



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



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FOR WALES



Test and trial prospectus

Framework development

Version 1

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SECTION A

Introduction

Context

Over the past few years, a range of initiatives has been undertaken in each of the four countries of the United Kingdom to address the need for qualification reform. In November 2005, Ministers agreed the establishment of a Programme Board to oversee reform by bringing together key strands of work across the UK. Framework Development forms a key strand within the Vocational Qualification Reform Programme.

The overall aim is to develop a jointly regulated credit and qualifications framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This should be a simple and rational organising structure for units and qualifications which reforms the current three country National Qualifications Framework and is capable of supporting the accumulation and transfer of credit achievement over time (CAT).

Over the next two years there is agreement across the three regulators (QCA, ACCAC¹, CCEA) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to:

- test and trial the mechanisms and processes needed to revise the current national qualifications framework and provide advice and recommendations to Ministers with a view to establishing a regulated, and enabling credit and qualifications framework
- ensure articulation² as closely as possible with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications framework (SCQF)³ in order to explain and understand the relationships between the frameworks
- trial and agree a common set of credit principles in order to articulate as closely as possible with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)⁴ to support learner progression in England and Northern Ireland
- take account of emerging European credit and qualification developments
- agree a common set of credit principles which allow articulation with the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)⁵

¹ ACCAC will become part of the Welsh Assembly Government on the 1 April 2006 and references will be changed

² The explicit meaning of 'articulation' will be clarified during the programme development process

³ The **SCQF** includes all the qualifications awarded and accredited by Scottish HEIS and the SQA.

- take account of other credit related developments in the 4 countries outside the scope of this development.

This prospectus has been released, to support the testing and trialling of aspects of a credit and qualifications framework with learners and providers. Although some aspects relate to three country qualification development others relate specifically to funding regimes in England. QCA, ACCAC and CCEA will work together on those aspects which are appropriate. Where awarding bodies wish to trial any aspects in Wales they will need to discuss with staff from the VQLL division, ACCAC. Awarding bodies wishing to trial any aspects in Northern Ireland should contact the Qualifications and Skills Accreditation and Policy Unit (CCEA) to discuss their proposals.

⁴ The FHEQ encompasses degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic awards (except honorary degrees and higher doctorates) granted by a university or college under its degree awarding powers. Development and population of the FHEQ is coordinated by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

⁵ The CQFW embraces all post-16 and higher education in Wales and is being established jointly by: ELWa, HEFCW and ACCAC.

1. General background

- 1.1 We have been working since November 2005 with partners across the LSC, SSDA and with the regulatory authorities and awarding bodies to establish the nature and scope of tests and trials to support the development of a fully functioning credit and qualifications Framework. This follows from the earlier consultation and subsequent discussions of the Framework for Achievement.
- 1.2 This prospectus sets out the requirements for those organisations wishing to submit project proposals for test and trials from September 2006 to July 2008.
- 1.3 The LSC will continue its work as a remitted partner taking the lead on trialling the system with providers in England. The LSC requirements for publicly funded trials with providers in England sets out the priority areas that will need to be covered in trials over the period 2006–08 and these are attached in Annex 1.
- 1.4 The prospectus identifies the rationale and process for selecting projects, timing and priorities, and the nature and scope of the trials.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 The primary objective of the work is to develop and test an operational model of the framework, through a period of tests and trials, that is supported by all key stakeholders and that can form the basis for decisions regarding potential roll-out.
- 2.2 The trials must evaluate the ability of a unit-based qualification system underpinned by credit to support a range of qualifications and learning programmes across sectors, learning and training contexts and awarding bodies.
- 2.3 The trials must evaluate whether a fully functioning credit system can support and enhance learner achievement and progression, and include testing of credit accumulation and transfer as well as the mechanisms to support this.
- 2.4 The trials must evaluate whether the potential benefits of a credit and qualifications framework including flexibility, inclusiveness, simplicity and reduced bureaucracy can be delivered through the proposed framework.
- 2.5 The trials in England must evaluate whether the development of the framework can contribute to strategic priorities and targets for publicly funded provision as identified by the LSC and described in Annex 1.

3. Priorities

3.1 The priorities for the test and trial projects are as follows:

- Priority 1: Testing the usability and usefulness of the specifications for the framework, and of the system of credit accumulation and transfer that underpins it.
- Priority 2: Testing the usability and usefulness of the mechanisms to support the framework in relation to awarding, recording achievement and managing data.
- Priority 3: Trialling the extent to which the framework delivers the anticipated benefits to learners and employers and supports strategic priorities for participation, achievement and progression.

4. Project proposals

Common requirements

- 4.1 The pro forma attached at Annex 2 identifies those **requirements** that will be common for all those wishing to engage in the trials.
- 4.2 Projects may be submitted that are primarily focussed on testing the proposed specification (Stage 1/2 projects), without the involvement of learners. These may, for example, consider through practical development activity whether the unit as described is fit for purpose or whether the rules of combination as proposed support the requirements for different qualifications. Proposals for this type of project will not require completion of the LSC pro-forma (**Annex 2**)
- 4.3 For the majority of project proposals it is expected that organisations will work together collaboratively within consortia of awarding bodies, providers, sector bodies and other relevant organisations. While some proposals may be based around a single organisation, it will be important for collaborative projects to identify all partners involved and their respective roles and to **identify a lead organisation** (normally an awarding body) to take responsibility for the overall project and its outcomes.
- 4.4 Proposals should indicate the scope of the project and be clear whether the trial is to cover learning in England, Wales or Northern Ireland (or all). It should be noted that the LSC is responsible for the funding of learners within **England only** (see **Annex 1**). Funding mechanisms and infrastructures are different in Wales and Northern Ireland so although some work proposed by awarding bodies or other organisations could be tested in Wales proposers should contact the Vocational Qualifications & Lifelong Learning Division (ACCAC) in the first instance. Wales is already supporting a number of initiatives regarding the development of a credit and qualifications framework that will also be used as part of the evidence base for decisions in the future. In the case of Northern Ireland proposers should contact the Qualifications and Skills Accreditation and Policy Unit (CCEA).
- 4.5 All project proposals must address at least one (and possibly all) of the priorities identified in section 3 above.

