

# Report on referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning

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## Preface

The England and Northern Ireland National Coordination Point (ENI NCP) is delighted to have taken part in this work on the referencing of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). It strengthens our links with Europe and helps us to understand the relationship between our national frameworks and the qualification systems and frameworks of other countries.

The report explains the process we went through and the criteria we used to understand the relationship of the QCF and the EQF. It also specifies our conclusions – the final referencing of QCF levels to ECF levels.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), who together operate as the executive for the NCP, would like to acknowledge the valuable input from members of the England and Northern Ireland group throughout the process. We'd also like to thank all those who took part in the consultation for their support.

## Membership of the England and Northern Ireland National Coordination Point Group

- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (joint NCP lead)
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (joint NCP lead)
- Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Department of Education (Northern Ireland)
- Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland)
- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (now Department for Business, Innovation and Skills)
- Edexcel
- Federation of Awarding Bodies
- Guild HE (observer status)
- International framework experts
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

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- Northern Regional College (Northern Ireland)
- Ofqual
- Open College Network Northern Ireland
- Quality Assurance Agency (observer status)
- Sector Skills Council network representative
- UK Commission for Employment and Skills
- Universities UK (observer status)
- UKNARIC

## Summary

In 2007 the UK Government signed up to the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework (EQF), along with the principle of referencing national qualifications systems to it by 2010. In 2008/9 three exercises were carried out to reference the UK qualifications frameworks to the EQF in accordance with the criteria and procedures developed by the EQF Advisory Group. This report describes the official referencing of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to the EQF in England and Northern Ireland. Separate reports describe the referencing of the frameworks in Wales and Scotland, and a report summarising the position for all the UK frameworks will be published later in 2009.

The QCF was introduced in 2008 with the intention that it will include all qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland other than higher education qualifications, which are covered by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), and the qualified status granted by professional bodies. It introduces a standard currency for achievement in the form of a framework of levels based on learning outcomes, as well as a system of credit and principles for recognising previous certificated and uncertificated learning. The QCF has nine levels, with the first (Entry) level subdivided into Entry 1–3. Entry 1 represents the most basic level of achievement, and level 8 the most advanced.

A National Coordination Point (NCP) was set up as the official body responsible for referencing the QCF to the EQF, led jointly by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (England) and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (Northern Ireland) with membership from across the education, training and skills sector. During the summer and autumn of 2008 the NCP carried out an exercise to map the levels of the QCF to the eight levels of the EQF by reference to each framework's level descriptors. The results of this exercise were published and drawn to the attention of key stakeholders in the sector, following which an open consultation was carried out. After consideration of the consultation responses, the NCP agreed the following relationship for referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the European Qualifications Framework:

### *Final referencing of the QCF to the EQF*

QCF level	E1	E2	E3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
EQF level	–		1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8

The NCP notes that the EQF does not include a level or levels corresponding to QCF Entry 1 and 2, which are recognised as important in supporting learners who have low levels of basic

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skills or lack confidence. It therefore encourages the EQF Advisory Group to consider how achievement at these levels might be recognised in the EQF.

The EQF has a set of common principles for quality assurance which national qualification systems are expected to follow. The NCP has assessed the quality assurance policies and procedures used in England and Northern Ireland and confirms that they conform to these principles.

This report has been endorsed by the competent national bodies in England and Northern Ireland, and will be placed on the QCDA and CCEA websites. The European Commission will be informed that the referencing process has been completed and a link to the report will be provided. The UK report, comprising the reports from Wales, Scotland and England and Northern Ireland, will be formally submitted to the European Commission at the end of the year.

# 1 Introduction and background

## 1.1 Introduction

In November 2007 the United Kingdom Government signed up to a recommendation of the European Parliament and Council of the European Union on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (the EQF). The recommendation proposes that member states:

- relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF by 2010, in particular by referencing their qualification levels to the levels of the EQF in a transparent manner
- adopt measures so that by 2012 all new qualification certificates, diplomas and “Europass” documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate EQF level.

This report addresses the first point above in relation to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in England and Northern Ireland. As will be explained in section 1.4 the United Kingdom has several qualifications frameworks, and the process described here is one of three which references these frameworks to the EQF. Separate reports refer to the referencing to the EQF of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The purpose of these exercises is to reference national qualifications frameworks to the EQF: it is not intended that the national frameworks themselves should be changed to produce closer or otherwise different alignments as a result.

The European Commission proposed that each member state sets up a National Coordination Point (NCP) as the means of relating their national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework. The NCP is the Commission’s first point of contact with member states on issues related to referencing to the EQF. The exercise described here has been led jointly by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) as the executive bodies of the NCP for England and Northern Ireland. The NCP’s executive is overseen by a committee of stakeholders from across the education and training sector in England and Northern Ireland (the ‘ENI Group’). The composition and remit of the ENI Group is given in Appendix 1.

## 1.2 The European Qualifications Framework

The development of the EQF started in 2000 with European-led discussions on the need for greater transparency of national qualifications systems. This work accelerated from 2004 with the drafting by QCA of a set of European reference levels. Following a development process drawing on expertise from all EU member states, a draft framework was extensively consulted on during



2005 and the finalised framework adopted formally in April 2008. The EQF is described and specified in the document *European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2008)*, published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities and available at [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/eqf08\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/eqf08_en.pdf).

The EQF is designed as a common European reference system to link different countries' qualifications systems and frameworks together: effectively to function as a translation device making qualifications more readable across national boundaries. The aim of the framework is to benefit learners and workers wishing to move between countries as well as employers and educational institutions attempting to compare the level of qualifications from different national systems. The EQF is designed to be used by the bodies responsible for national qualification systems and frameworks relating their systems to the EQF, rather than mapping individual qualifications directly to it.

The EQF is designed to cover all levels of qualification. The framework has eight reference levels based on a learning outcomes approach (the level of knowledge, skill and competence required) rather than on the type and length of learning experience. In principle each level should be attainable by a variety of education and career paths.

The NCP has agreed that the definitions contained in the EQF document are applicable to England and Northern Ireland.

### **1.3 The Qualifications and Credit Framework**

The Qualifications and Credit Framework was formally introduced in 2008 following a two year trial period. The QCF formed a major strand of the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme, so its initial focus has been on vocational and related qualifications. It is intended that it will include all qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland other than higher education qualifications (which are covered by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications) and the qualified status granted by professional bodies.<sup>1</sup> The QCF also forms part of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, which is managed by the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS).

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<sup>1</sup> In the UK there is no statutory obligation for qualifications to be included in the national frameworks. However the frameworks will include most qualifications that are offered through publicly-funded education and training. General educational qualifications (principally the General Certificate of Secondary Education and the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level) will continue to be located in the NQF until a decision is made whether or not to move them into the QCF.

The relationship of the QCF to the other UK frameworks and to the broader UK education and qualifications landscape is outlined in sections 1.4 and 1.5.

The QCF is designed as an inclusive and flexible regulated framework of units and qualifications that is capable of recognising the widest possible range of quality assured learner achievements. It introduces a standard currency for achievement in the form of a framework of levels based on learning outcomes, as well as a system of credit. In addition to being the national framework for qualifications (other than higher education qualifications) in England and Northern Ireland, the QCF therefore has a wider application as a unit-based credit framework. The essential design principles of the QCF are:

- a system of levels, based on learning outcomes. The QCF contains nine levels: an Entry level (subdivided into Entry 1, 2 and 3) for achievements below those normally associated with general educational and vocational qualifications, plus numerical levels 1 to 8. Level descriptors define the complexity of learning or achievement required at each level. Entry 1 is the most basic in terms of the outcomes required, and level 8 the most advanced. The levels of the QCF are summarised below and the full descriptors provided in Appendix 3.

*The levels of the QCF*

Entry level	Entry 1 recognises progress along a continuum that ranges from the most elementary of achievements to beginning to make use of skills, knowledge or understanding that relate to the immediate environment.
	Achievement at Entry 2 reflects the ability to make use of skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out simple, familiar tasks and activities with guidance.
	Achievement at Entry 3 reflects the ability to make use of skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts, with appropriate guidance where needed.
Level 1	Achievement at level 1 reflects the ability to use relevant knowledge, skills and procedures to complete routine tasks. It includes responsibility for completing tasks and procedures subject to direction or guidance.
Level 2	Achievement at level 2 reflects the ability to select and use relevant knowledge, ideas, skills and procedures to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems. It includes taking responsibility for completing tasks and procedures and exercising autonomy and judgement subject to overall direction or

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	guidance.
Level 3	Achievement at level 3 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to complete tasks and address problems that, while well defined, have a measure of complexity. It includes taking responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures as well as exercising autonomy and judgement within limited parameters. It also reflects awareness of different perspectives or approaches within an area of study or work.
Level 4	Achievement at level 4 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to address problems that are well defined but complex and non-routine. It includes taking responsibility for overall courses of action as well as exercising autonomy and judgement within fairly broad parameters. It also reflects understanding of different perspectives or approaches within an area of study or work.
Level 5	Achievement at level 5 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to address broadly-defined, complex problems. It includes taking responsibility for planning and developing courses of action as well as exercising autonomy and judgement within broad parameters. It also reflects understanding of different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.
Level 6	Achievement at level 6 reflects the ability to refine and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to address complex problems that have limited definition. It includes taking responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that are able to underpin substantial change or development, as well as exercising broad autonomy and judgement. It also reflects an understanding of different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the theories that underpin them.
Level 7	Achievement at level 7 reflects the ability to reformulate and use relevant understanding, methodologies and approaches to address problematic situations that involve many interacting factors. It includes taking responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that initiate or underpin substantial change or development, as well as exercising broad autonomy and judgement. It also reflects an understanding of relevant theoretical and methodological perspectives, and how they affect their area of study or work.

