

Key Dates

Aug 2008 – QCF commences

Sep 2010 – NQF ends

Therefore all qualifications must be on QCF

Apr 2009 – QCF *transitional* Website

Sep 2010 – Full QCF Service Layer

Qualification Sizes

It's easy to remember! The credits are in dozens; the qualification names are in alphabetical order – with the B missing and therefore Certificate covers the second & third dozens!

Key Points

QCF Service Layer is completely separate to DAS, the Diploma Aggregation Service.

Initially QCF is for 19+ but may be extended to 14-19 in 2013.

Key References/Documents

Ref 1. Ofqual/08/3726

Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualification and Credit Framework
ISBN 978-1-84721-674-8

Ref 2. QCA/08/3989

Guidance for Developing Rules of Combination for the Qualification and Credit Framework

ISBN 978-1-84721-879-7

Useful qualification examples.

Key Links

QCF concepts:

www.ofqual.gov.uk/qcf

QCF Service Layer technical documents:

<http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/qcfs/publications/>

What is QCF?

QCF – the Qualifications and Credit Framework – introduces, for the first time, a standard currency for learner achievement across the qualifications system via the award of credit. QCF replaces NQF and is being implemented from August 2008 across England, Wales and Northern Ireland by the respective qualification regulators Ofqual, DCELLS, and CCEA.

The *QCF Service Layer* is the working name for the web-site with which you can integrate to publish results and enable credit transfer. Will be provided by the LSC.

Required Structure for Qualifications on the QCF

All units and qualifications have:

- **Credit Value** (1 credit = 10 hours of learning time)
- **Difficulty Level** (entry level through to level 8)
N.B. At least 50% of the units must be at the same level as the qualification. Levels are defined in detail in Ref. 1 Annex E (see below).

Qualifications may have grades and they have a Size:

- **Award:** 1 to 12 credits
- **Certificate:** 13 to 36 credits
- **Diploma:** 37 credits and above

When submitting units they should be specified as either:

- **Shared Units** (available to all awarding organisations to award credit)
- **Restricted Units** (restricted to the specified awarding organisations)

Units will not be active unless included in an accredited qualification. Once a unit is placed in the QCF Unit Databank only the expiry date may be amended.

There is no longer a distinction between NVQs and other qualifications. However you may still use the term NVQ in the title of a qualification if it conforms to “operating rules for using the term NVQ in a QCF qualification title”. See Ref. 1.

Rules of Combination

Qualifications can be awarded after accumulation of credit as follows:

- Credit value from **mandatory units**
N.B. Mandatory units are not mandatory for a qualification!
- Credit value (or no. of units) from **optional units**
These may be clustered into groups; certain combinations of units may be required/barred.
- Credits from **other units**
The qualification can specify the total credit value that can be used from other units in the databank; the qualification should also specify the level, sector and classification of those units – as well as any time constraints. See Annex A of Ref. 2 for classifications.
- Credits from **equivalent units**
*As per credit from other units but generally on a unit-by-unit basis not an overall total, ie specific units must be listed. This can be applied to mandatory and optional units. The equivalent unit must be the same credit & level or higher (but only the *required* credit actually counts towards the qualification). However one unit on one qualification could be equivalent of two units on another qualification. Unit equivalencies are not always 2-way.*
- **Exemptions**
This allows you to recognise equivalent achievement (for units) from non-QCF qualifications.

A qualification may specify a time limit for credit accumulation or exemptions. All pathways do *not* have to be identical sizes.

What Should You Do Now?

Organisations in the QCF can choose to be recognised to:

- Develop and submit units to form part of accredited qualifications; now increasingly being done by Sector Skills Councils
- Develop rules of combination for accredited qualifications
- Operate as awarding organisations (less responsibility for developing qualifications but still responsible for benchmarking)