

GUIDANCE

Vocational Quarterly Data Collection

Guide to the Data Submission Process

ofqual

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General data collection guidance

Introduction

In order to fulfil our regulatory and accreditation functions as set out in the [Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#), we require awarding organisations to provide exams data for regulated qualifications.

Updates to formats and guidance

This guidance document will be updated regularly. Any changes to procedure will be incorporated into the guidance document.

How to submit your data

Your data should be submitted to us in CSV format. Please refer to the separate guidance document you can find on our [web page](#) to help you submit your files to us. If you need to ask us about a data submission please do contact the [Data Services team](#), but please do not send your data files via email to Data Services or to any other Ofqual email address, or via Contact the Regulator in the Portal.

Uploaded data

Once files have been successfully uploaded, the data will be validated against a set of validation rules. These are detailed in the sections below. If validation is successful, the data is automatically transferred into our systems and you will receive email confirmation. If the file is unsuccessful at any stage of validation you will receive an email with details of the validation failure. Please correct your file and resubmit it.

Amendments to data

Ofqual staff will not alter data once it has been submitted. If you find an error or omission after you've had a successful upload, please notify us [by email](#). We need to reject the existing submission before you can upload a new file.

How your data will be used

This data will be used to undertake our regulatory activities and to produce Official Statistics to fulfil our responsibility as a government department. Official statistics provide information on major areas of administration such as economy, health, crime and education and are regulated in the UK by the UK Statistics Authority. The statistics released by Ofqual are used to raise awareness and understanding, and improve public confidence in regulated qualifications and assessments. Ofqual's statistics can be accessed via [the GOV.UK website](#).

If we do not receive your data

The return of your information to Ofqual is mandatory. Failure to supply data in a timely and accurate manner will be noted in the Official Statistics publications.

Furthermore, this will also be in breach of Ofqual's [General Conditions of Recognition](#) (Condition B4: Notice to provide information to Ofqual) and may lead to regulatory action.

Vocational data collection

What data is collected?

In order to fulfil our regulatory and accreditation functions we require awarding organisations to provide aggregate data on the number of full certificates awarded for regulated vocational qualifications (i.e. all qualifications except GCSEs, GCEs and Advanced Extension Awards). For the quarters up to and including 2019 Q3 the submission of data for England, Wales and Northern Ireland was mandatory and data for Other UK and Non-UK could be provided on a voluntary basis. However, from 2019 Q4 onwards (collected in January 2020) the provision of data for the Other UK and Non-UK categories is also mandatory. Further details of this change can be found in letter RO65b, published in our [letters to awarding organisations](#).

Certification numbers are mandatory as part of this data collection. This is so that we can monitor trends in qualifications and also gain an understanding of the skills market at country level. This data is also used to inform our day-to-day regulatory activities.

The number of registrations per qualification is also requested. This is currently voluntary. This data is important to us as an indicator of participation and completion rates. Using this we can predict future trends and steer the direction in the vocational qualifications market.

When is the data collected?

Data is collected on a quarterly basis, in January, April, July and October. The collection window starts on the day following the quarter end to allow the gap between the end of the quarter and the publication date to be kept to a minimum.

How is the data collected?

Ofqual supplies to each awarding organisation a spreadsheet listing the organisation's available qualifications during the relevant calendar period.

Awarding organisations can submit their data in one of two ways: either by filling in and returning the spreadsheet provided (a Type 2 data return), or by supplying data in separate files at centre level (a Type 1 data return). Please see the sections below for detailed guidance for each process.

If you wish to change the format in which you submit your data between Type 1 and Type 2 you can do this at any time. You do not need to notify us of the change.

Completing the template file: type 2 return

Completion guidelines

- Data should be added to the empty cells in the Registration and Certification columns. **All cells must be filled with a numerical value otherwise the file will not be accepted.**
- Certification data should be provided by country/region. For further details on how to define the location of the certificate, please refer to the [Data definitions section](#).
- Certification data at country level is compulsory. Until 2019 Q3 the data should cover at least all full awards made in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. From 2019 Q4 **all country-level certificates** must be provided, including aggregate data for the Other UK and Non-UK categories in addition to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Registration and English regional certification data are not currently compulsory.
- All Certification and Registration data must be supplied as numerical values **with no formatting**. If you have no certifications or registrations to report, please add a **'0' (zero)**.
- If you have issued certificates for qualifications not listed in the file, please add them.
- No additional columns should be inserted.
- No total figures at the end of columns should be included.
- No leading or trailing blanks or spaces should be included.
- Submissions must be made in CSV format.
- The column headers must match those provided in the request file.