Level 8	Achievement at level 8 reflects the ability to develop original understanding and extend an area of knowledge or professional practice. It reflects the ability to address problematic situations that involve many complex, interacting factors through initiating, designing and undertaking research, development or strategic activities. It involves the exercise of broad autonomy, judgement and leadership in sharing responsibility for the development of a field of work or knowledge or for creating substantial professional or organisational change. It also reflects a critical understanding of relevant theoretical and methodological perspectives and how they affect the field of knowledge or work.
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- a system of units and credit. One credit is based on 10 hours of learning (consistent with UK credit accumulation and transfer practice), regardless of where or how the learning takes place. All units in the QCF have a unique unit title, learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria, a credit value and a level.
- principles for assembling qualifications from units. All QCF qualifications must be based on units in the QCF, with rules of combination being applied to specify which units must be achieved for each qualification.
- principles for recognising prior certificated and non-certificated (that is, informal and non-formal) learning.
- a standard system of qualification titles. Titles consist of the qualification's level, a designation (Award, Certificate or Diploma) relating to its credit size (see Figure 1), and the subject or occupational area that the qualification covers.
- separation of design/awarding and regulatory functions. The qualifications regulators (Ofqual in England, CCEA in Northern Ireland and DCELLS in Wales<sup>2</sup>) are responsible for

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of formation of the NCP, CCEA was the regulatory authority for all qualifications (except National Vocational Qualifications – NVQs) in Northern Ireland, while QCA was the regulatory authority for all qualifications in England and NVQs in Northern Ireland. The Education Act 1997 and the Education (NI) Order 1998 established QCA and CCEA as competent bodies ([www.statutelaw.gov.uk/home.aspx](http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk/home.aspx)). During the life of the project QCA split into Ofqual, responsible for regulation, and the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, responsible for research and development. Ofqual will take responsibility for the regulation of all qualifications in England and all vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland and will be accountable directly to parliament and to the Northern Ireland Assembly rather than to government ministers. The Department of Education in Northern Ireland will be responsible for regulating non-vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland.

recognising organisations for particular functions in the QCF. Organisations may be recognised to develop units; to award qualifications; or to combine either or both of these functions with developing the rules of combination that define qualifications.

- a system of quality assurance that applies the same standards of operation and comparability to all units and qualifications within the QCF (see Chapter 4).

**Figure 1: Level and credit in the Qualifications and Credit Framework**



Full details of the QCF and the associated regulatory arrangements are provided in the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*, available from [www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/reform\\_of\\_vocational\\_qualifications/qcf\\_regulations.asp](http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/reform_of_vocational_qualifications/qcf_regulations.asp) or [www.ofqual.gov.uk/121.aspx](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/121.aspx).

## **1.4 The QCF in the context of other UK qualifications frameworks**

### **(a) England and Northern Ireland**

Within England and Northern Ireland there are currently three qualification frameworks: the QCF; the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). The levels of the three frameworks are comparable with each other. Appendix 4 shows the relationships between the levels of these frameworks and the frameworks used in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

All vocational and Entry level qualifications currently in the NQF are expected to have moved into the QCF by the end of 2010. General educational qualifications (principally the General Certificate of Secondary Education and the General Certificate of Education at advanced level) will continue to be located in the NQF until a decision is made whether or not to move them into the QCF. The NQF uses the same system of levels (Entry 1–3 and levels 1–8) as the QCF, with levels being applied to full qualifications rather than to units.

The FHEQ (see *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, [www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/FHEQ08.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/FHEQ08.pdf)) is a five-level framework for higher education qualifications and is based on the concept that qualifications are awarded for the demonstrated achievement of learning outcomes. The levels, designated 4–8, are comparable to levels 4–8 of the QCF although a different approach is used to specify them. The five levels of the FHEQ are differentiated by a series of generic qualification descriptors that summarise the knowledge, understanding and the types of abilities that holders of qualifications at each level are likely to have. The FHEQ has been successfully verified as compatible with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (see *Verification of the compatibility of the framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA)*, available at [www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/selfcertification09/FHEQSelfCert.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/selfcertification09/FHEQSelfCert.pdf)).

### **(b) Relationships with frameworks in Wales and Scotland**

In Scotland the SCQF was introduced in its current form in 2001 as a comprehensive framework to cover all qualifications including those made by higher education institutions. The framework contains 12 levels including three Access levels (broadly comparable with the Entry levels in the QCF).

The CQFW in Wales is a similarly comprehensive framework that incorporates the QCF/NQF and FHEQ within it, as well as having a further strand for achievements not currently included in any of these frameworks. The levels of the CQFW are compatible with those of the QCF.

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A short explanatory document, *Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries*

([www.qcda.gov.uk/22197.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/22197.aspx)), gives graphic comparisons of the levels of the various UK frameworks and those of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It represents an easily accessible “rough guide” to the relationship between qualification levels in the UK and Ireland.

## **1.5 The QCF in the context of UK qualifications, education and training**

The following is a brief description of the education and training system in England and Northern Ireland geared to indicating how the QCF levels relate to key stages and forms of education.

### **(a) Education to age 16**

The general education route, followed by the majority of learners in schools until the age of 16, leads to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) which is normally taken in several subjects. GCSEs are examined and graded, with the higher grades regarded as equivalent to level 2 and lower grades level 1. In England alternative routes are available pre-16 leading to vocationally related diplomas at levels 1 and 2 or a variety of qualifications in the Foundation Learning Tier (Entry level and level 1). Depending on the availability of suitable provision, learners who are capable of doing so are able to progress to level 3 qualifications pre-16.

### **(b) Education and training at ages 16–18**

Around half of 16-year-olds progress to courses leading to the General Certificate of Education at advanced level (GCE A level) at level 3, which acts as the main route into higher education. Other mainstream options from age 16 include vocationally related diplomas in schools and colleges (in England), pre-vocational and vocational courses in colleges, apprenticeships, and other certificated work-based training. These routes may lead to qualifications at any level between Entry 1 and level 3, sometimes with direct progression to vocational and professional qualifications at higher levels or access to higher education.

### **(c) Education and training beyond age 18**

Higher education qualifications in England and Northern Ireland are delivered and awarded by a range of higher education institutions under degree awarding powers granted by Royal Charter or Act of Parliament. The major higher education qualifications awarded in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are described in the FHEQ document.

Outside of higher education there is a large and diverse range of vocational programmes in England and Northern Ireland that are designed to prepare people for careers and jobs, provide specific skills and ongoing development for people in work, and support career progression. These programmes typically lead to qualifications in the QCF.

Qualifying for many higher-level occupations across the UK involves gaining qualified status through professional membership or regulatory bodies. This is outside the scope of the QCF as it normally takes the form of a membership designation or a chartered or accredited title rather



than a certificate or diploma; however, many professions use qualifications within the QCF or from higher education as part of their routes towards qualified status.

Non-vocational programmes for adults, for instance in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages, may lead to qualifications at Entry level or levels 1, 2 and 3. Programmes designed specifically to provide access to higher education are at level 3.

## **2 The referencing and consultation process**

### **2.1 The National Coordination Point**

The National Coordination Point (NCP) for England and Northern Ireland is one of three NCPs in the UK, the others relating to Wales and Scotland. A UK EQF Coordination Group was established in November 2007 to provide a forum for the three NCPs (a) to work together to provide a coherent approach to implementation of the EQF across the UK and (b) to produce a single report summarising the position for the UK as a whole.

The role of the NCP is to:

- reference levels of qualifications within the national qualifications system to the European Qualifications Framework levels
- promote and apply the European principles for quality assurance in education and training when relating the national qualifications system to the European Qualifications Framework
- ensure that the methodology used to refer national qualifications levels to the European Qualifications Framework is transparent and that the resulting decisions are published
- provide guidance to stakeholders on how national qualifications relate to the European Qualifications Framework through the national qualifications system
- ensure the participation of all relevant national stakeholders including, according to national legislation and practice, higher education and vocational education and training institutions, social partners, sectors and experts on the comparison and use of qualifications at the European level.

The NCP's executive is provided jointly by QCA and CCEA. Its work is overseen by a committee representing key stakeholders from across the education and training sector in England and Northern Ireland (the 'ENI Group'). The remit and composition of the ENI Group is provided in Appendix 1.

### **2.2 The referencing process**

Commencing in July 2008, an exercise was undertaken to reference the QCF levels against those of the EQF. The approach taken was initially limited to comparing the level descriptors of the two frameworks and coming to an informed and neutral view of how the levels relate to each other. The referencing was carried out at three levels:

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- Descriptor level: comparing the descriptor (that is, the overall set of statements describing the level) for the QCF holistically with the corresponding set of statements in the EQF, identifying a 'best fit' at an outline level. This was carried out by putting printed versions of the two frameworks side by side and identifying the best-fit EQF level for each QCF level, and noting whether the match was good or partial. Of the three primary methods used this is potentially the most valid, but because the reading across is done at a broad-brush level it will also have the greatest subjectivity of interpretation.
- Domain level: comparing each of the QCF domains (knowledge and understanding, application and action, and autonomy and accountability) with the corresponding EQF domains (knowledge, skill and competence) at each level. Because of the different coverage of the EQF domains *vis-à-vis* those in the QCF, the method used was to compare each QCF domain with the relevant statements from the one or two domains from the EQF that related to it: so for instance QCF "knowledge and understanding" was related to EQF "knowledge," as well as to EQF "skills" in the sense of cognitive skills.
- Indicator level: The QCF level descriptors are made up of a series of bullet-point statements (indicators). Each indicator in the QCF was compared with the relevant level statements in the EQF, and a match identified for that specific indicator. This method was initially difficult to apply universally as some of the QCF indicators need to be read in context to maintain their sense of level. A modified approach was used that involved focusing on each individual indicator but also referring back to the context in which it appears. This produced more consistent results and can be viewed as refining the outcomes from methods 1 and 2.

Supplementary tests were also carried out, (a) through referencing a small sample of qualifications to both frameworks and (b) to examine the relative positioning of levels in the EQF and QCF where both had been mapped to third-party frameworks. Further details of methods and findings are provided in *Linking the Qualifications and Credit Framework levels to the European Qualifications Framework* (2008), available at [www.qcda.gov.uk/20243.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/20243.aspx) or [www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/docs/regulation/eqf/eqf\\_qcf\\_report.pdf](http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/docs/regulation/eqf/eqf_qcf_report.pdf).

The findings indicated that QCF Entry 1 and Entry 2 did not map to any of the EQF levels. The descriptors of QCF Entry 3 demonstrated a good match to EQF level 1, and those of QCF levels 1–3 matched to EQF levels 2–4 respectively. The descriptors for QCF level 4 exceeded those of EQF level 4, but without matching to EQF level 5. From QCF level 5 upwards the QCF levels showed a good correspondence with their numerically equivalent EQF levels.

The referencing of QCF level 4 was potentially problematic as, on the basis of the descriptors alone, it exhibited a better match with EQF level 4 rather than EQF level 5. This would suggest referencing both QCF levels 3 and 4 to EQF level 4, when customarily QCF/NQF level 3 represents the upper end of secondary and further education with qualifications above that level being within or parallel to higher education. However it was decided to proceed to consultation on the basis of the relationship supported by the level descriptors rather than that suggested by the workings of the qualification system.

### **2.3 The consultation**

Prior to the consultation period a broad range of stakeholders were approached to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage participation. This involved presentations at events, targeted emails about the consultation, articles in stakeholder newsletters and bulletins, and a dedicated section on QCA and CCEA's websites. The stakeholders who were contacted included but were not limited to:

- awarding organisations (that is, organisations responsible for the assessment, validation and certification of qualifications)
- professional bodies
- learning providers
- employer-led sector skills bodies
- the organisations responsible for the various UK and Irish qualifications frameworks
- subscribers to the QCF e-newsletter.

The referencing report was placed on the QCA and CCEA websites along with a set of consultation questions in the form of an online questionnaire.

The consultation period ran from November 2008 to February 2009. A total of 46 formal responses to the consultation questions were received, 44 via the online questionnaire and two in the form of a letter submitted to a member of the NCP steering group. The responses came from across the sector, including awarding and professional bodies, employer-led sector skills bodies, learning providers, trade unions, government and private-sector organisations, and consultants involved in other EQF-related projects.

The great majority (91 per cent) of respondents thought that the referencing was clear. A majority (66 per cent) agreed with the proposed relationship. Disagreement related to four main points:

- a) The referencing of QCF level 4 to EQF level 4. This was the most widely challenged recommendation, with a significant majority of respondents who commented on it suggesting that QCF 4 should be mapped to EQF 5. Particular concerns were raised about blurring the distinction between the completion of senior secondary education (QCF level 3) and the initial stages of higher education, and some respondents also indicated that there was a large difference in the level of vocational qualifications between QCF levels 3 and 4.
- b) A concern to ensure consistency between the referencing of frameworks across the UK and Ireland. Where specific discrepancies were noted relating to the QCF these were principally concerned with QCF level 4: comments suggested that some qualifications in Scotland and the Republic of Ireland would be referenced to EQF level 5, while the same or equivalent qualifications in England and Northern Ireland would be matched to EQF level 4.
- c) The lack of a direct numerical relationship (that is, 1–1, 2–2, 3-3) at the lower levels of the framework. The main concerns centred on the confusion that this might cause and an expectation that the levels should be directly equivalent. No evidence was offered that the relationship was either incorrect in terms of the level descriptors or resulted in equivalent qualifications being given a different EQF level via different national (UK and external) frameworks.
- d) The absence of an EQF level corresponding to QCF Entry level (or Entry 1 and 2). Some respondents commented that this could undermine access and exclude learners from the qualification system if achievements at these levels were not recognised across Europe.

Finally, examination of the consultation responses indicated some misunderstandings of the purpose and functioning of the EQF, indicating a need for clearer communication.

## **2.4 The NCP's response to the consultation**

Following the consultation the England and Northern Ireland Group considered the implications of different courses of action in response to the points raised, including their implications for relationships between the various UK and Irish frameworks. Following their deliberations the NCP decided the following:

- (a) To confirm the correspondence of QCF Entry 3 and levels 1, 2 and 3 with EQF levels 1–4 respectively.

The initial referencing exercise demonstrated conclusively that the descriptors of these QCF levels mapped to the EQF at one level above. Referring to key qualifications at the relevant QCF levels indicates that this is also consistent with interpretations in the other UK frameworks, in the Republic of Ireland, and where evidence is available, internationally.

(b) To adjust the referencing of QCF level 4 to EQF level 5.

Following consideration of a wider range of factors than those that had been taken into account in the original mapping exercise, the Group decided to adjust the referencing of QCF level 4 to EQF level 5. The consultation responses had indicated that there would be significant negative implications from referencing QCF 4 to EQF 4, primarily concerning consistency between national systems within and beyond the UK; the appropriate valuing of learners' achievements in relation to employment and progression; and the confusion that would result from having a single EQF level spanning a major boundary in the UK qualification system. The main evidence considered in taking these responses into account was:

- The level descriptors, which suggest that while QCF level 4 is pitched at a slightly higher level than EQF level 4, it is still closer to EQF level 4 than to EQF level 5.
- The actual relationships between qualifications at QCF levels 3, 4 and 5. This suggests that there is a stronger differentiation, perceived and actual, between achievements at QCF levels 3 and 4 than there is between those at QCF levels 4 and 5.
- Relationships with the other frameworks in the UK and with the Irish NFQ. Achieving consistency of referencing between the QCF, the SCQF, the CQFW and the NFQ points to QCF level 4 being referenced to EQF level 5. This referencing is also consistent with the relationship between the FHEQ and the framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.
- The level of typical qualifications positioned at level 4 in the QCF, which are closer to EQF level 5 than to EQF level 4.

Detailed consideration of both the technical argument based on a comparison of descriptors and the weight of evidence from current UK understandings of qualifications at these levels points clearly to QCF levels 4 and 5 being referenced to EQF level 5.

(c) To confirm the referencing of QCF levels 5–8 to EQF levels 5–8.

The direct referencing of QCF and EQF levels 5–8 was fully supported by both the initial referencing exercise and the consultation. It is consistent with the referencing of the other UK frameworks and the Irish NFQ to the EQF, and with the relationship between the FHEQ and the framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

(d) To approve the relationship between the levels of the QCF and those of the EQF as follows:

*Final referencing of the QCF to the EQF*

QCF level	E1	E2	E3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
EQF level	–		1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8

(e) To establish arrangements for a UK-wide communications programme and develop web-based information for users from outside the UK.

## 2.5 Matters for the EQF Advisory Group

The NCP noted the lack of an appropriate level in the EQF to which QCF Entry 1 and Entry 2 could be referenced, and also noted the potential for negative effects on inclusivity, access and progression.

QCF Entry 1 and Entry 2 provide opportunities for learners to have achievements recognised that are below the level normally represented by vocational, pre-vocational or general educational qualifications. Entry 1 is described as recognising “progress along a continuum that ranges from the most elementary of achievements to beginning to make use of skills, knowledge, or understanding that relate to the immediate environment”, while Entry 2 “reflects the ability to make use of skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out simple, familiar tasks and activities with guidance”. These levels have particular significance for supporting learners who have low levels of basic skills or lack confidence. There is also a substantial body of evidence showing that providing recognition for achievements at Entry level encourages learners to take further steps on the qualifications ladder.

Since this is a matter outside the scope of the current referencing exercise, the EQF Advisory Group is encouraged to consider how achievement at these levels might be recognised across Europe.

### 3 Criteria for the referencing process

The EQF Advisory Group has developed 10 criteria and procedures for referencing national frameworks to the EQF. These criteria are designed to ensure overall coherence and transparency in the referencing process. The way each criterion has been applied in referencing the QCF to the EQF is described below.

#### Criterion 1

*The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.*

QCA and CCEA jointly form the executive of the designated National Coordination Point (NCP) for England and Northern Ireland, with responsibility for managing the referencing of the QCF to the EQF. These bodies are the competent authorities for regulating qualifications in England and Northern Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

QCA is a non-departmental public body accountable to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. It develops the school curriculum and its assessment, supports the development of vocational learning, regulates awarding bodies and accredits and monitors qualifications in schools and in post-16 education and training. It supports the development of occupational standards by Sector Skills Councils, is responsible for national curriculum tests, and supports awarding bodies on the delivery of examinations.

