



Corporate report

Regulatory efficiency report 2026

Published 9 July 2026

Applies to England

Contents

[Improving regulatory efficiency in 2025 to 2026](#)

[Improving regulatory efficiency in 2026 to 2027](#)

[Annex](#)

Ofqual is the independent qualifications and assessments regulator for England. It is our responsibility to maintain standards and confidence in regulated qualifications and assessments.

As outlined in Ofqual's 2025 to 2028 strategy, regulated qualifications open doors to continued education, employment, and independent living. They provide a fair and reliable way for individuals to demonstrate their achievements and access opportunities that match their skills and ambitions, in turn supporting efficiency in the labour market.

Alongside Ofqual's statutory objectives, we have duties to:

- keep our regulatory functions under review

- not impose or maintain unnecessary regulatory burden
- have regard to the desirability of facilitating innovation
- consider the impact of our work on economic growth

Ofqual thinks about this as regulatory efficiency: achieving the maximum impact toward our statutory objectives for the lowest cost to those we regulate. We are committed to streamlining regulation in ways that can support growth while continuing to protect the value of regulated qualifications. This is relevant across the full range of our engagements with awarding organisations, which are outlined in the annex to this report.

In pursuit of regulatory efficiency, we seek to keep regulatory activity proportionate, to reduce the administrative burden on regulated entities, and to improve how we work with other parts of government - the core themes set out in this document.

Improving regulatory efficiency in 2025 to 2026

Proportionate regulatory requirements and scrutiny

Effective regulation is important to ensure that standards are maintained and that public confidence in qualifications is secured. We achieve this by applying scrutiny when making decisions about which organisations can offer regulated qualifications, reviewing certain qualifications before they are made available, and by setting and updating our regulatory requirements. During the year we have taken steps to ensure that these interventions remain robust and proportionate, while avoiding unnecessary burden.

This year we have:

- removed the need for apprenticeship ‘scope of recognition’ expansions where an awarding organisation already offers regulated apprenticeships in similar subject areas. It will be more efficient for awarding organisations who no longer need to make a recognition application for each apprenticeship assessment. We estimate the volume of expansion requests that awarding organisations need to make has

reduced by 60%

- introduced the [Principles Condition](#) to ensure a consistent understanding of our rules and make the underlying expectations of our framework clear. It is designed to provide clarity in novel or ambiguous circumstances, increasing certainty for awarding organisations and support in governance contexts. The condition has proportionate reporting requirements and is supported by advice notes
- updated our [supporting compliance and taking regulatory action policy](#), improving the efficiency and clarity of our investigations and introducing more streamlined enforcement routes
- supported appropriate use of artificial intelligence (AI) within the sector, recognising the efficiency and innovation opportunities it presents. This has included workshop and webinar engagement with awarding organisations, seeking views about whether regulation acts as a barrier to innovative use of AI, and publication of research and overarching principles about appropriate use of the technology in marking
- continued to run our innovation service, which helps awarding organisations explore new assessment approaches by clarifying requirements and reducing uncertainty when bringing new ideas to market

Reducing administrative burden

Regulation ensures that standards, trust and public confidence are secured. It places obligations on awarding organisations — including some that relate to recording and demonstrating compliance — known as administrative burden. We seek to minimise these administrative burdens and ensure those that remain are proportionate. This year we have:

- streamlined annual compliance returns by removing extended-response questions including those related to detailed financial information, and introduced a shorter census-style return. This has reduced the number of questions by 20-31% and reduced the overall effort required to complete
- identified data collections that can be removed or reduced while maintaining the visibility necessary for Ofqual to carry out its role. In 2025-26 we issued 97 collections related to general qualifications and 76 related to vocational and technical qualifications. In the future, we will reduce the total number of collections by 22%
- launched an improved recognition service that presents clearer expectations and

a more intuitive route to application for prospective awarding organisations, supported by pre-recognition engagement that avoids application processes for ineligible applicants

- introduced an updated regulatory model with the Standards and Testing Agency for our regulation of national assessments. This includes more systemised reporting requirements and work towards implementing proportionate and efficient arrangements for provision of monitoring data
- continued to work closely with awarding organisations, helping them meet our requirements efficiently, keeping them informed about upcoming changes, running workshops on key topics like artificial intelligence, and supporting leadership through forums with responsible officers and CEOs

Improving sector coherence

We continue to strengthen alignment across the education and skills system to improve coherence, reduce duplication, and ensure clarity for awarding organisations, centres, and students.

This year we have:

- enhanced our fraud action plan, further improving system-wide intelligence sharing. Changes to data submissions allow awarding organisations to proactively identify and manage potential instances of qualification fraud
- worked closely with other government departments to align roles and responsibilities in the scrutiny and funding approval of technical qualifications, reducing duplication and avoiding conflicting feedback
- Collaborated with the Home Office in relation to secure English language test (SELT) provision including through agreement of a memorandum of understanding

Improving regulatory efficiency in 2026 to 2027

Ofqual will continue to improve regulatory efficiency over the next year, maximising

our impact at a minimal and proportionate cost to the sector. Our plans include:

Proportionate regulatory requirements and scrutiny

- embedding a new apprenticeship assessment framework that increases flexibility in assessment design and delivery and supports manageability and innovation in apprenticeship assessments
- reviewing our accreditation and assessment strategy arrangements to support awarding organisations in making high quality submissions while retaining appropriate levels of regulatory scrutiny. We will provide briefings and run events to support awarding organisations submitting qualifications for accreditation
- improving our consultation processes by streamlining and improving the user experience for respondents who wish to provide their views on policy proposals. In turn, this will support handling of queries and minimise the time taken between consultation conclusion and published decision
- continuing to consider the outcomes of our consultations to ensure that our arrangements are proportionate and properly targeted, including in relation to qualification reform across vocational and technical qualifications, general qualifications, and onscreen assessment