Example file

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	
	Awarding Body	QAN	Qualification Title	Level	Type	End Date	Quarter	Registrations Total	Certificates Totals	England Certificates	Wales Certificates	Northern Ireland Certificates	Other UK Certificates	Non-Uk Certificates	England (North East) Certificates	England (North West) Certificates	England (Yorkshire and the Humber) Certificates	England (West Midlands) Certificates	England (East Midlands) Certificates	England (Eastern Region) Certificates	England (South West) Certificates	England (South East) Certificates	England (London) Certificates	Status	
1	DFQUALAB	100000001	Ofqual Level 1 Certificate ...	1	VRQ	31122011	2012.1	0	81	66	10	5	0	0	50	5	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	Expired
3	DFQUALAB	100000002	Ofqual Level 2 Certificate ...	2	VRQ	31122012	2012.1	0	27	15	0	12	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Effective
4	DFQUALAB	100000003	Ofqual Level 3 Certificate in ...	3	VRQ	31032014	2012.1	0	43	35	0	8	0	0	14	18	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Effective
5	DFQUALAB	100000004	Ofqual Level 1 Diploma in ...	1	VRQ	31122012	2012.1	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Effective
6	DFQUALAB	100000005	Ofqual Entry Level Diploma in ...	Entry	EL	31122012	2012.1	0	10	10	0	0	0	0	5	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Effective
7	DFQUALAB	100000006	Ofqual Entry Level Diploma in ...	Entry	EL	31122012	2012.1	0	16	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	Effective

The values in columns A – G should not be changed

If you have no Registrations to report, fill the column with zeros

The Certificates Total should be the sum of the certificates in the country breakdown (columns J – N)

The England Certificates should be the sum of the certificates in the region breakdown (columns O – W) unless you are not submitting regional data

If you have nothing to report in columns H – W, enter zeros.

The values in Status (column X) should not be changed

Field specification

The shaded fields require no data entry unless you are adding qualifications not listed in the file.

Field Name	Description	Column	Validation rule	Format	Example	Notes
Awarding Body ID	Acronym of the awarding organisation	A	Between 1 and 50 characters	text	XYZ Exams	All existing values in the spreadsheet provided by Ofqual should not be altered
QAN	Qualification Number	B	Between 8 and 10 characters. Must be a valid qualification number	text	601/2977/3	
Qualification Title	Title of qualification	C	Between 1 and 255 characters	text	XYZ Exams Level 1 Award In Dance	
Level	Level of qualification	D	Between 1 and 20 characters	text	Level 1	
Type	Type of qualification	E	Between 1 and 255 characters	text	Functional Skills	
Certification End Date	The date when certificates cease to be awarded for the qualification	F	A valid date	date (dd/mm/yyyy)	31/12/2012	
Quarter	The calendar quarter for which data is being collected	G	The quarter of the current data collection	text (yyyy.q)	2012.1	

NO DATA ENTRY REQUIRED - Qualification data supplied by Ofqual

	Field Name	Description	Column	Validation rule	Format	Example	Notes
	Registrations Total	Number of registrations received in the quarter	H	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	Enter number of registrations or 0 (zero) if none to report
	Certificates Totals	Number of certificates awarded in the quarter	I	Number between 0 and 99999999. Must be the sum of the certificates in the country breakdown (columns J – N)	number	50	Enter number of certifications or 0 (zero) if none to report
Country level breakdown	England Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in England for the quarter	J	Number between 0 and 99999999. Must be the sum of the certificates in the region breakdown (columns O – W) unless the sum is zero.	number	50	
	Wales Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in Wales for the quarter	K	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
	Northern Ireland Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in Northern Ireland for the quarter	L	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
	Other UK Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in other UK regions for the quarter	M	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
	Non-Uk Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in non-UK regions for the quarter	N	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
Regional breakdown	England (North East) Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in England (NE region) for the quarter	O	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
	England (North West) Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in England (NW region) for the quarter	P	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	

Field Name	Description	Column	Validation rule	Format	Example	Notes
England (Yorkshire and the Humber) Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in England (Yorkshire and Humberside region) for the quarter	Q	Number between 0 and 99999999	Number	50	
England (West Midlands) Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in England (WM region) for the quarter	R	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
England (East Midlands) Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in England (EM region) for the quarter	S	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
England (Eastern Region) Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in England (Eastern region) for the quarter	T	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
England (South West) Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in England (SW region) for the quarter	U	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
England (South East) Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in England (SE region) for the quarter	V	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
England (London) Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in England (London region) for the quarter	W	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50	
Status	Current status of qualification	X	Between 1 and 255 characters	text	Available to learners	Values should not be altered

Completing the template file: type 1 return

Completion guidelines

- You should provide two files, one containing details of your centres and the other with registration and certification data by centre and qualification, according to the field specification below.
- Certification data is compulsory. Registration data is not currently compulsory.
- If you have issued certificates in the quarter for qualifications not listed in the request spreadsheet, please include them.
- Submissions must be made in CSV format.
- The column headers must match those detailed in the field specification below.