CCEA is a non-departmental public body reporting to the Department of Education in Northern Ireland. Its functions include advising the government on the school curriculum, ensuring that the qualifications and examinations offered by awarding bodies in Northern Ireland are of an appropriate quality and standard, and specifying qualifications relating to the school curriculum.

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of formation of the NCP, CCEA was the regulatory authority for all qualifications (except National Vocational Qualifications – NVQs) in Northern Ireland, while QCA was the regulatory authority for all qualifications in England and NVQs in Northern Ireland. During the life of the project QCA split into Ofqual, responsible for regulation, and the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, responsible for research and development. Ofqual will take responsibility for the regulation of all qualifications in England and all vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland and will be accountable directly to parliament and to the Northern Ireland Assembly rather than to government ministers. The Department of Education in Northern Ireland will be responsible for regulating non-vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland.



The ENI Group which oversees the work of the NCP executive represents key stakeholders across education and employment in England and Northern Ireland. The remit and composition of the Group is provided in Appendix 1.

## Criterion 2

*There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.*

The mapping and national consultation process described in Chapter 2 of this report has produced clear and justifiable referencing between the levels of the QCF and those of the EQF as presented below and in the conclusions to this document. This referencing is also consistent with the established relationships between the qualifications frameworks in the UK and between them and the NFQ in Ireland. The relationship between the levels of the two frameworks will be publicised in documentation and on the websites of the qualifications regulators in England and Northern Ireland.

*Final referencing of the QCF to the EQF*

QCF level	E1	E2	E3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
EQF level	–		1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8

## Criterion 3

*The national framework or qualifications system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.*

The UK has a history of using learning outcomes that goes back to the mid-1980s, and it is now standard practice for qualifications to be specified in terms of what learners need to be able to demonstrate in order to achieve them. The QCF is explicitly based on a system of units, specified in terms of learning outcomes, that are assembled into qualifications through rules of combination. Achievement of single or multiple units is recognised by the award of credit. Learners who achieve credits are entitled to have them recognised towards any qualification that includes the relevant units within its rules of combination.

The QCF supports the recognition of previous learning from certificated and non-certificated sources where learners can show that they have met the learning outcomes within the unit(s) that they are seeking. The principles underpinning this are explained in the document *Claiming*

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*credit: guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (available from [www.qcda.gov.uk/20515.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/20515.aspx)).

## **Criterion 4**

*The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.*

As described in section 1.3 the QCF has clear requirements for the specification and titling of qualifications that makes clear their position in the framework. Procedures for the recognition of organisations to operate in the QCF and for the accreditation of qualifications into the QCF are publicly available on the qualifications regulators' websites. These procedures include ensuring that:

- the QCF level descriptors are consistently and correctly applied
- units and qualifications are assigned a credit value indicating their size
- units relating to occupational activities are approved by the relevant Sector Skills Council in line with their sector qualifications strategy
- titling of units and qualifications and the way in which units are assembled into qualifications via rules of combination are consistent with the QCF regulations.

The detailed requirements for units and qualifications in the QCF are described in the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (available at [www.ofqual.gov.uk/121.aspx](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/121.aspx)).

## **Criterion 5**

*The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in Annex 3 of the Recommendation).*

Annex 3 of the *European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning* (Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008) sets out nine principles for quality assurance in the implementation of the EQF (the 'Common Principles').

The quality assurance systems associated with the award of units and qualifications in England and Northern Ireland sit within the wider regulatory framework of the QCF, as described in the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* and summarised in Appendix 2. The quality assurance systems for the QCF are consistent with the Common Principles, as set out in Chapter 4 of this report.

## Criterion 6

*The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.*

The relevant quality assurance bodies are CCEA<sup>4</sup> in Northern Ireland and Ofqual (formerly part of QCA) in England. Both bodies are represented on the NCP, and formally endorse the referencing process and its outcomes as described in this report. On behalf of awarding organisations recognised by the qualifications regulators the report is endorsed by the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB), which is also represented on the NCP.

## Criterion 7

*The referencing process shall involve international experts.*

The following international experts were members of the ENI Group and played an active role in the workings of the Group and in the referencing process:

- Slava Pevec, National Institute for Vocational Education and Training, Slovenia.
- Francisca Arbizu Echávarri, National Institute of Qualifications (INCUAL), Spain.

## Criterion 8

*The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately each of the criteria.*

As the executive for the NCP for England and Northern Ireland, QCA and CCEA have produced and made public this report which:

- certifies the referencing of the QCF with the EQF
- sets out and provides links to the evidence to support the referencing
- details the key stages of the exercise

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing this report CCEA was responsible for the regulation of all qualifications in Northern Ireland, except National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Ofqual will take over regulation of vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland in 2010

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- addresses separately each of the 10 referencing criteria.

The report will be accessible from the QCDA and CCEA websites.

A report summarising the referencing processes for the whole of the UK is currently being prepared and will be agreed by the NCPs for England and Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. This report will also be made available on the QCDA and CCEA websites.

## **Criterion 9**

*The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed referencing reports.*

We consent to the information contained in this report being added to the EQF platform and portal so that it can be accessed widely in accordance with the agreed position.

## **Criterion 10**

*Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.*

This will form a later stage of the work. Certificates for qualifications in the QCF currently state the QCF level and the credit value of the relevant qualification.

## 4 Quality assurance

The following sections outline the approach to quality assurance within the QCF and how it complies with the EQF Common Principles. Further details on the quality assurance processes for the QCF are provided in the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (the 'Regulatory Arrangements'), available at [www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/docs/regulation/qcf\\_regulations/regulatory\\_arrangements\\_qcf\\_28\\_08\\_08.pdf](http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/docs/regulation/qcf_regulations/regulatory_arrangements_qcf_28_08_08.pdf) or [www.ofqual.gov.uk/121.aspx](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/121.aspx). A summary of the quality assurance processes for the QCF and the NQF is provided in Appendix 2.

### 4.1 Quality assurance in the QCF

Outside of higher education, which works to a separate set of principles and quality assurance processes, the qualification system in England and Northern Ireland is essentially an open market in which a wide range of qualifications are made available to learners, subject to national quality assurance arrangements. Within this system the principal actors are:

- Centres, meaning educational institutions, training organisations, employers and other bodies that provide learning and assessment opportunities leading to recognised qualifications.
- Awarding organisations, meaning bodies that award credit and qualifications, set assessment requirements, monitor assessments and issue certificates.
- The qualifications regulators (Ofqual for England and CCEA for Northern Ireland), who act to ensure that national expectations for standards of learning and assessment are met and that the operations of awarding organisations are of consistently good quality.

The principal roles of the qualifications regulators are to:

- establish and uphold criteria for units and qualifications within the QCF
- establish regulatory arrangements that specify clear requirements and rigorous and appropriate quality standards for awarding organisations and for organisations recognised to submit units to the framework
- recognise these organisations and monitor their systems and standards
- accredit qualifications within the QCF

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- keep users informed about units and qualifications in the QCF, publish a definitive record of all recognised units and accredited qualifications in the framework, and report publicly on the QCF and on the organisations that operate within it.

Awarding organisations must have sufficient resources, expertise, and organisational and administrative processes to provide qualifications to the standards required for the QCF. They are also required to have procedures in place to monitor their compliance with the regulatory arrangements, to review their operations with a view to continuous improvement, and make available the outcomes of their reviews to the qualifications regulators. The roles of awarding organisations are to:

- approve and monitor centres to provide units and qualifications to the standards required for the QCF
- ensure assessment is carried out in a way that is fair, valid, reliable and conforms to the requirements of the QCF
- ensure equality of access to units, qualifications and assessment
- award credit and qualifications to learners who have met the unit and qualification requirements
- maintain records of learner achievements and report on the achievement of units and qualifications
- collect and retain data as required by the qualifications regulators
- maintain and implement appeals procedures and procedures for dealing with malpractice.

Individual centres must have sufficient resources, expertise, and organisational and administrative processes to support and assess learners to the standards required for the QCF. They are responsible for internal quality assurance and must make their systems, processes and practices available for inspection and review by the awarding organisation. Centres must:

- assess units and qualifications in a way that is consistent with the awarding organisation's requirements (and therefore with those of the QCF)
- undertake internal quality assurance of assessments
- have processes in place for the recognition of prior learning from certificated and non-certificated sources, as appropriate for the units and qualifications that they offer.

In addition to the quality assurance provided through the qualifications regulatory systems, education and training providers who receive public funding are also subject to monitoring by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in Northern Ireland. These bodies carry out periodic inspections of providers to agreed national standards concerned with the overall governance and operation of the institution, the standards of teaching, learning, assessment and learner support, and the performance of learners.

## **4.2 Meeting the EQF Common Principles**

There are nine common principles (CP) for quality assurance described in the EQF document. The following briefly describes how they are applied within the QCF.

*CP 1: Quality assurance policies and procedures should underpin all levels of the EQF*

Quality assurance policies and procedures underpin all parts of the QCF as outlined in the Regulatory Arrangements. These include the roles of the qualifications regulators, the requirements for operating as an awarding organisation, and the requirements for centres recognised by awarding organisations. They also cover the requirements for units and qualifications within the QCF.

