the minimum items that an assessment strategy must include. They are not intended to provide a template specifying the form that it must take, since the optimal structure and content of an assessment strategy will depend on the approach that is being proposed by the awarding organisation.

| SECTION 1: DESIGN | Examples of relevant conditions |
|---|--|
| <p>Coverage of EDS National Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to coverage of the EDS National Standards, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how the EDS National Standards have been expanded as appropriate in the specification - the skills statements included from the EDS National Standards and how these reflect the purpose of the qualification. - the weightings for different skill areas of the EDS National Standards overall (and in each assessment if more than one) - the approach to targeting different skill areas and aspects of the EDS National Standards, e.g. whether integrated/synoptic or direct/focused | <p>Condition EDSQ1.1 Condition D1 Condition E4.2 Condition G1</p> |
| <p>Qualification structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Details of how the qualification and assessments will be structured and a rationale for the approach, for example in terms of covering the EDS National Standards effectively, and balancing reliability and manageability, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number and weighting of assessments - approach to content coverage across assessments (if more than one) | <p>Condition D1 Condition E4.2 Condition G1</p> |
| <p>Availability of assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to availability of assessments, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number of assessments to be available - type of assessments (e.g. onscreen, online, paper-based or a combination of these) - nature of opportunities (e.g. on-demand or sessional) - duration for which assessments will be available - approach to Learners taking an assessment again ■ In light of the approach to assessment availability, and having regard to the guidance for on-demand assessment, any specific risks that have been | <p>Condition EDSQ7.1 Condition D1 Condition E4.2 Condition G1 Conditions G9.1 – G9.2 Condition H2 Condition H3</p> |

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| <p>identified, how these will be mitigated, and how particular challenges will be addressed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensuring comparability of assessments - minimising predictability of assessments - ensuring security of assessments | |
| <p>Task types and mark schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ For each assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - details of the range and balance of task types to be used (e.g. multiple-choice, short answer, extended response) and how these will support valid assessment of the EDS National Standards - approach to mark scheme design, including for different task types, and an explanation of how resulting mark schemes will support reliable application by assessors - a sample of example tasks and associated mark schemes, representing the range to be used in assessments – these may or may not be taken from any sample assessment materials - commentaries explaining the approaches taken in the sample of example tasks and mark schemes | <p>Condition EDSQ1.1 Condition D1 Condition E4.2 Condition G1 Condition H1.1</p> |
| <p>Assessment time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assessment time overall, and for each individual assessment if more than one, and a rationale for this, for example in terms of covering the EDS National Standards effectively, and balancing reliability and manageability. | <p>Condition D1 Condition E4.2 Condition G1 Conditions G9.1 – G9.2</p> |
| <p>Number of marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of marks overall, and for each individual assessment if more than one, and a rationale for this, for example in terms of covering the EDS National Standards effectively, and balancing reliability and manageability. | <p>Condition D1 Condition E4.2 Condition G1</p> |
| SECTION 2: DELIVERY | |
| Developing assessment materials | Condition EDSQ1.1 |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Process for developing assessment materials, including different stages and personnel involved, how evidence regarding functioning of previous assessments is used, and any differences by assessment type. | <p>Condition EDSQ7.1 Condition D1 Condition D3 Condition E4.2 Condition G1 Condition G3 Condition G9.1</p> |
| <p>Assessment setting arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to training individuals who will be responsible for setting assessments and/or items, including ensuring security and mitigating any conflicts of interest. | <p>Condition A4 Conditions A5.1 – A5.3 Condition G1 Condition G4</p> |
| <p>Assessor standardisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to training and standardising assessors, including details of standardisation procedures and any wider training. | <p>Condition G1.3 Condition H1 Condition H2 Condition H5</p> |
| <p>Marking process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Explanation of how marking processes will operate. | <p>Condition EDSQ7.1 Condition H1 Condition H2 Condition H5 Condition H6.1(d)</p> |
| <p>Monitoring marking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Processes in place to monitor accuracy and consistency of marking and issuing of results, and to take remedial action where necessary. | <p>Condition H1 Condition H2 Condition H5 Condition H6.1(d)</p> |
| <p>Malpractice & security arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How malpractice will be addressed and security of assessments will be ensured, including any differences by assessment. | <p>Condition A8 Condition G4</p> |
| SECTION 3: CENTRES | |
| <p>Centre assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to whether Centre-adaptation and/or Centre marking will be permitted | <p>Condition EDSQ7.1 Condition C1 Conditions C2.1 – C2.3 Condition D1</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An explanation of the rationale for this and how any risks will be managed, for example in relation to authenticity of Learners' work and accuracy of Centres' marking. | <p>Condition E4.2 Condition G1 Condition G3 Condition G9</p> |
| <p>Centre guidance and training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to the provision of guidance and training to centres around Centre-adapted, and Centre-marked assessments. In particular to cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - guidance around adapting assessments - approach to reviewing Centre-adapted assessments - training in relation to application of assessment criteria | <p>Condition EDSQ7.1 Condition C1 Condition C2.5 Condition G9.2 Condition H1.1 Condition H5</p> |
| <p>Approach to marking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The steps taken to identify the risk of any Adverse Effect which may result from the awarding organisation's approach to marking assessments (and to Moderation and monitoring where appropriate). ■ Where such a risk has been identified, the steps taken to prevent that Adverse Effect or, where it cannot be prevented, to mitigate that Adverse Effect. | <p>Condition EDSQ7.1 Condition A6 Condition D1 Condition H1 Condition H2 Condition H5</p> |
| <p>Centre monitoring arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to monitoring Centres in relation to assessments, including how this will ensure assessments remain fit for purpose on delivery. | <p>Condition C1 Condition G9 Condition H1 Condition H2 Condition H5 Condition H6.1(d)</p> |
| <p>Moderation of Centre-marked assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to Moderation of centre marking, where relevant. | <p>Condition C1 Conditions C2.1 and C2.2(j) Condition H2</p> |
| SECTION 4: STANDARD SETTING & MAINTENANCE | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to ensuring decisions in relation to standard setting follow an appropriate technical methodology and have appropriate scrutiny. | <p>Condition EDSQ8.2(b) Condition D1 Condition H3</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An explanation of the technical methodology employed in the process, including the personnel involved and their roles. - An explanation of how the decisions from the process are approved within the awarding organisation and the personnel involved in this. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to ensuring decisions in relation to standard setting are based on an appropriate range of qualitative and quantitative evidence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Details of the range of evidence used to inform decisions and the weight given to different sources. - A rationale for why this approach is optimal, in light of the assessment design/approach and cohort make-up. | <p>Condition EDSQ8.2(b) Conditions EDSQ8.3 – 8.5 Condition D1 Condition H3</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approach to ensuring decisions in relation to standard setting promote comparability, over time and between awarding organisations, and are kept under review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Details of how comparability between different versions of assessments and, where relevant, different types of assessment (e.g. onscreen, online, paper-based or a combination of these) is ensured, both where these are available at the same time and on an ongoing basis. - For on-demand assessments, details of how and when remedial action is taken when emerging evidence regarding an existing assessment suggests previous decisions in relation to standard setting may need reconsidering. - Details of how evidence generated in line with any requirements set by Ofqual under Condition EDSQ8.2(a) in relation to inter-awarding organisation comparability will be used to inform decisions on standard setting. | <p>Condition EDSQ8.2 Condition D1 Condition H3</p> |



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Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU

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ofqual

Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH

0300 303 3344
public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofqual