



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



*Rewarding Learning*

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# Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework

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# Introduction

## Foreword

These regulations have been designed to support implementation of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) from August 2008 across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, subject to confirmation by ministers in the three countries. They represent the outcomes of extensive consultation and development work on qualifications and credit frameworks across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland and make particular reference to the findings from the first year of tests and trials of the QCF. They set out the arrangements that will apply to the organisations that operate within and the qualifications that are accredited into the QCF and reflect the qualifications regulators' commitment to a strategic approach to safeguarding the interests of learners.

The development of the QCF has taken place to date within the context of the UK Vocational Qualification Reform Programme and as such vocational qualifications are the current focus. The QCF is, however, designed to be capable of recognising all achievements at all levels.

These regulations have also been developed within the context of a number of other important policy initiatives. They reflect an agreed direction of travel towards a more strategic approach to regulation. Therefore they focus to a much greater extent than previous regulations on the fitness for purpose of the organisations that can operate in the QCF to develop, assess and award high-quality units and qualifications to the appropriate standards. As a result, they set out a reduction in the level of the scrutiny of individual units and qualifications required from the qualifications regulators to ensure that this is the case. This approach is consistent with the principle behind current government proposals that consider the concept of direct regulation or licensing of awarding bodies. Linked to the above, a consultation is due to start shortly on the future role of an independent regulator for England; the proposed timelines for issuing and applying the new regulations allow for any substantive issues arising from the consultation on the independent regulator to be reflected in the final draft.

The regulations also take account of current pilot activity in relation to sector skills council (SSC) approval of reformed vocational qualifications and recognition of employers and providers. Regarding SSC approval, a pilot is taking place between October 2007 and June 2008 that aims to give SSCs a more formal role than hitherto in the accreditation of vocational qualifications. The draft QCF regulations include a requirement that

qualifications must be either approved or supported by a relevant sector body where the qualification falls within the footprint of such a body – this reflects the fact that not all qualifications fall within scope of the pilot and the intention to evaluate the process in summer 2008 prior to implementation of the QCF regulations.

The regulations make no specific reference to the recognition of employers and providers but have been drafted in such a way that any organisation recognised for the purpose will be able to submit units, develop rules of combination and/or award qualifications. The outcomes of this work will be one of the sources of information additional to consultation responses that inform the final development of regulations after this consultation has been completed. Other relevant activity, such as the ongoing tests and trials of the QCF, will also be considered.

## **The aim and purpose of the QCF**

The aim of the QCF is to support the establishment, maintenance and continuing development of a qualifications system that is:

- inclusive
- responsive
- accessible
- non-bureaucratic.

The purpose of the QCF is to provide a flexible and simple structure within which:

- unit-based qualifications can be located
- achievements are recognised and recorded through the award of credits and qualifications
- the level and size of achievements can be easily identified
- the mechanisms necessary to support the accumulation and transfer of credits operate
- learners are given the maximum flexibility and range of opportunities to progress and receive recognition for their achievements.

The QCF will be all of the following.

### **An inclusive system**

The QCF will permit and encourage the development of an inclusive qualifications system, able to recognise the achievements of all learners at any level and in any area of learning.

### **A responsive system**

The QCF will permit and encourage the development of a qualifications framework that is responsive to the needs of users. It will enable individuals and employers to establish routes to achievement that are appropriate to their needs.

It will enable recognised organisations to develop units and qualifications in response to demand and to update these quickly and efficiently as demands change over time.

### **An accessible system**

The QCF will permit and encourage the development of an accessible qualifications system that is based on clear design features and is easy to understand for all users.

The systems that operate within the QCF are transparent and open to scrutiny by all users. The QCF is based on clear design specifications that establish a flexible and simple structure.

### **A non-bureaucratic system**

The QCF will operate on the basis of mutual trust and confidence, supported by a proportionate approach to regulation and quality assurance.

### **A system that supports credit accumulation and transfer**

The QCF is designed to support a qualification system rather than simply acting as a means of recognising a collection of different qualifications. Therefore it provides not only for a structure within which unit-based qualifications can be located but also for the mechanisms necessary to allow the accumulation and transfer of credits between qualifications and awarding organisations. Because of this, both the design features of the QCF and the ability of regulated organisations to operate them effectively are of key importance.

### **How the QCF works**

The qualifications system that will operate within the QCF can be described in terms of eight broad elements:

- developing units
- placing units in the unit databank
- developing qualifications
- accrediting qualifications
- offering units and qualifications to learners

- assessing achievement
- awarding credits
- awarding qualifications.

The QCF is a unit-based framework. Units are the building blocks of all qualifications. The development of units within the QCF is therefore explicitly and deliberately separated from the development of rules of combination, the accreditation of qualifications and the subsequent assessment of units and award of credits and qualifications.

As part of the technical structure that supports the QCF, the qualifications regulators will establish and maintain a unit databank. Organisations that have been recognised to develop and submit units are free to place units in the unit databank without further intervention from the qualifications regulators at the point of entry. Once units are available in the databank, they may be used to build rules of combination by organisations recognised for this purpose.

Awarding organisations subsequently use agreed rules of combination to develop qualifications and submit these for accreditation. At this point the units included in the qualification are available to learners and the awarding organisation is able to offer the qualification to centres and learners. It is subsequently responsible for carrying out assessments of units and making awards of credits and qualifications.

## **Regulation in a QCF context**

### **Regulatory aims for the QCF**

The overall aim of regulating the QCF is to ensure that requirements for organisations recognised to develop and submit units, develop rules of combination and/or assess units and award credits and qualifications are clearly established and implemented. This in turn is intended to support both the purpose of the QCF and its secure and robust operation, and to maintain public confidence in its value and benefits. To support its stability and integrity and maintain public confidence in the opportunities and benefits that it offers, regulation of the QCF is designed to meet the following aims.