Reducing administrative burden

- publishing improved data collection guidance to remove ambiguity in data submission processes, and continuing to monitor the data we collect to identify opportunities for future streamlining
- redeveloping the expansion application system and process to support an improved quality of evidence submitted and reducing the need for follow-up clarifications
- introducing further enhancements to the system used by the Standards and Testing Agency to notify Ofqual of national assessment events to improve user experience

Improving sector coherence

- continuing to work with government departments, sector bodies and awarding organisations to support the operationalisation of significant reforms across the sector
- continuing detailed work with the Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions, and Skills England to align operational responsibilities, ensuring clarity and reducing unnecessary overlap across the system

Annex

This annex provides supporting data on our routine regulatory activities, which are essential to maintaining high-quality outcomes. As with last year’s [Regulatory efficiency report](#) and the [Regulatory burden statement](#) in previous years, it is included to offer context for the efficiency improvements detailed in the main report.

Engagement with existing awarding organisations

Our work with awarding organisations helps them understand upcoming changes, discuss and ask questions about policies, and stay informed about wider regulatory activity. We offer tailored engagement for specific types of organisations (for example, those offering specific qualifications), as well as a wider programme of events open to all awarding organisations.

Summary of events to which all Ofqual-regulated awarding organisations were invited to attend, April 2025 to March 2026

Events to which all Ofqual-regulated awarding organisations were invited to attend	Number of events
Workshops and webinars related to consultations	12
Workshops and webinars related to wider regulatory activity	4
Regulator’s briefings	4

Recognition regulatory activity

An overview of all recognition decisions relating to new market entries or expansions, 2020 to 2026

Regulatory activity	1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023	1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022	1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
Recognition decisions	287	300	407	623	477	203
EPA only	233	245	312	535	428	149

Compliance and enforcement regulatory activity

An overview of compliance and enforcement regulatory activity, 2020 to 2026

Regulatory activity	1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023	1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022	1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
Compliance [footnote 1]	13	17	20	77	Not reported	
Audits	4	10	1	1	0	0
Investigations	4	1	6	5	0	7
Undertakings [footnote 2]	2	3	2	1	1	4

Directions ^{[footnote 3]}	0	1	0	0	0	0
Special Conditions ^{[footnote 4]}	23	14	11	18	25	8
Fines	6	5	0	2	1	0

Consultations

An overview of consultation activity, 2020 to 2026

Consultations	1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025	1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023	1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022	1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
Consultations open	7	3	5	10	13	14
Consultation outcomes published	4	1	8	8	12	10

Our engagement with awarding organisations

Ofqual interacts with awarding organisations throughout the full lifecycle of regulation. The nature of our engagement varies from routine operations to annual requirements to one-off activities. The extent of engagement can depend on the types of qualification an awarding organisation offers. The main activities that awarding organisations take forward that involve interaction with Ofqual are outlined below:

Entry and exit from regulated market and specific qualification types

- Make decisions for recognition applications to become a regulated awarding organisation

- Make decisions in response to expansion applications to extend existing awarding organisation's scope of recognition
- Make decisions to approve qualifications that have been submitted for accreditation, where required
- Review assessment strategies and design materials for qualifications where this is required
- Monitor and make necessary decisions in relation to the surrender of some or all of an awarding organisation's scope of recognition

Routine ongoing regulation

- Submit and respond to 'Contact the Regulator' and 'Contact awarding organisation' correspondence
- Review annual statement of compliance submissions made by awarding organisations
- Review, monitor and follow up event notifications submitted by awarding organisations
- Request and review information from awarding organisations in relation to complaints made about them
- Review maintenance of standards processes including data submissions made by awarding organisations
- Convene awarding organisations, providing information about Ofqual's approach and supporting awarding organisation governance
- Request, review and make decisions based on information provided through scheduled data collections and specific information request notices
- Review and provide feedback on innovation service submissions
- Undertake investigations into, and audits of, awarding organisations
- Undertake enforcement activities
- Involve awarding organisations in areas of research
- Consult on policy changes and make decisions based on responses received

-
1. Specific information-gathering exercises [↔](#)
 2. Commitment by an awarding organisation to take specific actions [↔](#)
 3. Directing an awarding organisation to take or not take specific steps [↔](#)
 4. Placing additional conditions on an awarding organisation [↔](#)

Help us improve GOV.UK

To help us improve GOV.UK, we'd like to know more about your visit today. [Please fill in this survey \(opens in a new tab\)](#).

Cancel



Services and information

[Benefits](#)

[Births, death, marriages and care](#)

[Business and self-employed](#)

[Childcare and parenting](#)

[Citizenship and living in the UK](#)

[Crime, justice and the law](#)

[Disabled people](#)

[Driving and transport](#)

[Education and learning](#)

[Employing people](#)

Government activity

[Departments](#)

[News](#)

[Guidance and regulation](#)

[Research and statistics](#)

[Policy papers and consultations](#)

[Transparency](#)

[How government works](#)

[Get involved](#)

[Environment and countryside](#)

[Housing and local services](#)

[Money and tax](#)

[Passports, travel and living abroad](#)

[Visas and immigration](#)

[Working, jobs and pensions](#)

[Help](#) [Privacy](#) [Cookies](#) [Accessibility statement](#) [Contact](#)

[Terms and conditions](#) [Rhestr o Wasanaethau Cymraeg](#)

[Government Digital Service](#)

OGI

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



[© Crown copyright](#)