4.6 To assist in the planning and design of project proposals **Table 1** overleaf, breaks down these three priorities into more detailed **criteria**. Each proposal will need to identify which of these criteria will be addressed within the scope of the project.

With respect to priority three, (the anticipated benefits of the Framework), projects will need to demonstrate the extent to which the criteria have been met.

| Table 1. Criteria for project proposals | | | | |
|--|--|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Priority | | Units | Qualifications | Credit system |
| 1 | Testing the usability and usefulness of the specification for the framework structure including the credit system that underpins it | | | |
| | Criteria: | | | |
| 1.1 | The adequacy of the unit requirements for the design and development of units | ★ | | |
| 1.2 | The effectiveness of the unit requirements: for communicating what learners are expected to know, understand or do as the basis for making awards in permitting flexibility in the conduct of assessment | ★ | | ★ |
| 1.3 | The adequacy of the unit requirements to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistency in the determination of credit values across all units within the framework consistency in the determination of level across all units within the framework the mutual recognition of units | ★ | | ★ |
| 1.4 | The process of developing coherent qualifications from individual units | | ★ | |

| | | | | |
|------|--|---|---|---|
| 1.5 | <p>The effectiveness of the rules of combination (RoC):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in specifying for users the number of credits, the level of units, pathways, time restrictions and exemptions in relation to a particular qualification • in providing a structure within which the process of credit accumulation and transfer can be planned, managed and given purpose | | ★ | |
| 1.6 | <p>The use of proposed qualification titling to inform users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the level and size of achievements particularly in relation to award, certificate and diploma • that a given qualification has a use or value to the holder in relation to employment, progression to further learning, or to personal and career development | | ★ | |
| 1.7 | The appropriateness of the credit values proposed for awards, certificates and diplomas. | | ★ | |
| 1.8 | The applicability of the level descriptors for the purposes of personal development and, across a range of vocational, occupational, academic and professional contexts | ★ | ★ | |
| 1.9 | The suitability of the level descriptors in the development of units from entry level through to level eight | ★ | | |
| 1.10 | The methods of determining the level of a qualification from the level of its constituent units/credits | | ★ | |
| 1.11 | The award of credits and qualifications | | ★ | ★ |
| 1.12 | The accumulation of credits to permit learners to achieve qualifications over time | | ★ | ★ |
| 1.13 | Mutual recognition of credits awarded by other awarding bodies | | ★ | ★ |

| | | | | |
|------|---|---|---|---|
| 1.14 | <p>Credit transfer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • between qualifications and awarding bodies • between units shared by more than one awarding body, irrespective of the method through which the learner has been assessed • of 'other' units within the rules of combination for a given qualification | | ★ | ★ |
| 1.15 | How an awarding body responsible for the award of an individual qualification will ensure that all the requirements of the rules of combination have been met by all learners who achieve the qualification | | ★ | ★ |
| 1.16 | That credit is awarded with integrity in all instances, even where different methods have been used to meet the same assessment criteria | | | ★ |
| 1.17 | Assessment of a unit(s) is valid, reliable, consistent and capable of reproduction | ★ | | |
| 1.18 | Assessment arrangements can ensure that all awarding bodies have mutual confidence in credit awarded by all other awarding bodies operating within the framework | | | ★ |
| 1.19 | The extent to which flexibility of assessment is introduced to the framework | ★ | ★ | |
| 1.20 | How grading arrangements might be developed and applied | ★ | ★ | |
| 2 | Testing the usability and usefulness of the mechanisms to support the framework in relation to awarding, recording achievement and managing data including unit and qualification information | | | |
| | Criteria: | | | |

| | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|
| 2.1 | The use of a single electronic learner achievement record to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • credit accumulation and transfer • registering learners using a prototype unique learner number (ULN) | | | ★ |
| 2.2 | The use of a unit databank to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of qualifications • credit accumulation and transfer • information for users | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| 3 | The extent to which the framework delivers the anticipated benefits | | | |
| | Criteria: | | | |
| 3.1 | Evaluate the flexibility of the framework to support the needs of learners and employers | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| 3.2 | Evaluate the simplicity of the framework to ensure it is easy to understand and use | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| 3.3 | Evaluate the ability of the framework to be inclusive and accommodate a wide enough range of achievements from both within and outside existing National Qualifications Framework (NQF) | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| 3.4 | Evaluate whether the arrangements for the system reduce bureaucracy and cost for all users | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| 3.5 | Evaluate the extent to which the framework facilitates progression, retention and achievement | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| 3.6 | Evaluate the extent to which the framework supports key strategic priorities and targets for learning and skills | ★ | ★ | ★ |

