Learning providers can now apply to become an awarding organisation in their own right and develop and deliver qualifications directly with their employers.

“We’re a large vocational college, and we’ve got lots of employers that are already engaged with us and we saw the opportunity of achieving awarding body status as another mechanism for being able to support local businesses around Norwich and Norfolk.”
Principle Dick Palmer, City College Norwich

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) is helping providers to become ‘ready’ for the QCF. This includes a consultancy service on how to plan for the changes as well as events and information resources. You can find information on what support is available at: www.qcfprovidersupport.net/home

The Association of Colleges is providing communications and support on the introduction of the QCF to colleges, focusing on information for principals, governors and senior managers. To find out more, visit www.aoc.co.uk

The Association of Learning Providers is helping large, independent work-based learning providers to understand the changes. A dedicated team of provider liaison managers is available to offer support. To find out more, go to: www.learningproviders.org.uk

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and its successor organisation the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) is responsible for ensuring that funding, planning and performance are aligned to the QCF.

The LSC is also delivering the Service Layer for the QCF. This supports the transfer of learner achievement data in the form of Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) for learners, providers and awarding organisations using the QCF. It is central to delivering the full flexibility and benefits of the QCF as a responsive and inclusive framework. Although CAT already exists, the Service Layer will enable accumulation and transfer of achievement to become standard practice for all vocational qualifications making QCF the framework of choice for employers, learners and providers.

The LSC is producing regular policy updates identifying the programme of work being taken forward around planning, funding and performance. The most up to date funding information is available on the LSC website at: http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvqrp/about/

The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency’s website also has information for providers about the QCF, including an animation illustrating how the QCF works: www.qcda.org.uk/qcda_22230.aspx

What progress has been made?
The process of populating the QCF with reformed vocational qualifications has already begun – there are currently 2,500 vocational qualifications on the QCF and more than 10,000 units.

By the end of 2010 we expect all key vocational qualifications will be on the QCF and it will be the sole framework for vocational qualifications.

What happens next?
From August 2010 onwards, the SFA will prioritise QCF provision for funding through the following gateways: Train to Gain, Pre-employment Training, the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) and Adult Learner Responsive.

Learning providers are being encouraged to find out more about the reforms to the system and act to incorporate them into their ways of working.

For more information on the reforms and up to date data visit www.bis.gov.uk/vqreform
The vocational qualifications system is changing to become more responsive to the specific needs of employers and learners. The content of qualifications will be more relevant to employers’ needs and qualifications will be more accessible to a wider range of learners.

Government recognises its role in supporting industry as we prepare for the upturn. Supporting employers’ ability to identify the skills needed for future success and ensuring we have a system in place to deliver them is crucial to developing a Britain that can compete more effectively in the global economy. Those involved in teaching and training have a key role to play in working with employers and learners to deliver relevant and personalised learning around these skills.

The reforms to the system are enabling learning providers to offer employers and learners a more flexible curriculum that is tailored to their needs and will encourage the development of relationships with new employers and learners.

What’s happening?

Under the reforms, the employer’s voice is heard through Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) – they decide on the qualifications that will be developed, approve these qualifications, and advise on those that will receive priority funding for each sector. SSCs have been working with employers, awarding organisations and the qualifications regulator to define and develop the relevant qualifications for each sector.

A major part of vocational qualification reform is implementing the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), the new framework for vocational qualifications. All qualifications in the QCF are built from smaller ‘units’ of learning which build into qualifications.

The QCF includes a wide range of units designed to a common specification and each with a credit value indicating the volume of achievement that can be combined within agreed rules to form qualifications. Learners can customise their qualifications and employers can identify packages of skills to meet business needs. This flexibility means that the qualifications system can more readily respond to changing skill needs. Units can be shared between qualifications, enabling learners to transfer and accumulate credit for their achievements.

The QCF enables all learners to have their achievement recognised between providers and to be transferred between awarding organisations in a consistent and transparent manner. They will get a personal learner record showing the training they have done and how they can progress their learning further.

Providers need to consider how best to use the QCF to build their curriculum around these units of training and how to work with employers and learners to deliver programmes which are more relevant to individual needs.

“Employers value high-quality vocational qualifications as a route to employment and it is essential that young people in particular receive clear advice on both the academic and vocational options available to them”

Susan Anderson, Director of Human Resources Policy at the CBI

The new flexibilities introduced by our reforms should help improve both learner achievements and retention rates and also introduce new learner groups to vocational qualifications.

“This should lead to a significant increase in the number of learners engaged in accredited vocational training, helping to upskill and reskill the nation’s workforce”

City & Guilds

The reforms will also give you the opportunity to rethink your employer offer and take up opportunities to work with local employers to deliver the programmes that they want.

“I found the learning fascinating and so will my students. While hybrids are perhaps a stepping stone in terms of the ultimate environmentally friendly car, this is still impressive technology. I would encourage my students to take this specific qualification. After all, it is the future.”

Brian Squires, trainer for Petroc who worked with Honda to deliver an employer qualification