

# Anticipated benefits of the QCF

## For learners the QCF will:

- offer more freedom, choice and flexibility
- give easy access to information about the commitment needed for different routes to achievement, letting learners balance that commitment with family, work and other responsibilities
- allow them to build up credits at their own pace and combine them in a way that will help them get where they want to be
- enable them to transfer credits between qualifications to avoid having to repeat their learning
- record all their achievements on an electronic learner achievement record (LAR), encouraging them and others to value their past achievements.

## For learning providers (schools, colleges, workplaces) the QCF will:

- enable them to design more flexible programmes, suitable to the individual needs of learners
- help them improve retention and progression rates by recognising smaller steps of achievement more frequently
- track all learners' achievements through the use of a unique learner number (ULN) and an individual's electronic learner achievement record (LAR), giving providers standard information about each learner's past achievements
- help them describe achievements to employers and learners in a language that is easy to understand.

## For employers the QCF will:

- help them to measure quickly the level and size of achievements of prospective employees
- enable them to get in-house training recognised within a national framework
- describe levels of achievement in terms everyone can understand
- make training options and pathways clear, helping employees and employers find the right training for their learning and business needs.

## For others the QCF will:

- provide clear information on units and qualifications on offer in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- help support the transfer of achievements across national and international boundaries
- be a more inclusive framework, containing a wide range of qualifications.

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## How can I get more information?

For regularly updated information, please visit the regulators' websites or send any queries to their email addresses:

### Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

83 Piccadilly  
London W1J 8QA  
Telephone 020 7509 5555  
Minicom 020 7509 6546  
info@qca.org.uk  
www.qca.org.uk/framework

### Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

VQLL Division  
Castle Buildings  
Womanby Street  
Cardiff CF10 1SX  
Telephone 029 2037 5431  
VQLL.info@wales.gsi.gov.uk  
www.wales.gov.uk

### Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

29 Clarendon Road  
Clarendon Dock  
Belfast BT1 3BG  
Telephone 028 9026 1200  
info@ccea.org.uk  
www.ccea.org.uk

QCA, DCELLS and CCEA produce a joint monthly email update. To subscribe, go to [www.qca.org.uk/updates.html](http://www.qca.org.uk/updates.html)

If you are interested in finding out more by attending relevant events, please contact the QCF team via [frameworktestsandtrials@qca.org.uk](mailto:frameworktestsandtrials@qca.org.uk)

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## The Qualifications and Credit Framework: an introduction

The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is a new way of recognising achievement through the award of credit for units and qualifications. It provides flexible routes to gaining full qualifications, and enables qualifications to be achieved gradually.



Qualifications and Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



Rewarding Learning

## About this leaflet

### Do you:

- find the current system of qualifications confusing?
- struggle to tell the difference between qualifications and skill levels?
- want a qualifications system that enables qualifications to be achieved in small measurable steps?
- want to find out more about the development of a more flexible and inclusive qualifications system?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, please read on.

This leaflet tells you about a new framework (under development) called the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)<sup>1</sup>. The framework will simplify the current qualifications system, making it:

- easier to understand
- more responsive to learner and employer needs.

### What is the QCF?

The framework is a new way of recognising skills and qualifications. It does this by awarding credit for qualifications and units (small steps of learning). It enables people to gain qualifications at their own pace along flexible routes.

### How will the QCF help me understand the qualifications system?

At present, it is hard to understand all the different types of qualification that learners hold – what level they are, how long they take to complete, what content they cover, and how they compare to other qualifications.

The new framework will help present qualifications in a way that is easy to understand and measure.

### Testing and trialling the new framework

As the framework represents a big change to current arrangements for qualifications, ministers have asked the regulators of external qualifications in England (QCA), Wales (DELLS) and Northern Ireland (CCEA) to test and trial the framework.

The tests and trials involve learners, employers, awarding bodies, sector skills councils, colleges and training providers. Having started in September 2006, they will run through to June 2008. The regulators will write a final report with recommendations on the tests and trials in June 2008. In the light of this report, ministers in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will decide whether the new framework should be fully implemented.

1. The framework will form part of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The CQFW covers all post-16 and higher education in Wales. You can get more details from [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk).

## How will it work?

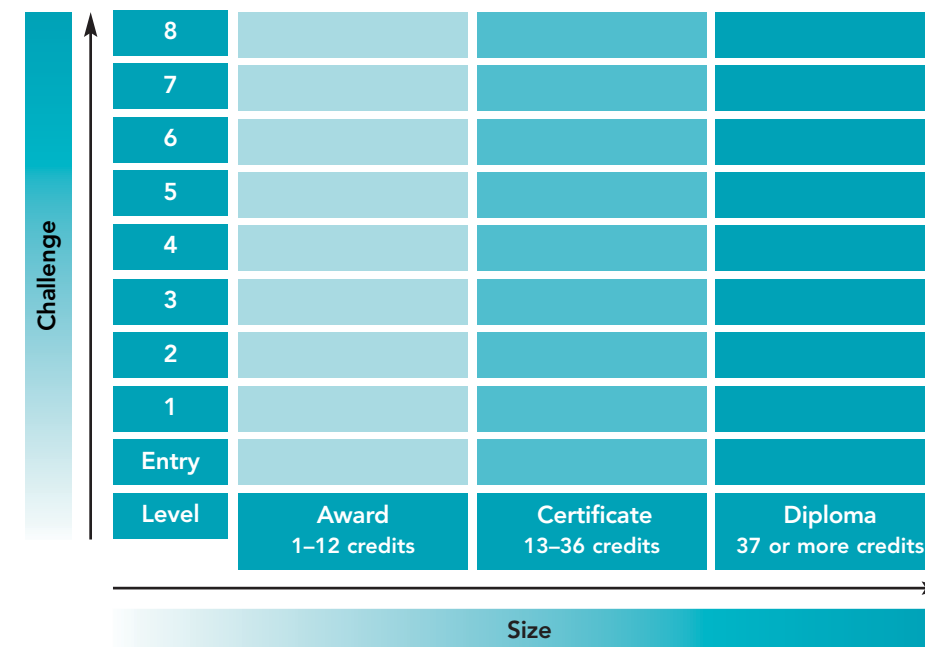
### Credit and level

Every unit and qualification in the framework will have a credit value (one credit represents 10 hours, showing how much time it takes to complete) and a level between Entry level and level 8 (showing how difficult it is).

### There are three sizes of qualifications in the QCF:

- **Awards** (1 to 12 credits)
- **Certificates** (13 to 36 credits)
- **Diplomas** (37 credits or more).

So in the new framework you can have an award at level 1 or an award at level 8. This is because the qualification type 'award, certificate, diploma' represents the size of a qualification, not how difficult it is.



### Each qualification title contains the following:

the level of the qualification (from Entry level at the bottom to level 8 at the top)

the size of qualification (award/certificate/diploma)

details indicating the content of the qualification.

Simply by looking at the title of a qualification you will be able to see how difficult it is, how long it will take the average learner to complete, and its general content.

To understand the level of difficulty of the units and qualifications in the new framework it might be helpful to know that GCSEs (grade A\*– C) are level 2, GCE A levels are level 3 and a PhD is a level 8. Knowing this can help to position the difficulty and challenge of each level in the framework.

### Examples of QCF qualifications

level 1	Award	in retail skills
level 2	Diploma	in professional cookery
level 3	Certificate	for IT users

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