



Skills Funding
Agency

Approval of Qualifications for Public Funding for Adult Learners

Version 3

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Official – Technical Guide for Awarding Organisations

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Purpose and scope

1. This document sets out the process and rules we use to approve qualifications. From March 2015 we will apply these rules to new qualifications for the current funding year, and all qualifications for the 2015 to 2016 funding year. We produce it so that you (awarding organisations) are clear about the process.
2. It covers approval of qualifications for funding through the Adult Skills Budget, and Offender Learning and Skills Service.
3. Qualifications eligible for a 24+ Advanced Learning Loan are designated by the Chief Executive of Skills Funding on behalf of the Secretary of State in line with the approval process outlined in this document.
4. Our work is part of the government's reform programme for vocational qualifications, [Getting the Job Done](#). Our approach builds on the principles for adult vocational qualifications set out in the [Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications](#) led by Nigel Whitehead, UK Commission for Employment and Skills Commissioner and Group Managing Director, BAE Systems plc.
5. We continue to work closely with the Department for Education (DfE) to align, where appropriate, our rules and process with their rules and processes for approval of vocational qualifications for 16 to 19 performance tables.
6. We also work closely with the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). In particular, to support their implementation of new regulatory arrangements and to make sure that future funding approval arrangements take account of and reflect new regulatory approaches.
7. The following areas are **not** covered:
 - **Apprenticeships**
 - **Contracting:** see [Register of Training Organisations](#) section of GOV.UK
 - **Learner eligibility and entitlement:** see our [Funding Rules](#)
8. If you have any queries about this document or our process to approve qualifications for funding, please email qualifications@sfa.bis.gov.uk.

Introduction

9. In this Guide we use the term 'offer' to refer to the qualifications and learning activity we approve for public funding. To be in the offer all qualifications must have met our rules to enter and remain publicly funded. We call this "approval". Approval applies to a "funding year". That is, from 1 August to 31 July.
10. We believe government contributory funding should support qualifications that are rigorous, recognised, and relevant.
11. **Rigorous:** we only approve regulated qualifications. We look to Ofqual and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to make sure that qualifications in scope for the offer are of sufficiently high quality. We will continue to streamline the offer. We do this so we can direct funding to those qualifications that demonstrate relevant skills to employers and others.
12. **Recognised:** we only approve qualifications that have high demand from employers and individuals. A qualification we approve must support the objectives below. It must act as a signal of meaningful skills achievement to employers or further and higher education institutions, allowing an individual to:
 - demonstrate their achievement of the specialist knowledge and skills needed to carry out a specific job role
 - enter an apprenticeship or work in a specific industry, occupation or occupational area
 - progress to the next level of learning, including higher education
13. **Relevant:** we only approve qualifications that enable learners to enter or sustain employment. Or that support them on their journey towards employment. The offer should be able to respond to current and future skills needs and be relevant at a sub-national level. Qualifications must support clear outcomes in the form of employment and/or progression to the next level. They must also allow individuals to both engage in and progress through vocational education and training. This includes those learners who are making the transition from the 16 to 19 offer to the offer for those aged 19 to 23.

14. We want the offer to focus on vocational qualifications that give learners reliable, recognisable signals of vocational skills gain, which can unlock employment and progression within vocational learning. This means the vocational qualifications we fund must be credible. They must have value to employers in the specific industry, occupation or occupational area.
15. We will also support a broader offer for certain learners working at Entry Level and Level 1. For example, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those unemployed and actively seeking work, or those that need smaller packages of tailored support to re-engage with learning. We want the offer to include qualifications at Entry Level and Level 1 only that support:
 - breaking down barriers to engagement with learning or work – this includes supporting individuals to operate independently and effectively
 - the generic and transferable skills needed to perform with confidence in the workplace
16. From August 2015 colleges and training organisations will be able to use non-regulated non-vocational provision at Entry Level and Level 1, where they feel this will offer a more responsive and bespoke offer to an individual's needs. We will continue to approve some regulated non-vocational qualifications so that they have a range and choice of appropriate provision. For the 2016 to 2017 funding year we may extend this flexibility, by no longer defining a list of non-vocational qualifications, linked to these outcomes at Entry Level and Level 1.
17. In line with government policy we will approve certain types or groups of qualifications in the offer automatically. For example, technical qualifications (Tech Levels). For us to do this they must fit within the remit of what we are able to fund (paragraphs 46 to 50).
18. We will support every learner to progress towards achieving an English or maths GCSE at A* to C. The offer will include recognised qualifications to support this, including Functional Skills. We will continue to approve some Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) English and maths qualifications at Entry Level and Level 1 only where they meet our business rules.

