



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



*Rewarding Learning*

# Qualifications and Credit Framework: Phase 2 test and trial prospectus

*Version 1*

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# Section 1 – Introduction and background

## Background

- 1.1 Over the past few years, a number of initiatives have been undertaken across the United Kingdom to address the need for qualification reform. In November 2005, and in order to oversee this reform and bring together key strands of work, Ministers established the UK Vocational Qualification Reform Programme.
- 1.2 As part of this change there is an agreement across the three regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QCA, DELLS, CCEA) to develop a jointly regulated framework of units and qualifications that will be underpinned by a credit system and will be characterised by a responsive and flexible infrastructure (the Qualifications and Credit Framework – QCF)<sup>1</sup>. The new framework will be capable of supporting the accumulation and transfer of credit achievement over time.
- 1.3 In relation to governance arrangements, the Sub Programme 2 Board forms a key strand of the Vocational Qualification Reform Programme.

## Qualifications and Credit Framework – Tests and trials

- 1.4 Over the next two years (2006/07 and 2007/08), and as part of the process of establishing the new framework, there is agreement across the three regulators to test and trial the mechanisms and processes needed to revise the current national qualifications framework. This initial phase of work is referred to as ‘Tests and trials – Proof of concept ‘.

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<sup>1</sup> In Wales the framework will form part of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The CQFW embraces all post-16 and higher education in Wales. Further details can be found on [www.cqfw.net](http://www.cqfw.net). The name ‘QCF’ is for the test and trial period only. The development of the QCF spans England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- 1.5 The primary objective of this work is to develop and test an operational model of the framework, the outcome of which will form advice and recommendations to Ministers and the basis for decisions regarding potential rollout.
- 1.6 The priorities for the test and trials 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.
- 1.7 To invite proposals from interested parties for Phase 1 trials, QCA, DELLS and CCEA published a *Test and trials prospectus* in April 2006 (<http://www.qca.org.uk/downloads/qca-06-2649testprospectus.pdf>). As a result, a series of Phase 1 tests and trials have been initiated to address the priorities (and associated technical criteria) identified above.

## Section 2 – Phase 2 trials

### Qualifications and Credit Framework – Phase 2 trials

- 2.1 Now that the regulators have been able to agree the scope and content of Phase 1 trials, it has been possible to identify those areas where there is insufficient coverage for a robust evaluation against the published priorities and technical criteria. This ‘gap analysis’ highlights a range of areas where further trial activity will be required. In many ways, this activity will represent a ‘scaling up’ of the trials to include a wider range of levels, sector and subject areas, qualifications and learners.
- 2.2 The regulators have also learned lessons from the process used to select and develop projects included in Phase 1 trials, and are therefore proposing a more streamlined approach to Phase 2. This approach includes more detailed specifications of what individual projects (in Phase 2 trials) will cover to avoid the lengthy process of developing initial proposals into detailed Project Initiation Documents.
- 2.3 The combination of a good understanding of the ‘gaps’ that will need to be covered by Phase 2 trials, the requirement to scale up activity and the need for a more streamlined process for selecting projects has enabled the regulators to be more specific about the nature and scope of Phase 2 activity. It has therefore been agreed by the Vocational Qualification Reform Programme Board to publish a more detailed prospectus than that issued for Phase 1 trials.
- 2.4 Proposals that include Entry and Level 1 provision are welcome for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Lead organisations will need to discuss with LSC, DELLS or CCEA the nature of their prospectus and how it links to agreed FLT trials in England.

### Trial priorities for phase 2

- 2.5 The priorities for Phase 2 trials remain the same as they did for Phase 1 and 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.
- 2.6 To assist in the planning and design of proposals, Annex 2 breaks down these three priorities into more detailed 'technical criteria'. These criteria should be considered closely in developing a submission.
- 2.7 The common priorities and technical criteria will form the basis for the evaluation strategy for both phases of trial activity.

## **Trial themes**

- 2.8 The evaluation of the coverage of Phase 1 trials against the priorities and technical criteria combined with the need to scale up trial activity has highlighted four themes that should be covered by Phase 2 trials.
- 2.9 In addition to the four themes, a number of additional requirements should be addressed for all projects that wish to receive public funding (either in England, Wales or Northern Ireland) for learners undertaking units and qualifications in the trials. These requirements for publicly funded provision are detailed in section 3.
- 2.10 The regulators welcome proposals that do not seek public funding for learners. Where this is the case, lead organisations should clearly state that public funds are not required. The additional requirements listed in section 3 will not apply for privately funded provision.
- 2.11 Organisations that wish to submit a proposal should therefore develop proposals that cover one or more of the following themes:
- Theme 1: the reform of qualifications in a particular sector or sub-sector
  - Theme 2: in-company training programmes
  - Theme 3: achievements leading to professional recognition/qualifications

- Theme 4: achievements leading to recognition in the voluntary and community sector.

2.12 The regulators and funding councils will also look favourably upon proposals that will conduct larger scale trials with:

- large numbers of learners (2000+) undertaking new units and qualifications across England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- large numbers of learners (100+) in individual learning providers or centres.

## Section 3 – Publicly funded trials

### Publicly funded trials in England: LSC statement

- 3.1 As part of its commitment to the Vocational Qualification Reform Programme, the LSC will fund QCF trial provision in 2007/08, subject to the provision supporting its priorities, availability of resources and to the requirements in this section of the prospectus being met. The LSC ambition is to trial QCF provision with 25,000 learners by July 2008 with a representative range of providers.
- 3.2 Funding for learners on trial provision must be agreed as part of the LSC business cycle for 2007/08 delivery. As a first step in this process, lead organisations proposing projects involving public funding in England must take account of the LSC *Annual statement of priorities - Raising our game* (October 2006), <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/Keyinitiatives/OurAnnualStatementOfPriorities/raising-our-game.htm>.
- 3.3 The LSC is committed to supporting the trials in the context of how we can model and evaluate the potential of a QCF to better deliver government targets and priorities. In the context of the four themes for Phase 2 trials, the LSC will fund trial provision that actively focuses on the development of:
- provision using the proposed design principles for full Level 2 qualifications to support the Level 2 entitlement
  - provision that can test out whether the design principles approach can be used to develop the Level 3 entitlement (including progression to higher education)
  - apprenticeships within a unit- and credit-based framework
  - Level 4 provision that can support the achievement of higher-level skills and employer engagement
  - provision delivered by the voluntary and community sector, including provision for volunteers
  - provision that would support offender learning and skills
  - in-company training in the context of Train to Gain, where the provision is articulated and aligned as a full Level 2 or Level 3
  - provision to support the Olympics, including the development of coaching qualifications.
- 3.4 The LSC would also welcome proposals that address social inclusion as well as the skills agenda. This may include proposals that demonstrate provision that can re-

engage learners, up-skill or could support the LSC in taking forward *Learning for living and work: Improving education and training opportunities for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities* (October 2006)

