

Qualifications and Credit Framework:

Full Level 2

March 2009



Leading learning and skills

Guidance for LSC funded providers regarding the interim definition for full Level 2 and confirmation process for qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

Introduction

1. This guidance is intended to update providers with regard to the interim full Level 2 definition agreed for the QCF and the process by which Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), Standard Setting Bodies (SSBs) and Sector Bodies (SBs) will identify and confirm full Level 2 qualifications for their sectors in the QCF. SSCs/SSBs/SBs have a new role setting the full Level 2 threshold for their sector, sub-sectors and occupations. This guidance is intended to identify the key considerations that will be taken into account when designing and confirming new full Level 2 qualifications in the QCF.

Background

2. In November 2008 the Secretary of State for the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) agreed an interim definition for full Level 2 for the period to 31 August 2010. The interim full Level 2 definition for QCF qualifications is based on a threshold of 13 credits with SSCs/SSBs/SBs responsible for determining the content for their sectors, sub-sectors and occupations. They also have the flexibility to set the threshold higher or lower than 13 credits in accordance with their sector requirements.
3. LSC has been remitted to disseminate this definition and to support all stakeholders in the identification of full Level 2 and to undertake monitoring and evaluation of the definition to inform a final definition for 2010/11 onwards.
4. As part of the implementation of the interim definition, LSC expects that SSCs/SSBs/SBs and Awarding Organisations (AOs) will work closely together. Collaborative working will be essential to ensure that vocational qualifications approved as full Level 2 in the QCF meet the needs of employers and learners. LSC expects that SSCs/SSBs/SBs will be communicating decisions on sector thresholds to Awarding Organisations to enable them to develop qualifications that can populate the QCF.

5. On the 18 of December 2008 the LSC published and circulated to SSCs a briefing note which sets out the new interim definition for full Level 2 qualifications in the QCF. The briefing note can be found at:

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/Level_2_Briefing_Note_Final_Dec08.pdf

Process

6. SSC/SSB/SBs will confirm with LSC which QCF Level 2 qualifications in their sector or sub sector are full. As part of moving towards the process of LSC aligning funding with those key vocational qualifications in the QCF identified by SSC/SSB/SBs, the LSC will publish a list of full Level 2 qualifications in the QCF. This will be an interim arrangement and the list will be part of the LSC QCF Policy Updates; this will be in addition to the existing process of notification through the Learning Aims Database. LSC is working with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills on an IT solution to assist the communication and confirmation of qualifications for public funding.

Learning Aims Database

7. The LSC will inform providers as the new QCF qualifications become available through the Learning Aims Database. This will include information on funding rates. The LSC will identify full Level 2 qualifications in the QCF using the existing flag for 'full Level 2'. To identify full Level 2 provision that is within the QCF it is possible to filter using the QCF flag on the LAD.

Allocations and funding

8. The LSC expectation is that providers should start delivering the new full Level 2 qualifications accredited onto the QCF as they become available where they are replacing existing Level 2 National Qualifications Framework (NQF) qualifications. The LSC plans to make ineligible for funding the NQF predecessor qualifications when new QCF qualifications are available. This will be the case even where the NQF qualification is still within its accreditation date. The list of qualifications ineligible for public funding can be found at:

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/List_of_Ineligible_Qualifications_for_0910_Final_Version_December_2008.pdf

9. LSC will be using the Sector Qualification Strategy Action Plans (SQS APs) to inform funding eligibility decisions, and SSCs will advise LSC on which key vocational qualifications should be funded¹. This is set out in the LSC QCF Policy Update: Issue 1 (January 2009):

¹ Please note that funding rates for qualifications are determined by the input and therefore not all full Level 2 qualifications will be funded at the same rate. The funding rate is likely to differentiate between qualifications by their mode of delivery, cost and input required.

10. In the context of full Level 2, LSC will be reviewing the funding priorities to take account of the new interim definition.
11. As signaled previously and in line with current LSC policy the timing of these changes will be carefully managed so that learners and providers are not disadvantaged and in order to give providers sufficient time to plan. Changes to the eligibility of predecessor NQF qualifications will therefore not be implemented in-year.
12. As the threshold of 13 credits is being applied to create a degree of comparability of size to current full Level 2 qualifications (particularly NVQs), there should be minimal or negligible impact on the funding allocation agreed and the associated learner numbers. As such the LSC would not expect to adjust allocations as providers begin to deliver the QCF full Level 2 qualifications. This assumption will be actively monitored during the two year period of the interim definition.