*CP 2: Quality assurance should be an integral part of the internal management of education and training institutions*

All centres that offer units and qualifications within the QCF are required to have in place internal systems of quality assurance in order to ensure consistent assessment practices and compliance with awarding organisations' requirements. These requirements apply regardless of the nature of the centre or whether or not it is publicly funded.

*CP 3: Quality assurance should include regular evaluation of institutions, their programmes or their quality assurance systems by external monitoring bodies or agencies*

All centres that offer units and qualifications within the QCF are required to undergo an initial approval process followed by regular monitoring by the awarding organisation whose units or qualifications they offer. Approval processes include evaluation of the centre's capacity to offer and resource the units or qualifications sustainably, their proposed methods of operation, and their quality assurance systems. Ongoing monitoring checks the satisfactory operation of these methods and systems and monitors assessment practice at the centre. The qualifications regulators can also carry out monitoring visits to centres as part of their ongoing monitoring of awarding organisations.

In addition all publicly funded education and training providers outside of higher education are subject to periodic monitoring by Ofsted or ETI as described in section 4.1.

*CP 4: External monitoring bodies or agencies carrying out quality assurance should be subject to regular review*

Awarding organisations are subject to initial approval processes and ongoing monitoring by the qualifications regulators. The performance of CCEA in respect of non-vocational qualifications is reviewed by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland, while its performance regarding vocational qualifications is monitored by the Department for Employment and Learning. The performance of Ofqual will be reviewed by Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

*CP 5: Quality assurance should include context, input, process and output dimensions, while giving emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes*

Quality assurance processes operated by the qualifications regulators, awarding organisations and centres are designed to monitor the assessment of units and qualifications and the achievement of learners along with associated processes including centres' ability to support learners to achieve the units or qualifications for which they are registered. The monitoring carried out by the inspectorates is broader in nature as described in section 4.1.

*CP 6: Quality assurance systems should include the following elements:*

a) Clear and measurable objectives and standards

Objectives and standards are set at an overall level in the Regulatory Arrangements for the QCF. Within these requirements awarding organisations produce their own objectives and standards that centres are required to meet.

b) Guidelines for implementation, including stakeholder involvement

The qualifications regulators provide guidelines for implementation within the Regulatory Arrangements and associated documentation. Awarding organisations are expected to produce their own guidelines for centres and for undertaking centre recognition and monitoring activities. All agencies include stakeholder involvement or consultation in developing their guidance.

c) Appropriate resources

The qualifications regulators are resourced by the Government to perform their functions as public bodies. Awarding organisations are resourced through the revenue that they generate from their operations; the process of recognition to operate within the QCF includes an assessment of their ability to perform their functions on a sustainable basis.



d) Consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review

The qualifications regulators carry out evaluation and monitoring of awarding organisations according to their published guidelines. Awarding organisations are required to carry out self-review and reporting, and their reports are monitored by the qualifications regulators as part of the external review process (further guidance is provided in the document *Awarding body self-assessment: guidance for evaluating and improving performance*). Awarding organisations must similarly publish their methods for reviewing centres which will include building on centres' own review and quality assurance processes.

e) Feedback mechanisms and procedures for improvement

Qualifications regulators and awarding organisations use both formal and informal feedback procedures to evaluate their quality processes and standards. Monitoring visits by the qualifications regulators may result in conditions for improvement being imposed on awarding organisations; progress towards these are reviewed regularly until the qualifications regulators agree they have been met.

f) Widely accessible evaluation results.

Reports of monitoring and evaluation are made available at [www.ofqual.gov.uk/10.aspx](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/10.aspx). These include any conditions imposed as a result of monitoring visits.

*CP 7: Quality assurance initiatives at international, national and regional level should be coordinated in order to ensure overview, coherence, synergy and system-wide analysis*

Quality assurance systems and processes within the QCF are coordinated at regulator level across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Work is currently in progress to develop a common set of regulatory principles for use across the UK.

*CP 8: Quality assurance should be a cooperative process across education and training levels and systems, involving all relevant stakeholders, within Member States and across the Community*

The development of quality assurance processes by the qualifications regulators involves input from awarding organisations and centres, as well as from other interested parties such as employer-led sector skills bodies, professional bodies and national education and training organisations. The implementation of processes requires effective working relationships between centres, awarding organisations and the qualifications regulators.

*CP 9: Quality assurance orientations at Community level may provide reference points for evaluations and peer learning*

The qualifications regulators publish the results of evaluations on their websites, make these available for research purposes, and engage in research activities themselves. Awarding organisations may also make their evaluations available publicly or distribute them to their recognised centres.

## 5 Conclusions

The NCP for England and Northern Ireland, in consultation with key bodies representing education and training interests and with the agreement of the competent national authorities, has agreed the following relationship for referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the European Qualifications Framework:

### *Final referencing of the QCF to the EQF*

QCF level	E1	E2	E3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
EQF level	–		1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8

This report confirms that the 10 criteria and procedures developed by the EQF Advisory Group for referencing national frameworks to the EQF have been complied with, and also indicates that the quality assurance arrangements for the QCF accord with the common principles for the EQF.

The report has been endorsed by the competent national bodies in England and Northern Ireland, and will be placed on the QCDA and CCEA websites. The European Commission will be informed that the referencing process has been completed and a link to the report will be provided. The UK report will be formally submitted to the European Commission at the end of the year.

## 6 References and web links

### European Qualifications Framework

*European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*. 2008. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/eqf08\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/eqf08_en.pdf)

### Qualifications and Credit Framework and associated documents

*Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*. August 2008. Ofqual, Welsh Assembly Government, CCEA.

[www.ofqual.gov.uk/121.aspx](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/121.aspx)

[www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/reform\\_of\\_vocational\\_qualifications/qcf\\_regulations.asp](http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/reform_of_vocational_qualifications/qcf_regulations.asp)

*Claiming credit: guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework*. 2008. Ofqual, Welsh Assembly Government, CCEA.

[www.qcda.gov.uk/20515.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/20515.aspx)

[www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/reform\\_of\\_vocational\\_qualifications/qcf\\_support.asp](http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/reform_of_vocational_qualifications/qcf_support.asp)

*Awarding body self-assessment: guidance for evaluating and improving performance*. 2006. QCA, CCEA, Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Qualifications Authority.

### EQF–QCF referencing consultation report

*Linking the Qualifications and Credit Framework levels to the European Qualifications Framework*. October 2008. S Lester / QCA & CCEA.

<http://www.qcda.gov.uk/20243.aspx>

[www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/docs/regulation/eqf/eqf\\_qcf\\_report.pdf](http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/docs/regulation/eqf/eqf_qcf_report.pdf)

### Higher education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

*The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. August 2008. Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

[www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/FHEQ08.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI08/FHEQ08.pdf)

*Verification of the compatibility of the framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA): Report of the FHEQ Self-certification Advisory Group.* November 2008. Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

[www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/selfcertification09/FHEQSelfCert.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/selfcertification09/FHEQSelfCert.pdf)

## **Other UK and Irish frameworks**

*Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries: a rough guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland.* March 2009. QAA, SCQF, CCEA, Ofqual, CQFW, NQAI.

[www.ofqual.gov.uk/2366.aspx](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/2366.aspx)

*Referencing of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF).* June 2008. National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

[www.nqai.ie/documents/EQFReferencingReportfinalJune2009.pdf](http://www.nqai.ie/documents/EQFReferencingReportfinalJune2009.pdf)

## **Appendix 1: Terms of reference and membership of the England and Northern Ireland European Qualifications Framework Referencing Group**

### **Purpose**

The role of the referencing group is to provide direction to the work to ensure that it realises the following objectives:

- reference levels of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)/Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to the European Qualifications Framework levels;
- promote and apply the European principles for quality assurance in education and training when relating the national qualifications system to the European Qualifications Framework;
- ensure that the methodology used to refer NQF/QCF levels to the European Qualifications Framework is transparent and that the resulting decisions are published;
- provide guidance to stakeholders on how national qualifications relate to the European Qualifications Framework through the national qualifications system;
- encourage the participation of all relevant national stakeholders including, according to national legislation and practice, higher education and vocational education and training institutions, social partners, sectors and experts on the comparison and use of qualifications at the European level.

### **Broad areas of remit**

(a) Referencing levels of qualifications in the frameworks to the EQF levels

The group will:

- discuss and agree on the methodology to be used to reference the NQF/QCF levels to the EQF levels
- keep under review progress on the process of referencing NQF/QCF levels to EQF levels
- oversee the formal consultation process on the outcomes of the referencing process
- agree on the content and distribution of a publication on the confirmed level-to-level referencing.

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### (b) Quality assurance (QA) procedures

The group will:

- define the task of writing the digest of the QA procedures in use in England and Northern Ireland for the NQF/QCF
- review progress of the preparation of the digest. This digest will need to be compatible with the European principles for Quality Assurance (HE and VET)
- ensure international involvement in creating and endorsing the digest.

### (c) Making the referencing process transparent

The group will:

- promote its work and ensure that key stakeholders are aware of its purpose and include information about the referencing and quality assurance exercises in their corporate communications
- advise on EQF specific website development
- advise on the production of a multilingual leaflet.
- advise on responses to queries of the NQF/QCF linkage by other Member States.