#### **Meet the needs of learners**

The system must meet the needs of individual learners, offer choices of routes to achievement and opportunities for progression and protect the interests of learners by maintaining the quality and integrity of the qualifications system.

### **Maintain standards and comparability**

Standards and comparability must be established and maintained across the units developed, and the credits and qualifications awarded to learners, by the various organisations recognised to operate within the QCF.

### **Promote public confidence**

There must be quality assurance of and support for the organisations that develop and submit units, develop rules of combination and/or assess units and award credits and qualifications in the QCF in order to maintain public confidence and trust in the organisations that operate within it. This quality assurance must be based on the integrity and good practice of the organisations concerned.

### **Support equality and diversity**

The QCF must support the operation of a fair and accessible qualifications system that offers a wide choice of opportunities for achievement and supports the needs of a diverse range of learners.

### **Ensure value for money**

Investment in the QCF and the cost, impact and benefits of regulatory measures and interventions should provide overall value for money for all stakeholders, including learners, centres, regulated organisations and government.

## **Approach to regulation in the QCF**

The qualifications regulators intend to focus their activity within the QCF as far as possible at system and organisation level rather than on individual units or qualifications. This approach is consistent with the specifications of the QCF and demonstrates a commitment to adopt a more strategic approach to regulation that is based on risk.

This document sets out the regulatory principles for the QCF and the objectives of the regulatory processes based on these principles. It does not set out the processes by which those objectives are achieved. This approach provides flexibility for organisations to work to the principles and meet the required objectives, without the majority of processes being prescribed.

These regulations do not specify the mechanisms that the qualifications regulators will use to check compliance with the requirements since these are likely to need to change over time. In broad terms, however, it is intended that organisations wishing to operate

within the QCF will go through an initial process in order to be recognised to carry out specific functions and, once recognised, will be subject to ongoing monitoring to ensure that their systems and procedures continue to meet the relevant requirements.

This focus on organisational capability means that the qualifications regulators will not scrutinise individual units at the point when they are admitted to the unit databank, and will use a streamlined process to focus on only the key features of qualifications at the point of accreditation.

The functions of the QCF for which organisations may be recognised, together with the regulatory requirements that apply, are outlined in more detail below.

## **Links with other regulatory documents**

These arrangements cover all the requirements applying to organisations operating within the QCF, the units and rules of combination that they may develop and the credits and qualifications they may award. The arrangements do not therefore rely on any other regulatory criteria or codes of practice although the regulators may also from time to time produce requirements, information and guidance for framework users intended to support the effective regulation of the QCF and the operation of the qualifications system. Currently the only such document is the *Regulatory principles for e-assessment*, to which awarding organisations should refer if they intend to use this type of assessment.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

This section summarises the main roles and responsibilities of organisations operating within the QCF. Organisations may be recognised to carry out one or more of the following functions:

- developing and submitting units
- developing rules of combination for qualifications
- submitting qualifications for accreditation, assessing units and awarding credits and qualifications.

The regulations have been designed so that all organisations must meet those set out in Section 2.1, which looks at general requirements for all organisations, and, depending on the functions for which they wish to become recognised, one or more of:

- Section 2.2, requirements for developing and submitting units
- Section 2.3, requirements for developing rules of combination for qualifications
- Section 2.4, requirements for awarding organisations.

### **Developing and submitting units**

Organisations recognised to develop and submit units to the unit databank must ensure that these units are up to date, responsive to change and capable of combination within qualifications that meet both market demand and the strategic intentions of key stakeholders. They must have procedures in place to ensure that units are developed according to QCF specifications and have robust levels and credit values.

### **Developing rules of combination for qualifications**

Organisations recognised to develop rules of combination for qualifications are responsible for developing rules that make effective use of the units available in the unit databank and have a clear purpose and rationale.

### **Submitting qualifications for accreditation, assessing units and awarding credits and qualifications**

Organisations recognised to carry out assessment and to award credits and qualifications based on this assessment are responsible for submitting qualifications based on agreed rules of combination for accreditation, developing assessment methodologies and assessing learner achievement reliably, validly and consistently. They are also responsible for awarding credits to learners for the achievement of units, making qualification awards within overarching arrangements for credit transfer and exemption and recording achievement in the learner achievement record (LAR).

# 1. The design specifications of the QCF

## 1.1 General

- 1.1.1 The concept of 'framework' in the term 'Qualifications and Credit Framework' is embodied explicitly through a set of design specifications. These specifications set out the key technical features of the QCF and are the basis for the consistency and stability of the framework.
- 1.1.2 The design specifications also provide the basis for establishing and maintaining an operational qualifications system within the QCF that is able to meet the objectives for developing the framework.
- 1.1.3 The design specifications of the QCF are established on the principle that the minimum set of technical features necessary to guarantee the stability and consistency of the QCF will lead to the most flexible and responsive system of qualifications located within it.
- 1.1.4 These design specifications may be grouped under the following headings
- units
  - credits
  - levels
  - qualifications
  - rules of combination
  - the award, accumulation and transfer of credits.
- 1.1.5 In order for the QCF to function effectively in delivering on its objectives, all bodies recognised to operate within it will be required to conform to these design specifications. One of the primary objectives of the regulation of the QCF is to enforce these requirements.

## 1.2 Units

- 1.2.1 The QCF is a unit-based framework. Units form the building blocks of all qualifications within it. They provide the basis for constructing qualifications and awarding credit.
- 1.2.2 All units within the QCF will be developed within a standard format. This format is based on the following design features:
- unit title

- learning outcomes
- assessment criteria
- level
- credit value.

