

Learning and Skills Council / Skills Funding Agency Target-bearing Level 2 and Level 3 Qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

Version 1

Date of issue	25 March 2010
LSC office	National Office
Security Classification	NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Background and introduction

- 1 This paper sets out the current process for confirming target-bearing (full) Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). This process forms a part of the wider implementation of vocational qualification reform, being undertaken by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and its successor organisation, the Skills Funding Agency, and key delivery partners.
- 2 From April 2010, the Skills Funding Agency will be responsible for confirming provision for public funding for post 19 learners in England. In the case of vocational qualifications, it will seek advice from employers, via their sector organisations, as to what should be funded. It will also confirm which vocational qualifications are target bearing, that is, count towards the Adult Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets.
- 3 The introduction of the QCF means that a new definition is needed to determine which vocational qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 will count as 'full' towards the current PSA targets, as currently 'full' qualifications are defined in terms of type (e.g. NVQ) or guided learning hours in the case of vocationally related qualifications. In the QCF qualifications are not differentiated by type, and credit value identifies the number of credits that may be awarded for successful achievement of the qualification and the units within it. Therefore defining 'full' vocational qualifications through type and/or guided learning hours in the context of the QCF is not appropriate.

Definition of target-bearing (full) Level 2 and Level 3

- 4 In November 2008, as part of the announcement of the implementation of vocational qualification reform, the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills announced an interim definition for target-bearing

Learning and Skills Council

National Office

Cheylesmore House Quinton Road Coventry CV1 2WT

T 0845 019 4170 F 024 7682 3675 www.lsc.gov.uk

vocational qualifications in the QCF. This was a credit value of 13 credits for Level 2 and a credit value between 25 and 70 credits for Level 3. This would be subject to Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), Standard Setting Bodies (SSBs) and Sector Bodies (SBs) being able to vary this credit value. During 2008/9 the LSC embarked on a significant piece of work with SSCs/SSBs/SBs to identify suitable credit values for target-bearing qualifications in their sectors and sub-sectors, in order to deliver occupational competence and/or progression in Train to Gain. The outcome of this work was a list of credit values by occupational role, which was submitted to and approved by Ministers.

- 5 ***These credit values remain a key component of the definition of target-bearing vocational qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3, which can be funded in Train to Gain, but have also been supplemented by other, broader criteria.*** In particular, the National Skills Strategy *Skills for Growth* (2009) lays out the direction of travel that target-bearing Level 2 should be drawn from the Certificate or Diploma band of the QCF, and Level 3 from the Diploma band.
- 6 Building on this initial work, and as part of the wider work around developing a process for the confirmation of vocational QCF qualifications for public funding for post 19 learners in England, the LSC has developed a set of technical funding parameters to support SSCs/SSBs/SBs in the identification of fit-for-purpose vocational QCF qualifications across its main delivery programmes. ***The parameters included further guidance around target-bearing vocational qualifications in Train to Gain, and clarity over what would constitute a target-bearing vocational qualification in the broader context of Adult Learner Responsive.*** Target-bearing Level 2 and Level 3 are defined in terms of ***volume of learning*** and ***qualification purpose***. Further details of the technical funding parameters across all Skills Funding Agency delivery programmes will be available online in due course.
- 7 The use of qualification purpose as a parameter helps to ensure that qualifications deliver an appropriate outcome for a particular delivery context, and meet the policy intent of the Skills Funding Agency different delivery programmes. So, in Train to Gain, target-bearing qualifications will in general be expected to confer occupational competence, which is an appropriate outcome for someone undertaking training in a workplace. In Adult Learner Responsive provision, a broader vocational qualification offer is appropriate, including progression (developing knowledge and skills or preparing for further learning) and preparation for employment. A target-bearing qualification might, therefore, be offered across all delivery programmes, but in the main this will not be the case.
- 8 As a result of the above, ***vocational qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 in the QCF will be confirmed as target-bearing if they:***
 - a Are approved by the relevant SSC/SSB/SB for accreditation into QCF and recommended to the Agency by the SSC/SSB/SB
 - b Meet the required parameters in terms of credit value (size) within one or more delivery programmes:

- This means Certificates or Diplomas for Level 2, and Diplomas for Level 3 (note that some exceptions to this are being permitted as a transitional measure in Train to Gain only)
 - For Train to Gain, they must meet the credit value identified by the relevant SSC
 - Where the same Level 2 qualification exists at Certificate and Diploma size, both will be confirmed as target bearing (full) in Adult Learner Responsive only and in agreement with the SSC/SSB/SB. This will allow some of the flexibilities inherent in the QCF to begin to be delivered, and is on the clear understanding that anyone who completes the Certificate would only be funded for the necessary components to complete the Diploma and also where a learner registers for the Diploma but does not complete, assuming they have achieved the credit value of the Certificate, they will gain that qualification.
- c Meet the parameters for that delivery programme in terms of purpose identifier.
- 9 In recommending vocational QCF qualifications for public funding SSCs/SSBs/SBs should also be aware of the stated intent of the Agency to move towards greater use of shared units across the QCF in order to drive forward and stimulate credit accumulation and transfer.

Identifying target-bearing qualifications

- 10 A list of target-bearing vocational qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 in the QCF can be found at <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvgrp/support/list> and is being added to on an ongoing basis. The qualifications are also being added to the Learning Aims Database (LAD), flagged as 'full' and with assigned funding rates.
- 11 From 1 April 2010, the list will be added to through the Skills Funding Agency's funding approval process.
- 12 As a transitional measure, the LSC has allowed a number of qualifications recommended by SSCs/SSBs/SBs, which did not fully match the new definition (in particular the National Skills Strategy size requirements) to be approved for a limited period. This will be reviewed in August 2010.
- 13 ***The Skills Funding Agency expects providers to start delivering the new target-bearing Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications as they become available, in preference to the NQF predecessors.*** Full details of the timetable for focusing public funding on the QCF, and removing it from NQF provision, is available at: http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/QCF_Transition_Paper_Final_March_2010.pdf.

Evaluation

- 14 The LSC/Skills Funding Agency has commissioned work to monitor and evaluate the new definition of target-bearing Level 2 and Level 3, including the use of purpose. Monitoring and evaluation will include affordability and

impact on current and future Adult Skills targets. It will also include impact on success rates and delivery. The Skills Funding Agency will seek to understand impact at provider and national level to best inform future decisions.

- 15 The Skills Funding Agency will work closely with SSCs/SSBs/SBs to support them in the role of recommending qualifications. Through moderation and validation of SSC/SSB/SB recommendations, the Agency will also ensure that all target-bearing qualifications are aligned to stated priorities and that the processes that underpin the recommendations are consistent across sectors.