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/Keyinitiatives/learning-for-living-and-work.htm>.

## Approach in England

- 3.5 At the end of November 2006, each LSC region will publish a Regional Commissioning Plan<sup>2</sup> to set out the broad blocks of provision they intend to secure in 2007/08. These plans will include any planned QCF trial provision, which could be set out for specific sectors or groups of individuals or, for instance, as a percentage of all Level 3 provision. An aggregate plan at national level plan will also be available on the QCA/LSC websites.
- 3.6 As part of the submission review process the LSC will map the regional plans against the proposals received by QCA (including ensuring that the anticipated volumes of learners will be achieved). When lead organisations are notified of the outcome of their submission on 15 January, this will include confirmation of public funding where appropriate.
- 3.7 Lead organisations should note that the agreement of provider involvement in England, after a successful submission has been confirmed, will be subject to the following:
- providers must currently be a directly or indirectly LSC funded provider
  - there must be no quality, equality & diversity or health and safety related reason for them not to be involved
  - they must have the capacity to provide whatever additional support is required by learners, eg information, advice and guidance
  - there must be agreement to support the use of unique learner numbers with all learners on trial provision.

## Publicly funded trials in Wales

- 3.8 Where trials wish to be in receipt of public funding in Wales they must, within one of the theme's described above, trial units, qualifications and credit where:
- funding allocations for programme delivery have already been agreed

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<sup>2</sup> These will be available on the LSC website ([www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

- trials have explored the priorities raised in the Annual Learning and Skills Assessment 2006 – 2009 (Published in May 2006).

### **Publicly funded trials in Northern Ireland**

- 3.9 Funding will automatically be given to learners in Northern Ireland where allocations for programme delivery have been agreed within existing budgets.
- 3.10 There are no additional priorities for publicly funded provision in Northern Ireland.

## Section 4 – The submission process

- 4.1 Section three describes the submission process that will be used to establish Phase 2 trials.

### Timelines for the submission process

- 4.2 The timeline outlined below describes the expectations of the Vocational Qualification Reform Programme Board for Phase 2 trials.

<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Completion Date:</b>
Initial document published	Friday October 27 2006
Deadline for submissions	Wednesday December 13 2006
Submissions reviewed by regulators	Wednesday December 20 2006
Submission reviewed by LSC (for learners in England) to map to regional priorities	Wednesday December 20 2006
Interviews held with submission organisations	Monday 8 – Friday 12 January
Lead organisations notified of successful (and unsuccessful) submissions and confirmation of public funding where appropriate	Monday January 15 2007
Contracts issued	Wednesday January 31 2007
Stage 1 of trials commences	Monday February 12 2007

## **Submitting proposals**

- 4.3 All proposals must be submitted on the pro forma released with this prospectus document. Submissions received in alternative formats will not be considered in the selection process.
- 4.4 Organisations submitting proposals are free to provide details over and above those required in the submission pro forma.

## **Selecting proposals**

- 4.5 The regulators will use the priorities and associated technical criteria to evaluate submissions and to make judgements regarding which will have most to contribute to a robust evaluation of the QCF working specifications, supporting infrastructure and anticipated benefits.
- 4.6 It is anticipated that more than one submission may be accepted for each of themes.
- 4.7 Organisations that have submitted proposals will be contacted by Monday 15 January and notified whether their submission has been successful.

## **Section 5 – Common requirements for all submissions**

- 5.1 There are a number of requirements that will be common to all submissions, regardless of the particular theme or additional priority (for publicly funded provision) to which the proposal is addressed.

### Identifying a lead organisation

- 5.2 For the majority of project proposals it is expected that organisations will work together collaboratively. 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 to take responsibility for the overall project and its outcomes.

### **Awarding bodies**

- 5.3 All trials will require the involvement of at least one awarding body that will (among other things) submit units for approval, qualifications for accreditation and award credit and qualifications to learners.
- 5.4 Awarding bodies involved in the trials must demonstrate robust unit and qualification development arrangements through completion of a successful application for access to the 5-day accreditation process. (If this has not already been completed, discussions will need to take place with the regulators so that this may take place alongside the trial activity.)

### **Working specification for framework test and trials**

- 5.5 The working specification describes the proposed features of the QCF and its underpinning system of credit accumulation and transfer. It also provides information on the regulatory arrangements that will underpin the trials. While many definitions and requirements will need to be rigorously tested, and in some cases it is anticipated that as a result of trials the specification and requirements will be revised, the working specification provides the basis and fixed point for all QCF trials.

- 5.6 The working specification can be found on the QCA website  
<http://www.qca.org.uk/downloads/qca-06-2647workingspec.pdf>.