1.2.3 These are the key design specifications for all units in the QCF. All units must include all these design specifications. No additional specifications may be added to these design features.

1.2.4 Each unit developed to these design features will also include additional information to support the use of the unit within the QCF. This information is referred to as 'additional' because:

- it is not required to be produced for every unit and/or
- it is added to the unit on completion of the unit development process.

1.2.5 The QCF unit format is set out in full with and includes a more detailed description of each of the unit design features in supporting guidance.<sup>1</sup>

1.2.6 All units must be developed to be capable of assessment independently of any other unit, although awarding organisations may also develop assessment methods that relate to the learning outcomes of more than one unit. Credit(s) will not be awarded to learners when all the learning outcomes of a unit are not achieved.

1.2.7 Each unit must be capable of contributing towards at least one qualification. Units will not be 'active' and available to learners until they are included in an accredited qualification.

1.2.8 All units will be placed in the QCF unit databank. Only bodies recognised by the regulators to do so may place units in the databank (see Section 2.2 of this document).

1.2.9 Within the QCF unit databank, submitting bodies must identify units as available to one of the following:

- to all awarding organisations to award credit (shared units)

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<sup>1</sup> Supporting guidance is available that provides further explanatory detail about the key features of the QCF. This is available at [www.qca.org.uk/framework](http://www.qca.org.uk/framework) and will be updated after the consultation.

- to a defined number of awarding organisations to award credit (restricted units)
- only to the awarding organisation that submitted it to award credit (private/owned units).

1.2.10 Two particular features of the unit, *credit value* and *level*, also have a wider application within the QCF, and these are explained in the following paragraphs.

## 1.3 Credit value

1.3.1 All units within the QCF have a credit value. The credit value specifies the number of credits that will be awarded to a learner who has achieved the learning outcomes of the unit.

1.3.2 The establishing of unit credit values is a key part of the process of unit development within the QCF. Credit values are determined for each unit, based on the definition of credit in the QCF:

- one credit is awarded to a learner for the achievement of the learning outcomes specified in a unit that the learner can be expected to achieve in ten hours of learning time.<sup>2</sup>

1.3.3 The credit value of a unit is represented through a number in the unit format. No restrictions are placed on the range of credit values that may be determined for an individual unit. However, in monitoring the range of credit values offered to learners within the QCF, the qualifications regulators will pay due regard to the objectives of the QCF in relation to accessibility and responsiveness to individual learner needs.

1.3.4 A fuller description of the use of credit values in the process of unit development is set out in supporting guidance.<sup>3</sup> Credit values are also used in the process of qualifications development, and in the representation of qualification size to QCF users. These uses of credit value are set out in Section 1.7.

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<sup>2</sup> Learning time is defined as the amount of time a learner at the level of the unit is expected to take, on average, to complete the learning outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the assessment criteria and differs from guided learning hours, which cover only teacher-supervised or directed study time required to teach a qualification or unit of a qualification.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 1.

## **1.4 Level**

- 1.4.1 Within the QCF, nine separate levels of learner achievement are recognised. These levels are identified through a set of level descriptors through which all achievements within the QCF are located at a particular level. These level descriptors are detailed in Annex D.
- 1.4.2 Each of the QCF level descriptors has a name that reflects a simple concept of progression from Entry level, through level 1, level 2 to level 8. Levels 1 to 8 of the QCF are mapped to levels 1 to 8 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).
- 1.4.3 The level descriptors are one of the design specifications used in the process of unit development within the QCF. All units in the QCF are located at one level of the framework (a single unit cannot be located at more than one level) and the name of the appropriate level is an integral feature of the unit.
- 1.4.4 The QCF level descriptors are therefore used to determine the level of all individual units. The same descriptors are used to represent the level of individual qualifications in the QCF.

## **1.5 Qualifications**

- 1.5.1 Qualifications will be offered and awarded by awarding organisations recognised to do so within the QCF. Before being offered to learners, a qualification must be accredited. The qualifications regulators will accredit qualifications against the requirements set out in this section and Section 3 below, and will invite awarding organisations to submit qualifications for accreditation, based on these arrangements.
- 1.5.2 In presenting a qualification for accreditation, an awarding organisation will be required to present the following information to the regulators:
- the title of the qualification
  - the rationale covering the need for the qualification
  - the purpose of the qualification
  - the rules of combination
  - a description of any grading arrangements
  - any requirements about the manner in which specific units must be assessed
  - the sector/subject area within which the qualification is to be classified

- the start and end dates for accreditation and end date for certification of the qualification
- the age ranges of the learners to whom and where the qualification is to be offered.

1.5.3 All other information about the qualification will be the responsibility of the awarding organisation to produce, but will not be required to be submitted for accreditation. In their monitoring activities, the qualifications regulators will have access to all the information developed by an awarding organisation in relation to the qualification.

## **1.6 Grading**

1.6.1. Qualifications in the QCF may be graded. Components of qualifications may also be graded. Any grading arrangements developed for a qualification or for the components of a qualification must:

- specify explicitly the criteria against which individual performance within the qualification or component is to be differentiated
- identify the grading scale to be used to signify performance differentiation within the qualification and/or components.

1.6.2. In specifying grading criteria and identifying a grading scale, the integrity of the all other specifications of the QCF must be maintained. In particular:

- any additional grading criteria must be consistent with the overall level of the qualification or components to be graded and must be clearly distinguished from achievements at the next level of the QCF
- all grading scales must include a 'pass' grade based exclusively on the assessment criteria in the unit or units on which the component or qualification is based and for which credit must be awarded
- grading scales may not use the term 'credit' to describe any point on the grading scale.

## **1.7 Qualification titles**

1.7.1 All qualification titles will be presented in a standard format that identifies the level, size and content of the qualification.