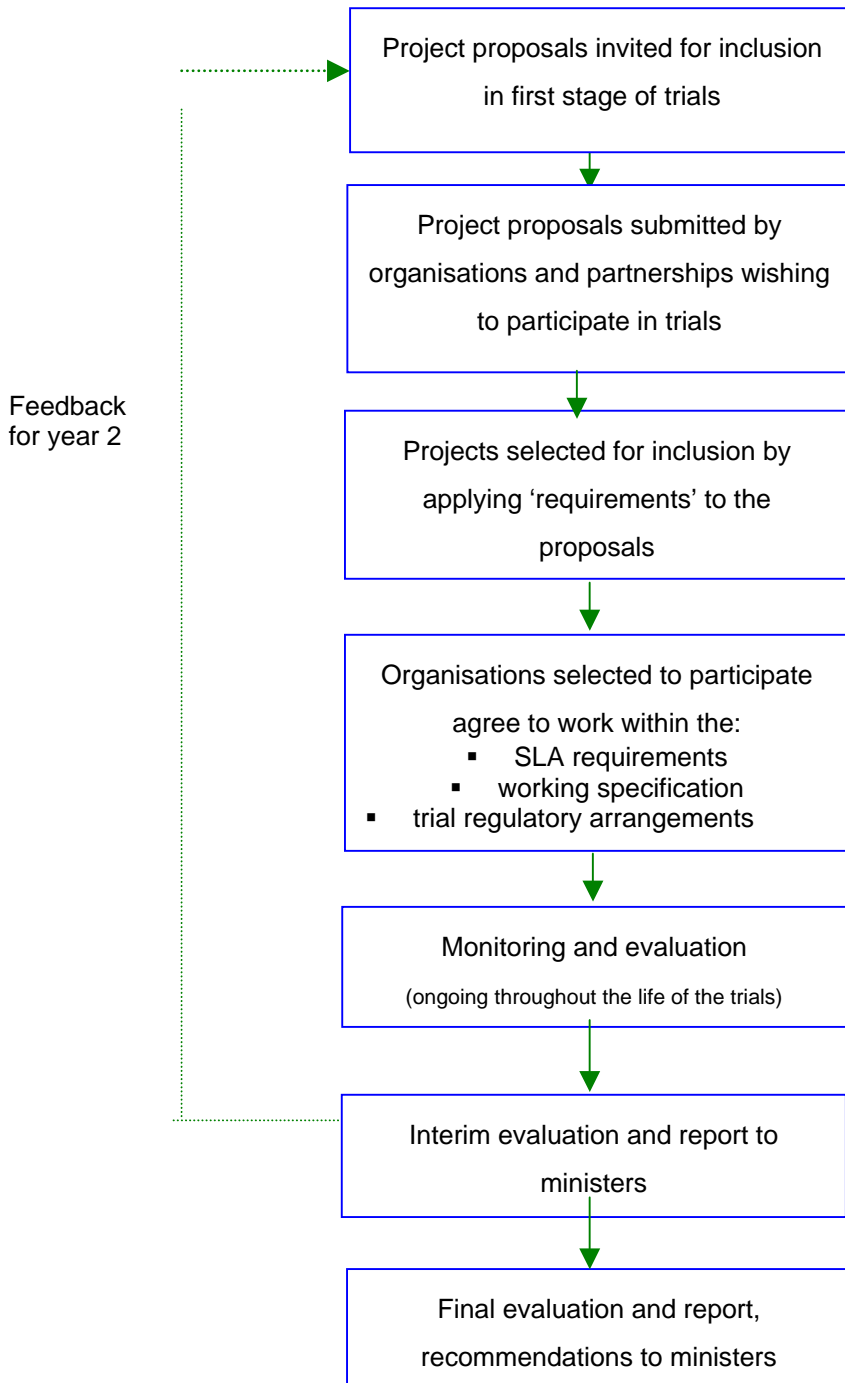
5. Submitting proposals

- 5.1 It is expected that the number of projects and the scope of the trials will increase during the trial period. The first stage of live trials (from September 2006 – July 2007), with learners, will involve a limited number of projects in a rolling programme of trials. These will be expanded during the second stage from August 2007 onwards.
- 5.2 All projects will be completed by the summer of 2008, but we will need some to complete by July 2007 in order to contribute to the interim report to Ministers. Organisations submitting proposals for trials with learners should bear the completion date of their proposal in mind with regard to anticipated start and finish dates for learners and with regard to planning and funding cycles.
- 5.3 For those proposals that are not included in the first stage of trials, there will be further opportunities (throughout the two-year period) to resubmit or redevelop projects and contribute to the trialling. These opportunities will also be available for those organisations who have not submitted proposals in the first instance.
- 5.4 **All project proposals must be submitted using the standard pro forma (see Annex 2)** and should:
- identify the units and/or qualifications that will be included within the scope of the project
 - explain in sufficient detail how the project will address the key priorities and criteria within this prospectus
 - identify all those organisations that will collaborate and contribute to the project and identify a lead organisation that will take responsibility for the trial
 - provide details of the timelines, milestones and deliverables for the project and any stages within it
 - identify the regions and/or countries in which the trial will take place
 - clearly identify if the project is seeking public funding to support learners undertaking achievements in England
 - provide a statement of the administrative, meeting and travel and subsistence costs of the project.

- 5.5 It may be possible to contribute towards reasonable administrative, meeting and travel and subsistence costs of projects included in the trials. Details of these costs should be included in project proposals along with any other costs that the project might incur. The regulatory partners will undertake discussions with those organisations whose projects are included in the first stage of trials to establish where further costs may be met prior to projects starting.
- 5.6 All organisations engaged in the trials will have to agree to meet the requirements identified in the proposal pro forma (see Annex 2). These requirements are designed to ensure that there is access to the information necessary to conduct a thorough evaluation of the trials. They will also place a responsibility on those involved to share the findings of their projects with other organisations to assist in building capacity amongst those not directly involved in the trials.
- 5.7 The requirements in the pro forma (see Annex 2) will form the basis of a service level agreement with the organisation leading the project.

