

OLASS and the QCF workshops: Q&A

OLASS Provider Event

15 July 2009

For general information on the QCF, visit the QCDA website:

<http://www.qcda.gov.uk/19674.aspx>

To keep up to date on LSC policy developments that relate to the QCF, refer to the regular Policy Updates available on the LSC website:

<http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvgrp/support/>

Q&A:

QCF Q1. What is the definition of credit in the context of Guided Learning Hours?

A Under the QCF, one credit has been defined as equal to 10 hours of learning time. This includes Guided Learning Hours (GLH) but also includes other relevant activities the learner undertakes such as independent study. To inform future decisions on the approach to provider funding in England, work is being done to identify what proportion of learning hours you could reasonably expect to be occupied by GLH. It is not anticipated that funding rates would be linked directly to credit until 2012 at the earliest. While there is significant further development taking place in this area in England, it is worth noting that the decision has been taken in Wales that for 10 hours learning time, providers will be funded for 7 GLH.

QCF Q2. In the past LSC data systems such as the Learning Aims Database (LAD) have often not been updated in a manner perceived to be timely enough to be responsive in supporting providers to fulfil reporting requirements. How will these systems be maintained to manage the added complexity of a unitised system under the QCF?

A The LSC is undertaking an intensive strand of work to align its business processes and systems including the LAD to support the delivery and recording of learning delivered as part of the QCF. It is recognised that the structure of LAD will need to change to be able to reflect hierarchical relationships between units and qualifications and to increase efficiency in bring new provision to market. The LSC is currently undertaking a review of all of its internal systems to ensure that they are ready to support agreed changes to the funding of QCF provision.

Changes to the ILR are managed by the Information Authority on a published annual cycle that reflects the development time for provider software suppliers. Any changes needed to the ILR to support the delivery of units and qualifications will be made through this route.

QCF Q3. How do shared and restricted units work and will restricted units be funded?

A Shared units are available to all awarding organisations to award credit and therefore, provide the sort of flexibility necessary to realise the benefits of credit accumulation and transfer of units under the QCF. Restricted units are only available to specified awarding organisation(s) to award credit. Currently there are approximately 9,000 units on the QCF, approximately 6,000 of which are shared (July 2009). LSC wishes to support the development and delivery of shared units that will provide the benefits for learners and enables the flexibility of the QCF to be recognised. Being on the QCF is not a guarantee of funding for either units or qualifications. Decisions on what learning the public purse will support will be made by LSC in line with government policy. Currently there is no inclusion or exclusion from public funding made solely on the basis of the status of a unit. LSC / SFA will continue to look at a range of factors in making decisions on which provision is eligible for public funding.

QCF Q4. There is a view amongst providers that provider support programmes are only of value when they canvass significant input from providers themselves. What is being done to incorporate provider input to the QCF provider support programme?

A The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) is responsible for getting the skills sector ready for implementing the QCF through a readiness programme and within that, has commissioned the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), the Association of Learning Providers (ALP) and the Association of Colleges (AOC) to work with learning providers. This programme will take a collaborative approach with providers and will include 'QCF in Action' project funding allocated to providers through an application process under the readiness programme. Through this project, providers will help inform the development of QCF readiness activities through their experience.

More information on the QCF Readiness Provider Support Programme is available at:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/226596>

QCF Q5. What is the purpose of introducing a new framework based on units when the current system is already unitised?

A It is true that the current system offers qualifications that are broken down into units but it does not provide the benefits of a genuine unitised system. The QCF will recognise learner achievement of individual units through the introduction of credit. The QCF will allow those units to be individually assessed and combined with other units to form qualifications. Credit will also allow greater opportunities to transfer achievement between providers, Awarding Organisations and qualifications. Learners will have their achievement of units and qualifications recorded on their learner record. The formal recognition and flexible use of units under QCF will also benefit employers in that they can access qualifications comprised of combinations of units that will better meet the skills needs that are specific to their employees.

QCF Q6. How will funding and performance management be handled under the unit-based approach of QCF?

A LSC is currently investigating options for establishing performance management arrangements that will best support the QCF. LSC has been funding units and smaller episodes of learning since its inception. LSC is exploring a number of ways in which funding units and qualifications can be managed effectively in line with policy intent. For the latest developments see the QCF policy update section on funding: <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvqrp/support/>

It is recognised that QCF has the potential to change the mix and balance of provision between units and qualifications. It is further recognised that some of the client gateways will deliver a greater volume of units than qualifications. OLASS is one programme that may potentially fall into this category. As such there is a need for a more holistic performance measure that can capture a providers' performance across the breadth of its provision and reflect the aims of different programmes.

LSC has been trialling the concept of a credit success rate through the unit funding trials. Currently the various ways in which a credit success rate could be used in performance and contract management are being considered. The Credit Success Rate (CSR) would have the potential to be included within: Framework for Excellence, Ofsted inspection indicators, Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP) calculations, and contract management arrangements.

QCF Q7. What composition of unit levels determines the level of a qualification?

A The level of a qualification is that which represents more than 50% of the credits comprising the qualification.

QCF Q8. How are different units combined to form qualifications and who is involved in determining how this can be done?

A Rules of combination set out the requirements for achievement of a qualification in the QCF using units as building blocks and credits as the underlying currency for recording learning achievement. Every qualification is based on a set of these rules, which map out for a learner the particular combination of credits that they will need to achieve in order to be awarded the qualification.

Rules of combination also provide a structure within which the accumulation and transfer of credits between qualifications and awarding bodies can take place. Different kinds of qualification in the QCF will offer different kinds of opportunities for learners to transfer credits, and these opportunities are made explicit through rules of combination.

In developing qualifications, Awarding Organisations submit proposed rules of combination for qualifications for approval by SSCs to ensure they meet the priority needs of the sector.

For more information on rules of combination, go to the QCDQ website: <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/21600.aspx>