19. Where we do not approve a qualification automatically, you will need to prove to us that the qualification is relevant to the needs of employers and learners and aligns with the objectives set out in paragraphs 11 to 15. We will apply our [business rules](#) to these qualifications to make sure that the offer only includes qualifications that have a clear value to employers and currency for learners.
20. Our business rules make sure that we only fund qualifications that:
 - are of a sufficient **size** to deliver meaningful learning to demonstrate the attainment of skills, knowledge and understanding
 - have a public-facing **purpose statement** that clearly describes the outcomes the qualification supports – these outcomes must align with funding priorities set out in the [Skills Funding Letter](#) and this Guide
 - have appropriate **recognition** from employers and/or appropriate education and training organisations
21. The business rules are now 'framework neutral'. We have removed our rule that we will only consider QCF qualifications outside of automatic approvals. This means we will accept submissions for QCF and non-QCF qualifications.
22. We will apply the business rules to all qualifications to see if we can add them to the offer. This includes qualifications developed with the [Innovation Code](#).
23. Each year, we also look at the qualifications that have been approved for two or more years. We will only keep in the offer qualifications that have a **track record** of demand and that support **progression** to relevant, meaningful outcomes for the learner.

Qualifications Advisory Group

24. We will continue to monitor the use and impact of our rules. We will update the Qualifications Advisory Group on any issues that arise.
25. This group advises us on qualification-related issues and the chair is independent. It includes representatives from both the Federation of Awarding Bodies and the Joint Council for Qualifications. You can view the Terms of Reference and membership on the [Qualifications Advisory Group](#) section of GOV.UK.

Further ahead

26. We may need to update this Guide as Ofqual implement its [regulatory changes](#) as the nature and timescales for those changes becomes clear.
27. In 2015 we will look at how we can have a more locally responsive offer. We will explore how we can work with Local Enterprise Partnerships, Industrial Partnerships and National Colleges, to make sure the offer supports delivery of their strategic plans, particularly in the context of current and future adult vocational qualifications (AVQs).
28. We will publish guidance for the 2016 to 2017 funding year in January 2016.

Timescales

29. February 2015 will be the last time we use Version 2 of the Guide.
30. From 6 March 2015 we will review all submissions with this version of the Guide. This will be for submissions for both the 2014 to 2015 and 2015 to 2016 funding years.
31. The timescales for the funding year 2015 and 2016 are as follows:

Process cycle:	Awarding Organisation submission date:	Updated offer published by:
Initial 2015 to 2016 offer	6 November 2014	5 February 2015
Monthly process (using version 2)	6 February 2015	2 March 2015 (2014 to 2015 offer only)
Quarterly process	6 March 2015	1 April 2015
Quarterly process	4 June 2015	1 July 2015 (last publication of the 2014 to 2015 offer)
Quarterly process	3 September 2015	1 October 2015
Annual review	5 November 2015	8 February 2016
Quarterly process	3 March 2016	3 April 2016
Quarterly process	9 June 2016	4 July 2016

How we approve qualifications

Here we explain the process we use to identify which qualifications will be eligible for public funding.

Overview

32. In February 2015 we published the initial offer for the next funding year. These qualifications will be available for delivery from 1 August 2015.
33. Before we publish the initial offer we do an **annual review**. We apply three criteria to all qualifications that have been in the offer for two or more years:
 - 1) Does the qualification have a track record of demand?
 - 2) Has the qualification supported sufficient progression outcomes? For example, entry into work or progression to the next level of learning.
 - 3) Has the awarding organisation regularly uploaded qualification and unit achievement data to the Personal Learning Record (PLR)?
34. We will consider removing a qualification that does not meet all of these criteria from the offer for the following funding year.
35. We then update the offer every three months unless there is a government imperative to make a change to the offer outside of this timescale.
36. Throughout the year we will:
 - add to the offer qualifications that meet our rules for automatic approval
 - consider submissions for qualifications we do not approve automatically (we will review these qualifications against our business rules)
 - consider requests for a qualification that we removed as part of the annual review to re-enter the offer
 - consider submissions for exceptions (we will only consider exceptions for qualifications at Level 2 or above that do not meet our size rule)
 - review amendments made to qualifications already in the offer

Annex A is a summary of the process for approving individual qualifications.