1.7.2 The level of a qualification is determined by reviewing the rules of combination for the qualification and identifying the level at which there is the greatest number of

credits. At least 60 percent of credits must be at the same level as the qualification or above

- 1.7.3 The size of a qualification will be signalled through the use of the terms 'award', 'certificate' and 'diploma'. This is determined by the credit value of the qualification as follows:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Award</b>	<b>Certificate</b>	<b>Diploma</b>
Credit value	1 to 12	13 to 36	37 and above

## 1.8 Rules of combination

- 1.8.1 Units are the building blocks of all qualifications in the QCF. Rules of combination are the mechanism through which sets of achievement are grouped together into a qualification in the QCF, in a way consistent with the qualification rationale. All qualifications in the QCF will be based on rules of combination set out in a standard format

- 1.8.2 Rules of combination specify the credits that need to be achieved, through the achievement of particular units, for a qualification to be awarded. All qualifications within the QCF will have rules of combination. Rules of combination do not exist outside the context of a qualification.

- 1.8.3 The standard format for representing rules of combination within the QCF permits rules to be established for the accumulation of credits through particular units under each of the following headings:

- qualification title (including any subtitles reflecting pathways)
- the credit value of the qualification
- the credits to be achieved at the level of the qualification or above
- credits from mandatory units
- credits from optional units
- credits from other units
- credits from equivalent units
- time limits on the process of credit accumulation.

- 1.8.4 In addition the rules of combination format also permits the identification of opportunities for learners to claim *exemption* from the credit achievement requirements of mandatory or optional units, based on qualifications or other certification achieved outside the QCF and deemed to be equivalent to

designated units within a qualification. These opportunities may also be time limited.

- 1.8.5 In establishing rules of combination, qualification developers will use one or more of these headings, but there is no requirement to use all these features in all qualifications. Rules of combination may be based on the achievement of credits from a single unit (through the identification of one mandatory unit).
- 1.8.6 The rules of combination format is set out in more detail in supporting guidance<sup>4</sup>.

## **1.9 The award, accumulation and transfer and recording of credits**

- 1.9.1 All awarding organisations recognised within the QCF will have the facility to award credits and qualifications (see Section 2.4). Credits are awarded for the successful achievement of the learning outcomes of a unit, and are entered into the learner's LAR.
- 1.9.2 Credits must only be awarded to learners for the achievement of all the learning outcomes specified in a unit. It is not possible for some credits to be achieved for partial completion of a unit or learners to be awarded credit when all the learning outcomes are not achieved by virtue of any 'compensation' for stronger performance in other areas of learning.
- 1.9.3 Credits may be accumulated towards a qualification. The rules of combination for a qualification will determine the requirements for achievement of credits through particular units. The LAR will support the process of credit accumulation.
- 1.9.4 All awarding organisations must mutually recognise the credits awarded by all other awarding organisations recognised to operate within the framework. Credits may be transferred between qualifications and awarding organisations where appropriate, subject to the rules of combination for the 'receiving' qualification.
- 1.9.5 All awarding organisations must have arrangements in place to ensure that all credits that fall within the rules of combination for the qualification that a learner claims are recognised as counting towards the qualification, irrespective of the awarding organisation that recorded the credit achievement in the LAR

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<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1.

## **1.10 Qualification types in the QCF**

- 1.10.1 A qualification type is defined through a specific and additional set of regulatory requirements that apply over and above the common requirements for all qualifications.
  
- 1.10.2 The QCF does not currently include specific requirements relating to particular types of qualification but would be capable of doing so were a case to be made that a particular group of qualifications would benefit from a set of additional requirements based on a set of clearly identified characteristics. In this case, it would need to be clear that the benefits of establishing such a type outweigh any costs, particularly to the flexibility of the QCF and the ability of learners to transfer credit between different qualifications and awarding organisations.
  
- 1.10.3 The QCF is also capable of supporting other mechanisms for differentiating between qualifications, for example by differentiating according to qualification purpose.

## **2. Organisational requirements**

### **2.1 Organisational requirements – general requirements for all organisations**

#### **Management and governance**

- 2.1.1 An organisation must notify and keep the qualifications regulators informed of:
- its ownership and arrangements for governance of any regulated functions
  - the names of individuals responsible for maintaining the quality of the relevant regulated functions
  - the management structures used to control the delivery of relevant regulated functions.
- 2.1.2 These arrangements must be transparent and sufficient to enable the organisation to carry out its regulated functions efficiently and impartially and must ensure that there are no conflicts of interest between functions.
- 2.1.3 If more than one organisation contributes to a regulated function, the cooperating organisations must:
- identify a lead body that is responsible for quality assurance
  - hold written statements of each organisation's responsibilities, including specific reference to their responsibilities for quality assurance
  - be able to provide evidence that all of them will comply with the relevant regulatory criteria.
- 2.1.4 An organisation must comply with the equality and diversity principles outlined in Annex E.

#### **Resources**

- 2.1.5 An organisation's financial strategy and arrangements must provide for sufficient funds to support current and future demands for its services.
- 2.1.6 An organisation's human resources strategy and arrangements must provide for sufficient staff and/or associates to support current and future demands for its services.
- 2.1.7 An organisation's technical strategy and equipment must provide for:

- adequate facilities to support current and future demands for its services
- arrangements that will enable it to maintain business continuity in the event of unforeseen circumstances affecting its regulated functions.

## **Self-evaluation and continuous improvement**

2.1.8 The organisation must have procedures in place to monitor its compliance with the regulations.

2.1.9 The organisation's review and evaluation arrangements must provide opportunities for users to contribute, and should be used to support continuous improvement.

