

VQ WATCH

2009/2

July 2009

A catch up on recent developments in vocational qualifications

This latest VQ Watch brings you news on Functional Skills, FLT, Apprenticeships, QCF, NVQs, BTECs and information from an update meeting with the LSC.

Functional Skills (FS)

Functional Skills can be thought of as having two strands - mainstream, which has just come to the end of its second year in pilot, and adult FS. The good news emerging from the mainstream pilot is that Edexcel's assessment model has been well received, although it's early days for Entry Level. From Jan 2010 Edexcel will be offering 4 assessment windows: Jan, March, Nov and Dec, all paper-based assessments. Entry Level, paper-based, internal assessment, will be on demand.

External assessment for Entry level? It is being suggested that Entry level FS should be externally assessed. Edexcel, however, believes that this is not an appropriate model at Entry level and is challenging this through its consultation response. Part of the problem is the volume of multiple-choice assessment permitted.

Will schools offer FS? This continues to be an issue following the announcement that the hurdle of FS has been dropped from GCSEs. Edexcel is pressing the DCSF to clarify the incentive for schools to take up FS.

On-screen or criteria compliant? Adult FS are just starting an on-screen pilot. Edexcel has informed the Department of its capability to offer flexible, on-demand, on-screen assessments. However in order to do this we will have to step outside the current FS criteria to provide objective testing that can be computer based. The pilot is aimed at adult learners, but can accommodate some part time younger learners, such as those in hospital education, pupil referral units and offender learning. The Department now needs to make a decision as to whether it is happy with this replacement for ALAN .

Be part of the pilot. Edexcel would welcome applications from centres to join the adult/on-screen pilot. You will be dealing with adult learners, ESOL, or younger learners in part time education. You may wish to trial this with just a select number from your cohort, who, ideally will also be taking an ALAN qualification as well, in order that we can compare achievement. We want you to feedback you experiences and you will be able to influence develop to ensure these qualifications are appropriate and successful for your learners. Registration is free, for any number of learners. If you interested in becoming part of the pilot, please follow this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/notices/Pages/fsoap.aspx>, or call James Haskins on 0207 190 4347 for more information.

The Foundation Learning Tier - update guidance now available

The LSC has published its Foundation Learning Tier: Interim Guidance. This is basically an update with particular reference to the changes to the presentation of the Progression Pathways. The guidance outlined in this document will take effect for all providers, pre-and post 19, involved in the phased implementation of the Foundation Learning Tier from August 2009. The LSC would welcome comments and feedback on the interim guidance document via: cvh-QFR@lsc.gov.uk (DIUS VQR e-news)

Apprenticeships

Edexcel submitted a formal response to the recent consultation. The main issue, raised by a number of respondents to the consultation, is that of the 250 hours off-workstation training. Edexcel considers this should be decided on a sector-by-sector basis, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. As we noted in our response, it was a surprise not to see BTECs mentioned as potential progression routes, despite BTECs already featuring in some Apprenticeships and providing established progression routes into others.

The new criteria are due out at the end of August.

FAB/JCQ AO QCF Readiness project workshops

The introductory workshops for Awarding Organisations (AO), run by FAB/JCQ (Federation of Awarding Bodies and the Joint Council for Qualifications) in March and April this year on QCF Design and Realisation and on QCF Regulation and Control, comprised phase one of a FAB/JCQ QCF Readiness Project being funded by QCA.

The next round of workshops are intended to help awarding organisations to develop their expertise in meeting the requirements for QCF recognition, in writing QCF units, in determining level and credit values, and in developing rules of combination. The activities so far planned to December 2009 include: additional, general introductory workshops similar to those in phase one; preparation of stimulus materials on the processes required for QCF recognition; skills development workshops on unit writing and provision of feedback on samples of units from individual awarding organisations; guidance on determining levels and credit values; and development and publication of guidance on developing rules of combination.

Confirmation of fullness - level 2 and level 3

The Secretary of State has agreed the new definition of 'full' Level 3, within the QCF, to be a qualification with a credit value range of a minimum threshold of 25 credits to a maximum threshold of 70 credits. The definition will be implemented for the period to 31st August 2010. Up until then the LSC will monitor, manage and evaluate the new definition. For the full Funding Watch:

[http://www.edexcel.com/Policies/Documents/\(3\)%20Funding%20Watch%202009%203%20New%20defintion%20of%20full%20level%203%20confirmed.pdf](http://www.edexcel.com/Policies/Documents/(3)%20Funding%20Watch%202009%203%20New%20defintion%20of%20full%20level%203%20confirmed.pdf)

Working with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)

There are a number of different ways in which Edexcel is working with SSCs: some are very inclusive when working Awarding Organisations.