Producing the qualifications offer

37. We usually approve a qualification for the whole of the funding year. When we approve a qualification we assume it is ready for delivery from its operational start date, as recorded in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#). We may approve a qualification for less than the whole of the funding year if:
- the operational end date is earlier than the end of the funding year, or the operational start date is later than the start of funding year
 - we decide to stop funding the qualification (for example, because a new suite of qualifications have been developed)
38. In exceptional cases we may suspend approving certain types or groups of qualifications. For example, where there are concerns about a group of qualifications in a particular occupational area. If we do this we will alert you.
39. If we approve a qualification after 1 August, we backdate its approval to 1 August, or its operational start date if that is later.
40. When we add a qualification to the offer we give it a funding rate. We give information on funding rates in the [Hub](#). Not all qualifications in the offer can be delivered to all learners. We give information on eligibility in the [Funding Rules](#).
41. During 2015 we will withdraw the [Simplified Funding Rates Catalogue](#) in its current form. However, we will continue to produce a version of the catalogue for regulated qualifications only.

Qualification approval process

42. We will run our approval process every three months throughout the year. We start by looking at information about new:
- Qualifications entering Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#)
 - Access to Higher Education diplomas on the QAA [Access to Higher Education database](#)
43. We put these qualifications through our approval process to see whether we can add them to the offer. There are three steps to this process. In step three

we apply our business rules to qualifications that are not approved automatically.

44. If you are concerned that the content of a qualification may not be appropriate for the offer, you can contact us for an informal discussion. Where possible we will give an indication as to whether we would consider the qualification.
45. **We cannot consider a qualification which is not approved automatically unless you submit it to us, along with the evidence we require.**

Step one – is the qualification within our remit to fund?

46. Before we consider a qualification we need to establish if it is within our remit to fund. We apply a set of 'core criteria' to new qualifications to make sure that we do not approve a qualification that is outside our remit.
47. We will **consider** qualifications that are:
 - available in England
 - available for learners aged 19 and over
 - from Entry Level to Level 4
 - offered by awarding organisations that have signed our PLR Agreement and regularly uploads data to the PLR in line with the terms of the [Agreement](#)
48. We will **not approve** a qualification where the content or purpose is:
 - required by a licensing authority so that an individual can operate in a regulated job role
 - for higher education provision where we do not have a remit to fund
 - to recognise activity that would already be taking place as part of a learner's experience within further education (FE) – for example, college induction, preparing to go on work experience, or preparing to enter a skills competition
 - used for the end-point assessment of new apprenticeship standards
 - specific to one employer (unless due to statutory requirements they are the sole employer in a sector, such as the armed forces)

- for a named product (for example a vendor-specific course)
- vocational, but the title of the qualification does not reflect the specific sector or occupation or job activity covered
- non-vocational and the content is not appropriate for public funding

English and maths

49. Our approach is in line with the [Ministerial statement](#) (July 2014). This will ensure a clear focus by colleges and training organisations on GCSEs and Functional Skills in English and maths up to Level 2.
50. We continue to approve QCF English and maths qualifications at Entry Level and Level 1 alongside GCSE and Functional Skills. However, we will not approve any QCF English and maths Level 2 qualifications. We will review the business rules for QCF English and maths once the outcomes of the Education and Training Foundation's review of English provision are clear. We will make changes in line with their [recommendations](#).

Step two – can we approve the qualification automatically?

51. We will approve these groups of qualifications automatically if they meet the criteria in step one:
- General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)
 - Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary Level (GCE)
 - Functional Skills in English, maths and ICT from Entry Level to Level 2
 - QCF English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications
 - QAA Access to Higher Education Diplomas
 - iGCSEs in English and maths that are part of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measure grade A* to C
 - Free-standing Maths qualifications up to and including Level 2
 - Technical Certificates and Tech Levels which meet DfE requirements for inclusion in [16 to 19 Performance Tables](#)
 - Levels 3 and 4 Early Years Educator qualifications that the National College for Teaching and Leadership confirms as 'full and relevant'

- Ofqual-regulated Level 2 Early Education and Childcare qualifications, including all Children’s Care Learning and Development qualifications that provide progression routes to Level 3
- Level 3 Diplomas for Residential Childcare (England)
- Level 3 Awards in Education and Training and Level 4 Certificates in Education and Training
- specific qualifications in fork-lift truck, food hygiene, health and safety, first aid at work and security approved for certain groups of learners
- Princes Trust Employment, Teamwork and Community Skills qualifications

Step three – applying the business rules

52. If we do not approve a qualification automatically you can submit it to us. We will review it to see whether we should approve it. We review qualifications individually.
53. This includes QCF English and maths qualifications at Entry Level and Level 1.
54. We will apply the business rules to see if we should add the qualification to the offer. The qualification must meet all the rules to enter the offer.
55. You should be aware that if you offer different sizes and/or levels of the same or similar qualification title, and they lead to the same or similar outcome(s) we may not approve all of the qualifications.

