



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



*Rewarding Learning*

# Implementing the Qualifications and Credit Framework

## Purpose

The purpose of the paper is to outline broad proposals for managing the implementation of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) from August 2008 based on new regulations that specify all the requirements that organisations and qualifications must meet. It covers key timelines for recognition and accreditation activities in the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and QCF in relation to the qualifications that are in scope and suggests mechanisms for recognising a range of bodies to operate within the QCF based on these timelines. The proposals also take account of related policy developments, particularly the sector qualification reform programme and foundation learning tier programme. As the QCF is being taken forward on a three-country basis, the proposals apply equally to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## Scope

The qualifications regulators have responsibility for a broad spectrum of qualifications that includes those with a general and vocational focus. It should be noted that not all these qualifications are currently considered as being within the scope of the arrangements proposed in this paper.

QCF tests and trials form part of the UK Vocational Qualification Reform Programme and as such vocational qualifications are clearly covered by these arrangements. These include qualifications at Entry level, national vocational qualifications and higher level qualifications although these have not been designated as specific qualification types during the test and trial period.

Qualifications currently considered as out of scope are GCSEs and GCEs, the International Baccalaureate and other similar qualifications. Discussions are taking place around the potential for bringing these qualifications into the QCF in the longer term and any proposals in this territory will be consulted on separately. There are also a number of other current qualification developments that have links to the QCF but which are being handled separately from the arrangements described here, including the functional skills pilots and 14–19 diploma qualifications.

## **Timelines**

The qualifications regulators are committed to certain timelines as a result of recommendations made in the interim report to ministers. These include a commitment to issue regulations designed to support implementation of the QCF on 1 May 2008 and to formally apply these from 1 August 2008. This timeline allows for a 12-week notification period in line with good practice and means that from 1 August 2008 it will be possible to accredit qualifications into the QCF on the basis of the new regulations. The other given is that no qualification covered by these implementation arrangements will have an accreditation end date within the NQF of later than 31 December 2010. Within these parameters, the qualifications regulators need to establish arrangements for recognition and qualification accreditation activities that are sensible and practicable or both existing stakeholders and those seeking to participate in the QCF in the future.

## **Awarding body recognition and qualification accreditation within the NQF**

Currently any organisation that wishes to submit qualifications for accreditation within the NQF is required to complete an awarding body recognition process that is based on a review of its governance, management and administration arrangements. In terms of awarding body recognition, it is proposed that the qualifications regulators should cease accepting applications for recognition within the NQF from organisations seeking to offer qualifications covered by these proposals after 31 July 2008. Any applications received before this date should, however, be allowed to complete. We do not propose to apply a final date for receipt of applications for qualification accreditation within the NQF. By making it clear that no qualification within the scope of these proposals will have an accreditation end date beyond 31 December 2010 together with implementation of provision planning tools such as sector qualification strategies, it should allow awarding bodies to make informed decisions about when to seek accreditation of their qualifications into the QCF.

## **Recognition and qualification accreditation within the QCF**

The proposals in this section are more complex because they cover existing NQF awarding bodies wishing to become recognised to operate within the QCF, organisations recognised within the QCF test and trial environment to submit units and organisations seeking recognition for the first time to develop and submit units, develop rules of combination for qualifications or assess units and award credits and qualifications within the QCF.

It is proposed that procedures should be put in place for existing awarding bodies to allow them to demonstrate that they meet the requirements of the QCF regulations. These arrangements should however focus only on those areas that are specific to the QCF, namely developing high quality units, developing rules of combination and managing credit accumulation and transfer. Moreover, the process should be as manageable and streamlined as possible, should draw on best practice from current recognition and monitoring activities and should be tailored to reflect the fact that some awarding bodies are already participating in QCF tests and trials. The same broad approach should apply to organisations that have been recognised to submit units as part of QCF tests and trials, although it is suggested that these organisations are likely to need to submit only minimal additional information.

In order to ensure that awarding bodies needing to submit qualifications for accreditation in the QCF from August 2008 are in a position to do so, it is further proposed that this recognition activity could begin on a voluntary basis from May 2008 with briefing and capacity building for the awarding bodies concerned beginning in March. In order to manage the work effectively, there will need to be some prioritisation of applications and it is suggested that this is drawn up by the qualifications regulators in collaboration with awarding bodies on the basis of timelines agreed through related developments such as the implementation of sector qualification strategies. Organisations recognised to submit units within QCF tests and trials could be included in these arrangements if necessary.

There are also likely to be organisations that wish to become recognised to develop and submit units, develop rules of combination for qualifications or assess units and award credits and qualifications within the QCF that have not previously participated in the NQF. In these situations it is proposed that more detailed recognition procedures will be required in order to ensure that the organisations concerned are able to meet all relevant aspects of the regulations. To allow such organisations to make applications from 1 August 2008, information on these processes should be

available sufficiently in advance to allow early discussions to take place as necessary. This proposal covers all organisations wishing to participate in the QCF, whether awarding bodies or other organisations such as employers or providers.

## Summary of timelines

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
Consult on QCF regulations	November 2007 to February 2008
Issue QCF regulations	1 May 2008
Allow recognition of existing awarding bodies and organisations recognised to submit units within QCF tests and trials on a voluntary basis to operate in the QCF	1 May 2008
Last date for NQF awarding body recognition applications	31 July 2008
Implement QCF regulations	1 August 2008
NQF accreditation end date for all qualifications within scope of these proposals	31 December 2010