6. Process for selecting projects

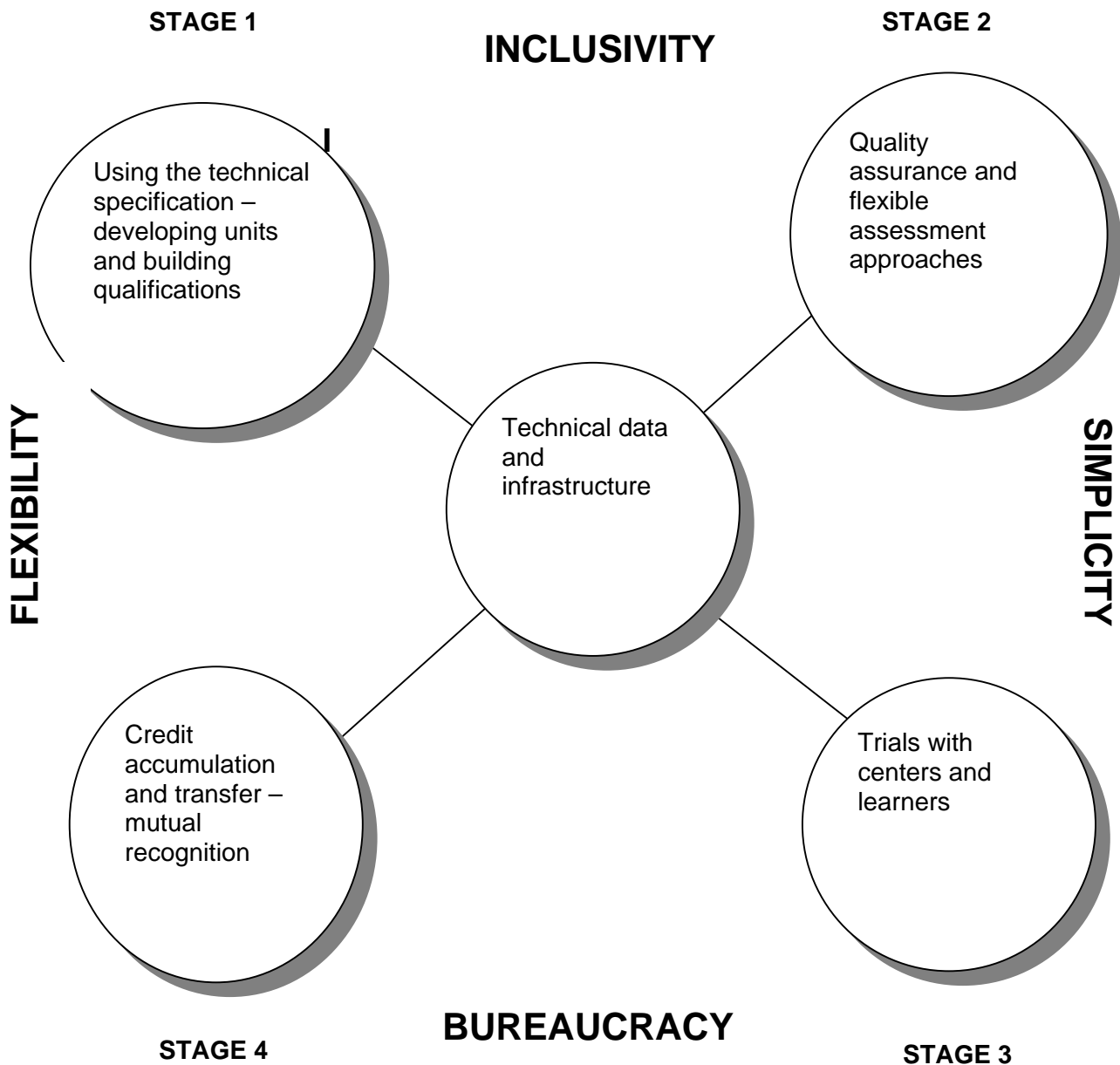
The following flowchart shows the process for selecting projects to be included in the test and trials.



SECTION B

7. Project overview

The diagram below represents the critical stages for trial projects.



- 7.1 As identified in Section 2.4, all projects will need to identify the extent to which the framework has the potential to deliver on the four anticipated benefits of:
- flexibility
 - inclusivity
 - simplicity
 - reduced bureaucracy.
- 7.2 All projects will need to address how the underpinning technical data and infrastructure proposals can be implemented effectively. Specific trials will be identified to test IT prototyping (see Section 9.5).
- 7.3 Projects proposals will need to identify which stage/stages will be addressed through the project activity:
- Stage 1 project – Developing units and building qualifications
 - Stage 2 project – Quality assurance and assessment approaches
 - Stage 3 project – Trials with centres and learners
 - Stage 4 project – Using credit-based units/qualifications: credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) and mutual recognition.
- 7.4 It is expected that a proportion of the proposals submitted will address **all** stages over the two-year trial period.

8. Project components

8.1 Stage 1 – Developing units and building qualifications. Project requirements will be to:

- design and develop **new** units and/or qualifications to evaluate the working specification and its application **OR**
- redevelop existing units and/or qualifications in the NQF within the specification to evaluate its application **OR**
- apply the specification to certificated learning currently outside the current NQF (where this meets the trial requirements relating to project content) **OR**
- a combination of the above.