Apprenticeships

56. Where a qualification is required in an apprenticeship we may consider it for funding. But we will need a rationale as to why it should be available outside the apprenticeship. This applies to qualifications which are part of current apprenticeship frameworks as well as those in the new Trailblazer apprenticeship standards.

Submissions for funding approval

Here we explain how you can send us a submission.

General information

57. We require you to nominate a key contact, who should receive copies of all email correspondence. We will notify them of the outcome of submissions and when we update our guidance or forms.
58. So that we can collate and review the qualifications you submit accurately, you need to send them to us in the following format:
 - a separate email for each qualification
 - the email must contain all documents for the qualification
 - the email title must include the qualification number, written without “/” or “-“, for example: 6015432X
 - you must send the email to qualifications@sfa.bis.gov.uk
59. We provide a form to help make sure you give us all of the information we need. You must use this form. Before you start please make sure you have the latest version of the form from the [Qualifications](#) page of GOV.UK.
60. Before you make a submission please check all its contents.
61. Our deadlines for submission are set out in the [timetable](#) above.

Quarterly process

New qualifications

62. We use this process to review qualifications against our business rules. The rules and the evidence we ask for is set out in the [business rules](#) section below.
63. Do not make a submission for a qualification that we approve automatically. You should note that we do not approve Applied General Qualifications automatically. If you have also made a submission to DfE to include a qualification in their 16 to 19 Performance Tables we will not confirm the outcome of your submission to us until the DfE process is complete.

64. We will write to you at the end of the review process to tell you the outcome of your submission. We will do this shortly before we update the offer. If your submission has not met one or more of the business rules we will tell you which one(s), and give you feedback.
65. We expect you to consider our feedback carefully and address this in any resubmission. If we receive a third submission for a qualification and the business rules have still not been met we will not accept a further submission for it in the current funding year.

Re-entry

66. If, as part of the annual review, we remove a qualification from the offer on the basis of low or no demand you may request we consider it re-enter the offer.
67. To re-enter the offer a qualification must have evidence of demand and meet the business rules and evidence requirements for new qualifications.

Re-entry evidence:
1. Evidence of 100 or more publicly funded adult learners for the funding year, outside of apprenticeships. This must take the form of letters from three or more colleges or training organisations on our Register of Training Organisations or declared list of subcontractors.
2. A rationale for why the qualification should be available outside of an apprenticeship.
3. A submission form, purpose statement, and evidence of recognition to meet the same business rules as all other qualifications.

Exceptions

68. We will only consider an exception to the size rule for qualifications at Level 2 and above. This means we will not make exceptions for qualifications that are:
 - within the Preparation for Life and Work Sector Subject Area
 - English or maths qualifications
 - at Entry Level and Level 1

69. You will need to give us a rationale for the size of the qualification and explain why it should be in the offer. The rationale must include clear employer support for the qualification at this size.
70. We will not approve an exception if all the content is in a qualification in the offer that has met our size rule.

Exception evidence:
<p>1. A statement that demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the gap in training the qualification addresses but does not replicate the qualification’s statement of purpose • a clear and robust rationale for why the qualification is the size it is, including evidence of employer support • evidence that not approving the qualification for funding will result in limited or no availability of provision at that level in that specific industry, occupation or occupational area
<p>2. A rationale for why the qualification should be available outside of an apprenticeship.</p>
<p>3. Submission form, purpose statement, and evidence of recognition to meet the same business rules as all other qualifications.</p>

71. If the qualification was once in the offer we will look at its previous learner demand.
72. We may agree to approve the qualification if all the business rules and evidence requirements have been met.
73. Qualifications we approve as exceptions are not designated ‘full’. You can find out how we define ‘full’ qualifications in our [Qualifications Information Guide](#).
74. We will keep a record of the exceptions we approve. You will not need to re-apply for an exception in later funding years. This does not mean the qualification will stay in the offer. There may be changes to the business rules that take the qualification out of the offer. It will also be subject to our annual review.

75. If later on we approve a larger qualification from you that covers the same content as an exception, we will set a 'last date for new starts' for the exception. This is because the provision is now available in the larger qualification.
76. We will not remove an exception from the offer during the funding year because another awarding organisation now offers the same content in a larger qualification. We will review this situation as part of our annual review. We may write to the awarding organisation offering the exception to advise that it will not be available in the following funding year, if there is now a larger funded qualification that covers the content.