2.1.10 The organisation must provide details of the outcomes of its review and evaluation activities to the qualifications regulators as required, and must allow the qualifications regulators access to premises, meetings documents and data.

## **2.2 Organisational requirements – requirements for developing and submitting units**

### **Expertise**

2.2.1 The organisation must have procedures in place that ensure:

- it has access to individuals who have expertise in the relevant subject or sector area(s) and the design and development of units
- it has access to expertise in assessment to inform unit design
- its staff and/or associates have access to appropriate training and guidance on the design and development of units.

### **Development**

2.2.2 When developing units, the organisation must have procedures in place to:

- determine the need for a new unit, by interrogating the unit databank and using provision planning tools<sup>5</sup> wherever these exist and using market research and labour market intelligence where appropriate
- involve awarding organisations, where it is not itself an awarding organisation
- ensure consistency in the determination of levels and credit values
- ensure that all units developed meet the requirements set out in the design features in Section 1

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<sup>5</sup> Such as Sector Qualification Strategies (SQS) and associated action plans and the Foundation Learning Tier qualifications strategy

- review and sign off the quality of units prior to submission to the unit databank
- use the IT systems supplied by the qualifications regulators to submit signed off units to the databank.

### **Ongoing review**

- 2.2.3 The organisation must have procedures in place to:
- review the continued need for a unit and compliance with the requirements set out in the design features
  - ensure continued consistency in levels and credit values with other units in the unit databank.
- 2.2.4 The organisation must agree to participate in any activities organised by the qualifications regulators to ensure consistency across units.

## **2.3 Organisational requirements – requirements for developing rules of combination for qualifications**

### **Expertise**

- 2.3.1 An organisation must have expertise in those areas in which it intends to develop rules of combination.
- 2.3.2 The organisation must have procedures in place that ensure:
- it has access to individuals who have expertise in the relevant subject or sector area(s) and the design and development of rules of combination
  - its staff and/or associates have access to appropriate training and guidance on the design and development of rules of combination.

### **Development**

- 2.3.3. The organisation must have procedures in place to determine the need for a set of rules of combination for a qualification, using provision planning tools wherever these exist and using market research and labour market intelligence where appropriate. This is the rationale for a qualification and must be specified.
- 2.3.4 When developing rules of combination, the organisation must have procedures in place to:
- interrogate the unit databank effectively to establish the units required for a rule of combination and ensure new units are developed if required

- ensure that all rules of combination developed meet the requirements set out in the design features in Section 1
- use meaningful and coherent combinations of units that reflect the rationale for a qualification
- generate maximum opportunities for credit accumulation and transfer consistent with the rationale for a qualification
- involve awarding organisations, where it is not itself an awarding organisation.
- review and sign off the quality of the rationale for a rule of combination for a qualification
- use the IT systems supplied by the qualifications regulators to set out the rationale and requirements of rules of combination and make them available to those that need to use them.

### **Ongoing review**

2.3.5 The organisation must have procedures in place to:

- review the continued need for a rule of combination and compliance with the requirements set out in the design features
- ensure the specified combinations of units and opportunities for credit accumulation and transfer continue to be consistent with the rationale for the qualification.

## **2.4 Organisational requirements – requirements for awarding organisations**

### **Design and development of assessment**

2.4.1 The awarding organisation must have in place procedures to develop assessment methods for units or groups of units that:

- are consistent with the requirements for units set out in the design features in Section 1
- enable individual units to be assessed in response to learner needs
- assess validly the skills, knowledge and/or understanding for all learning outcomes against the stated assessment criteria
- require the production of sufficient evidence from learners to enable reliable and consistent judgements to be made about the achievement of all learning outcomes against the stated assessment criteria
- permit manageable and cost-effective assessment arrangements to be developed by centres, with a minimum of bureaucracy

- where appropriate, are consistent with the requirements set out in provision planning tools.

## **Grading**

2.4.2 Where an awarding organisation chooses to offer grades within a qualification, it must have procedures in place to ensure that:

- the grading arrangements for that qualification conform to the grading requirements set out in the design features in Section 1
- judgements about the grading of qualifications and their components are made using the procedures outlined below for delivery of assessment.

## **Delivery of assessment**

2.4.3 The awarding organisation must have defined roles and responsibilities for staff involved in the delivery of assessment to ensure that assessment requirements are managed and conducted effectively, with clear accountability to the awarding organisation.

2.4.4 The awarding organisation must have in place the necessary systems and procedures to ensure that:

- assessment instruments and tasks can be produced to the required quality standards
- arrangements are in place to ensure consistency of standards in assessment of units, across units and over time
- people involved in the assessment process are adequately informed and supported to fulfil their responsibilities
- suitable training is offered to people involved in the assessment process
- performance management systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of people involved in assessment
- for each qualification, it (or its centres) retains sufficient evidence of learners' work or assessment decisions to monitor them over time.

2.4.5 The awarding organisation must ensure that its own staff are not responsible for the quality assurance and/or conduct of assessment at a centre in which they have a personal interest.

2.4.6 The awarding organisation must ensure that it has arrangements in place for standardisation and quality assurance of assessment outcomes across centres and awards.

2.4.7 The awarding organisation must ensure that assessment outcomes are held and transmitted securely by centres.

### **Ongoing review**

2.4.8 The awarding organisation must have procedures in place to:

- review whether its approaches to assessment design and development result in assessment methods consistent with the principles set out in Section 2.4.1 and, where the qualification is graded as in Section 2.4.2
- review whether its procedures for delivery of assessment are consistent with the principles set out in Sections 2.4.3 to 2.4.7
- ensure standards are comparable year on year across centres, qualifications with the same title and units assessed using different assessment methods.