#### The four project stages

- 5.7 The first of these relates to the project components, or stages, through which each trial will progress. There is a logical sequence to all trial activity that begins with the development of units and qualifications, progresses through the design of fit-for-purpose approaches to assessment and quality assurance, conducts trials with learners in centres and then explores opportunities for the accumulation and transfer of credit awarded to learners. While it is evident that there may be some overlap between these stages and that they are not in all cases completed consecutively, it is helpful for the purposes of the trials to consider four distinct stages of activity.
- 5.8 As a result, all submissions should recognise that they will progress through and complete all four stages of activity. Milestones, deliverables, timelines and ultimately payments are triggered by the completion of a stage. The relationship between these stages is represented diagrammatically in Annex 3.
- 5.9 **Stage 1 – Unit and qualification development.** Using the working specification, the project will design and develop credit-based units and build these, through rules of combination, into coherent qualifications. This development process may either:
- design and develop new units and/or qualifications to evaluate the working specification and its application. New developments may build upon existing achievements OR
  - apply the specification to certificated learning currently outside of the National Qualifications Framework (where this meets stated sectoral or skills priorities) OR
  - a combination of the above.
- 5.10 Completed units will be submitted to the unit databank and qualifications to the regulators for accreditation to the QCF. Projects will therefore be expected to provide feedback on the accreditation process and the web-based accreditation system.

- 5.11 **Stage 2 – Quality assurance and assessment approaches.** Using the working specification and associated regulatory criteria, the project will:
- 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.
- 5.12 **Stage 3 – Trials with learners.** Upon completion of stages 1 and 2, projects will begin to trial the QCF units and qualifications with learners and learning providers.
- 5.13 Where there is an expectation that public funding will be available to learners in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the appropriate steps must be taken to ensure this is in place. In addition to the information contained in the document, the LSC will publish further guidance concerning the process for securing public funding in England. Organisations submitting proposals are not therefore expected to identify individual learning providers although they must identify the number of learners they would expect to take part in the trial.
- 5.14 **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.
- 5.15 Projects will be required to provide an evaluation of how CAT and mutual recognition might work in practice in the sector or between related sectors.

## Deliverables, milestones and timelines

- 5.16 Deliverables and milestones will be tied to the four project stages. Upon completion of each stage, the lead organisation will provide an evaluative report that provides evidence of what has been done and analyses the issues and challenges faced during the stage.
- 5.17 While it is recognised that the activities undertaken in each stage will produce important outcomes such as new units and qualifications, quality assurance mechanisms and approaches to mutual recognition, it is the production of the evaluative report that will constitute the key deliverables of the project.
- 5.18 In order to meet the expectations of the Vocational Qualification Reform Programme and the particular requirements of the framework development strand, timelines for projects have been set by the regulators. The table below defines the projects milestones, deliverables and timelines.

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeline / Date</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Stage 1 evaluative report:</b> Unit and qualification development	May 31 2007
<b>2</b>	<b>Stage 2 evaluative report:</b> Quality assurance and assessment approaches	June 29 2007
<b>3</b>	<b>Stage 3 evaluative report:</b> Trials with learners	April 30 2008
<b>4</b>	<b>Stage 4 evaluative report:</b> Credit accumulation and transfer	May 30 2008
<b>5</b>	<b>Final evaluative report</b>	May 30 2008

NB: Stage 1 of the trials will begin on February 12 2007.

- 5.19 It is anticipated that stages 1 and 2 may run concurrently given the close relationship between unit and qualification development and their associated assessment and quality assurance. Similarly, opportunities to explore issues of credit accumulation and transfer and mutual recognition (Stage 4) may occur before the end of Stage 3 trials with learners.

5.20 While it is recognised that not all learners engaged in trials will have completed all of their target units and qualifications by the end of May 2008, projects will need to provide an evaluation of what has been learned during the period to ensure that data can be included in the regulators final report to Ministers in the summer of 2008.

## Evaluation

QCA and its partners are in the process of appointing an external body to conduct an overall evaluation of all test and trial activity. The findings of all trial projects will be fed into the evaluator who will produce a report on the following:

- whether the processes for framework development are working as intended. Specifically test and trial the:
  - usability and usefulness of the specifications for the framework and of the system of credit accumulation and transfer that underpins it, including an investigation of all issues related to regulatory requirements and accreditation
  - usability and usefulness of the mechanisms to support the framework in relation to awarding, recording achievement and managing data
- whether the impact on learners and other stakeholders is beneficial. Specifically test and trial the:
  - extent to which the framework system delivers the anticipated benefits to learners and employers and supports strategic priorities for participation, achievement and progression including, in England, supporting the achievement of Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets<sup>3</sup>
- whether the long-term commitment to a credit-based qualification framework is in the best interests of society generally, the labour market and individuals.

5.20 All lead organisations must contribute to the successful completion of the evaluation.

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<sup>3</sup> The LSC will be conducting a complimentary evaluation in this area.

## Section 6 – Project themes

The following section details the four themes and additional requirements for publicly funded provision.

### Theme 1 – The reform of qualifications in a sector or sub-sector

#### *Project overview and scope*

- 6.1 Theme 1 projects will reform vocational and/or occupational units and qualifications within a particular sector or sub-sector (in line with the QCF working specification) and trial these with learners. Led by a sector skills council (SSC) or recognised sector body, and in partnership with an awarding body (or bodies), the project will bring together other appropriate partners to develop and trial credit-based achievements that meet sectoral or skills priorities. These priorities may have been identified either through a Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) or a (completed or emerging) Sector Qualification Strategy (SQS). Alternatively, priority skills (and corresponding units and qualifications) may be based upon the LSC sectoral funding priorities either at local, regional or national level in England or upon skills priorities in Wales and Northern Ireland.
- 6.2 It will be the responsibility of the SSC or sector body (in discussion with partners) to identify – in their submission – the scope of the project, ie which units and qualifications will be included. However, it is anticipated that Theme 1 projects will be sufficient in their coverage to allow for an evaluation of some of the key issues facing the sector in relation to the development of the framework and underpinning system of credit accumulation and transfer.
- 6.3 Theme 1 projects will, in particular, look to:
- design and develop vocational as well as occupational units and qualifications
  - explore opportunities for the mutual recognition of units where there is not a 'one-to-one' relationship with National Occupational Standards (NOS)

- identify 'shared units'<sup>4</sup> in order to fully support CAT and to explore opportunities for common units where appropriate
- explore and evaluate the issues and merits associated with the inclusion of 'shared' and 'awarding body owned'<sup>5</sup> units and their respective impact on the coherence and rationality of provision within the sector or sub-sector.