Amendments

77. After a qualification first appears on Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications, you may amend some of its information.
78. We review changes to size, purpose and Sector Subject Area classification. We do not update funding information automatically and may request evidence from you to explain the reason for the change.
79. If you amend a qualification this may mean it no longer meets the rules for funding. If this happens we will tell you that we are setting a 'last date for new starts' to stop funding for new enrolments with immediate effect. We will continue to fund enrolled learners.

Annual Review

80. Each autumn, we review qualifications that have been in the offer for two or more years. We review three things:
- The qualification's track record of publicly funded demand.
 - The progression outcomes the qualification supports, measured against a set of key performance indicators (KPI).
 - The regular upload of data to the PLR in line with the [Awarding Organisation Agreement](#).
81. If you are not using the PLR or the qualification has no demand we will not include it in the offer for the next funding year. If a qualification has low demand

or does not appear to support key progression outcomes we may not include it in the offer for the next funding year.

Track record

82. At the start of the review we publish two lists of the qualifications that have been approved for two or more years:
- Those with no demand. These qualifications have had no publicly funded enrolments, outside of apprenticeships.
 - Those with low demand. These qualifications have had 1 to 99 publicly funded enrolments, outside of apprenticeships, in each of the previous two years.
83. We will give you the opportunity to provide us with evidence that removing a qualification with low demand will have a negative impact on learners or employers. We publish guidance at the start of each review to explain this process.

Progression

84. In the 2015 annual review we intend to measure the impact of a qualification through a set of KPI.
85. Work on new measures of success for the skills system is broader than our business rules. Our KPI development is closely linked to the [Outcome Based Success Measures](#) BIS are developing.
86. We are exploring four KPI:
- 1) How effective the qualification has been in supporting individuals to progress into work or to a higher level of learning.
 - 2) What the economic return of the qualification is, as measured through changes in earnings.
 - 3) How far the offer responds to key national and/or local/regional priorities, and/or skills gaps.
 - 4) Review the learner success rate at qualification level rather than at the level of the college or training organisation.

87. These KPI will help us to measure the impact of qualifications in the offer and to determine the overall value for money of the offer. We may remove from the offer qualifications that do not appear to support key progression outcomes.
88. We will test our approach with Qualifications Advisory Group and only apply KPIs where the approach and modelling is robust.
89. A key principle for us is to collect data once and, where we can, pull through data at qualification level to minimise the burden on you. We will give you more information on the use of the KPI and the methodology we will use in the annual review guidance.

Personal Learner Record

90. For a qualification to be in the offer, you must have signed the Awarding Organisation Agreement. Details of this are available on the [Learning Records Service](#) section of GOV.UK.
91. As well as signing the Agreement you must regularly upload achievement data to the learner's Personal Learner Record.
92. As part of our annual review we check whether you upload achievement data in a timely manner in line with the Agreement.
93. If you have not uploaded achievement data, or the level of upload is low, we will write to you to tell you that your qualifications are in scope to be removed from the offer. We will remove them unless there is a clear reason and appropriate evidence as to why data has not been uploaded.

Our Business Rules

Here we explain the rules we use to approve new qualifications for public funding and the evidence we need.

Rule 1 – Size

94. Professor Wolf's [Review of Vocational Education](#) found that small qualifications tend not to help learners achieve progression or employment. Whilst her review focused on learners aged 14 to 19, the concern over the labour market value of small qualifications applies to all learners.
95. We know access to and achievement of regulated qualifications can be a motivating factor for adults. These qualifications need to be of a suitable size to deliver meaningful learning outcomes that are transferable and have currency.
96. We have size thresholds that will support these aims. The thresholds are expressed as the credit value or guided learning hours (GLH) of qualifications.

Qualifications at:	Business rule:	Evidence:
Entry Level to Level 1	Must be a minimum of six credits or 60 GLH, or three credits or 30 GLH for English or maths	We will apply this rule automatically, using the information in the Register of Regulated Qualifications.
Level 2 and above	Must be a minimum of 15 credits or 150 GLH	

97. We want learners to progress onto qualifications that employers recognise demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding needed in their sector. In some occupational areas some learners may benefit from qualifications which focus on initial vocational learning and which provide a 'progression ladder' to move the learner towards and achieve the qualification that acts as entry to a job role or occupation. We do not expect these to be large in size. We may not approve them if their size does not appear relevant.