### (d) EQF level of main qualifications

The group will:

- ensure that for each of the main national qualifications the EQF level is made clear
- consult and agree with the regulatory bodies and awarding bodies the prominence to be given to the EQF levels on the certificates for qualifications
- promote and advise on the review of existing regulatory and awarding body guidance documents for possible update with EQF information.

### (e) Informing and contributing to other related UK and European EQF groups

The group will:

- feed back information on the work of the group to the UK EQF coordinating group and to the European EQF implementation group via the UK representative.

### (f) General

The group will:

- advise on risks and other associated issues
- provide the mechanism for collaborative working between all member organisations.

## **Membership**

- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (joint NCP lead)
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (joint NCP lead)
- Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Department of Education (Northern Ireland)
- Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland)
- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (now Department for Business, Innovation and Skills)
- Edexcel
- Federation of Awarding Bodies
- Guild HE (observer status)
- International framework experts
- National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
- Northern Regional College (Northern Ireland)
- Ofqual
- Open College Network Northern Ireland
- Quality Assurance Agency (observer status)
- Sector Skills Council network representative
- UK Commission for Employment and Skills
- Universities UK (observer status)
- UKNARIC



## **Appendix 2: Summary of quality assurance arrangements**

This appendix is reproduced from the Quality Assurance Digest for the QCF and NQF, which repeats some of the information contained in the main body of the report.

### **Introduction**

Quality assurance is central to the education, training and qualifications system in England and Northern Ireland. Official bodies operate in both countries to regulate quality via both the provision of education and training and through the specification and assessment of qualifications, with their main goals being protection of the learner and maintenance of consistent and adequate standards. Quality assurance takes place at all levels of the system, within an approach that concentrates effort towards the areas of greatest risk. Sanctions and notices to improve are applied when organisations fail to operate adequate quality assurance systems or maintain standards.

National qualification frameworks are a major tool in the regulation and quality assurance of education and training, as they enable processes and standards to be brought to bear at the point where learners are signed off as having achieved specified learning outcomes. This document sets out the broad principles for quality assurance in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

England, Wales and Northern Ireland have had a National Qualifications Framework since the early 1990s. The framework was revised and expanded in 2004 to include a wider range of qualifications and to improve correspondence with the separate Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education (FHEQ). The QCF was introduced in 2008 as a more comprehensive framework incorporating a unit- and credit-based approach, with the intention that it will include all qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland other than higher education qualifications and the qualified status granted by professional bodies. The QCF formed a major strand of the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme launched in 2005, so its initial focus has been on vocational and related qualifications; all vocational and Entry level qualifications currently in the NQF are expected to have moved into the QCF by the end of 2010. General educational qualifications (principally the General Certificate of Secondary Education and the General Certificate of Education at advanced level) will continue to be located in the NQF until a decision is made to move them into the QCF. The two frameworks will therefore exist in parallel for the immediate future.

This document focuses on the QCF, and explains any differences that apply to the NQF. Higher education operates through a system of independent institutions that have degree awarding powers granted by Royal Charter or Act of Parliament, and are subject to quality assurance arrangements led by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The quality assurance arrangements for higher education are outside the scope of this document.

## **Qualifications frameworks in England and Northern Ireland**

The qualification system in England and Northern Ireland is essentially an open market in which a wide range of qualifications are made available to learners. The majority of qualifications, including those taken through publicly funded education and training, are located in the national qualifications frameworks where they are subject to formal quality assurance arrangements. To manage standards and control risk the qualifications regulators (CCEA in Northern Ireland and Ofqual in England) assure the quality of qualifications, examinations and assessments. This is to ensure that:

- the qualifications market is fit for purpose
- qualifications are fair, robust and fit for purpose
- the standards of qualifications and assessments are maintained
- public confidence in the qualifications system is sustained, and
- the interests of learners are upheld.

Three qualifications frameworks currently operate in England and Northern Ireland. As described above the QCF is in the process of replacing the NQF as the framework for qualifications outside of higher education. Higher education qualifications are contained in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). All three frameworks are shared with Wales, where they form components of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales. The design principles of the QCF and NQF are outlined below.

### **The Qualifications and Credit Framework**

The essential design principles of the QCF are:

- a system of quality assurance that applies the same standards of operation and comparability to all units and qualifications within the QCF
- a system of levels, based on level descriptors that define the complexity of learning or achievement required at each level; Entry 1 is the most basic in terms of the outcomes required, and level 8 the most advanced.

- a system of units and credit; all units within the QCF have a unique unit title, learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria, a credit value and a level
- principles for assembling qualifications from units; all QCF qualifications must be based on units in the QCF, with rules of combination being applied to specify which units must be achieved for each qualification
- principles for recognising prior certificated and non-certificated learning.
- a standard system of qualification titles; titles consist of the qualification's level, a designation (Award, Certificate or Diploma) relating to its credit size, and a title that reflects the content that the qualification covers.
- separation of design/awarding and regulatory functions; the qualifications regulators are responsible for recognising organisations for particular functions in the QCF and organisations may be recognised to develop units; to award qualifications; or to combine either or both of these functions with developing the rules of combination that define qualifications.

The QCF is regulated through the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (2008), published by the qualifications regulators.

### **The National Qualifications Framework**

The NQF follows the same system of levels as the QCF, but it does not require qualifications to be unit-based, to have credit values, or use standard titles. Qualifications must be approved (accredited) by the qualifications regulators for admission to the NQF, and they are subject to a similar system of quality assurance as the QCF.

The NQF is regulated through the Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2004), published by the qualifications regulators.

### **Roles and responsibilities in relation to quality assurance**

Quality assurance in the QCF and NQF takes place through a network of bodies with distinct functions, as follows:

#### **The qualifications regulators**

The qualifications regulators are the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual) for England and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland. In Wales the qualifications regulator is the Department for Children,

Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS). The qualifications regulators work closely together to safeguard the public interest in the standards of qualifications in the QCF and NQF.

The principal roles of the qualifications regulators are to:

- establish and uphold criteria for units and qualifications recognised within the frameworks
- establish regulatory arrangements that specify clear requirements and rigorous and appropriate quality standards for awarding organisations and for organisations approved to submit units to the framework (the roles of these organisations are described later in this section)
- approve these organisations and monitor their systems and standards
- accredit qualifications within the frameworks
- keep users informed about units and accredited qualifications in the frameworks, publish a definitive record of all units and qualifications in the frameworks, and report publicly on the frameworks and on the organisations that operate within it.

Proposed new qualifications need to be submitted to the qualifications regulators by an awarding organisation. The qualifications regulators check that the content and assessments in the new qualifications meet the appropriate national criteria. Vocational qualifications are also subject to approval by the appropriate sector skills council before they are accredited.

### **Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)**

Sectors Skills Councils are independent, employer-led, UK-wide organisations that have the remit of building a skills system that is driven by employer demand. There are currently 25 SSCs in the UK. In relation to the qualifications frameworks their principal roles are to ensure that vocational qualifications meet industry needs and are based on standards approved by employers, through:

- working with employers to identify future skills needs and developing sector qualifications strategies to meet them
- developing the industry-led occupational standards that underpin vocational units and qualifications
- approving qualifications related to their occupational areas in line with their sector qualifications strategies.

## **Awarding organisations**

An awarding organisation is an organisation recognised by the qualifications regulators for the purpose of developing qualifications and awarding qualifications and credits for learner achievements. An awarding organisation must gain recognised status from the qualifications regulators before it can propose qualifications for accreditation into the QCF or NQF, or award qualifications within the frameworks. There are currently (summer 2009) over 140 awarding organisations recognised to award qualifications within the QCF, NQF or both. Each awarding organisation varies in size, scope, mode of operation and in the range of qualifications it awards; there is no minimum size for an awarding organisation provided it is able to meet its commitments to learners and fulfil its requirements in relation to the QCF or NQF.

The principal roles of awarding organisations are to:

- approve and monitor centres to provide units and qualifications to the standards required for the frameworks
- ensure assessment is carried out in a way that is fair, valid, reliable and conforms to the requirements of the frameworks
- ensure equality of access to units, qualifications and assessment
- in the QCF, award credit and qualifications to learners who have met the unit and qualification requirements
- maintain records of learner achievements and report on the achievement of units and qualifications
- collect and retain data as required by the qualifications regulators
- maintain and implement appeals procedures and procedures for dealing with malpractice.

## **Unit submitters**

Within the QCF the regulators may recognise organisations that do not wish to become awarding organisations, but who wish to develop and submit units to the unit databank. These organisations may in addition be recognised to design the rules of combination that specify qualifications, which can then be submitted by awarding organisations for accreditation within the QCF.

## **Centres**

A “centre” is an organisation – such as a school, college, training provider, adult education centre, offender learning unit or an employer – that is recognised by an awarding organisation to

provide learner support and assessment for a qualification or range of qualifications. Centres choose which awarding organisation(s) to work with, and they can be recognised by more than one awarding organisation.

Individual centres must have sufficient resources, expertise, and organisational and administrative processes to support and assess learners to the standards required. They are responsible for internal quality assurance and must make their systems, processes and practices available for inspection and review by the awarding organisation. Centres must:

- assess units and qualifications in a way that is consistent with the assessment organisation's requirements (and therefore with those required within the frameworks)
- undertake internal quality assurance of assessments
- for the QCF, have processes in place for the recognition of prior learning from certificated and non-certificated sources, as appropriate for the units and qualifications that they offer.