6.4 Submissions that can identify the links between their Theme 1 proposal and other key aspects of reform (Diplomas, SQS pilots, Sector Qualification Criteria development, etc.) will be important in highlighting the relationships between different strands of the reform agenda. QCA and its partners will consider submissions from any and all sectors or sub-sectors, but because of their involvement in diploma and SQS pilots, will be particularly interested in:

- health and social care
- construction
- creative and media.

6.5 SSCs and sector bodies are advised to discuss their submission with the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), prior to submission, if they require guidance relating to any of the above.

### ***Trial priorities and technical criteria***

6.6 Theme 1 projects will address all three trial priorities in the end of stage evaluative reports (see paragraph 1.6). It is essential that submissions describe how the priorities will be evaluated during the trial.

6.7 Theme 1 projects will address all of the technical criteria (see Annex 1) in the end of stage evaluative reports, with the possible exception of criteria 1.7, 1.9, 1.14 and 1.20 as these will depend upon the nature of the units and qualifications included in the trial. It is essential that submissions describe how the technical criteria will be evaluated during the trial.

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<sup>4</sup> See *Working specification for tests and trials*, <http://www.qca.org.uk/downloads/qca-06-2647workingspec.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

- 6.8 To assist lead organisations in reporting to QCA and its partners what has been learned in relation to the priorities and technical criteria, a common reporting pro forma' is attached at Annex 4. This will provide a common basis for lead organisations to describe the issues and challenges faced during the trials. It will not, however, dictate how lead organisations will conduct their evaluations against the priorities and technical criteria. This information must be supplied in the submission.

#### Requirements for publicly funded provision

- 6.9 Theme 1 trials seeking to reform provision in a particular sector or sub-sector should also address one or more of the following requirements for publicly funded provision:
- provision using the proposed design principles for full Level 2 qualifications to support the Level 2 entitlement in England. Lead organisations that include Level 2 achievements (in England) within the scope of their trial will be provided with draft qualities and design principles for how QCF qualifications can be designed to meet the Level 2 entitlement for adults and contribute to the PSA target at that level. Trials will therefore evaluate both the suitability of the draft qualities and design principles and how they can be implemented through the design of QCF qualifications at Level 2
  - provision that can test out whether the design principles approach can be used to develop the Level 3 entitlement
  - apprenticeships within a unit and credit-based framework
  - Level 4 provision that can support the achievement of higher-level skills. Trials should explore the particular issues and challenges facing the inclusion of achievements at Level 4 within the context of the working specification for the QCF. Trials incorporating Level 4 achievements should also analyse and evaluate learner progression pathways at the higher levels and into higher education and engagement with employers
  - trials with learners in Northern Ireland. As the QCF will cover achievements across the three countries trials should explore any particular issues facing learners in Northern Ireland
  - trials with learners in Wales. As the QCF will cover achievements across the three countries trials should explore any particular issues facing learners in Wales raised in the Annual Learning and Skills Assessment 2006 – 2009 (published in May 2006).

6.10 Projects should also consider whether they can conduct:

- trials with large numbers of learners (2000+) undertaking new units and qualifications across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Trials with significant learner numbers are critical to evaluating the scalability of the QCF and the usability and usefulness of the mechanisms to support it in relation to awarding, recording achievement and managing data
- trials with large numbers of learners (100+) in individual learning providers or centres (subject to confirmation with the appropriate funding body). Trials will need to evaluate the impact of mechanisms used by learning providers and centres to support the recording of achievement and management of data.

## Theme 2 – In-company training programmes<sup>6</sup>

### *Project overview and scope*

- 7.1 Theme 2 projects will utilise the working specification for QCF in the development of in-company training programmes and trial these with learners. Led by an employer in partnership with an awarding body (or bodies), the project will investigate how in-company training programmes can be developed into credit-based achievements and recognised within the QCF.
- 7.2 Sector bodies may also help to identify particular in-company training programmes suitable for trials and collaborate with an employer and awarding body to develop a submission.
- 7.3 It will be the responsibility of the lead organisation (in discussion with partners) to identify – in their submission – the scope of the project, ie which training programmes will be included.
- 7.4 Theme 2 projects will, in particular, look to investigate and evaluate:
- what can be learned about assessment and associated quality assurance of in-company training programmes and how it might meet the regulatory requirements of the QCF
  - models of partnership between employers and awarding bodies and how these can facilitate a responsive framework
  - what benefits are identified in embedding in-company training programmes in the new framework
  - how might employers utilise the working specification in the development of new in-company training programmes
  - how can the inclusion of in-company training programmes help the England Skills Strategy objectives of encouraging greater private investment in training and the

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<sup>6</sup> *In-company training* refers to all types of provision designed by employers to meet organisational needs. It is assumed that most in-company training currently sits outside the National Qualifications Framework.

rebalancing of public/private funding, including through the alignment of the Level 2 and Level 3 entitlement, in the context of Train to Gain?

### ***Trial priorities and technical criteria***

- 7.5 Theme 2 projects will address all three trial priorities in the end of stage evaluative reports (see paragraph 1.6). It is recognised, however, that professional bodies may be particularly well placed to evaluate priorities 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 relating to anticipated benefits of simplicity, flexibility, 'inclusiveness' and bureaucracy. It is essential that projects describe how the priorities will be evaluated during the trial.
- 7.6 Theme 2 projects will address all of the technical criteria (see Annex 1) in the end of stage evaluative reports, with the possible exception of criteria 1.7, 1.9, 1.14 and 1.20, as these will depend upon the nature of the units and qualifications included in the trial. It is essential that submissions describe how the technical criteria will be evaluated during the trial.
- 7.7 To assist lead organisations in reporting to QCA and its partners what has been learned in relation to the priorities and technical criteria, a common 'reporting pro forma' is attached at Annex 3. This will provide a common basis for lead organisations to describe the issues and challenges faced during the trials. It will not, however, dictate how lead organisations will conduct their evaluations against the priorities and technical criteria. This information must be supplied in the submissions.

