

Qualifications and Credit Framework Unit Delivery Trials 2011/12 (Single Adult Skills Budget)

Additional Briefing

February 2012

Of interest to Providers and Area Relationship Teams

Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Unit Delivery Trials 2011/12

Introduction

1. This briefing has been produced to offer additional information to providers participating in the Unit Delivery Trials (UDT) which are supported by the Skills Funding Agency (the Agency) through the single Adult Skills Budget in 2011/12. It should be used in conjunction with the guidance accompanying the Expressions of Interest Document (EOI) published in October 2011 and other appropriate Agency guidance relating to funding and eligibility.

Background

2. During 2010/11 the Agency supported a number of Further Education (FE) colleges and training organisations to trial QCF unit delivery. These trials, building on earlier work in 2009/10, enabled providers to begin to test in real terms some of the flexibilities of a unit-based and credit-bearing qualifications framework and begin to deliver these flexibilities to learners and employers.

3. Evaluation of the 2010/11 trials showed that learners and employers welcomed the facility to undertake learning more flexibly and achieve incrementally. However, the evaluation also highlighted some of the challenges in terms of systems, timescales, planning, communication and costs that unit delivery poses. A full report on the evaluation of the 2010/11 trials is available on the Agency website below.

Context and Objectives

4. The current UDT commenced in November 2011. They are being taken forward alongside, but separate from, the 2011/12 Unit Offer for the Unemployed. The UDT are also distinct from earlier trials of unit delivery in that the QCF itself is now established and some of the issues that large-scale unit delivery raise are now clearer. There is also a more defined picture emerging of how, and over what period, demand for credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) may grow.

The 2011/12 UDTs focus on three key themes:

- how unit delivery can support progression to and through entitlements
- how unit delivery can support re-skilling and up-skilling
- how unit delivery can support enterprise and entrepreneurship

5. A common objective across these themes is to establish to what extent unit delivery and CAT can facilitate a wider range of learners moving towards target qualifications, and also better understand in practical terms the flexibility that unit delivery offers in terms of building coherent programmes that can support providers in being more responsive to the needs of local communities and local employers.

The Unit Delivery Trials

6. Over seventy providers have been confirmed to participate in the current UDT. This includes FE colleges, training organisations, local authorities and specialist providers, working with almost 19,000 learners in total.

The Unit Offer

7. In January 2012 the Agency refreshed the list of units available for the UDT, based on feedback from providers, awarding organisations (AOs) and NIACE, who are undertaking an evaluation of the UDT. Over 16,000 units on the QCF, from Entry to level 5, are available for providers to access during the UDT. They encompass most sectors and sub-sectors and are all within the Rules of Combination (RoC) of a qualification confirmed for funding by the Agency. The majority of units available in the UDT are shared units, which means they have been made available to a range of AOs to use. Having refreshed the original list of units available, it is not expected that any more units will be added to the list before the completion of the UDT in July 2012.

8. It is critical that before learners begin their programme, providers confirm with the AO the ownership and status of both the unit and the qualification(s) it may fall within. This is in order to ensure that both unit and qualification(s) are 'live' and valid. Providers should ensure that units they intend to offer appear on the list of available units, which is published on the Agency website below and also on the LARA: [LARA/Pages/Welcome](#)

9. The Agency expects providers involved in the UDT to deliver the units they identified in the original EOI. The units should be delivered as part of a coherent programme so that credit can be accumulated towards qualification achievement. The UDT are not intended to support delivery of single units – this is important as learners need to be able to accumulate credit which is meaningful in terms of RoC and routes to full qualifications. The offer must result in sufficient credit being accumulated so that, at an appropriate stage, progression towards a target qualification can be supported where it is appropriate for the individual.

10. It is not a requirement that all learners involved in the UDT accumulate credit and progress towards and achieve a target qualification within the period of the trial. However, providers should aim to deliver programmes that offer learners the opportunity to be awarded credit and combine their achievement in meaningful ways that will support the requirements for future employment, upskilling/reskilling and progression. For many of the learners involved in the UDT, this combination of achievement will be in the context of qualifications, for other learners the achievement may be in the context of progression within the workplace and not necessarily linked to a qualification. However providers should be aware that where learners are clear from the outset that they wish (and are able) to undertake a particular qualification and do not require the flexibility that unit delivery offers, then the UDT will not be appropriate.

Personal Learning Record

11. It is important that providers understand the needs and aspirations of learners so that they are able to offer appropriate information, advice and guidance on the most suitable units for learners to undertake and how achievement may be combined and credit accumulated towards meaningful outcomes. The Personal Learning Record (PLR) is a free, on-line service that enables providers and learners to view learner achievement so far and help identify the most suitable units for future learning. Providers can use the PLR as a guide in forming a coherent programme for the learner that leads to credit accumulation and meaningful achievement, including qualifications.

