

**Vocational Qualification Reform &
Qualification and Credit Framework
(QCF) Implementation:**

**Technical Parameters for Funding –
Offenders’ Learning and Skills Service
– Version 1**

16 June 2010

Background and Purpose

1. This document sets out the details of what will be funded within the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS), commencing with the policy intent of the programme, the scope of the offer and identifying the technical funding parameters which Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), Standard Setting Bodies (SSBs), Sector Bodies (SBs) and awarding organisations (AOs) should work within. This document should be read in conjunction with the general guidance on technical parameters.

Policy Intent

2. OLASS is a service that delivers learning and skills development activities in prisons to help prepare offenders to settle in the community on release, and to reduce re-offending. The service in the community supports offenders serving sentences under the supervision of probation through mainstream Skills Funding Agency programmes.

Scope of the offer

3. The OLASS core curriculum in custody is made up of a number of strands:
 - a. **Vocational qualifications and units**, designed to equip learners with appropriate occupational competence for employment, or broader vocational knowledge and skills within a given sector. This will consist mainly of qualifications that are also available in Adult Learner Responsive provision and/or Train to Gain.
 - b. **Employability skills**, which provide preparation for employment in a broad or specific occupational area. There will be an overlap between the provision in this category and that provided by the Programmes for the Unemployed, although there may also be provision that is unique to the OLASS programme. Some employability skills provision is already in the QCF, and further appropriate provision is expected to be added to the QCF by the end of 2010.
 - c. **Functional skills** (which are currently not in the QCF) where OLASS will use the same qualifications and provision as approved for Adult Learner Responsive provision.
 - d. **Personal and social development** (PSD) in Foundation Learning is also included in the OLASS curriculum. For offenders in the community, mainstream Foundation Learning provision will be used where appropriate.
4. The Skills Funding Agency is seeking SSC/SSB/SB recommendations via the action plan database on the most suitable and fit for purpose vocational qualifications for their sectors and sub-sectors (including those appropriate for delivery within the employability skills strand). These recommendations will then be reviewed by the Skills Funding Agency in consultation with the OLASS QCF Provider Group the suitability of these qualifications to be funded in this learning environment. SSCs/SSBs/SBs will not have a role in advising the Agency on functional skills or PSD.
5. It is expected that, in the main, vocational qualifications in OLASS will be drawn from those qualifications already in the QCF and confirmed for public funding or in the process of being confirmed. Therefore where SSCs/SSBs/SBs have already identified target-bearing (full) Level 2 and 3 qualifications, they are expected to identify some or all of these for OLASS, rather than needing to undertake a fresh exercise. However, it is recognised that not every qualification identified for Train to

Gain or Adult Learner Responsive will be appropriate for the OLASS delivery context as, for example, a more flexible approach to assessment may be required. Therefore SSCs/SSBs/SBs should consider the need for fit-for-purpose assessment approaches in the vocational qualifications that they identify.

6. There will be a mixture of both unit and qualification provision under the OLASS programme. Unit trials in this area will focus on identifying which QCF units are both available and appropriate for OLASS. For 2010/11, the Skills Funding Agency will seek SSC/SSB/SB advice only in respect of vocational *qualifications*, not in respect of units for inclusion in the Unit Trials.

Technical Funding Parameters

7. The technical parameters to be followed by SSCs/SSBs/SBs, when advising of vocational qualifications in the QCF to be considered for funding in the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service are set out below. It is acknowledged there will on occasion be legitimate exceptions to these. Where this is the case, a clear written rationale must be provided for consideration by the Skills Funding Agency and a final decision will be made by the Skills funding agency in consultation with the OLASS QCF Provider Group.