### ***Requirements for publicly funded provision***

- 7.8 While it is recognised that the majority of in-company training programmes are not in receipt of public funding, and may not require it for the purpose of QCF trials, Theme 2 projects may choose to focus upon one or more of the following, although they are not required to do so:
- provision using the proposed design principles for full Level 2 qualifications to support the Level 2 entitlement in England. Lead organisations that include Level 2 achievements (in England) within the scope of their trial will be provided with draft qualities and design principles for how QCF qualifications can be designed to meet the Level 2 entitlement for adults and contribute to the PSA target at that level. Trials will therefore evaluate both the suitability of the draft qualities and design principles and how they can be implemented through the design of QCF qualifications at Level 2

- provision that can test out whether the design principles approach can be used to develop the Level 3 entitlement
- apprenticeships within a unit and credit-based framework
- Level 4 provision that can support the achievement of higher-level skills. Trials should explore the particular issues and challenges facing the inclusion of achievements at Level 4 within the context of the working specification for the QCF. Trials incorporating Level 4 achievements should also analyse and evaluate learner progression pathways at the higher levels and into higher education and engagement with employers
- trials with learners in Northern Ireland. As the QCF will cover achievements across the three countries, trials should explore any particular issues facing learners in Northern Ireland
- trials with learners in Wales. As the QCF will cover achievements across the three countries, trials should explore any particular issues facing learners in Wales raised in the Annual Learning and Skills Assessment 2006 – 2009 (published in May 2006).

7.9 Projects should also consider whether they can conduct:

- trials with large numbers of learners (2000+) undertaking new units and qualifications across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Trials with significant learner numbers are critical to evaluating the scalability of the QCF and the usability and usefulness of the mechanisms to support it in relation to awarding, recording achievement and managing data
- trials with large numbers of learners (100+) in individual learning providers or centres (subject to confirmation with the appropriate funding body). Trials will need to evaluate the impact of mechanisms used by learning providers and centres to support the recording of achievement and management of data.

## **Theme 3 – Achievements leading to professional recognition**

### ***Project overview and scope***

- 8.1 Theme 3 projects will design and develop units and qualifications that lead to professional recognition within a particular sector or employment area (in line with the QCF' working specifications) and trial these with learners. Led by an organisation with both NQF awarding body and professional body status, or by a professional body, the project will bring together in a collaborative partnership awarding bodies and other appropriate partners to develop and trial credit-based achievements that meet professional requirements for entry or continuous professional development within a sector or employment area.
- 8.2 The trial will seek to investigate the particular issues and challenges that face professional bodies in the inclusion of their achievements within the QCF. These will include, but are not restricted to:
- any requirements on professional bodies resulting from their charter that impacts upon their ability/capacity to operate within the working specification
  - how assessment criteria and assessment instruments can be written and designed for units and qualifications that provide entry or CPD within a profession
  - how credit transfer might operate between professional and other awarding bodies where entry to, or CPD within the profession is regulated
  - the potential benefits for professional bodies of including their qualifications within the QCF.
- 8.3 It will be the responsibility of the professional body (in discussion with partners) to identify – in their submission – the scope of the project, ie which units and qualifications will be included. However, it is anticipated that Theme 3 projects will be sufficient in their coverage to allow for an evaluation of some of the key issues facing the profession (or professional area) in relation to the development of the framework and underpinning system of credit accumulation and transfer.
- 8.4 Professional bodies may wish to discuss their submission with the SSDA and appropriate SSC (prior to submission) if they require guidance relating to any of the above.

### ***Trial priorities and technical criteria***

- 8.5 Theme 3 projects will address all three trial priorities in the end of stage evaluative reports (see paragraph 1.6). It is recognised however, that professional bodies may be particularly well placed to evaluate priorities 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 relating to anticipated benefits of simplicity, flexibility, ‘inclusiveness’ and bureaucracy. It is essential that submissions describe how these priorities will be evaluated during the trial.
- 8.6 Theme 3 projects may choose to address all of the technical criteria (see Annex 1) in the end of stage evaluative reports but may wish to focus upon criteria 1.1, 1.3, 1.6, 1.13, 1.14 and 1.18 as previous consultation activities have highlighted these as critical factors for recognising professional achievements within the QCF. Proposals from professional bodies must describe which technical criteria they will address, as well as describing how they will be evaluated during the trial.
- 8.7 To assist lead organisations in reporting to QCA and its partners what has been learned in relation to the priorities and technical criteria, a common ‘reporting pro forma’ is attached at Annex 3. This will provide a common basis for lead organisations to describe the issues and challenges faced during the trials. It will not however, dictate how lead organisations will conduct their evaluations against the priorities and technical criteria. This information must be supplied in the submission.

### ***Requirements for publicly funded provision***

- 8.8 It is recognised that much of the provision currently awarded by professional bodies is not in receipt of public funding. Where public funding is not required for trials, lead organisations do not have to address the requirements described below. If, however, public funding is sought for Theme 3 projects one or more of the following requirements must be addressed:
- provision that can test out whether the design principles approach can be used to develop the Level 3 entitlement
  - Level 4 provision that can support the achievement of higher-level skills. Trials should explore the particular issues and challenges facing the inclusion of achievements at Level 4 within the context of the working specification for the QCF. Trials incorporating Level 4 achievements should also analyse and evaluate learner progression pathways at the higher levels and into higher education and engagement with employers

- trials with learners in Northern Ireland. As the QCF will cover achievements across the three countries, trials should explore any particular issues facing learners in Northern Ireland
- trials with learners in Wales. As the QCF will cover achievements across the three countries, trials should explore any particular issues facing learners in Wales raised in the Annual Learning and Skills Assessment 2006 – 2009 (published in May 2006).

8.9 Projects should also consider whether they can conduct:

- trials with large numbers of learners (2000+) undertaking new units and qualifications across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Trials with significant learner numbers are critical to evaluating the scalability of the QCF and the usability and usefulness of the mechanisms to support it in relation to awarding, recording achievement and managing data
- trials with large numbers of learners (100+) in individual learning providers or centres. Trials will need to evaluate the impact of mechanisms used by learning providers and centres to support the recording of achievement and management of data.