12. All providers involved in the trials are encouraged to use the PLR to support learners in understanding the routes to achievement for target qualifications through unit delivery and CAT. Learners do not have immediate access to the PLR but any provider registered as a Learning Registration Body (LRB) with the Learning Record Service (LRS) can arrange access for the learner. The LRB will verify the learner's identity with the LRS and arrange

access to the Personal Learning Record. The LRS Customer Helpdesk can be contacted by telephone on 0845 602 2589 or by email: lrsupport@learningrecordsservice.org.uk.

Funding

13. Providers should note that involvement in the UDT does not attract any additional funding and delivery must be financed from the single Adult Skills Budget. Learners will be either fully-funded or co-funded depending on their prior achievement and employment status in accordance with the 2011/12 Learner Eligibility and Contribution Rules Version 2.1: [LearnerEligibilityandContributionRules2011/12 V2.1](#)

14. Where a learner in the UDT is undertaking a coherent package of units to support progression to Level 2 (progression funding) then normal contribution rules are expected to apply. If the learner does not have a first full Level 2 or 3, and is seeking to achieve units and accumulate credit towards a first full Level 2 or 3, it is expected that normal contribution rules to apply.

15. Within the QCF credit is an award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of the designated learning outcomes of a unit. Learning time is the amount of time a learner at the level of the unit is expected to take, on average, to complete the learning outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the assessment criteria. Credit includes the guided learning hours (glh) on which funding is currently based. The funding rates attached to the units available have been determined using glh. The funding rates for units are shown on LARA.

Success rates

16. Currently unit delivery is excluded from providers' Qualification Success Rate (QSR). However, the Agency has begun to take forward work around a Qualification and Credit Success Rate (QCSR) that could take account of qualifications with a range of different attributes, including units and credit. The first stage of this work has focussed on unit delivery and credit accumulation and modelling how a unit/credit success rate could prepare for shadow running of this in advance of possible implementation in 2014/15. Consultation with the FE sector on a unit/credit success rate and a possible QCSR will take place during 2012.

Recording on the ILR

17. Where a learner is undertaking a coherent package of units providers should record the unit(s) as the learning aim on the ILR (Learning Aim reference: A09). The employment status of the learner should be recorded in the ILR employment status fields. Providers should bear in mind that the purpose of unit delivery is not to maximise success rates or funding. As in paragraph 10 (above), where a learner wishes to undertake a target qualification and does not require the flexibility unit delivery may offer, then the provider should not include this learner on the basis of a qualification delivered unit by unit.

18. Please note that there is no requirement to identify unit delivery trials in the Learner Funding and Monitoring section of the ILR. Unit delivery trials can be identified by the completion of the Planned credit value and the Credits achieved fields, which are mandatory for providers delivering QCF units trials. Further information on returning data via the ILR can be found in the [Provider support manual](#) on *the information authority* website: <http://www.theia.org.uk/ilr/ilrdocuments/>

Administration and Staff Development

19. Earlier unit delivery work has shown that providers' internal administration systems should ideally be streamlined as possible to support learner achievement and tracking. An effective database of learners and units is also very helpful. Staff development and training in the principals of unit delivery and CAT is also highly important.

Planning Delivery Models

20. Evaluation of the 2010/11 trials showed that providers prepared delivery models based on local labour market intelligence, learner preference for short learning episodes and progression to Levels 2 and 3. New course starts were able to be offered more frequently (e.g. fortnightly) for the most popular courses and innovative approaches to both curriculum planning and delivery were implemented. The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) has a range of QCF support materials and case studies available at:

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/qcfprovidersupport

Working with Awarding Organisations

21. It is important that providers involved in the UDTs make early contact with the appropriate AOs offering the unit to confirm arrangements with regard to registration, assessment and certification (including the award of credit). Evaluation of the 2010/11 trials identified the importance of good links with AOs to ensure that providers have accurate information about appropriate processes and arrangements. It will be important for providers to agree with the AOs they are working with on how areas like recognition of prior learning and CAT can be supported.

Evaluation

22. Evaluation of the 2011/12 Unit Delivery Trials and the 2011/12 Unit Offer for the Unemployed will be carried out simultaneously by NIACE, with nine providers selected from each. The main purpose of the evaluation is to identify how providers are using opportunities for unit delivery to support a flexible and responsive offer to individuals, including how packages of units can support progression to full qualifications. The evaluation will also aim to identify how provider systems (e.g. IAG, enrolment, initial assessment) can be used to support the development of credit accumulation and transfer within QCF provision, and to enable learner progression.

23. The evaluation will involve desk research, and also fieldwork with participating learners, providers, AOs and employers. Six case studies will be produced to illustrate good practice in unit delivery and CAT as well as any significant issues and barriers. A number of position papers will also be prepared. Final reports containing key findings and elements of selected case studies will be published in March 2012.

Further information

24. If you have any questions about the above briefing, or if you require more information about the 2011/12 Unit Delivery Trials, please contact:

peter.coady@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk

Skills Funding Agency

Cheylesmore House

Quinton Road

Coventry CV1 2WT

T 0845 377 5000

F 024 7682 3675

www.bis.gov.uk/skillsfundingagency

BIS | Department for
Business Innovation & Skills

© 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, please contact the Skills funding Agency Help Desk: 0845 377 5000

Skills Funding Agency – P –120006