Rule 2 – Purpose

98. A qualification must have a clear statement of purpose. Written for the learner, it must cover all the information they need and help them make an informed choice about which qualification to take.
99. So that the learner can access it the purpose statement must be in a publicly accessible part of your website.
100. All purpose statements must include:
 - (a) A summary of the qualification's content.
 - (b) What knowledge, skills and competencies the learner will develop.
 - (c) Enough information for the learner to understand why they should take this qualification over others when you offer the same or similar qualification titles.
 - (d) Whether the qualification is available in an apprenticeship and why they should take the qualification outside of the framework or standard.
 - (e) An explanation of how the qualification will support the learner to achieve the outcome(s) identified in paragraph 101.
 - (f) Reference to the organisations that support the qualification.
101. The purpose statement must explain the primary and other outcomes of the qualification. It is not enough to just state that the qualification leads to an outcome. The statement must provide an explanation of how the content will lead the learner to one or more of the following outcomes:
 - (a) Prepare to enter a specific sector, job role, and/or apprenticeship.
 - (b) Confirm that they are competent in a specific job role.
 - (c) Progress to the next level of vocational learning.
 - (d) Progress into higher education.
 - (e) Progress to the next level of English and maths.
 - (f) Overcome barriers to entering work.
 - (g) Operate independently and effectively in life, learning and work.
 - (h) Re-engage with learning.

102. For the outcomes in paragraph 101 (a) and (b) the purpose statement must also include:

- (a) The minimum and maximum amount of vocational learning that relates to the job role, occupation, sector or activity in the title of the qualification. That is, the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to do a particular job role or activity.
- (b) A description of the job role(s) or occupation/occupational area the qualification will enable the learner to enter and/or progress in, or that the qualification confirms competence in.

103. For the outcomes in paragraph 101 (c) and (d) the purpose statement must also include:

- (a) The minimum and maximum amount of vocational learning that relates to the job role, occupation, sector or activity in the title of the qualification. That is, the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to do a particular job role or activity.
- (b) A description of the higher level learning achieving the qualification leads to. Specifically the subjects, qualifications and apprenticeships that the learner can go on to study at the next level. At all levels this should focus on the higher-level vocational qualifications the learner can progress to.
- (c) At Level 3 the UCAS points the qualification attracts, if it has them.

104. For the outcome in paragraph 101 (e) the purpose statement must also include:

- (a) How the qualification will support progression to Level 2. These qualifications must demonstrate how they act as an interim stepping stone to GCSE and/or Functional Skills.

105. Where the purpose of a qualification is to progress to the next level of learning we anticipate that you will already offer the qualification(s) in that Sector Subject Area that are recognised as confirming the learner is ready to enter a specific job role/occupational area. Or that are recognised by a receiving institution for studying higher education. Where this is not the case we may not approve such vocational qualifications.

106. You do not need a separate statement for adults and young people. We will accept a purpose statement that covers both our and DfE's requirements.

Purpose Statement evidence:

The evidence you submit must:

1. Meet the criteria set out in paragraphs 99 to 106.
2. Include a link to the webpage in the submission form.

If the purpose statement is part of the specification, it must still meet the content requirements and be referenced in the index. If you publish it as part of the specification and this is held in a restricted area, the purpose statement must be accessible with whatever other information is publicly available for the qualification.

107. The purpose statement is for the learner. It must help them understand what they can achieve with the qualification and why they would take one particular qualification over another. To make sure the purpose statement is accessible and easy to understand we recommend you write it in plain English.
108. Appendix 1 is a guide you can use to prepare your purpose statement. Whilst it is not mandatory, we recommend you do use it, as it will help learners, employers, colleges and training organisations compare qualifications and make informed choices.

Rule 3 – Recognition

109. Qualifications allow learners to demonstrate to others that they have achieved certain skills, knowledge and understanding at a given level. We will only approve qualifications where appropriate organisations indicate that the qualification demonstrates these skills, knowledge and understanding.
110. We need you to give us letters from appropriate organisations who recognise that the qualification meets the needs of their learners or employees.
111. We do not currently require you to publish these on your website. However, the letters must be written and presented in such a way that they would be suitable for future publication.

112. To help you to with this rule, Appendixes 2 and 3 are statements from us that explain why we need this evidence. They are available on the [Qualifications](#) page of GOV.UK. We hope they will help you in discussions with employers, colleges and training organisations and higher education institutions.

Format

113. All letters must use headed paper and include the following information:

- (a) Your organisation's full name.
- (b) The full title and qualification number (QN) for each qualification, as opposed to a generic qualification type or suite. We understand that in some cases you may seek letters of support whilst you are developing a qualification and, as a result, the QN is not available. In exceptional cases we may accept letters of support without the QN. However, these must include an accurate and explicit reference to the qualification's title.
- (c) The signatory's name, job title and organisation.

114. We will accept letters submitted as part of the DfE process for vocational qualifications to be recognised in Performance Tables for 16- to 19-year-olds, so long as the letter meets our requirements.

