



Office of the Qualifications
And Examinations Regulator
Spring Place
Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UB

To: Recognised awarding organisations
Sector Skills Councils and Standard Setting Bodies
Organisations involved in the development of the QCF

24 August 2009

Dear Colleague

I am writing on behalf of the qualifications regulators for England (Ofqual), Wales (DCELLS) and Northern Ireland (CCEA), to confirm our position on the end of the accreditation period for qualifications within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), as set out in my letter of 4 June 2009 (<http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/2401.aspx>). We were very grateful for the feedback we received. I am pleased to report that, with two exceptions, the organisations that commented on the regulators' proposed position on accreditation end dates were supportive. Given this, and for the reasons we set out for this approach in my original letter, I can now confirm the accreditation end dates proposed in my initial correspondence. These are:

- QCF qualifications awarded by organisations that have access to operate within the QCF but are not yet fully recognised, will have an accreditation end date of no later than 31 December 2010.
- Awarding organisations that are not fully recognised to operate within the QCF will be able to submit qualifications for accreditation to the QCF until 31 December 2009, with an accreditation end date of no later than 31 December 2010. After this time only qualifications awarded by organisations fully recognised to operate within the QCF will be accredited.
- From 1 September 2009, awarding organisations that are fully recognised to operate within the QCF will be able to submit a proposed accreditation end date for a qualification of up to five years from the date of the accreditation. Actual accreditation end dates may depend on plans to

update related information such as National Occupational Standards or Sector Qualification Strategies. These dependencies will be covered via the SSC approval process and the relevant requirements must be adhered to.

Also from 1 September 2009, awarding organisations that are fully recognised to operate within the QCF will be able to submit proposals using Web Based Accreditation (WBA) to extend the period of accreditation for qualifications that have already been accredited. These will be subject to the awarding organisation's own review of the continuing suitability of the qualifications and confirmation that the qualifications comply with the QCF arrangements. For vocational qualifications this will also include approval of the extension by the relevant Sector Skills Council (SSC) if appropriate. The normal processes for extensions will then apply. In deciding whether to allow the extension, the regulators will take into account feedback on take-up of the qualification and the performance of the awarding organisation.

May I take this opportunity to draw your attention to the fact that extension of the end date will not be automatic. We will be carefully scrutinising qualifications for which awarding organisations are seeking extension, to ensure they comply with the *Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/Regulatory_arrangements_QCF_August08.pdf)

We are aware that a number of units and qualifications that were placed within the QCF as part of tests and trials do not fully comply with current regulatory requirements. This is understandable, as the regulations only came into effect in December of last year. However, awarding organisations will be expected to undertake a thorough review of their units and qualifications before seeking an extension and to take any steps necessary to ensure compliance with the regulatory arrangements.

A number of organisations that responded to the original letter asked for an indication of the time the regulators take to approve an application for recognition. Several factors affect the length of time it takes, notably the completeness of the application when it is first submitted and the time it takes an organisation to respond to requests for outstanding evidence. On average, Ofqual is currently responding to first submissions in 24 days from submission. The time will vary according to the volume of recognition applications received.

General qualifications, including GCSE and GCE, will continue to be accredited to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in line with their established end dates. Other general qualifications currently included within the NQF with an accreditation end date at or before the end of 2010 can have their accreditation within the NQF extended until the end of 2012, by which time it will have been possible to review regulatory requirements in the light of the introduction of the QCF and legislative changes. Examples of these

qualifications would include those covering personal effectiveness or skills development, which are clearly not vocational qualifications. Any new proposals of this type can also have an accreditation end date up to the end of 2012. All submissions will be dealt with via WBA in the usual way.

As mentioned in my previous letter, a programme of support is being provided and coordinated through the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) in England and CCEA in Northern Ireland. The readiness programme provides support for organisations in building their capacity to operate within the QCF and is being delivered in England through delivery partners, including the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils and Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) /Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). Further information about the QCF readiness programme can be obtained by visiting www.qcda.gov.uk/qcf. For enquiries please email qcfreadiness@qcda.gov.uk.

Further information about the CCEA readiness programme can be obtained from Caroline Egerton at cegerton@ccea.org.uk. For information on DCELLS' capacity building programme please refer to the Welsh Assembly Government website or contact Lowri Reed at lowri.reed@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

We are compiling a list of frequently asked questions about QCF recognition and accreditation that will be placed on our website shortly.

If you require any more information please do not hesitate to contact us by emailing qcf@ofqual.gov.uk

Yours faithfully



Julie Swan
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