

people:skills:jobs:



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
www.delni.gov.uk

Qualifications
and Credit
Framework

QCF

AN INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS?

Vocational and work-related qualifications, such as National Vocational Qualifications, are changing to become more responsive to the demands of employers and learners.

An essential tool in this reform is the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), the new framework for vocational qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The QCF is at the heart of the vocational qualifications system, which will make it simpler, more accessible to a wider range of learners and more relevant to learners' and employers' needs.

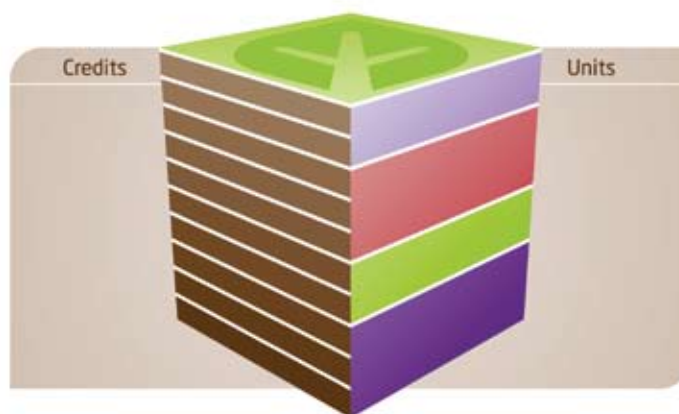
Qualifications in the QCF reflect the skills that employers want, because employers, through Sector Skills Councils, are involved in their development. These qualifications are more flexible than previous qualifications so learners can fit them more easily around their home and work lives. QCF qualifications are also more up-to-date because they are based on revised national occupational standards which reflect the skills that are needed to operate effectively in today's workplace.

HOW DOES THE QCF WORK?

The QCF recognizes skills and qualifications by awarding credit for qualifications and units (small steps of learning).

Each qualification in the QCF is made up of units which can be combined under specified rules to contribute to the award of the qualification. Every unit and qualification in the QCF has a credit value that tells you roughly how long it takes to complete — one credit represents about 10 hours of work. Each unit and qualification also has its own level, from entry level to level 8, to show how demanding it is.

The structure of a QCF qualification



The titles of all the qualifications in the QCF are set out in the same way to help you understand them more easily. The title tells you three things — how difficult the qualification is, how long it takes and what it is about.

The **level** shows how challenging the qualification is. There are nine levels in the QCF, from entry level to level 8. It might be helpful to know that GCSEs (grades A* to C) are equivalent in demand to level 2, A levels to level 3, and a PhD to level 8.

Next is the **size** — how long the qualification takes to complete. Every qualification in the QCF comes in one of three sizes — Award, Certificate or Diploma. Awards are made up of 1 to 12 credits (10 to 120 hours of learning), Certificates 13 to 36 credits (130 to 360 hours of learning) and Diplomas 37 credits or more (370 or more hours of learning).

Finally the **content** shows what the qualification is about — could be retail, leadership, or maybe sport.

Here are two examples of qualification titles, showing how the three parts fit together:

Level 1 Certificate in sport and leisure

Level 8 Award in strategic direction and leadership



RECORDING LEARNER ACHIEVEMENTS

Learners can build up their units at their own pace and put them towards a full qualification. All their achievements will be stored in their own personal learning record which learners and their advisers will be able to access through a unique learner number (ULN). Every learner is issued with a ULN when they enrol for a QCF unit or qualification with a learning provider.

Using the personal learning record, learners and advisers will find it easier to see how units and qualifications can help their personal and career development.



SCOPE AND TIMESCALES FOR QCF IMPLEMENTATION

It is expected that all regulated vocational qualifications, including NVQs, will be on the QCF by the end of 2010. QCF qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland can be found on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk).

Further education colleges and other providers in Northern Ireland are already delivering QCF qualifications and more are becoming available all the time. People who engage with learning through the ApprenticeshipsNI, Training for Success or Steps to Work programmes will be following QCF qualifications more and more during 2010. All enrolments from 2011 will be on QCF qualifications. Discussions are also underway as to how, in the future, general qualifications such as A levels and GCSEs relate to vocational qualifications in the QCF.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

To watch an animation on how the QCF works, and for all sorts of other useful information about the new framework, visit: www.nivqrp.org.uk

The NI Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment is the statutory advisory body to the Department for Employment and Learning on all qualifications issues, while Ofqual is the body that regulates vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. For further details on their work in this area, see www.ccea.org.uk and www.ofqual.gov.uk.

For advice on learning and qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds contact Careers Service NI at **www.careersserviceni.com**

Sector Skills Councils' details can be found at **www.sscalliance.org**.

This leaflet is available in other formats on request.