115. We will accept electronic copies of the original letter. We will not accept emails.

Qualifications supporting entry to a job role/occupation/occupational area

116. For qualifications that support competency or entrance into a job role, occupation or occupational area we require business recognition of the qualification. This could be from employers, Industrial Partnerships or professional/trade bodies. They must be representative of the job role, occupation or occupational areas to which the qualification relates.

117. We want them to identify the jobs the qualification leads to, the skills it enhances, and why the content is relevant. We are not looking for an assertion that they support it or that they would like to see it funded, but an explanation of why they value it.

118. Organisations must be in the United Kingdom. Employers may be private, public or non-profit businesses. A UK professional or trade body or Industrial Partnership must be recognised by and relevant to the industry, occupation or occupational area the qualification content covers. So we can easily identify them the letter must contain their Company Number, where this exists.

119. Their letters must cover:

- (a) Why the qualification is relevant for the employer and why they value it.
- (b) How the qualification will benefit their staff and support the development of skills for specific job roles within their business.

Type of qualification:	Recognition evidence:
Vocational qualifications	Letters from at least five employers, or one from a professional/ trade body or Industrial Partnership.

120. We will only accept two letters from employers that are your approved centres. Where you are part of a professional or trade body, we will accept their recognition of the qualification alongside letters from employers.

121. We will consider accepting fewer than five employers where you are able to prove that the employment sector the qualification relates to has very small number of employers. We may also consider an exception if the Innovation Code has been used to develop the qualification. If you wish us to consider an exception, you must request this in writing and provide a rationale.

122. If the qualification covers more than one occupation or job role because it has endorsed pathways you should make sure each occupation is covered by at least one letter of support.

123. You should be aware that we will not accept letters from:

- (a) Chambers of Commerce as a professional/trade body. We will accept letters from them as an employer or training organisation where they meet the criteria for these set out in this Guide.
- (b) Trade unions, National Skills Academies or recruitment agencies, except in their capacity as direct employers.

- (c) Sector Skills Councils. They were involved in developing most existing qualifications and in many cases supported their original accreditation. For this reason we do not require their further recognition.

Qualifications supporting progression to the next Level

124. For qualifications that support progression to the next level we require letters from organisations who offer the qualification that the learner can progress to.
125. We will not accept letters that only identify progress within the same suite of qualifications at the same level.
126. The letter must confirm the qualification offered by the college or training organisation which this qualification supports entry into, and an explanation of how it supports progression. For example, does it provide the underpinning knowledge?
127. We will accept letters from colleges and training organisations that are contract-holders or their subcontractors. They must be on our Register of Training Organisations or list of approved subcontractors. So we can easily identify them the letter must contain their UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN).
128. For qualifications at Levels 3 and 4 that support progression to higher education and higher vocational skills, we require support for the qualification from the receiving institution. We will accept letters from Higher Education Institutions and FE colleges that offer the higher-level course. The letter must confirm the course they offer and that the qualification meets their entry requirements for it. Either by meeting these in its own right or alongside other qualifications at the same level.

Type of qualification:	Recognition evidence:
Qualifications that support progression to the next level.	Letters from three colleges and/or training organisations.
Qualifications that allow the learner to progress into higher education.	Letters from at least three receiving institutions.

129. We will accept one letter from a Group Training Association (GTA) if three of the organisations in the GTA are on our Register of Training Organisations. The GTA must be in the same occupational sector as the qualification.

130. We will only accept one letter from a training organisation that is part of the same company group as you.

Non-vocational qualifications at Entry Level or Level 1

131. For qualifications that help learners to:

- overcome barriers to entering work
- operate independently and effectively in life, learning and work employment, and/or
- re-engage with learning

We require letters from colleges and training organisations that offer the qualification.

132. The letter must confirm the qualification's outcomes and explain how achieving the qualification will support the learner to achieve one or more of the outcomes in paragraph 101 (f) to (h).

133. We will accept letters from colleges and training organisations that are contract-holders or their subcontractors. They must be on our Register of Training Organisations or list of approved subcontractors. So we can easily identify them the letter must contain their UKPRN.

Type of qualification:	Recognition evidence:
Qualifications at Entry Level and Level 1 that deliver the outcomes in paragraph 101 (f) to (h).	Letters from at least three colleges and/or training organisations.

134. We will only accept one letter from a training organisation that is part of the same company group as you.

QCF English and maths qualifications

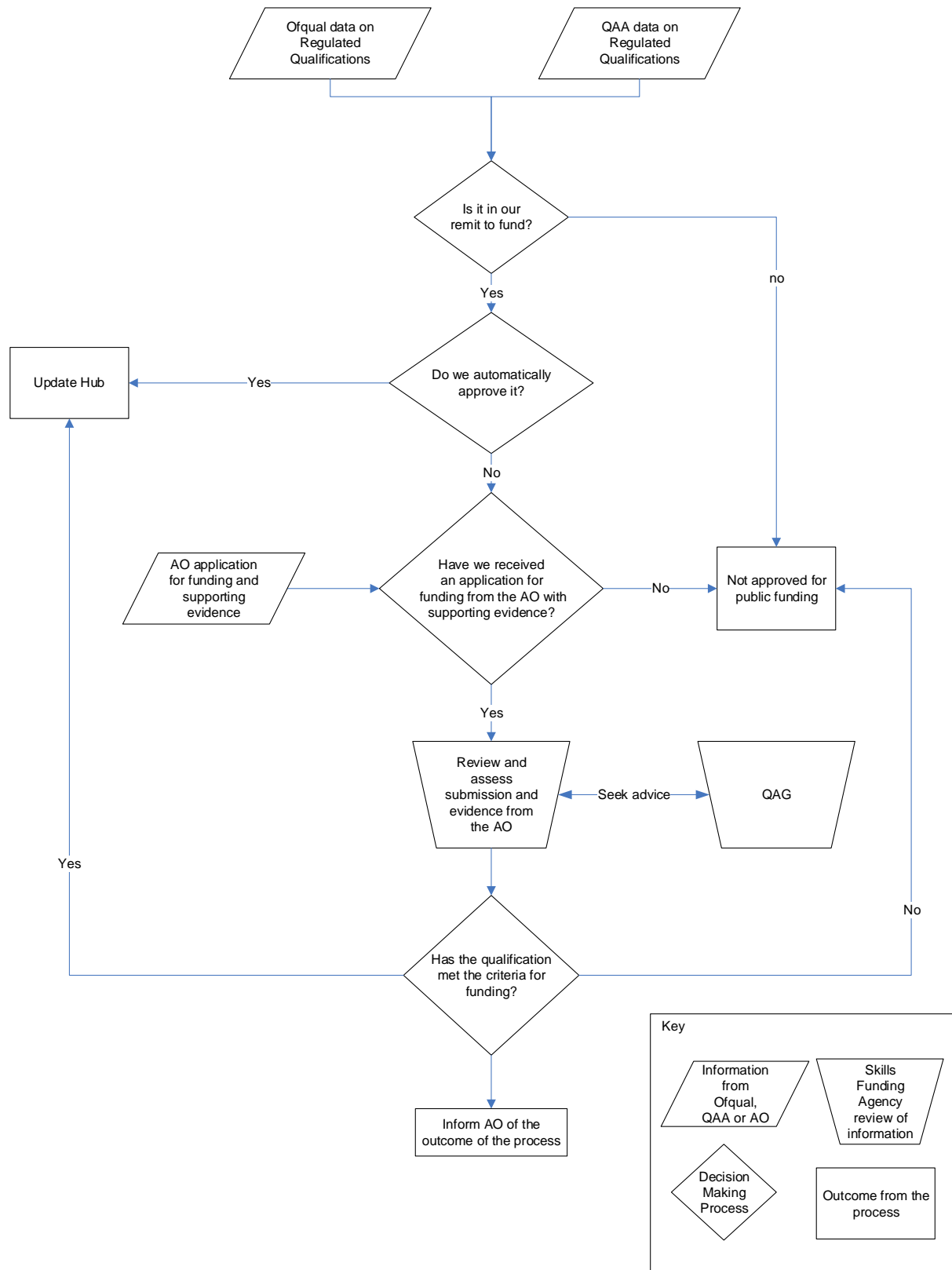
135. For QCF English and maths qualifications we require letters from organisations who offer the qualification at the next level the learner can progress to.
136. The letters must identify the qualification that it leads to. It must also explain how it supports this progression, rather than be a letter of support for the development of the qualification or support for public funding.
137. The letters must also give us evidence of the publicly funded demand for the qualification.
138. We will accept letters from colleges and training organisations that are contract-holders or their subcontractors. They must be on our Register of Training Organisations or list of approved subcontractors. So we can easily identify them the letter must contain their UKPRN.

Type of qualification:	Recognition evidence:
English and maths qualifications.	Letters from three colleges and/or training organisations. Evidence of publicly funded demand of at least 250 learners.

139. We will only accept one letter from a training organisation that is part of the same company group as you.

Annex A

Overview of the funding approval process





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