Proposals to use existing credit based qualifications, for examples those developed collaboratively during the recent CQFW project, will be welcomed.

8.2 Stage 2 – Quality assurance and assessment approaches. Project requirements will be to:

- test a range of assessment approaches to credit-based units and/or qualifications and evaluate the working specification and its application in relation to assessment, including an analysis of the impact of unit assessment across the system **OR**
- trial processes and systems needed to support the development of high quality units and qualifications and the consistent application of credit across the system **OR**
- develop quality assurance benchmarks and criteria that support mutual confidence in the assessment of units and/or qualifications and the award of credit by all awarding bodies operating in the framework **OR**
- test the use of grading as part of a credit-based system **OR**
- a combination of the above.

Given the close relationship between Stage 1 and Stage 2 it is anticipated that proposals are likely to combine these stages within a coherent project proposal, which may be across more than one awarding body.

Proposals to use existing credit based qualifications, for examples those developed collaboratively during the recent CQFW project, to test the above will be welcomed.

8.3 Stage 3 – Trials with centres (see Annex 1). Project requirements will be to identify potential live trial sites with centres and learners using framework unit/qualifications:

- credit-based units combined to provide customised learning programmes (where this meets the trial requirements relating to project content) **OR**
- unit-based qualifications underpinned by credit (where this meets the trial requirements relating to project content) **OR**
- existing credit-based qualifications developed as part of the CQFW project
- a combination of the above.

It is anticipated that Stage 3 projects will follow from Stages 1 and 2 in most instances. It is expected that the number of Stage 3 projects will increase as the trial period progresses.

8.4 Stage 4 – Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT). Although this is identified as a stage this assumes:

- all projects will wherever possible build opportunities for, and an evaluation of, the opportunities for CAT into the work
- practical evaluation of CAT and mutual recognition can only take place where learners are achieving credits offered within Stage 3 trials.

Specific proposals for projects focusing on an evaluation of CAT and mutual recognition are requested for Stage 4.

9. Technical data and infrastructure

9.1 All projects will need to address how the underpinning technical data and infrastructure proposals can be implemented effectively. Project proposals will need to identify which aspects will be addressed within the scope of the trial area.

9.2 During the trial period, data and infrastructure prototyping work will build on existing systems and processes wherever appropriate to:

- minimise the impact of introducing the framework
- maximise integration with existing systems
- speed implementation
- minimise cost.

9.3 The existing systems and processes already identified for trialling include:

| Existing system and processes | Sponsoring organisation |
|--|--|
| Web-based accreditation (WBA) | QCA |
| openQUALS | QCA |
| Unique learner number (ULN) prototype | MIAP |
| Shibboleth learner identity management | British Educational Communications and Technology Agency/Joint Information Systems Committee |

9.4 Other systems and processes being reviewed for integration with the framework are the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP), UK Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP), MIAP Learner Interface (MLI), the National Pupil Database (NPD) and management information systems used by learning providers.

9.5 Specific project proposals – technical data and infrastructure. Project proposals must contribute towards an evaluation of the technology and data functions that will support the framework with particular reference to the learner achievement record (LAR) and the unit/qualification databank. Proposals will need to consider the extent to which the overall system:

- provides an effective solution
- is cost effective to implement and operate
- reduces bureaucracy in the system.

At this stage we are seeking to identify awarding bodies and learning providers (singly or as part of a consortium) who intend to submit project proposals for Stages 1–4, with a particular interest in focusing activity on the technical data and infrastructure. Those organisations that hold an interest in this area should indicate this on the pro forma (see Annex 2) and will be invited to a pre-selection meeting to discuss the work in more detail. Following this meeting a separate prospectus will be issued.

10. Project content

10.1 Project proposals for Stages 1–3 (as identified in Section 7.3) will be required to address the following priority areas:

- units and qualifications that support the eight LSC priorities (see Annex 1, bullet 5)
- Units and qualifications that result from Sector Qualification Strategies and sector priorities for skills development as they emerge (These will require agreement with the LSC where public funding is required to support Stage 3 trials in England)
- units and qualifications, in addition to those specified by the LSC priorities, that could be used to demonstrate and evaluate the framework across England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- units and qualifications, offered by bodies not requiring public funding that support employer, professional body or other specific needs, for example customised employer training or licence-to-practise qualifications (it is expected that these will be proposed through the relevant sector/industry-led bodies).

10.2 Where project content falls outside of these categories, bodies are advised to discuss the proposal with regulatory partners before submitting a pro forma.

Annex 1: LSC requirements for trials of publicly funded framework development provision in England 2006–8

Purpose

- 1 This paper identifies the key LSC requirements for publicly funded trials of Framework for Achievement (FfA) provision in England from 2006-2008.
- 2 The requirements exist because of the need to link the trials to current targets and priorities and use them to develop our understanding of the FfA's implications for the sector, including the *agenda for change* reform programme and the FE Reform White Paper.
- 3 The requirements fall into three areas:
 - headline requirements;
 - key criteria
 - populating the trials.
- 4 Organisations wishing to submit proposals for framework trials need to take the headline requirements and key criteria into account if public funding is sought for learners.⁶ At the end of this paper there is a section on what to do next if this is the case and the requirements are reflected in the proposal pro forma.