## **Theme 4 – Achievements in the voluntary and community sector**

### ***Project overview and scope***

- 9.1 Theme 4 projects will design and develop units and qualifications for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), in line with the QCF working specification, and trial these with learners. Led by a VCS organisation, or by an awarding body working with a VCS organisation, the project will bring together in a collaborative partnership, awarding bodies and other appropriate partners to develop and trial credit-based achievements that meet VCS priorities. Proposals will need to provide evidence of key priorities within the voluntary or community area and how the unit and qualifications development process will meet these.
- 9.2 The trial will seek to investigate the particular issues and challenges that face the voluntary and community sector in including their achievements within the QCF. These will include, but are not restricted to:
- the use of assessment models that may not fit neatly within statutory regulations for external qualifications
  - the quality assurance measures used to support assessments
  - the relationship between VCS provision and national targets and priorities.
- 9.3 It will be the responsibility of the VCS organisation (in discussion with partners) to identify – in their submission – the scope of the project, ie which units and qualifications will be included. However, it is anticipated that Theme 4 projects will be sufficient in their coverage to allow for an evaluation of some of the key issues facing the sector in relation to the development of the framework and underpinning system of credit accumulation and transfer.
- 9.4 VCS organisations are advised to discuss their submission with QCA, DELLS or CCEA (prior to submission) if they require guidance relating to any of the above.

### **Trial priorities and technical criteria**

- 9.5 Theme 4 projects will address all three trial priorities in the end of stage evaluative reports (see paragraph 1.6). It is recognised, however, that the voluntary and community sector may be particularly well placed to evaluate priorities 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

and 3.4 relating to anticipated benefits of simplicity, flexibility, inclusiveness and bureaucracy. It is essential that submissions describe how these priorities will be evaluated during the trial.

- 9.6 Theme 4 projects may address all of the technical criteria (see Annex 1) in the end of stage evaluative reports, but may wish to focus upon criteria 1.1, 1.2, 1.6, 1.12, 1.14, 1.18 and 1.19 as previous consultation activities have highlighted these as critical factors for recognising achievements within the VCS. Proposals from VCS organisations must describe which technical criteria they will address, as well as describing how they will be evaluated during the trial.
- 9.7 To assist lead organisations in reporting to QCA and its partners what has been learned in relation to the priorities and technical criteria, a common 'reporting pro forma' is attached at Annex 3. This will provide a common basis for lead organisations to describe the issues and challenges faced during the trials. It will not however, dictate how lead organisations will conduct their evaluations against the priorities and technical criteria. This information must be supplied in the submission.

### ***Requirements for publicly funded provision***

- 9.8 While it is recognised that much of the provision currently awarded with the VCS is not in receipt of public funding, where public funding is sought for Theme 4 trials one or more of the following requirements must be addressed:
- provision using the proposed design principles for full Level 2 qualifications to support the Level 2 entitlement in England. Lead organisations that include Level 2 achievements (in England) within the scope of their trial will be provided with draft qualities and design principles for how QCF qualifications can be designed to meet the Level 2 entitlement for adults and contribute to the PSA target at that level. Trials will therefore evaluate both the suitability of the draft qualities and design principles and how they can be implemented through the design of QCF qualifications at Level 2
  - provision that can test out whether the design principles approach can be used to develop the Level 3 entitlement
  - provision that can contribute to achievements in the FLT (Entry level and Level 1)
  - provision that would support offender learning and skills

- trials with learners in Northern Ireland. As the QCF will cover achievements across the three countries, trials should explore any particular issues facing learners in Northern Ireland
- trials with learners in Wales. As the QCF will cover achievements across the three countries, trials should explore any particular issues facing learners in Wales raised in the Annual Learning and Skills Assessment 2006 – 2009 (published in May 2006).

9.9 Submissions should also consider whether they can conduct:

- trials with large numbers of learners (2000+) undertaking new units and qualifications across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Trials with significant learner numbers are critical to evaluating the scalability of the QCF and the usability and usefulness of the mechanisms to support it in relation to awarding, recording achievement and managing data
- trials with large numbers of learners (100+) in individual learning providers or centres. Trials will need to evaluate the impact of mechanisms used by learning providers and centres to support the recording of achievement and management of data.

## Annex 1. Technical criteria

Annex 1 – Evaluation technical criteria for tests and trials				
Priority	<i>Testing the usability and usefulness of the specification for the framework structure, including the credit system that underpins it</i>	Units	Qualifications	Credit system
1				
Criteria				
1.1	The adequacy of the unit requirements for the design and development of units			
1.2	<p>The effectiveness of the unit requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for communicating what learners are expected to know, understand or do</li> <li>• as the basis for making awards</li> <li>• in permitting flexibility in the conduct of assessment</li> </ul>			
1.3	<p>The adequacy of the unit requirements to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consistency in the determination of credit values across all units within the framework</li> <li>• consistency in the determination of level across all units within the framework</li> <li>• the mutual recognition of units</li> </ul>			

1.4	The process of developing coherent qualifications from individual units			
1.5	<p>The effectiveness of the rules of combination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in specifying for users the number of credits, the level of units, pathways, time restrictions and exemptions in relation to a particular qualification</li> <li>• in providing a structure within which the process of credit accumulation and transfer can be planned, managed and given purpose</li> </ul>			
1.6	<p>The use of proposed qualification titling to inform users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about the level and size of achievements particularly in relation to award, certificate and diploma</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>			
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			

