

# The Qualifications and Credit Framework Explained

The Qualifications and Credit Framework is a new framework for recognising and accrediting qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is designed to make the system of vocational qualifications simpler to understand and more flexible for employers and learners alike. The QCF is scheduled to replace the National Qualifications Framework by December 2010.

The QCF recognises achievement through the award of credit for units and qualifications. Each unit and qualification will have a credit value which shows how many hours it takes the average learner to complete (1 credit representing 10 hours) Each will also be assigned a level between 'entry' and 'level 8' which shows how difficult it is. There are three sizes of qualification:

Award (1-12 credits)  
Certificate (13-36 credits)  
Diploma (37+ credits)

The qualification title includes the type and level and indicates the content so users of the framework can easily see what the qualification entails and compare qualifications. Learners can progress by using units across qualifications of different levels and sizes without the need to repeat assessment.

Semta has achieved QCF submitting body status. It is moving all its NVQ qualifications over to the new framework in the format agreed with Ofqual, while maintaining the quality and integrity valued by employers. The qualifications submitted by Semta contain 'NVQ' in the title. This means that users can be sure they are competency based, and directly aligned to National Occupational Standards (NOS) developed with employers, and are subject to rigorous assessment methods. Because it generally takes more than 370 hours to complete an NVQ, these qualifications will appear as diplomas on the QCF.

## Scotland

Existing SVQs are being retained unaltered in Scotland. Within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) qualifications will be credit-rated (1 credit representing 10 hours' notional learning) and assigned a level from 1 to 12 so that employers and learners can compare them. For example an SVQ3 will appear at SCQF Level 6, an honours degree at SCQF Level 10.

## For employers the QCF will:

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

## For learners the QCF will:

- offer more freedom, choice and flexibility
- allow them to build up credits at their own pace and combine them in a way that suits them
- enable them to transfer credits between qualifications
- record all their achievements on an electronic learner record

“Retaining NVQs in the QCF whilst introducing greater clarity, choice and flexibility for employers and learners is a win:win situation. Employers value NVQs as evidence of competency in the workplace and we are pleased that we can continue to develop them for our sectors as a QCF submitting body. The QCF is a very significant reform which brings many benefits. Semta is proud of the good relationships it has formed with QCDA and Ofqual and delighted to be closely involved.”

Philip Whiteman  
Semta Chief Executive

## Regulator view

"Semta has successfully completed Ofqual's rigorous recognition process to operate on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. They will now be contributing to the growing number of qualifications on the framework which provide high-quality assessment that meets the needs of learners and have currency in the marketplace."

**Kathleen Tattersall – Chair, Ofqual**

## Employer view

The RAF has played a pivotal part in developing occupational standards for aeronautical engineering. The development of new National Occupational Standards (NOS) provided an opportunity not only to make military standards compatible with industry but also to align industry and military standards to civil aviation. Working in partnership with industry and the MoD, Semta produced a range of robust NOS which align with the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) ATA 100 referencing system.

"It is vital that we maintain occupational standards in our sector and continue this work. The amount of support we've had from Semta has been outstanding. NVQ QCF units are written directly from NOS and because these are aligned to what industry wants and what the CAA requires we are aiming to tie vocational training in with professional competence. A lot of training goes on in the military that we haven't been able to get recognition for in the past. Now we have the potential to get more synergy from occupational standards and gain recognition from the CAA and the professional institutes, which will benefit everyone."

**Alan Moss – Accreditation Development Manager, Defence College of Aeronautical Engineering, RAF Cosford**

"It is fantastic that we can keep NVQs in the format we are familiar with. Thanks to its quality assurance process it provides a reliable qualification standard that we can trust. This is especially valuable when we recruit someone who is expected to maintain our high industry standards.

"We're also pleased about the QCF, which provides a significant vehicle towards having our own in-house courses recognised as nationally accredited qualifications. We're working very closely with Semta and awarding organisations in developing new qualifications, and we hope to have something on the QCF in 2010."

**Gary Griffiths – Head of Apprenticeships, Airbus Operations Ltd**

## Provider view

"NFEC members were most anxious when they saw the possibility of NVQs disappearing just as employers were using them widely and really valuing them. Establishing the credibility of other qualifications with employers would have put us back to square one. We're greatly relieved that Semta has been successful in retaining NVQ's in the QCF and protecting their quality and assurance – both as qualifications in their own right and within apprenticeship frameworks. Semta and Ofqual have worked hard to reach an agreement and we're very pleased with the outcome."

**Bob Millington – Director for National Liaison and Regional Co-ordination, National Forum of Engineering Centres (NFEC)**

Burton College has worked with Semta and Toyota Motor Manufacturing UK to develop a QCF compliant NVQ which meets the company's training needs for the introduction of a new motor vehicle.

"Using the QCF system, we were able to accredit learning and create a qualification that meets the employer's specific needs. Toyota has always been an excellent employer with regard to training. The company recognises that national accreditation is important both to the business and to individuals. Now we can use QCF accreditation to validate training and let the workforce understand where their training fits within a national framework."

**Howard Boswell – Vice Principal Strategic Partnerships and Planning, Burton College**

## Awarding body view

Training is the key to safeguarding our sector's future success – even in a recession – and this must be taken into account when implementing such major reforms as the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

2010 is shaping up to be an exciting year for EAL, and for the vocational education sector as a whole. Over the next 12 months, EAL will work closely with its training centres, made up of providers, colleges, employers and their learners to raise awareness and foster understanding around the new QCF qualifications, and their implications.

**Ann Watson – Managing Director, EAL (EMTA Awards Ltd)**