## **Quality assurance arrangements**

The information in this section is illustrated by *Figure 2: Lifecycle of a qualification*.

### **Recognition requirements to operate within the frameworks**

Awarding organisations and unit submitters must be recognised by the qualifications regulators before they can submit units and qualifications into the frameworks or start awarding qualifications within the frameworks. Recognition involves meeting requirements in several areas including having sufficient resources, expertise, and organisational and administrative processes to develop and/or award qualifications to the standards required, having procedures in place to monitor compliance with the regulatory arrangements, and having robust procedures for centre recognition, managing enquiries and appeals and dealing with malpractice.

A strong emphasis is placed on using recognition as a regulatory tool to initiate and support quality assurance. Positioning quality assurance at the level of the organisation allows the qualifications regulators to adopt a risk-based approach in quality assuring qualifications and units, because of the initial confidence they have in the quality of the organisation itself.

### **Accreditation and unit submission**

After an awarding organisation or unit submitter has been recognised, they can submit qualifications for accreditation into the NQF or units and qualifications into the QCF. Each qualification is ascribed to a level and accredited in line with the criteria for the relevant framework.

Quality assurance at the level of the qualification and unit is risk-based. The level of scrutiny given to qualifications in qualification development and accreditation will depend on the risks associated with that qualification. Some qualifications like GCEs and GCSEs are given extensive development support by QCDA, DCELLS and CCEA; in addition, at the point of final submission for accreditation, a report on the quality of these qualifications is provided to the qualifications regulators.

Units submitted into the QCF unit databank must meet the design specifications outlined in the regulatory arrangements for the QCF. All units include the following five features:

- unit title: all units must have a unit title that is clear, concise and reflects the content of the unit
- learning outcomes: all units must contain learning outcomes that set out what a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do as a result of the learning process
- assessment criteria: all units must contain assessment criteria that specify the standard a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that the learning outcomes of the unit have been achieved
- level: all units must be positioned at a single QCF level that is consistent with the level of achievement expressed in the learning outcomes of the unit
- credit value: all units must identify a credit value which specifies the number of credits that will be awarded to a learner who has achieved the learning outcomes of the unit.

Qualifications submitted into the QCF or NCF must have a detailed rationale of the need for the qualification, the support of relevant agencies (such as SSCs), and a clearly defined title, level and structure. In the QCF qualifications must include a set of rules of combination that specify the units from the QCF databank contained within them. Accreditation will also ensure that the qualification submitted reflects the framework level that is claimed for it.

### **Monitoring and codes of practice**

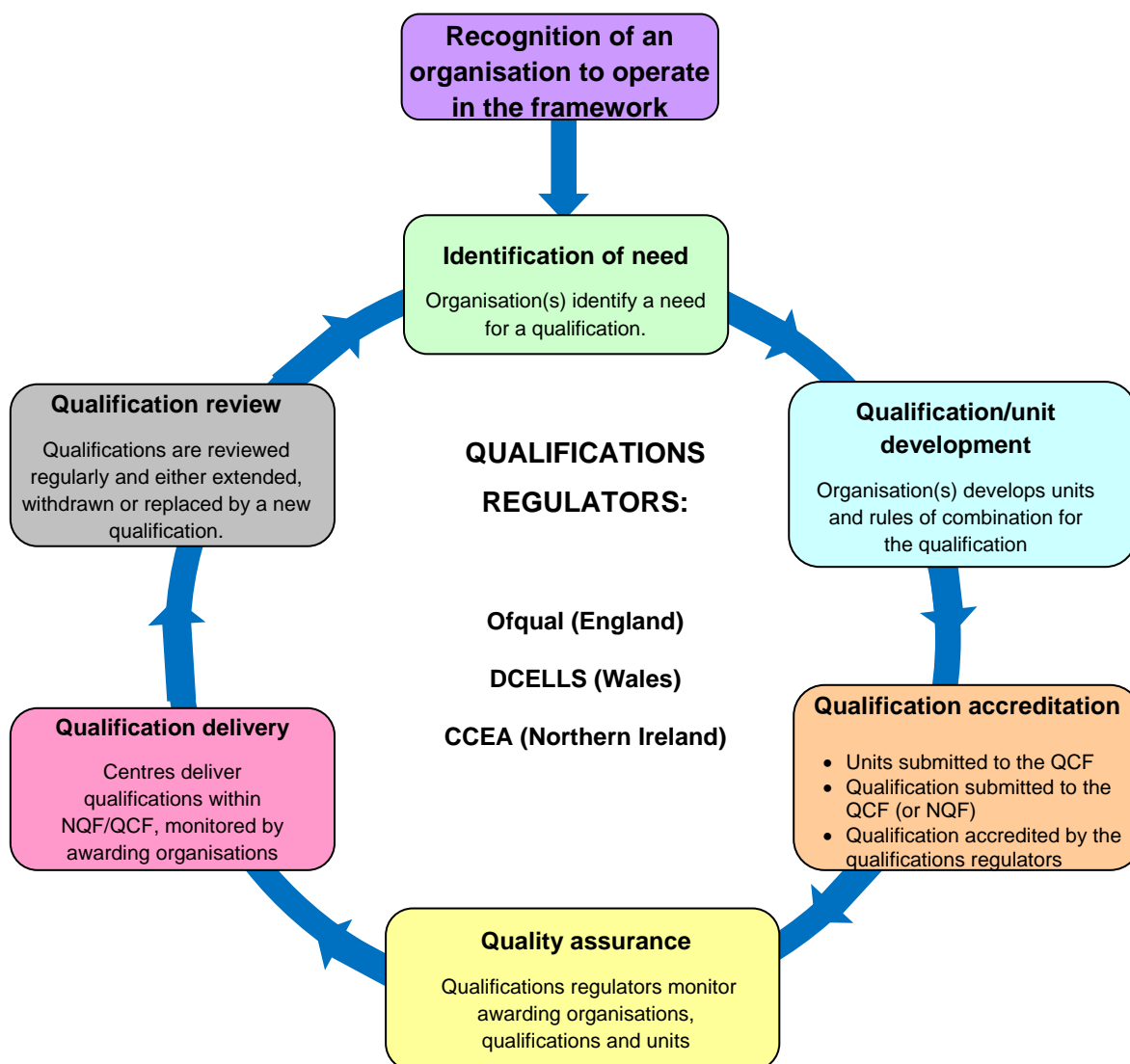
All awarding organisations within the frameworks are subject to monitoring by the qualifications regulators and asked to complete periodic self assessments. Monitoring focuses on whether the awarding organisation or unit submitter continues to meet the regulatory requirements under which it has been recognised, including how it uses relevant systems, procedures and resources to ensure that assessment methods produce consistent, valid, fair and transparent results over time and between assessment locations.

The frequency and focus of awarding organisation monitoring is determined on the basis of risk. Areas identified for improvement as a result of monitoring will be outlined as accreditation conditions and will be monitored in an action plan for the awarding organisation. When these requirements have been complied with they will be signed off by the qualifications regulators.

For high-risk qualifications, monitoring is also conducted at a qualification level. Some major qualification types are subject to codes of practice or operating rules that outline in greater detail how qualifications should be delivered with reference to areas such as assessment, awarding and grading. These codes of practice or operating rules are used to direct the qualifications regulator in monitoring to ensure that qualifications continue to meet the required quality standards.



Figure 2: Lifecycle of a qualification.



## Regulatory and guidance documents

QCF regulations: *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework*. August 2008. Ofqual, Welsh Assembly Government, CCEA.

[www.ofqual.gov.uk/121.aspx](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/121.aspx)

[www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/reform\\_of\\_vocational\\_qualifications/qcf\\_regulations.asp](http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/reform_of_vocational_qualifications/qcf_regulations.asp)

NQF regulations: *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. 2004. QCA, ACCAC, CCEA.

[www.qcda.gov.uk/10447.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/10447.aspx)

*Claiming credit: guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework*. 2008. Ofqual, Welsh Assembly Government, CCEA.

[www.qcda.gov.uk/20515.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/20515.aspx)

[www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/reform\\_of\\_vocational\\_qualifications/qcf\\_support.asp](http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/reform_of_vocational_qualifications/qcf_support.asp)

*Awarding body self-assessment: guidance for evaluating and improving performance*. 2006. QCA, CCEA, Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Qualifications Authority.

## Initials and acronyms

ACCAC	Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (now DCELLS)
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
DCELLS	Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills
FHEQ	Framework of Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
Ofqual	Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator

## Report on referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the EQF

QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (now QCDA and Ofqual)
QCDA	Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
SSC	Sector Skills Council

### **Further information**

This appendix provides an overview of quality assurance arrangements relating to the QCF and the NQF: the intention is to keep the document short and readable rather than describe procedures in detail. Further details can be found in the regulatory documents referred to below. Any comments on this document should be sent to [info@qcda.gov.uk](mailto:info@qcda.gov.uk).

## Appendix 3: Qualifications and Credit Framework level descriptors

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
Entry Level	Entry 1 recognises progress along a continuum that ranges from the most elementary of achievements to beginning to make use of skills, knowledge or understanding that relate to the immediate environment.			
	Achievement at Entry 2 reflects the ability to make use of skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out simple, familiar tasks and activities with guidance.	Use knowledge or understanding to carry out simple, familiar activities.  Know the steps needed to complete simple activities.	Carry out simple, familiar tasks and activities.  Follow instructions or use rehearsed steps to complete tasks and activities.	With appropriate guidance begin to take some responsibility for the outcomes of simple activities.  Actively participate in simple and familiar activities.

Report on referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the EQF

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
	Achievement at Entry 3 reflects the ability to make use of skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts, with appropriate guidance where needed.	<p>Use knowledge or understanding to carry out structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts.</p> <p>Know and understand the steps needed to complete structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts.</p>	<p>Carry out structured tasks and activities in familiar contexts.</p> <p>Be aware of the consequences of actions for self and others.</p>	<p>With appropriate guidance take responsibility for the outcomes of structured activities.</p> <p>Actively participate in activities in familiar contexts.</p>
Level 1	Achievement at level 1 reflects the ability to use relevant knowledge, skills and procedures to complete routine tasks. It includes responsibility for completing tasks and procedures subject to direction or guidance.	<p>Use knowledge of facts, procedures and ideas to complete well-defined, routine tasks.</p> <p>Be aware of information relevant to the area of study or work.</p>	<p>Complete well-defined routine tasks.</p> <p>Use relevant skills and procedures.</p> <p>Select and use relevant information.</p> <p>Identify whether actions have been effective.</p>	Take responsibility for completing tasks and procedures subject to direction or guidance as needed.

Report on referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the EQF

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
Level 2	Achievement at level 2 reflects the ability to select and use relevant knowledge, ideas, skills and procedures to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems. It includes taking responsibility for completing tasks and procedures and exercising autonomy and judgement subject to overall direction or guidance.	<p>Use understanding of facts, procedures and ideas to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems.</p> <p>Interpret relevant information and ideas .</p> <p>Be aware of the types of information that are relevant to the area of study or work.</p>	<p>Complete well-defined, generally routine tasks and address straightforward problems.</p> <p>Select and use relevant skills and procedures .</p> <p>Identify, gather and use relevant information to inform actions.</p> <p>Identify how effective actions have been.</p>	<p>Take responsibility for completing tasks and procedures.</p> <p>Exercise autonomy and judgement subject to overall direction or guidance.</p>

## Report on referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the EQF

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
Level 3	<p>Achievement at level 3 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to complete tasks and address problems that, while well defined, have a measure of complexity. It includes taking responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures as well as exercising autonomy and judgement within limited parameters. It also reflects awareness of different perspectives or approaches within an area of study or work.</p>	<p>Use factual, procedural and theoretical understanding to complete tasks and address problems that, while well defined, may be complex and non-routine.</p> <p>Interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas.</p> <p>Be aware of the nature of the area of study or work.</p> <p>Have awareness of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work.</p>	<p>Address problems that, while well defined, may be complex and non-routine.</p> <p>Identify, select and use appropriate skills, methods and procedures.</p> <p>Use appropriate investigation to inform actions.</p> <p>Review how effective methods and actions have been.</p>	<p>Take responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures, including, where relevant, responsibility for supervising or guiding others.</p> <p>Exercise autonomy and judgement within limited parameters.</p>

Report on referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the EQF

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
Level 4	<p>Achievement at level 4 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to address problems that are well defined but complex and non-routine. It includes taking responsibility for overall courses of action as well as exercising autonomy and judgement within fairly broad parameters. It also reflects understanding of different perspectives or approaches within an area of study or work.</p>	<p>Use practical, theoretical or technical understanding to address problems that are well defined but complex and non-routine.</p> <p>Analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas.</p> <p>Be aware of the nature and approximate scope of the area of study or work.</p> <p>Have an informed awareness of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work.</p>	<p>Address problems that are complex and non-routine while normally fairly well defined</p> <p>Identify, adapt and use appropriate methods and skills.</p> <p>Initiate and use appropriate investigation to inform actions.</p> <p>Review the effectiveness and appropriateness of methods, actions and results.</p>	<p>Take responsibility for courses of action, including, where relevant, responsibility for the work of others.</p> <p>Exercise autonomy and judgement within broad but generally well-defined parameters.</p>



Report on referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the EQF

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
Level 5	<p>Achievement at level 5 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to address broadly defined, complex problems. It includes taking responsibility for planning and developing courses of action as well as exercising autonomy and judgement within broad parameters. It also reflects understanding of different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.</p>	<p>Use practical, theoretical or technological understanding to find ways forward in broadly defined, complex contexts.</p> <p>Analyse, interpret and evaluate relevant information, concepts and ideas.</p> <p>Be aware of the nature and scope of the area of study or work.</p> <p>Understand different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the reasoning behind them.</p>	<p>Address broadly defined, complex problems.</p> <p>Determine, adapt and use appropriate methods and skills.</p> <p>Use relevant research or development to inform actions.</p> <p>Evaluate actions, methods and results.</p>	<p>Take responsibility for planning and developing courses of action, including, where relevant, responsibility for the work of others.</p> <p>Exercise autonomy and judgement within broad parameters.</p>

Report on referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the EQF

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
Level 6	<p>Achievement at level 6 reflects the ability to refine and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to address complex problems that have limited definition. It includes taking responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that are able to underpin substantial change or development, as well as exercising broad autonomy and judgement. It also reflects an understanding of different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the theories that underpin them.</p>	<p>Refine and use practical, conceptual or technological understanding to create ways forward in contexts where there are many interacting factors.</p> <p>Critically analyse, interpret and evaluate complex information, concepts and ideas.</p> <p>Understand the context in which the area of study or work is located.</p> <p>Be aware of current developments in the area of study or work.</p> <p>Understand different perspectives, approaches or schools of thought and the theories that underpin them.</p>	<p>Address problems that have limited definition and involve many interacting factors.</p> <p>Determine, refine, adapt and use appropriate methods and skills.</p> <p>Use and, where appropriate, design relevant research and development to inform actions.</p> <p>Evaluate actions, methods and results and their implications.</p>	<p>Take responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that are capable of underpinning substantial changes or developments.</p> <p>Initiate and lead tasks and processes, taking responsibility, where relevant, for the work and roles of others.</p> <p>Exercise broad autonomy and judgement.</p>

## Report on referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the EQF

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
Level 7	Achievement at level 7 reflects the ability to reformulate and use relevant understanding, methodologies and approaches to address problematic situations that involve many interacting factors. It includes taking responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that initiate or underpin substantial change or development, as well as exercising broad autonomy and judgement. It also reflects an understanding of relevant theoretical and methodological perspectives, and how they affect their area of study or work.	<p>Reformulate and use practical, conceptual or technological understanding to create ways forward in contexts where there are many interacting factors.</p> <p>Critically analyse, interpret and evaluate complex information, concepts and theories to produce modified conceptions.</p> <p>Understand the wider contexts in which the area of study or work is located.</p> <p>Understand current developments in the area of study or work.</p> <p>Understand different theoretical and methodological perspectives and how they affect the area of study or work.</p>	<p>Conceptualise and address problematic situations that involve many interacting factors.</p> <p>Determine and use appropriate methodologies and approaches.</p> <p>Design and undertake research, development or strategic activities to inform the area of work or study, or produce organisational or professional change.</p> <p>Critically evaluate actions, methods and results and their short- and long-term implications.</p>	<p>Take responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that initiate or underpin substantial changes or developments.</p> <p>Exercise broad autonomy and judgement across a significant area of work or study.</p> <p>Initiate and lead complex tasks and processes, taking responsibility, where relevant, for the work and roles of others.</p>

## Report on referencing the Qualifications and Credit Framework to the EQF

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
Level 8	<p>Achievement at level 8 reflects the ability to develop original understanding and extend an area of knowledge or professional practice. It reflects the ability to address problematic situations that involve many complex, interacting factors through initiating, designing and undertaking research, development or strategic activities. It involves the exercise of broad autonomy, judgement and leadership in sharing responsibility for the development of a field of work or knowledge or for creating substantial professional or organisational change. It also reflects a critical understanding of relevant theoretical and methodological perspectives and how they affect the field of knowledge or work.</p>	<p>Develop original practical, conceptual or technological understanding to create ways forward in contexts that lack definition and where there are many complex, interacting factors.</p> <p>Critically analyse, interpret and evaluate complex information, concepts and theories to produce new knowledge and theories.</p> <p>Understand and reconceptualise the wider contexts in which the field of knowledge or work is located.</p> <p>Extend a field of knowledge or work by contributing original knowledge and thinking.</p> <p>Exercise critical understanding of different theoretical and methodological perspectives and how they affect the field of knowledge or work.</p>	<p>Conceptualise and address problematic situations that involve many complex, interacting factors.</p> <p>Formulate and use appropriate methodologies and approaches.</p> <p>Initiate, design and undertake research, development or strategic activities that extend the field of work or knowledge or result in significant organisational or professional change.</p> <p>Critically evaluate actions, methods and results and their short- and long-term implications for the field of work or knowledge and its wider context.</p>	<p>Take responsibility for planning and developing courses of action that have a significant impact on a field of work or knowledge, or result in substantial organisational or professional change.</p> <p>Exercise broad autonomy, judgement and leadership as a leading practitioner or scholar sharing responsibility for the development of a field of work or knowledge, or for substantial organisational or professional change.</p> <p>Take responsibility for the advancement of professional practice.</p>

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