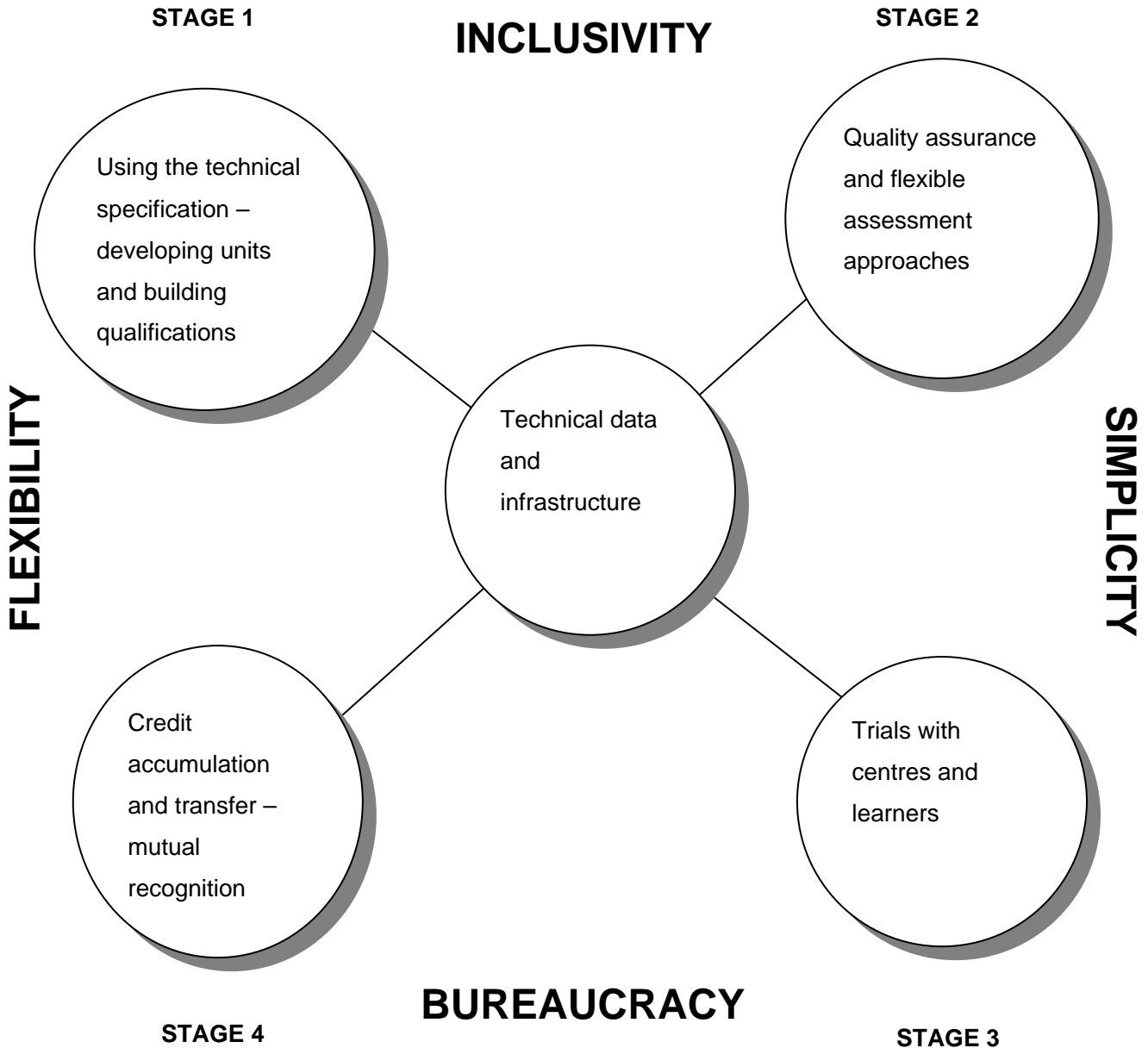
	professional contexts			
1.9	The suitability of the level descriptors in the development of units from Entry level through to Level 8			
1.10	The methods of determining the level of a qualification from the level of its constituent units/credits			
1.11	The award of credits and qualifications			
1.12	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	Credit transfer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• between qualifications and awarding bodies</li> <li>• between units shared by more than one awarding body, irrespective of the method through which the learner has been assessed</li> <li>• of 'other' units within the rules of combination for a given qualification</li> </ul>			
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			
<b>Priority 2</b>	<b><i>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</i></b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Credit system</b>
<b>Criteria</b>				
2.1	The use of a single electronic Learner Achievement Record to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• credit accumulation and transfer</li> <li>• registering learners using a prototype unique learner number (ULN)</li> </ul>			
2.2	The use of a unit databank to support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of qualifications</li> <li>• credit accumulation and transfer</li> </ul>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>information for users</li> </ul>			
<b>Priority 3</b>	<b><i>The extent to which the framework delivers the anticipated benefits</i></b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Credit system</b>
<b>Criteria</b>				
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			

## Annex 2: Project stages

The diagram below represents the critical stages for Theme 1, 2, 3 and 4 trial projects.



# Annex 3: Reporting pro forma

## Evaluation reporting

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This reporting pro forma will be used by all lead organisations involved in framework test and trials and provides a common basis for describing to QCA and its partners what has been learned during the trials. It has been designed to ensure that the evidence generated across the range of trials can be compared with each other and to facilitate dissemination of evaluation outcomes across the programme and will inform reports to Ministers.
- 1.2 While the reporting pro forma is designed as a common tool, it is intended to be flexible enough to encourage organisations involved to collect and record evidence throughout the life of the project, that is contextualised and sensitive to the circumstances and issues relating to their sector, organisation or area of provision.
- 1.3 The evidence that organisations supply will be used to structure a qualitative database that will be capable of accepting all evaluative comment and can form the basis for a comprehensive evaluation of the trial projects.

### 2. Using the reporting pro forma

- 2.1 The structure of the pro forma is intended to support individual approaches that lead organisations are taking to the planning and management of the stages of the projects. It will provide a structure in which the evidence that the project generates can be reported back to QCA and its partners. It does not generate additional reporting requirements to those identified in individual project initiation documents but will act as a reporting structure in which to frame the findings of the projects without restraint.
- 2.2 The evidence generated during the course of your project will contribute to one or more stages of test and trials (unit and qualification development, quality assurance and assessment, trials with learners, credit accumulation and transfer). However, the reporting template covers all four stages and you are strongly encouraged to offer evidence in any section where you feel you have collected relevant information.

- 2.3 There are two types of questions asked within the reporting template. First there are broader questions relating to your overall findings and experiences in relation to the work you have completed. These questions are followed by more detailed ones based on the criteria described in the test and trial prospectus (<http://www.qca.org.uk/15708.html>). Both types of questions are intended to facilitate a broad analysis of your findings, and those of other projects involved in the trials, to contribute to the report to Ministers on the framework development programme.

