

Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

Interim Definition of Full Level 3 Qualifications

Guidance for LSC Funded Providers

June 2009

This document is of interest to LSC Funded
Providers

Further information

For further information please contact the appropriate Learning and Skills Council office. Contact details for each office can be found on the LSC website: www.lsc.gov.uk

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Guidance for LSC funded providers regarding the interim definition and confirmation process in the Qualification Framework (QCF)

Introduction

1. This guidance is intended to update providers with regard to the interim full Level 3 definition agreed for the QCF and the process through which Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), Standard Setting Bodies (SSBs) and Sector Bodies (SBs) will identify and confirm full Level 3 qualifications in the QCF. SSCs/SSBs/SBs will have a new role of setting full Level 3 threshold for their sector, sub-sectors and occupations, and this guidance is intended to identify the key considerations that will be taken into account when designing and confirming new full Level 3 qualifications in the QCF.

Background

2. The Secretary of State has now agreed an interim definition for full Level 3 set as a credit threshold range of a minimum threshold of 25 credits and a maximum threshold of 70 credits for QCF provision. The interim definition will be implemented for the period to 31 August 2010, and during this period LSC will monitor, manage and evaluate the definition. SSCs/SSBs/SBs will be able to vary the threshold to ensure that the resulting qualification confers a basis for occupational competence and 'licence to practice' and/or progression to higher education and higher level skills in a sector, sub-sector or occupation.

3. 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 3 in the QCF meet the needs of employers and learners. We expect 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.

Process

4. SSC/SSB/SBs will confirm with LSC which QCF Level 3 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 3 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 (LAD). LSC is working with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UK CES) on an IT solution to assist the communication and confirmation of qualifications for public funding.

Learning Aims Database

5. As indicated above, 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 3 qualifications in the QCF using the existing flag for 'full Level 3'. To identify full Level 3 provision that is within the QCF it is possible to filter using the QCF flag on the LAD.

Allocations and funding

6. The LSC expectation is that providers should start delivering the new full Level 3 qualifications accredited onto the QCF as they become available where they are replacing existing Level 3 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 current 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.

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

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/QCF_Policy_Update_Issue2.pdf

8. In the context of full Level 3, LSC will be reviewing the funding priorities to take account of the new interim definition.

9. As signalled 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.

10. As the minimum threshold of 25 credits is being applied to create a degree of comparability of size to current full Level 3 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 3 qualifications. This assumption will be actively monitored during the two year period of the interim definition.

Performance

11. Performance arrangements will continue unaltered during the interim period. The new full Level 3 qualifications will be included within qualification success rate calculations in the same way that current full Level 3 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

12. 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 3 NQF qualifications in terms of affordability, and the way learners, providers and employers might be affected.

Guidance

13. The table below sets out key considerations that will be taken into account by SSCs/SSBs/SBs to meet key full Level 3 approval requirements. These will also form the considerations that Awarding Organisations will adopt when developing

new full Level 3 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
Content and sector fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The full Level 3 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 3 threshold will also align with the relevant SQSs and Action Plans, therefore ensuring the skills, knowledge and understanding that provide an occupational competence/licence to practice and/or progression to higher education and higher level skills in the sectors, sub-sectors or occupations. ▪ The full Level 3 credit thresholds will have to be comparable among SSCs with similar 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 3 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 3 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 3 in their sector, sub-sector(s) and occupations should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Represents appropriate number of credits, and volume of skills and knowledge to demonstrate occupational competence in the sector. ▪ Enables an employee to move to next level of employment in the sector. ▪ Enables an employee to progress to higher level skills and learning. ▪ Gives a 'licence to practice' in a profession. <p>Qualifications below 25 credits and over 70 credits should only be approved in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>If the threshold is set such that there are full Level 3 qualifications as both Certificate and Diploma at Level 3, SSCs/SBs/SSBs should have fully considered the implications and need to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rationale for regarding both a Certificate <i>and</i> a Diploma at the same level as full qualifications in one sub-sector or occupational area. ▪ Employment opportunities that justify fullness at each stage. ▪ Issues regarding learner entitlement considering LSC policy of firstness. <p>If there are any implications for progression routes between these qualifications.</p>
Primary purpose	Full Level 3 qualifications will have the specified main purpose and sub-purpose as defined on the list supplied by the regulators and entered on the

	<p>web-based accreditation system (WBA).</p> <p>The main purpose identifiers suitable for full Level 3 encompass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B. Prepare for further learning or training and/or develop knowledge and/or skills in a subject area; D. Confirm occupational competence and/or 'licence to practice'; and E. Updating and continuing professional development (CPD); <p>as defined in the OfQual's <i>Identifying purposes for qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework</i>; February 2009.</p> <p>In the QCF, SSCs/SSBs/SBs will be responsible for approving vocational qualifications threshold and content for full Level 3 qualifications, with a main identifying purpose D: Confirm occupational competence and/or 'licence to practice'.</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 B, D or E will be automatically full Level 3. They need to be approved and aligned to SQS and NOS as previously described.</p>
Portability	<p>Full Level 3 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 employ-ability	<p>When designing full Level 3 qualifications it is important to consider progression routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is there a sufficient threshold to progress to Higher Education or higher level skills? ▪ Specify what kind of professional or employment related progression will be enabled.

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