### **Award of credits**

2.4.9 The awarding organisation must have procedures in place to ensure that:

- centres are provided with sufficient information and support to enable them to respond positively to learner demands for the award of credit
- the credits achieved by learners are awarded securely, accurately and quickly, and awards are recorded, amended and, if necessary, withdrawn through IT systems supplied by the qualifications regulators for the LAR.

2.4.10 If issuing paper-based certificates, the awarding organisation must ensure that:

- the design of certificates meets the requirements outlined in Annex B
- certificates are issued without unnecessary delay
- there are safeguards against fraudulent or mistaken claims for certificates
- replacement certificates are labelled as such, and are only issued after steps have been taken to authenticate the claims.

### **Award of qualifications**

2.4.11 The awarding organisation must have procedures in place for the award of qualifications that ensure it can:

- identify accurately and quickly the point at which a learner has completed the rules of combination for a qualification
- ensure that credits awarded by other awarding organisations are able to be counted towards achievement of the qualification

- ensure that all appropriate exemptions have been claimed and recorded by learners completing the rules of combination for a qualification
- ensure all qualifications achieved by learners are awarded securely, accurately and quickly and awards are recorded, amended and, if necessary, withdrawn through IT systems supplied by the qualifications regulators for the LAR.

2.4.12 The awarding organisation must have procedures in place for issuing qualification certificates that ensure:

- the design of certificates meets the requirements outlined in Annex C
- certificates are issued without unnecessary delay
- there are safeguards against fraudulent or mistaken claims for certificates
- replacement certificates are labelled as such, and are only issued after steps have been taken to authenticate the claims.

### **Centre recognition**

2.4.13 The awarding organisation must have procedures in place to recognise centres to offer assessment leading to awards within the QCF that ensure each centre:

- has arrangements in place to identify a single named point of accountability for the quality assurance and management of units and qualifications
- has the staff, resources and systems necessary to support the assessment of units and the award, accumulation and transfer of credits
- has arrangements in place to obtain on behalf of its learners a unique learner number (ULN) and LAR
- has access to a record of the previous achievements of learners in order to ensure that opportunities for credit transfer and exemption are maximised
- where appropriate, has in place arrangements for the accreditation of prior experiential learning
- has administrative systems in place to track the progress of learners towards their target awards
- documents the respective roles and responsibilities of each partner where a centre is a partnership arrangement between organisations
- agrees to provide the awarding organisation and the qualifications regulators with access to premises, people and records, and to cooperate with the awarding organisation's monitoring activities.

## **Fees**

2.4.14 The awarding organisation must provide the qualifications regulators with information about its fees in confidence and on request.

## **Data requirements**

2.4.15 The awarding organisation must collect and retain information about its centres, and on candidate registrations and achievements of units and qualifications.

## **Awards outside England, Wales and Northern Ireland**

2.4.16 Certificates for accredited qualifications can be awarded to candidates outside of England, Wales and Northern Ireland and can carry the relevant qualifications regulators' logo(s) provided that:

- the qualifications are offered to the exact specification accredited for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- the awarding organisation informs its clients that the qualifications regulators' logo(s) on the certificate indicate that the qualification is accredited only for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## **Use of languages**

2.4.17 Apart from foreign language specifications and the other specific instances set out in the paragraph below, the awarding organisation must provide:

- in England, qualification specifications and assessment materials that are expressed in English
- in Wales, qualification specifications that are expressed in Welsh or English, or in Welsh and English; specifications must state explicitly in which language(s) assessment is available
- in Northern Ireland, qualification specifications that are expressed in English, and assessment materials that are expressed either in English, or in English and Irish (Gaeilge).

2.4.18 Awarding organisations may allow assessment in a language other than English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) in qualifications designed for the workplace, provided that:

- the awarding organisation ensures that the assessment is comparable to that offered in English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge)
- lack of proficiency in English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) does not prevent the candidate from properly carrying out the role that is supported by the qualification.

2.4.19 Where more than one language is used, the awarding organisation must put mechanisms in place to ensure that:

- assessments carried out in the different languages are comparable
- quality standards for assessment carried out in different languages is comparable.

## **Appeals**

2.4.20 The awarding organisation must have published procedures that centres or candidates can follow to enquire about, or appeal to the awarding organisation against, assessment or other decisions.

2.4.21 The enquiry procedure must provide for centres to seek a check on:

- assessment decisions affecting candidates' results
- other decisions affecting centres and candidates, where appropriate.

2.4.22 The appeals procedure must:

- make provision for some independence in the decision-making process
- focus, in the case of appeals against assessment decisions, on whether the awarding organisation used procedures that were consistent with these regulations and applied the procedures properly and fairly in arriving at judgements
- include provision to keep the appellants informed
- avoid deterring appellants on financial grounds
- explain how unresolved appeals can be put to independent review.

2.4.23 Where the outcome of an appeal brings into question the accuracy of other results, the awarding organisation must take steps to protect the interests of all learners, the integrity of the qualification and the integrity of the QCF.

2.4.24 The awarding organisation must have procedures in place for monitoring, evaluating and reporting annually on its enquiry service and appeals arrangements, including the number and nature of enquiries and appeals and their outcomes. The awarding organisation must share relevant data with the qualifications regulators on request.

## **Dealing with malpractice**

- 2.4.25 The awarding organisation must publish procedures to centres for dealing with malpractice on the part of learners, centre staff and any others involved in providing the qualification.
- 2.4.26 The procedures must require centres to report to the awarding organisation any suspected malpractice, and must make clear that failure to cooperate can lead to certificates not being issued and future entries and/or registrations not being accepted.
- 2.4.27 The awarding organisation must conduct a full investigation of instances of alleged or suspected malpractice, and must take such action, with respect to the learners and centres concerned, as is necessary to maintain the integrity of the qualification. The actions taken should be commensurate with the gravity of the malpractice.
- 2.4.28 The awarding organisation must report cases of malpractice to the qualifications regulators whenever it finds evidence that certificates may be invalid. The awarding organisation must cooperate with any follow-up investigations of malpractice required by the qualifications regulators. The awarding organisation must agree with the qualifications regulators on appropriate remedial action if there is evidence that certificates may be invalid.