The tight timescales remain an issue both for qualifications to be in place for 2010 funding and also for centres to have sufficient preparation time when implementing new qualifications.

Another issue is that of changing NVQs from the current delivery model with performance criteria to the QCF assessment model with learning objectives and assessment criteria. The problem is that the assessment criteria can tend to become a long list of tasks: some units then have over 70 assessment criteria - all of which have to be assessed and passed to gain the credit. Guidance is now available for SSCs to develop competence-based, QCF compliant units: <O:\QCF\policy\QCA-09-4281%20quality%20and%20standardisation.pdf>

The future of NVQs

Edexcel NVQs accredited into the NQF will not have an accredited end date beyond 31st December 2010, although NVQ certification claims may be made up to the certification end date. Edexcel NVQs will be migrated from the NQF to the QCF by December 2010 as competence-based qualifications. Some may have '(NVQ)' in the title - at the discretion of the particular SSC; this may dictate certain types of assessment.

Edexcel QCF competence-based qualifications:

- describe and quantify achievement more readily
- use a centralised system and the unique learner number (ULN) to track learners' achievements
- offer of more flexible programmes and smaller steps of achievement - potentially increasing retention and achievement
- enable in-house training to be recognised within a national framework.

Edexcel is working closely with the SSCs to ensure that Edexcel competence-based qualifications form a part of the Sector Qualification Strategies and to ensure that competence-based qualifications and the Apprenticeship framework continue to be available to centres through Edexcel.

BTECs

Please see the BTEC bulletin (link below) for information regarding:

- BTEC Entry and Introductory qualifications and FLT
- BTEC 2010 briefing events
- New QCF BTEC Firsts and Nationals available for 2010.

http://www.edexcel.com/migrationdocuments/Family%20top%20level/BTEC_Bulletin_Issue_36.pdf

We have formalised our **policy on the age of learners on BTEC Programmes** in order to clarify the age at which learners may commence study for BTEC programmes and when to make registrations to gain certification. To view the policy, please click on the following link: <http://www.edexcel.com/notices/Documents/Age%20of%20Learners.pdf>.

LSC update - key messages from a recent LSC policy update

- Approaches to unit funding are being tested during 2008/09 and 2009/10.
- Credit success rate measure will be tested through the trials.
- Unique Learner Number (ULN) is mandatory for funded provision.
- The new interim definition of full level 2 and full level 3 will apply until 2010/11. The interim definition of full level 2 is 13 credits which can be lower or higher according to the needs of the sector, as identified by the SSC. The interim definition of full level 3 is from 25 credits to 70 credits, which again can be lower or higher according to the needs of the sector, as identified by the SSC.
- There are 56 full level 2 qualifications on the QCF. From August 2009, the LSC expects these qualifications to be delivered in preference to any NQF equivalents offered by the same Awarding Organisation.
- The LSC expects Awarding Organisations to begin to develop qualifications during 2009/10 and expects that by August 2010 there will be a comprehensive offer of full level 3 qualifications available in the QCF.
- The LSC expects that 30% of foundation starts will be on the FLT in 2009/10.
- IAG (to become Careers Information and Advice) is expected to support the learner in context of the QCF.
- August 2010 will mark a significant shift of funding to the QCF.
- QCF qualifications and units will be the core offer of all Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funded programmes.
- The new Adult Entitlement to Learning - the Education and Skills Act 2008 places a new duty on the LSC to secure the provision of free education and training leading to specified qualifications in literacy at Level 1, numeracy at entry Level 3, a first full Level 2 vocational qualification and a first full qualification at Level 3, for all eligible adults in England. The SFA will be responsible for this in 2010. The new legal entitlement is similar, though more limited in scope, to the current adult funding entitlement. The legal entitlement will come into force for the academic year 2009/10.

Survey of QCF regulations by Ofqual

Ofqual is running a survey on the QCF regulations. Edexcel will submit a formal response. The survey is on-line and can be found at:

http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/Regulatory_arrangements_QCF_August08.pdf

QCF gets on the web!

Coming very soon there will be Edexcel internet pages dedicated the QCF!

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