

**Qualifications and Credit Framework
Adult Learner Responsive (ALR)
Flexible Delivery (Unit Funding) Trials**

Expressions of Interest Document

21 July 2010

Background

1. The Skills Funding Agency (the Agency) is responsible for the implementation of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) across the post 19 further education and skills system as part of the wider programme of Vocational Qualification Reform Programme. The implementation of the QCF is also being taken forward in the context of the wider agenda of simplification, freedoms and flexibilities across the sector. The transition to the QCF is about ensuring a credit based qualifications framework can deliver greater freedoms and flexibilities through supporting greater learner choice in what is studied and the way learning is delivered and that, where vocational qualifications are available, they are supported by employers and reflect up to date employment standards.
2. So far implementation of the QCF has focussed predominantly upon populating the new framework and supporting providers to move from delivering National Qualification Framework (NQF) provision to QCF provision. Although there have been trials of flexible delivery through supporting the funding of QCF units, these trials have been limited. In addition, any trials have been constrained by current funding and performance approaches which are focussed on the achievement of 'full' and whole qualifications within a specified period.
3. One of the key benefits of the QCF is that it is responsive to learner and employer needs as it allows individuals to learn flexibly and build up achievement in small steps through accumulation and transfer of credit, going forward, the Agency's implementation of the QCF now needs to focus on delivering these benefits to learners and employers. We intend to do this through a refresh of the unit funding trials in Adult Responsive Learning, alongside the broader programme of QCF implementation we are taking forward and alongside the work to simplify approaches to funding and the new Skills Strategy.
4. John Hayes Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning recently announced a firm commitment of giving colleges the freedom to use funds to support learner and employer needs. Through refreshing the unit funding it is anticipated that colleges will now have the opportunity to explore more fully the flexibilities for learners, employers and colleges provided by a unit and credit based framework.
5. As part of the recent announcement on freedom and flexibilities (covered in detail in the Agency's Guidance Note 4), colleges will have a single post-19 budget. This will enable colleges who wish to participate in the unit funding trials to allocate appropriate funds to delivering this provision.
6. By its nature, provision delivered through the unit funding trials will be in scope of, and thus funded through, the Adult Learner Responsive model.
7. The Agency will support flexible delivery and unit funding trials in the following areas:
 - Offender Learning and Skills Service
 - Qualify with a Business (QwaB)
 - Adult Learner Responsive.
8. Although Adult Learner Responsive will host both the QwaB unit funding trials and the broader flexible delivery trials, these two initiatives are separate and have different

parameters concerning the participation of colleges. For full details and guidance with regard to the QwaB trials please go to QCF QwAB webpage:

<http://qcf.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/qcf-funding/policy/>.

9. For the broader unit funding trials in Adult Learner Responsive, the Agency wishes to take these forward through inviting Expressions of Interest from colleges
 - support these through guidance, support and monitoring and reporting from 1 September 2010 to 31 July 2011
 - work with participating colleges to understand what the challenges and issues are around flexible delivery of qualifications
 - work with participating colleges to drive the demand for credit accumulation and transfer
 - work with participating colleges to inform and support the deployment of the Personal Learning Record (PLR)
 - work with participating colleges to ensure outcomes from the trials can inform ongoing funding and performance reform.

Aim, objectives and context

10. Over the past 12 months there have been QCF unit funding trials running in Adult Learner Responsive (ALR), but these have been small scale and have yet to really test the benefits of the QCF, specifically around what the flexible delivery of learning means in practice. In order to progress this work there is therefore a need to continue to understand how colleges can use the flexibilities of QCF in a “live” operational environment and to assess the costs and affordability of flexible delivery from a provider and learner perspective.
11. The context of these unit funding trails is to allow learners the opportunity to realise the benefits of the QCF both through flexible delivery of units and successful modular delivery towards a qualification.
12. The Agency is therefore inviting Expressions of Interest from colleges who wish to participate in the unit funding trials in ALR. In particular, the Agency is keen to work with colleges who may encompass one or more of the following :
 - Have prior expertise and are familiar with delivering provision through the QCF
 - Have experience in delivery through modular and flexible delivery
 - Are working particularly, though not exclusively, with groups of learners who are returning or looking to return to work, operating at entry or level 1.

Expressions of Interest (Eol)

13. In submitting Expressions of Interest to the Agency, colleges need to be aware that involvement in the unit funding trials will **not attract** any additional funding and delivery must be within the existing single post-19 budget for 2010/11.
14. Colleges should also be prepared to work with the Agency in reporting on the outcomes of the trials and be agreeable to participating on the monitoring and review of the progress of the trials.

Scope

15. Only Colleges who are currently delivering Adult Learner Responsive funded provision for the Skills Funding Agency are eligible.
16. The Agency is seeking Eol from a range of between 10 to 25 Colleges.

July 2010

17. The Agency would be particularly keen to receive proposals across a geographical spread.
18. The Agency would also be keen to receive proposals from a range of provider types, including Specialist Designated Institutions (SDI).

Timetable

19. The period for the trials will be for 11 months starting from 1 September 2010.
20. Expressions of Interest should be returned by Friday 13 August 2010.

Criterion for Expressions of Interest

21. The Agency hopes that by indicating the areas of preferred focus within the Expressions of Interest it will encourage colleges to start to explore the benefits of modular delivery and credit accumulation and transfer.

The key parameters to be submitted and evaluated against would be:

- 21.1 Units must be within Rules of Combination of a QCF qualification already confirmed for funding at Entry to Level 4 and appearing on the QCF online list and available for delivery - QCF Confirmation of funding:
<http://qcf.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/qcf-funding/confirmationfunding/>.
- 21.2 Particular focus on learners working at Entry and Level 1 in terms of how flexible delivery can engage hard to reach learners
- 21.3 Particular focus on groups of learners returning to work or preparing to return to work
- 21.4 Particular focus on learners where unitised delivery could stimulate engagement and enhance qualification achievement
- 21.5 Particular focus on flexible delivery across Level 3 and 4 where unitised delivery and credit accumulation and transfer could enhance progression opportunities. (this may involve collaboration with a higher education institution). Proposals that may focus on a particular sector need and may involve working with a Sector Skills Council
- 21.6 Focus on delivery that stimulates co-investment from learners and employers
- 21.7 Proposals that may involve the colleges working strategically with an Awarding Organisations
- 21.8 Particular focus on using flexible delivery to stimulate accumulation and transfer.

Next steps

The attached proforma for Expressions of Interest should be returned to the contact below by **13 August 2010**.

Contact details

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July 2010

**Expression of Interest Proforma Adult Learner
Responsive Flexible Delivery (Unit Funding Trials)**

**Skills
Funding
Agency**

Name of College	
UPIN	
Address of College	Post Code
Contact Person(s) and details Name: Address: Phone: e-mail:	
Aims and Objectives (please provide details of the key aims of the trials in line with the guidance on parameters in para 21)	
Name of Awarding Organisation(s)	
Qualification(s) (please provide details of the range of qualifications)	
QCF Units	
Learner numbers and starting date (anticipated)	
Summary of details of involvement of partners/HEI/SDIetc	

Program delivery mode (eg class room based; distributed and electronic learning; workplace delivery, etc.). Not ER only delivery ¹	
Additional Information	

¹ Provision based on Employer Responsive only is out of the scope of this work.

Skills Funding Agency

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