Context for the trials

- 5 The LSC has identified eight priority areas, based on its strategic objectives and targets, which need to be covered by and explored through the trials. These have

⁶ There is no separate resource for funding learners. The funding will flow through local LSC allocations to providers, through the agreement of the annual plan.

informed the development of the headline requirements and key criteria. The priority areas for publicly funded trials are:

- Level 2 provision contributing to the adult Public Service Agreement target.
- Units and qualifications at entry and level 1 that can support the development of the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) and the trialling of progression pathways for learners. It should be noted that trials of the FLT will come under slightly different arrangements to the trials of the framework and that the LSC will initially lead on identifying sites of existing provision with which to build the FLT.
- The LSC identified priorities for public funding, as set out in the [Annual statement of priorities](#) (November 2005) and in [Priorities for success](#) (October 2005).
- Level 3 provision – particularly achievements that facilitate progression from the learning and skills sector to the higher education sector and to higher level vocational learning and skills.
- Key sector priorities identified in LSC business planning which have been agreed and developed between the LSC and Sector Skills Councils via the Sector Skills Agreement process and with other sector bodies. In 06-07 the priorities include SEMTA (Business Improvement Techniques), E-Skills (ITQ) and TDA (School Support Staff) as well working closely with Improve Ltd, People 1st and Skillsmart Retail in the context of taking forward [Priorities for Success](#). Other sector areas will be considered as appropriate.
- Offenders' Learning and Skills Provision.
- Achievements within the 'Train to Gain' programme.
- Provision involved in the Recognition and Recording of Progress and Achievement (RARPA) extension project (REX)⁷.

6 In practice publicly-funded trials are likely to contribute to more than one priority area and to contribute to testing key aspects of the framework's functionality.

Headline requirements

7 The headline requirements confirm what the LSC wants to establish through the trials of framework provision by July 2008.

8 In two years it will not be possible to answer conclusively these questions. The trials must, however gather sufficient experience and evidence to enable credible judgements to be made about the *emerging* conclusions. These will be used in

reporting progress to Ministers as well as informing a cost/benefit analysis of the impact of the FfA on the systems and processes of the LSC.

9 The four headline requirements are highlighted below, with some examples of why they are important to the LSC.

1. **Does the framework better support the achievement of government targets and priorities and the delivery of the LSC's statutory responsibilities?**

- The trials must provide a basis for a robust evaluation of the implications of the framework for the LSC sector. This includes a cost/benefit analysis for the LSC.
- We need to understand what a more flexible framework, which can better respond to discontinuous learning, will mean for the LSC in terms of planning and funding.
- We need to understand how we can manage the transition from the current NQF to a wider framework for achievement in terms of planning and funding and in the context of managing the balance and mix of provision.
- We need to understand how curriculum delivery and design may change as a result of a unit-based qualification offer underpinned by credit and credit accumulation and transfer.
- The trials must test the feasibility of combining in a meaningful and coherent way the accumulation and transfer of existing achievement with units drawn from the framework in the context of levels 2 and 3.

2 **Does the framework provide a curriculum offer that better meets the needs of learners and employers?**

- We need to see if the perceived benefits for learners and employers are realised.
- We need to understand what the framework means in terms of the operational capacity of providers to work with it. Also, how will the framework affect what constitutes effective and efficient delivery in a provider setting?

3 **Can the LSC prioritise framework learners and framework learning for public funding, particularly in light of the FE Reform White Paper?**

⁷ REX aims to extend the RARPA approach from non-accredited provision to all provision, as part of the New Measures of Success programme.

- We need to understand how a unit-based qualification offer, underpinned by credit and credit accumulation and transfer, can support and inform the rebalancing of private and public funding.
- We need to look at the implications of the framework for the technical aspects of the *agenda for change* funding reforms – the Standard Learner Number calculation for instance.
- We need to look at the implications of the framework for learner support programmes.
- We need to model what the results of the trials might mean on a local, regional or national basis.

4 Does the system have the capacity to track and record learner achievement in the framework without adding undue cost or bureaucracy?

- We need to understand what a more flexible framework will mean in terms of achievement recorded and measured at unit level.
- We need to understand what the implications of a unit based qualification offer, underpinned by credit, are in terms of capturing data on learner achievement and progression.

Key criteria

- 10 Key criteria for publicly funded trials confirm the minimum requirements for individual publicly funded trials.
- 11 They encompass aspects of *coverage* (in terms of learner and provider numbers and types), *functionality* (in terms of the implementation of the trials with providers and the LSC's relationship with them) and the *priority areas* already identified.
- 12 The table that follows identifies the key criteria and how these are linked to the headline requirements.

| Key Criteria for publicly funded trials in England ⁸ | Head Req 1 | Head Req 2 | Head Req 3 | Head Req 4 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <p><i>There must be agreement that learners on trials will be funded by regional or local LSCs. All proposals seeking public funding for the learners involved must be supported and endorsed by the appropriate LSC before submission to QCA. These trials will also be subject to agreement by the LSC Trials Project Steering Group.</i></p> <p>There are options for funding trials. Depending on the nature of the proposal and the views of the LSC all of these may be used across all trials or a combination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>LSC regions or local LSC fund trials as projects.</i> <i>Trials are funded using the current funding methodology but the scenarios concerning the implications for funding a unit based qualification offer, with credit that make up the rules of combination are modelled as are the cost implications for providers of developing and delivering a unit based qualification offer underpinned by credit.</i> <i>In some trials one or more new models for funding are used – the ITQ for instance.</i> <i>Trials will contribute to testing the application of the agenda for change funding methodology, and specifically the new funding formula, to FfA provision. Overlap between the providers involved in the FfA and agenda for change funding trials is welcomed.</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| <p><i>Trial provision must deliver against identified LSC priority areas (trials may deliver against more than one).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 2 provision contributing to the Public Service Agreement target⁹ Units and qualifications at entry and level 1 which can support the development of the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) and the trialling of progression pathways for learners. The LSC identified priorities as set out in the Annual Statement of Priorities (November 2005) and in Priorities for Success (October 2005) Level 3 and particularly achievements that facilitate progression from the learning and skills sector to the higher education sector and to higher level vocational learning and skills. Key sector priorities identified in LSC business planning which have been agreed and developed between the LSC and Sector Skills Councils via the Sector Skills Agreement process and with other sector bodies. The 06-07 priorities are SEMTA (Business Improvement Techniques), E-Skills (ITQ) and TDA (School Support Staff) as well working closely with Improve Ltd, People 1st and Skillsmart Retail in the context of taking forward Priorities for Success. Other sector areas will be considered as appropriate. | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |

⁸ We hope that the trial programme will also include privately funded trials.

⁹ We want the FfA to recognise a wider range of achievement and we are interested in trialling different ways of progressing to level 2. But this must be in the context of the requirements of the tests and trials - awarding bodies having Part A accreditation and providers being existing LSC-funded providers, for instance.

| Key Criteria for publicly funded trials in England ⁸ | Head Req 1 | Head Req 2 | Head Req 3 | Head Req 4 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offenders' Learning and Skills Provision. • Achievements within the 'Train to Gain' programme. • Provision involved in the Recognition and Recording of Progress and Achievement (RARPA) extension project (REX)¹⁰. | | | | |
| <p><i>Trials must be delivered in a synchronised way with the LSC Business Cycle</i></p> <p>They must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a link with the relevant Regional Statement of Priorities of November 2005; • be reflected in the relevant Local Annual Plan to be agreed in March 2006; • be included in the agreed provider development plan in April 2006; • be reflected in the funding allocations confirmed with the provider in May 2006; • be monitored as part of the on-going monitoring of delivery from June 2006; • be included in provider self-assessment in October 2006; • be included in the review of regional priorities in November 2006 – at which point the cycle starts again. | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| <p><i>Trials must support the LSC Policy Requirement for Managing the Balance and Mix of Provision</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial provision must be either Classification 1 provision or Classification 2, including where there is demonstrable progression to 1. • There must be no Classification 3 provision (provision no longer eligible for funding). | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| <p><i>Learners on trials must receive information, advice and guidance (IAG) relevant to the trial provision being offered to them.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers delivering trial provision must have matrix accreditation for its Information, Advice and Guidance Services. • There must be a commitment to providing IAG that supports learners in the context of the FfA trial provision. • A range of brokerage models may need to be explored | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| <p><i>Learners on trials must be learning in a safe, healthy and supportive environment, in line with LSC Health and Safety policy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The providers involved must have been assessed as 'strong' for learner and health and safety. • Regional Health and Safety Managers must confirm there is no health and safety reason why a provider should not be involved. | | ✓ | | |

¹⁰ REX aims to extend the RARPA approach from non-accredited provision to all provision, as part of the New Measures of Success programme.

| Key Criteria for publicly funded trials in England ⁸ | Head Req 1 | Head Req 2 | Head Req 3 | Head Req 4 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <p><i>Trials must offer provision of a high-quality.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only existing LSC-funded providers can offer trial provision. • We would normally expect providers to have achieved grades 1 or 2 at inspection in leadership and Management and in the specific curriculum or occupational area to be covered in the trial.¹¹ • Trial provision may be offered as part of a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE). • Local LSCs must be confident there are no quality-related reasons not to approve the trial. | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| <p><i>Learner achievement on trials must be robust, credible and supportive of progression, independent of the decision on the future development of the FfA from July 2008.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any programmes offered to a learner must be coherent. • We welcome trials which are coherent with New Measures of Success (NMoS) approach to supporting learner progress through Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) and the RARPA Extension Project (REX)¹² e.g. in the use of Individual Learning Plans (ILP). | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| <p><i>Trials must support new models of curriculum delivery</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes may make greater use of e-learning. • Programmes may make greater use of blended learning. • The cost implications of more flexible delivery are examined. | ✓ | | | ✓ |

¹¹ We realise there may be circumstances in which this criteria cannot be met, in which case an explanation should be provided with details of how the provision can be assured as being of a high quality.

¹² For REX, the trials will include work with providers and awarding bodies on a model for streamlining bureaucracy. Trials of REX, as part of the New Measures of Success, will come under slightly different management arrangements to the trials of the FfA and that the LSC, with the QCA, will initially lead on identifying sites for trialling and arrangements for taking forward and evaluating this work

| Key Criteria for publicly funded trials in England ⁸ | Head Req 1 | Head Req 2 | Head Req 3 | Head Req 4 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <p><i>Trials must contribute data that supports current priorities and targets and an exploration of how data would be recorded and managed in roll-out of the FfA after July 2008 (including implications for provider MIS systems).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trials must be clearly identified on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR). • The relevant Learning Aim References (LAR) must be used. • Trials must use the unique learner numbers provided by the prototype of the MIAP Learner Registration Service – links between the FfA trials and the providers involved in the wider Learner Registration prototype are welcomed. | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| <p><i>Trial provision must support the need to promote equality of opportunity between people from different racial groups; men and women; people with or without a disability and people of different ages.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly funded trial provision must not put any group of people at a disadvantage. • Publicly funded trials could support the LSC's aim to support provision for specific target groups who are considered disadvantaged - for example Black and Ethnic Minority groups. | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| <p><i>Trial provision must support an assessment of whether the perceived benefits for learners and employers are realised (they may do this by focussing on one or more perceived benefit).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial units and qualifications could exist in some form already. • Some trial units and qualifications will be new. • Trials could include new approaches to delivery and assessment that take advantage of the greater flexibility and responsiveness of the FfA – the use of e-learning or blended learning for instance. • Trials could explore the extent to which the portability of credit can be realised and is valued. • Although this will feature in the overall independent evaluation, trials could explore aspects of the impact in terms of bureaucracy. | ✓ | | | |
| <p><i>Trial provision must include exploration of how the FfA can contribute to the development of the New Measures of Success¹³ (again they may do this by focussing on one or more aspects)</i></p> <p>Trials must help explore what the FfA means for:</p> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |

¹³ Individual trials need not address all of these but they must all be addressed across the programme of trials.

| Key Criteria for publicly funded trials in England ⁸ | Head Req 1 | Head Req 2 | Head Req 3 | Head Req 4 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The future recording of Qualification Success Rates • The potential streamlining of bureaucracy through the use of RARPA evidence for self-assessment process and SAR development, LSC quality assurance, inspection and Awarding Body centre recognition and monitoring within the FfA • The recording of post-16 unit or qualification outcomes for use in the Valued Added and Distance Travelled Measures • The potential identification of provision at unit or qualification level delivered in response to employers' needs (Responsiveness to Employers) • The identification of common pathways through and from learning which results in unit or qualification achievement (Learner Destinations) • The relationship between a more flexible curriculum offer and learner satisfaction. | | | | |

Populating the trials

Context

- 13 The LSC is not being prescriptive about the number of trials but the programme as a whole must be manageable and of a sufficient size and range to constitute a valid sample for review and evaluation. There must be a range of provider types for instance, if we are to start to assess the impact on the LSC sector as a whole.
- 14 We are also aware that there may be different types of trial. A single trial, for instance, may involve several sites. Or, if providers are interested in the same priorities they could be clustered in some way.
- 15 It is possible, however, to identify some LSC expectations in terms of populating the trials.

Expectations

- 16 It is expected that there will be trials of different scale and involving different numbers of providers. Some trial areas may be relatively small (covering a specific sector for instance), others may be relatively large. However, **the LSC has accepted that, in order for the trials to be robust and credible, there should be between 25 and 50 trials across the nine LSC regions.**
- 17 Ideally, **the LSC is looking for between 500 and 1000¹⁴ learners to be involved in each trial, leading over the period of two years to a cumulative total of 25,000 learners across the nine LSC regions.**
- 18 Thought will need to be given to the number of learners involved with any single provider; in some cases it will be important to develop a provider wide approach in order to understand the challenges of engaging a whole institution in credit.
- 19 We would like the trials to cover as wide a range of providers as possible in order that we can look at the FfA in the context of a range of settings. We would also want to include providers with experience of working with a unit based credit

¹⁴ There need not be 500 learners in a single provider. A qualification could be trialled with 500 learners across a number of providers. What we are seeking to avoid is multiple trials involving small groups of learners because this will make the trial programme difficult to manage and draw robust conclusions from.

system as well as those with little or no experience. **Ideally we are looking for not less than 50 providers satisfying one or more of the following criteria :**

- **general further education colleges**
- **external institutions**
- **specialist providers for learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability**
- **centres of vocational excellence (CoVES)**
- **specialist designated institutions**
- **personal, community and development learning providers**
- **voluntary and community sector providers**
- **work based learning providers**
- **providers operating in urban/rural areas**
- **providers operating in deprived/affluent areas.**

20 Because there will be significant challenges to providers in terms of teacher commitment and organisational management, **the LSC has agreed that providers involved in the trials should have achieved inspection grades 1 or 2¹⁵** in relation to:

- leadership and management
- achievement and standards
- education and training overall
- the specific curriculum and occupational areas to be included in the trials.

21 It is also essential that the trials include learners from a range of different backgrounds and with different characteristics, prior attainment and learning ability. With the exception of the FLT and offender learning and skills, **learners involved in publicly funded trials in England would be aged 19+. Beyond this the different backgrounds and characteristics might include:**

- **gender**
- **ethnicity**
- **disability**

¹⁵ We realise there may be circumstances in which this criteria cannot be met, in which case an explanation should be provided with details of how the provision can be assured as being of a high quality.

- **age**
- **a range of prior attainment.**

What to do next

- 22 The next steps in proposing a publicly funded trial will vary depending on the organisation leading on the proposal.
- If you are a **regional or local LSC** you can initiate a trial and submit the paperwork to QCA or initiate a trial or ask the provider(s) to submit the paperwork.
 - If you are **a provider with a proposal for a trial**, you must talk to your local LSC relationship manager. Once funding for the learners has been agreed through your development plan, you can submit the paperwork to QCA.
 - If you are **an awarding body or a Sector Skills Council wishing to propose units and/or qualifications for trialling in association with one or more providers**, the providers need to contact their local LSC as described above.
 - If you are **an awarding body or a Sector Skills Council wishing to find providers to work with in a proposed trial** email Mary Kelly, Senior Policy Manager for the Framework for Achievement, at the LSC National Office (mary.kelly@lsc.gov.uk) with details of the units and qualifications available, what types of learner you are looking for etc. The LSC will circulate the details to regional and local LSCs.
 - If you are a provider, wishing to find an awarding body to work with email frameworktestsandtrials@qca.org.uk with details of the type of provision you are interested in.
- 23 If you have any general queries about the framework trials in England, please contact Mary Kelly on the email address above.