Volume of Learning and Challenge

8. **Level:** QCF Vocational qualifications (and units within the Rules of Combination (RoC) for vocational qualifications or included in Apprenticeship frameworks) from Entry Level to Level 4 may be identified for the OLASS offer.
9. **Size:** Entry, Level 1 or Level 4 qualifications within OLASS provision will not have any size restrictions, although it is expected that Diplomas would not generally be expected at Entry and Level 1 in Foundation Learning. This will be reviewed in the transition period through to 2011.
10. Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications should in general meet the size requirements for target bearing (full) in Train to Gain or Adult Learner Responsive provision, that is:
11. Target bearing qualifications at Level 2 should be Certificates or Diplomas. Where the same Level 2 qualification exists at Certificate and Diploma size, if an SSC/SSB/SB requests that both be confirmed as target bearing (full), this will be accepted.
12. Target bearing qualifications at Level 3 should be Diplomas. Certificates will be considered where a certificate is the agreed competency qualification in Train to Gain.
13. For OLASS provision, Awards will also be considered, with a suitable rationale from the SSC/SSB/SB, where these offer pathways for progression to target bearing qualifications.
14. Qualifications which confirm occupational competence (i.e. have purpose 'D') must have a credit value matching the agreed Train to Gain credit threshold.

Qualification Purpose

15. Vocational qualifications should have a purpose of 'D' (Confirm occupational competence) (where this can be delivered in a realistic working environment), 'B' (Prepare for further learning or training and/or develop knowledge and/or skills in a subject area), or 'C' (Prepare for employment).
16. Employability skills qualifications should have a primary purpose of 'A' (Recognise personal growth and engagement in learning), 'B' (Prepare for further learning or

training and/or develop knowledge and/or skills in a subject area) or 'C' (Prepare for employment).

Parameters for functional skills and personal and social development

17. These parameters are provided for information only, as SSCs/SSBs/SBs do not have a role in confirming funding for these categories.

Functional skills

18. Functional skills (Application of Number, Communication and ICT) will be funded at Entry, Levels 1 and 2 from September 2010, when they replace the existing main Key Skills.

Personal and social development

19. Personal and social development qualifications (and units within the rules of combination for such qualifications) at Entry Level and Level 1 will be considered. While at present there is some PSD provision is non-accredited, it is expected that in future it will be in the QCF. A significant amount of provision in this area is in QCF at this date and already been confirmed for funding.
20. In the main qualifications should fall within the Award or Certificate band (with a clear rationale as to why the same qualification might be offered at both Award and Certificate, if this is requested). They should be built from shared units.

Ineligible provision

21. Some the elements of provision normally ineligible for funding for post 19 learners (for example health and safety and conflict resolution) may be fundable within OLASS in order to allow vocational training to be delivered in a custodial context and/or to contribute to rehabilitation. The Agency would expect these elements to be part of a progression route for the individual.

Process and Timescales

22. Skills Funding Agency will only accept advice from SSCs/SSBs/SBs via the Action Plan database. Sector bodies must ensure the database is updated regularly and accurately to permit a timely response.
23. The SSCs/SSBs/SBs must ensure that the Action Plan database is completed correctly, including all fields and that where more than one awarding organisations offers the qualification, all awarding organisations are referenced.
24. Once approved for funding through the Agency's funding approval process in consultation with the OLASS QCF Provider Group the qualification will be added to the published list of approved qualifications. This list will be a 'live' list and will be available on the Skills Funding Agency website; the list will be updated on a fortnightly basis from April to December 2010.
25. Where an SSC/SSB/SB identifies a qualification which needs to be considered as an exception a written case must be put forward by the appropriate SSC/SSB/SB to the Agency's Sector Manager setting out the rationale for the recommendation using the Business case template. This will then be considered and a final decision made by the Strategic Approvals Panel.

Notification of Units

26. Sector Skills Councils will notify the Skills Funding Agency of Qualification they wish to put forward for public funding via the action plan DB, we will then work with individual SSC's, Agency and the QCF provider Group to look at individual units for appropriateness for the programme.

Skills Funding Agency

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
T 0845 019 4170
F 024 7682 3675

www.bis.gov.uk/skillsfundingagency

BIS | Department for
Business Innovation & Skill

© Skills Funding Agency

Published by the Skills Funding Agency

Extracts from this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial, educational or training purposes on condition that the source is acknowledged and the findings are not misrepresented.

This publication is available in electronic form on the Skills Funding Agency website:

www.bis.gov.uk/skillsfundingagency

If you require this publication in an alternative format or language, please contact the Skills Funding Agency Help Desk: 0870 900 6800.

Skills Funding Agency – P100031