Data processing

- The import process uses the CentrePostCode in the centre file to derive the geographical location of the certificates and registrations provided. We use Ordnance Survey postcode data to do this.
- If the postcode of any centre is not recognised, the certificates and registrations will be assigned to the geographical area 'Non-UK'. If this has occurred for any of your data, the files will be accepted, but you will receive an email warning you which centres are affected. Please contact us if you are unsure about the problem, or if you want to resubmit your data.
- Once your files have been successfully validated and the processing is complete, we generate a Type 2 file with the name in the following format:
 - SampleAOVQ2016Q3auto.csv

You will be notified by email that this file has been produced and processed.

Field specification – Centre file

Field Name	Description	Column	Validation rule	Format	Example
CentreID	The identification number of the centre	A	Between 1 and 20 characters	text	12345A
CentreName	The name of the centre	B	Between 1 and 255 characters	text	Ofqual Centre
CentrePostCode	The post code of the centre	C	Up to 20 characters	text	CV1 3BH
CentreAddress1	Line one of the centre's address	D	Up to 255 characters	text	Earlsdon Park
CentreAddress2	Line two of the centre's address	E	Up to 255 characters	text	53-55 Butts Road
CentreAddress3	Line three of the centre's address	F	Up to 255 characters	text	Coventry
CentreAddress4	Line four of the centre's address	G	Up to 255 characters	text	West Midlands
CentreType	The type code of the centre	H	Up to 3 characters	text	123
NCNCode	The NCN code of the centre	I	Number between 0 and 99999 or alphanumeric value of format AANNN. May be left blank	text	AA123

Field specification – Data file

Field Name	Description	Column	Validation rule	Format	Example
CentreID	The identification number of the centre	A	Between 1 and 20 characters	text	12345A
QAN	Qualification Number	B	Between 8 and 10 characters. Must be a valid qualification number	text	601/2977/3
Quarter	The calendar quarter for which data is being collected	C	The quarter of the current data collection	text (yyyy.q)	2012.1
Registrations	Number of registrations received in the quarter	D	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50
Certificates	Number of certificates awarded in the quarter	E	Number between 0 and 99999999	number	50

Data definitions

Certifications

A certificate should represent a candidate completing a qualification. If your processes allow for the physical certificates to be issued multiple times for each candidate (for example, if an administrative error is made) then you should count the candidate's completion of the qualification only once.

Certificate numbers should only represent certificates issued during the requested period. Any certificates in dispute or under review should only be included in the period during which they are finally issued. This should ensure minimal change to the reported figures.

Registrations

Registration numbers should represent the total number of candidates registered for the qualification during the period. The point of registration is when a candidate indicates an intention to gain the qualification. For modular qualifications this may be the point where a candidate requests the qualification, having completed the component units.

Quarters

Quarter 1 covers January to March, Quarter 2: April to June, Quarter 3: July to September and Quarter 4 covers October to December.

Location

The location of the certificate should be calculated based on the where the learner/candidate is located for the majority of their assessment.

- In many cases, learners will be registered at a centre and will take their assessments at that centre. In this case, that centre address should be used to determine the location of the learner.
- In cases where the registration centre is in a different location from the assessment centre/site, it is the assessment centre location that should be used to determine the location of the learner. For example, if a learner is registered at a centre in England for administrative purposes but attends a location in Wales for all or the majority of the assessment the learner should be treated as located in Wales.
- In instances where a distance learner is registered directly with an awarding organisation (i.e. there is no centre), the address held for that learner should be treated as the assessment location.

Geographical regions

English geographical regions are determined by the location of the assessment/examination centre, according to Region (formerly Government Office Region).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) provides guidance and datasets to define Region, including a description of the [English Geographic Structure](#) and [lists of administrative geographies](#).

The administrative geographies are also available as a [dataset](#) and as [regional maps](#) to describe the areas in each of the Regions and the [postcode directory](#) allows Region to be derived from postcode.

Please note that for the purposes of this and other Ofqual data collections the Isle of Man and Channel Islands should be included in the 'Other UK' country category. Whilst these islands are not part of the UK for administrative purposes they are grouped as such for our reporting in line with the approach taken by the [Joint Council for Qualifications](#) (JCQ) and other education organisations.

Contacts

For all queries relating to the data collection process, amendments to data previously provided, or for general guidance, please contact:

Data Services
Ofqual
Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
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CV1 3BH

Email Data.Services@ofqual.gov.uk



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