## **Customer service**

- 2.4.29 The awarding organisation must publish a customer service statement that specifies:
- the quality of service that customers can expect in relation to qualifications
  - relevant points of contact and communication mechanisms
  - its policy on communicating bilingually with centres, where the awarding organisation offers assessment opportunities through the medium of Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge)
  - the fee structure that will apply to the qualification or to authentication of the qualification
  - associated performance measures and feedback arrangements, focusing particularly on manageability and responsiveness.

## **Submitting qualifications for accreditation**

2.4.30 The awarding organisation must have procedures in place to:

- ensure that qualifications that are submitted for accreditation meet the design features set out in Section 1
- review and sign off the quality of qualifications prior to submission for accreditation
- use the IT systems supplied by the qualifications regulators to submit qualifications for accreditation.

## 3. Qualification requirements

### 3.1 Accreditation

3.1.1 In order to be accredited, a qualification must:

- meet the design features set out in Section 1
- include units developed under the requirements for developing and submitting units set out in Section 2.2 and combined together through rules of combination developed under the requirements for these bodies set out in Section 2.3
- have assessment arrangements designed by awarding organisations under the requirements set out in Section 2.4
- be submitted by bodies that have arrangements in place for delivery and administration of assessment set out in Section 2.4.

3.1.2 Qualification proposals submitted for accreditation must also:

- be supported or approved by an SSC where the qualification falls within an SSC footprint<sup>6</sup>
- not require learners to take up or maintain membership of any organisation unless required to do so by statute – this requirement only applies to the award of accredited qualifications and does not preclude a membership requirement for continued use of a licence to practise.

3.1.3 The awarding organisation must also agree to negotiate appropriate arrangements with the qualifications regulators for withdrawal of the qualification to protect the interests of learners.

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<sup>6</sup> A pilot to determine whether SSC approval for vocational qualifications is appropriate is underway. If as a result of this pilot it is deemed that SSC approval is appropriate for all vocational qualifications then this will be confirmed in summer 2008.

## Annex A: Glossary

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Accreditation	The process through which the regulators confirm that a qualification conforms to the regulatory criteria
Appeal	The process through which an awarding organisation may be challenged on the outcome of an enquiry about results or, where appropriate, other procedural decisions affecting a centre or an individual learner
Assessment	The process of making judgements about the extent to which a learner's work meets the assessment criteria of a unit, or any additional assessment requirements of a qualification
Assessment criteria	Descriptions of the requirements a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved
Assessor	The person who assesses a learner's work
Award of credits or qualifications	A certificate (electronic or paper-based) issued to an individual that recognises an achievement
Award	A qualification with credit value between 1 and 12
Awarding organisation	A body recognised to award credits and qualifications
Centre	An organisation accountable to an awarding organisation for the assessment arrangements leading to the award of credit(s) or qualification(s)
Centre recognition	A process through which a centre wishing to offer an award or awards is confirmed as being able to maintain the required quality and consistency of assessment and comply with other requirements of the awarding organisation
Certificate (1) for a unit or qualification	The record of attainment of credit(s) or a qualification issued by an awarding organisation
Certificate (2)	A qualification with a credit value between 13 and 36
Comparability of assessment	The extent to which marks, grades or results are equivalent between centres, awarding organisations and over time
Component	A sub-set of a qualification to which a particular set of assessment methods is applied

Condition of accreditation	Requirements that awarding organisations must meet which, although important, are not deemed sufficiently serious to delay an accreditation decision
Credit	An award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of the designated learning outcomes in a unit
Credit accumulation	The process of putting together a combination of credits to meet the achievement requirements of a qualification
Credit transfer	The process of using a credit or credits awarded in the context of one qualification towards the achievement requirements of another qualification
Credit value	The number of credits that may be awarded to a learner for the successful achievement of the learning outcomes of a unit
European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	A meta-framework that enables all European qualification frameworks to be mapped to a generic set of level descriptors
Exemption	The facility for a learner to claim exemption from some of the achievement requirements of a credit-based qualification, using a certificated, non-credit-based achievement of equivalent value
Grade	A point on a scale of performance used to differentiate achievement within a qualification
Guided learning hours	The number of hours of teacher-supervised or directed study time required to teach a qualification or unit of a qualification
Learning outcome	A statement of what a learner can be expected to know, understand or do as a result of a process of learning
Learning time	The amount of time a learner at the level of the unit is expected to take, on average, to complete the learning outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the assessment criteria
Level	An indication of the relative demand, complexity and/or depth of achievement, and/or the autonomy of the learner in demonstrating that achievement
Level descriptors	A set of statements that enable achievements to be located at a particular level in the framework
Mandatory units	Units in a set of rules of combination that must be achieved for the qualification to be awarded
Monitoring	The review of, and reporting on, an organisation's quality assurance arrangements by the qualifications regulators

Optional unit	A unit named in a set of rules of combination that a learner may choose to complete to achieve the required number of credits for award of the qualification
Qualification	An award made to a learner for the achievement of the specified combination of credits required for that award
Qualification level	An indication of the relative demand, complexity and/or depth of achievement, and/or the autonomy of the learner, represented by a qualification
Qualification specification	The title, rationale, rules of combination and other key information required by the regulators to accredit a qualification
Qualification title	An short description of the level, size and content of the qualification
Qualifications regulators	Government-designated statutory organisations required to establish national standards for credits and qualifications and secure consistent compliance with them
Reliability of assessment	The extent to which assessment results are an accurate measurement of a learner's achievements against the requirements of a unit
Rules of combination	A description of the credit accumulation requirements for the achievement of a named qualification
Sector skills council	A body responsible for formulating and reviewing occupational standards for a specific sector across the UK, and for supporting the development of units and qualifications based on these standards. Each SSC is an employer-led, independent organisation. All SSCs are licensed by government
Sector qualifications strategy	A specification of the current and future needs of a sector, with a timeline and implementation plan
Standardisation of assessment	A process to ensure that assessment leading to the award of credits and qualifications is applied consistently by individuals, centres and awarding organisations
Unit	A coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria, with a title, credit value and level
Unit databank	An electronic repository within which all units used in qualifications are stored, classified and made available to users
Unit format	A standard design structure within which all units must be developed and submitted to the unit databank

## **Annex B: Design requirements for credit certificates**

The following are the minimum requirements that the qualifications regulators would expect an awarding organisation to include on a credit certificate.

1. A statement that indicates that the learner has been awarded credit(s).
2. The full name of the awarding organisation.
3. The accredited unit title/s – prominently shown and in the form agreed by the regulators at accreditation.
4. The credit value of each unit.
5. The unit level.
6. The learner's name as registered.
7. The national accreditation number/s for the unit/s.
8. A clear distinction between information on grading and the award of credit.
9. The date (day/month/year) on/during which the awarding organisation confirms a learner's achievement of the credit/s by issue of a certificate.
10. The signature of a single point of accountability at the awarding organisation, with printed name and title.
11. Certificate details to be issued in English or English and Welsh where appropriate.

## **Annex C: Design requirements for qualification certificates**

The following are the minimum requirements that the qualifications regulators would expect an awarding organisation to include on an accredited qualification certificate.

1. The full name of the awarding organisation.
2. Partnerships between awarding organisations may be shown provided these have been agreed by the regulatory authorities during the accreditation process.
3. The learner's name as registered.
4. The accredited qualification title – prominently shown and in the form agreed by the qualifications regulators at accreditation.
5. The national accreditation number for the qualification.
6. A unique identifier or code for each certificate to enable audit activity, or an assurance that the certificate may be used for audit purposes. A candidate number may be used for this purpose, providing the awarding organisation is able to distinguish between multiple certificates awarded to the same candidate.
7. If the qualification is graded then the grade must be shown on the certificate.
8. Date (day/month/year) on/during which awarding organisation confirms achievement of the qualification by issue of a certificate.
9. Signature of single point of accountability at the awarding organisation, with printed name and title.
10. Certificate details to be issued in English or English and Welsh as appropriate.
11. If the qualification certificate is being used also to record unit achievement, then the unit certificate minimum requirements also apply.
12. Use the three regulators' logos, in the form provided by QCA.

## Annex D: Qualifications and Credit Framework level descriptors

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

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	
<b>Level 2</b>	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.	Use understanding of facts, procedures and ideas to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems Interpret relevant information and ideas Be aware of the types of information that are relevant to the area of study or work	Complete well-defined, generally routine tasks and address straightforward problems Select and use relevant skills and procedures Identify, gather and use relevant information to inform actions Identify how effective actions have been	Take responsibility for completing tasks and procedures Exercise autonomy and judgement subject to overall direction or guidance
<b>Level 3</b>	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 a study area of study or work.	Use factual, procedural and theoretical understanding to complete tasks and address problems that while well defined may be complex and non-routine Interpret and evaluate relevant information and ideas Be aware of the nature of the area of study or work Have awareness of different perspectives or approaches within the area of study or work	Address problems that while well defined may be complex and non-routine Identify, select and use appropriate skills, methods and procedures Use appropriate investigation to inform actions Review how effective methods and actions have been	Take responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures, including where relevant responsibility for supervising or guiding others Exercise autonomy and judgement within limited parameters

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
<b>Level 4</b>	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>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>
<b>Level 5</b>	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>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>

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
<b>Level 6</b>	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>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>
<b>Level 7</b>	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>

Level	Summary	Knowledge and understanding	Application and action	Autonomy and accountability
<b>Level 8</b>	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>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>

## Annex E: Equality and diversity requirements

It is intended that the regulators consult on a draft set of equality principles that will apply equally to all the qualifications that we regulate, including those recognised within the QCF. Therefore these principles are likely to be revised in the light of this exercise.

QCF diversity and equality principles:

1. There must be fair and equal opportunity to access QCF units and qualifications for all learners.
2. The six areas of diversity and equality to be considered are disability, gender, race/ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation and religion/belief. The regulatory activity of QCA, DCELLS and CCEA also promotes equality in terms of disability, gender and ethnic origin, in accordance with public sector equality duties, to ensure that unlawful discrimination on these grounds is eliminated.
3. Organisations recognised to operate in the QCF must design their units, rules of combination for qualifications and their assessment requirements, for all learners so that there are no barriers to equality for learners on the basis of disability, gender, race/ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation and religion/belief (unless the recognised organisation considers a barrier to disability equality is essential to the qualification because it is part of the competence standard).
4. Awarding organisations' design of assessment for units and qualifications in the QCF should minimise any subsequent need to make reasonable adjustments for disabled learners.
5. Awarding organisations must allow reasonable adjustments to the assessment of QCF qualifications for disabled people to overcome any barriers to equality that have been identified.
6. Organisations recognised to operate in the QCF must have procedures in place to monitor, evaluate and impact assess their policies in order to ensure that they do not adversely impact on equality and meet the requirements of current legislation. They must share relevant data with the qualifications regulators on request.