



Identifying purposes for qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework

Testing and trialling

February 2009

Ofqual/09/3985

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726) set out the requirements that will apply to the organisations that operate within, and the qualifications that are accredited into, the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). They specify that qualification proposals submitted for accreditation must identify the purpose of the qualification from a list provided by the qualifications regulators (see *Regulatory arrangements* paragraph 6.2c). The purpose of this document is to set out:
- the list of possible purposes that can be selected (see the list of purposes on page 5)
 - the underlying principles behind the development and articulation of the list of qualification purposes
 - the rules for identifying a qualification purpose from the list.
- 1.2 The list of qualification purposes was developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in consultation with members of the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Board, including the qualifications regulators, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, the Federation of Awarding Bodies and the Joint Council for Qualifications. Awarding bodies are now required to select purposes for their qualifications.
- 1.3 The purposes will be tested and trialled until summer 2009 and will be subject to a comprehensive evaluation during this period. Following the final evaluation report, the qualifications regulators will decide whether, and in what way, qualifications within the QCF should identify their purpose in future.
- 1.4 Further details on the implementation arrangements for the operating rules and on the evaluation arrangements will be published in due course.

2. Underlying principles

- 2.1 Users of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) have tended to distinguish between qualifications on the basis of their regulated type (eg GCSE, GCE, NVQ). However, the QCF does not currently include any separately regulated qualification types. By testing and trialling a limited list of purposes for qualifications within the QCF, the qualifications regulators will determine whether this additional information helps learners and other users of qualifications to understand more clearly what a qualification in the QCF has been primarily designed to do. This information will supplement the information currently required by the qualifications regulators for each qualification proposal, including its level, size and title.
- 2.2 The Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual), the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) now require awarding organisations to identify qualification purposes in order to gain accreditation for qualifications in the QCF.
- 2.3 In line with the overarching design of the QCF, which is an outcomes-based framework, the purposes have been expressed in terms of outputs. In other words, they focus on the primary outcome related to the achievement of a qualification. It is important to note that each purpose is intended to convey information on what a qualification is primarily designed to do, and not what it may also be used for.
- 2.4 The list of purposes spans the full breadth of provision likely to be accredited within the QCF.
- 2.5 The list has been split into two sections – main purpose and sub-purpose. The sub-purposes divide each main purpose into more specific, narrower purposes. The flexibility of the operating principles allows qualification proposals to identify more than one sub-purpose if appropriate, for example where a qualification includes various different pathways/routes through it.
- 2.6 The list of purposes also includes some examples of possible qualifications against each sub-purpose. These examples are provided as broad guidance only. The examples do not imply that these qualifications would always fall within

the specified main and/or sub-purpose. Nor is any reference intended to qualifications offered by any particular awarding organisation.

2.7 It should be noted that the purposes are not intended to reflect, nor convey information on:

- inputs to the qualification such as its duration, location (eg school, workplace) or the pedagogical method underpinning its delivery
- what a qualification might also be used for in wider policy context, or what it is funded as, for example within an apprenticeship, within the foundation learning tier or as a full level 2 or 3 qualification in England
- the likely age of a learner taking the qualification
- the level of the qualification.

The above information is not usually directly relevant to what a qualification is primarily designed to do and, while important, is already available from other, more appropriate sources.

3. Operating rules

- 3.1 Each qualification proposal submitted for accreditation within the QCF must:
- i) identify one main purpose from the list set out in 3.2
 - ii) identify at least one sub-purpose from the list set out in 3.2. The sub-purpose(s) must directly relate to the main purpose, eg main purpose A, sub-purposes A1 and A2.

3.2

Main purpose	Sub-purpose	Examples of possible qualifications
A. Recognise personal growth and engagement in learning	A1. Recognise development of skills for life	Functional skills qualification Skills for Life qualification
	A2. Recognise development of knowledge and/or skills to operate independently and effectively in life, learning and work	Qualification in personal and social development Qualification in personal effectiveness
	A3. Recognise development of personal skills and/or knowledge	Qualification in music
	A4. Recognise development of employability skills and/or knowledge	Qualification in employability
B. Prepare for further learning or training and/or develop knowledge and/or skills in a subject area	B1. Prepare for further learning or training	GCSE Access to HE, or Pre-U qualification
	B2. Develop knowledge and/or skills in a subject area	Qualification in art and design Qualification in classical languages
C. Prepare for employment	C1. Prepare for employment in a broad occupational area	Qualification in economics or business Qualification in performing arts or media
	C2. Prepare for employment in a specific occupational area	Qualification for teaching assistants Qualification in hairdressing
D. Confirm occupational competence and/or 'licence to practice'	D1. Confirm competence in an occupational role to the standards required	NVQ Other competence-based qualification
	D2. Confirm the ability to meet a 'licence to practice' or other legal requirements made by the relevant sector, professional or industry body	Qualification in door supervision Qualification in accountancy
E. Updating and continuing professional development (CPD)	E1. Update knowledge and/or skills relating to legal, technical, process or best practice changes/requirements	Qualification in infection control Qualification in health and safety
	E2. Develop knowledge and/or skills in order to gain recognition at a higher level or in a different role	Qualification in operational or strategic management
	E3. Develop knowledge and/or skills relevant to a particular specialisation within an occupation or set of occupations	Specialist qualification in the health sector Specialist qualification in food safety

First published by The Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator in 2009.
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