**Project title:**

**Lead organisation:**

**Broad questions**

A. In relation to your project, summarise which technical features of the framework specification worked well?

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B. In relation to your project, summarise which technical features of the framework specification did not work well and why?

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C. Please provide up to three main points that your team would like to make about the framework that you would like to see included in the evaluation report.

1
2
3

D. How adequately does the framework support key strategic priorities and targets for learning and skills? Which ones?

--

E. How effectively does the framework reduce bureaucracy and cost for all users?

--

F. Is the framework inclusive and able to accommodate a wide enough range of achievements from both within and outside existing NQF?

--

G. Is the framework simple, easy to understand and flexible? Comment.

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**Introduction**

The eight sections that follow cross all stages and seek detailed feedback wherever it is available.

**Section 1. The design and development of units, rules of combination and qualifications**

1. Comment on the adequacy of the unit specifications for the design and development of units of assessment particularly in relation to:

Learning outcomes
Assessment criteria
Unit titles

2. Comment on the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the unit specifications for communicating to learners what they are expected to know, understand and be able to do.

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3. To what extent do the unit specifications assist awarding bodies to recognise units by different awarding bodies and for different qualifications?

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4. Comment of the adequacy of the unit specifications to allow the development of coherent qualifications from individual units?

--

5. To what extent do the unit specifications allow the development of units that are capable of being assessed individually?

--

6. To what extent do the rules of combination effectively clarify for learners, providers and awarding bodies the number of credits, the level of units, pathways, time restrictions and exemptions in relation to a particular qualification?

7. To what extent have awarding bodies ensured that the unit achievements of all learners comply with the rules of combination?'

8. To what extent do the rules of combination enable the process of Credit Accumulation and Transfer to be manageable?'

Any other comments section 1:

## **Section 2. Assessment, quality assurance and grading**

1. Comment on the effectiveness or otherwise of the unit requirements to facilitate flexible assessment?

2. To what extent has the assessment of units been reliable and manageable?

3. To what extent do assessment arrangements contribute to mutual trust in credit awarded by all other awarding bodies operating in the framework?

4. Were quality assurance issues raised within the scope of your project? If so, please detail and expand.

5. What quality systems would need to be established to support the inclusion of provision currently outside the framework provision?

6. Are there any key aspects of grading that need to be coordinated so that mutual trust develops?

7. What methods have you used to implement grading of qualifications?

8. What additional information might be needed in the final specification on the process of grading and reporting grades?

Any other comments on section 2:

**Section 3. Credit: the determination of credit value and the processes for credit accumulation and transfer**

1. Does the unit specification requirements ensure the determination of consistent credit values across units within the framework? Comment.

2. Comment on the adequacy of credit to be awarded with integrity even when different methods have been used to meet the same assessment criteria?

3. How effectively are units shared by more than one awarding body? Comment.

4. Does the unit specification requirements ensure the determination of consistent credit level across units within the framework? Comment.

5. Do the requirements allow credit transfer between qualifications and between units designed and assessed by different awarding bodies?

6. Comment on the likely effectiveness of the accumulation of credits to permit learners to achieve qualifications over time.

7. How effective is the proposed method for determining the level of a qualification from the level of its constituent units/credits?

8. How appropriate are the proposed credit values for awards, certificates and diplomas?

Any other comments on section 3:

**Section 4. Levels and level descriptors**

1. How appropriate is the progression from one level to another in the level descriptors?

2. How appropriate are the level descriptors when applied across all learning contexts?

3. To what extent are the level descriptors suitable for the development of units from Entry through to Level 8?

Any other comments on section 4:

**Section 5. ICT and data: unit databank, learner achievement record and web-based accreditation**

1. From your perspective, to what extent does the use of a single electronic learner achievement record support credit accumulation and transfer? How?

2. How effective is the amended WBA system in providing unit databank, rules of combination and process for qualification accreditation?

3. How effective is the use of a unit databank in the support of credit accumulation and transfer?

4. How effective is the unit databank in supporting information about units and qualifications for users?

5. Is the LAR website fit for purpose, easy to use and understand?

Any other comments on section 5:

**Section 6. Transparency: focused on employers, higher education and learners**

1. Is the framework easy to understand from the learners, employers, awarding body, higher education and sectoral perspective?

2. Is the framework flexible from the learners, employers, awarding body, higher education and sectoral perspective?

3. Are the ranges of credit values, defined in the framework as Award, Certificate and Diploma, sufficient to meet the needs of all users?

Any other comments on section 6:

## Section 7. Inclusion and the recognition of all aspects of lifelong learning

1. How can the new framework support the development of provision in the voluntary sector?

2. How might the technical features of the framework be used to support provision offered through the Train to Gain programme?

3. How adequately does the framework encourage the recognition of competences learned non-formally and informally?<sup>7</sup>

4. How adequately do the interfaces between the framework and the user (LAR, WBA, websites) consider equality and diversity issues?

Any other comments on section 7:

## Section 8: Regulation

1. Were there any aspects of the regulatory criteria that raised issues in relation to your project? Please describe these.

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<sup>7</sup> Non-formal learning is the learning that occurs in formal settings but which is not assessed (eg workplace learning through working with skilled people, communication skills). Informal learning happens through engagement in everyday life, eg interpersonal skills, project management through DIY).

2. Were there any aspects of regulatory processes that raised issues in relation to your project? Please describe these.

3. The web-based accreditation system currently asks for information on assessment methodology at qualification rather than unit level. How effective is this as an approach? Would capturing assessment methodology at unit level and making it available on NDAQ (as with NQF units and qualifications) be more appropriate in helping learners and centres make informed choices about which qualifications to choose, and would it impede credit accumulation and transfer? If so, why?

4. Based on the questions above, are there any changes you would propose to regulatory criteria or processes?

5. If you are participating in the pilot project on non-awarding body submission of units, what are your views on the quality assurance processes in place to support this? Would there be scope for implementing this approach on a broader scale?

Any other comments on section 8: