

Dear Colleague

Changes in the Arrangements for the Regulation of qualifications in Northern Ireland from 1st April 2010

We are writing to you as the qualifications regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in reference to the impact that recent legislative changes, including the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, have on the arrangements for the regulation of qualifications in Northern Ireland.

The system in Northern Ireland was that CCEA were responsible for the regulation of all qualifications other than National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) which were regulated by QCA and more recently by Ofqual.

From the 1st April 2010 the arrangements will change. Ofqual will undertake all activities in regard to the regulation of Vocational Qualifications in Northern Ireland; with CCEA acting as the regulator for other qualifications, including GCSEs, GCEs and essential skills. In line with its role in England, Ofqual will play no role in providing advice and guidance on the development of qualifications in Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland, this advice and guidance role will be carried out by CCEA in respect of all qualifications, including vocational qualifications.

In addition to the change in regulatory duties, the legislation also marks a difference in the formal constitution of Ofqual; with the organisation becoming an independent, non-ministerial body that reports directly to Parliament. Arrangements are being developed in the Northern Ireland context to mirror this arrangement and set out appropriate working relationships with both the Department for Employment and Learning NI; and the Northern Ireland Assembly. In addition, Ray Coughlin has been appointed as a member to the Ofqual Board representing the interests of Northern Ireland.


The two regulators in Northern Ireland have been working together over the past number of months to develop a smooth process for transition and to interpret practically respective roles and responsibilities in light of the legislation. One such practical consideration is the agreed position for schools in Northern Ireland. For schools, the first point of contact on regulatory issues will continue to be through CCEA. Where the concern or question relates to Vocational Qualifications, CCEA will then liaise with Ofqual as the regulator of Vocational Qualifications in Northern Ireland.

The two regulators are developing communications plans in order that stakeholders may be assured that the existing levels of regulatory activity are maintained; and to

enable the development of a more detailed understanding of the high level changes set out above. In the meantime should stakeholders wish to find out more, please contact the heads of the two regulatory teams in Northern Ireland:

- Joan Gormley, Head of Ofqual Operations, Northern Ireland, joan.gormley@ofqual.gov.uk
- Roger McCune, Head of CCEA Qualifications and Skills Accreditation, rmccune@ccea.org.uk

Yours sincerely



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Neil Anderson, Acting Chief Executive, CCEA



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