Performance

13. Performance arrangements will continue unaltered during the interim period. The new full Level 2 qualifications will be included within qualification success rate calculations in the same way that current full Level 2 provision is. Achievement rates and time taken to achieve the new qualifications will form part of the monitoring that will be undertaken during the two year period.

LSC monitoring role

14. LSC has been remitted to monitor and manage implementation of the definition and in particular to manage affordability. LSC will therefore need to understand the changes in relation to the previous full Level 2 NQF qualifications in terms of affordability, and the way learners, providers and employers might be affected.

Guidance

15. The table below sets out key considerations that will be taken into account by SSCs/SSBs/SBs to meet key full Level 2 approval requirements. These will also form the considerations that Awarding Organisations will adopt when developing new full Level 2 qualifications for the QCF. If you require further information then please contact the Qualifications and Framework Developments team (cvh-qfr@lsc.gov.uk):

| Category | Considerations |
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| Content and sector fit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The full Level 2 credit threshold for sectors, sub-sectors and occupations will be determined by SSCs/SSBs/SBs and aligned to National Occupational Standards (NOS), which will be approved/endorsed by employers. It is expected NOS will be a reference point for all provision. ▪ The full Level 2 threshold will also align with the relevant SQSs and Action Plans, therefore ensuring the skills, knowledge and understanding that provide a platform for employability in the sectors, sub-sectors or occupations. ▪ The full Level 2 credit thresholds will have to be comparable among SSCs with similar qualification footprints, and aligned if there are allied occupations. ▪ SSCs/SSBs/SBs should consult with Awarding Organisations, and/or key employers and professional bodies, when establishing requirements for full Level 2 content and threshold. ▪ LSC will monitor information regarding predecessor qualifications in order to understand the implications for existing qualifications, and safeguard against adverse consequences such as reduction in size solely to meet the minimum full Level 2 threshold. ▪ LSC will also monitor other quality indicators - e.g. professional endorsements, quality standards obtained etc. |
| Sufficient Threshold | <p>SSCs have been advised that sufficient credit threshold for full Level 2 in their sector, sub-sector(s) and occupations should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Represent minimum level of competency in an occupational area. ▪ Represent appropriate number of credits, and volume of skills and knowledge to gain sustainable employment in the sector. ▪ Enable an employee to move to the next level of employment in the sector. ▪ Give a 'licence to practice' in a profession (where appropriate). <p>Qualifications below 13 credits should be approved only by exception, and be backed by rationale and evidence consistent with the relevant SQS and Action Plan.</p> <p>If the threshold is set in such a way that there are qualifications that are approved as full Level 2 for all different qualification sizes – e.g. Award, Certificate and Diploma are all deemed to represent full Level 2, the SSCs will have to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rationale for regarding an Award <i>and</i> a Certificate <i>and</i> a Diploma at the same level as full qualifications in one sub-sector or occupational area. ▪ Employability outcomes that justify fullness at each stage. ▪ Issues regarding learner entitlement considering LSC policy of funding being prioritised for a learner's first full Level 2 qualification. Any subsequent qualifications at the same level would not be automatically entitled to full public funding. ▪ If there are any implications for progression routes between these |

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| | <p>qualifications.</p> |
| <p>Primary purpose</p> | <p>Full Level 2 qualifications will have the specified main purpose and sub-purpose as defined on the list supplied by the regulators and entered on the web-based accreditation system (WBA).</p> <p>As a guide LSC would expect that all full Level 2 qualifications should be within the main purpose definition D, and the relevant sub-purpose categories as follows:</p> <p>D. Confirm occupational competence and/or 'licence to practice':</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">D1. Confirm competence in an occupational role to the standards required.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">D2. Confirm the ability to meet a 'licence to practice' or other legal requirements made by the relevant sector, professional or industry body.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that there might be secondary sub-purpose fields – for example, within the purpose definition E to reflect the breath of qualification.</p> <p>Note that not all qualifications with the purpose definition D will be automatically full Level 2. They need to be approved and aligned to SQS and NOS as previously described.</p> |

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| Portability | <p>Full Level 2 credit threshold should ensure that qualifications are portable for the individual, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ That level of literacy, numeracy, ICT and other generic and transferable skills are in line with the NOS minimum entry requirement for that profession. ▪ Qualification is transferable across employers in the sector. |
| Progression and employability | <p>When designing full Level 2 qualifications it is important to consider progression routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If there is a sufficient threshold to progress to Level 3. ▪ If further learning is needed to progress to Level 3, consider what this entails and how learners and providers might be affected (e.g. learner entitlement, appropriate information for learners). ▪ What kind of professional or employment related progression will be enabled. |