



Qualifications
& Credit
Framework

Make all your learning count
A learner's guide to the Qualifications
and Credit Framework



Do you:

- want the skills and qualifications that employers are looking for?
- want to gain a vocational qualification at your own pace, in a way that suits you?
- want to put what you've already learnt towards a qualification?

If so, read on — this leaflet is for you.

What's happening?

Over the next few years there are going to be some big changes to vocational and work-related qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. These will help you gain skills and qualifications that employers want and support your personal and career development. The biggest change is the introduction of the Qualifications and Credit Framework, or the QCF.



Joe's been working at his local supermarket for a few years, and has completed the in-house training scheme in retail marketing. He's now thinking about changing track and doing a business qualification, but he's worried the training he's already done won't count towards it.

The QCF lets him put all his achievements — at school, college or work — towards a new qualification. So if he decides to do a business qualification in the QCF he won't have to study anything he already knows.

Joe can't commit to studying full time — he has a family to support and can't take the time off work. That's not a problem in the QCF — it's a flexible framework, where qualifications are made up of smaller steps of learning, called units. Joe can complete units as and when it suits him, fitting them around his home and work schedule. These units can then build up into a whole qualification.

Watch our animation to find out how the QCF can benefit learners like Joe at www.qcda.gov.uk/qcf.

What's the QCF?

The QCF recognises small steps of learning and enables you to build up your learning at your own pace and put them towards a full qualification. You can bank all your achievements over time so you don't have to study anything you already know. And all your learning will be stored in your own personal learning record that you can build up as you progress.

How does it work?

Every qualification in the QCF is made up of units. And each unit has a credit value that tells you roughly how long it takes to complete — one credit represents about 10 hours' work. Each unit and qualification also has its own level, between Entry level and level 8, to show how difficult it is.

The names of all the qualifications in the QCF are set out the same and tell you three things — how difficult it is, how long it takes and what it's about.

The level shows how difficult the qualification is. There are nine levels in the QCF, from Entry level to level 8.

Next is **the size** — that's how long the qualification takes to complete. Every qualification in the QCF comes in one of three sizes — Award, Certificate or Diploma. Awards are made up of 1 to 12 credits (or 10 to 120 hours' learning), Certificates 13 to 36 credits (130 to 360 hours' learning) and Diplomas 37 credits or more (370 or more hours' learning).

And **the content** — that's what it's about — could be retail, or leadership, or maybe sport.

Here are two examples of qualification titles, showing how the three parts fit together:

Level 1	Certificate	in sport and active leisure
Level 8	Award	in strategic direction and leadership

So if you were doing the Level 1 Certificate in sport and active leisure, you could include a unit on how the body works, which has a credit value of four. This would take you 40 hours to complete.

What's in it for me? Why should I choose a QCF qualification?

- you'll have the skills and qualifications that employers are looking for
- you'll find it easier to see how qualifications can help your career and personal development
- you can fit learning around your home and work life
- you'll have a better understanding of different qualifications.

CHALLENGE



SIZE

Remember that the qualification name – Award, Certificate or Diploma – tells you how long it will take, not how difficult it is. The level tells you how difficult it is. It's worth knowing that an A level is equivalent to level 3 and a PhD is equivalent to level 8 in the QCF.

Foundation Learning helps learners working at Entry level and level 1 in the QCF in England to develop their potential and prepares them to progress towards level 2 and other routes.

It's your choice

In the QCF you build your own qualification from different combinations of units, to suit your personal circumstances, interests and skills. Qualifications are made up of units you have to do and some that you can choose to do. The units can be put together to make up a qualification. As long as the units you're taking fit the rules about combining them, they'll add up to a whole qualification.

Make all your learning count

Nobody wants to study the same thing twice, and in the QCF you don't have to. If part of your QCF qualification is made up of units that you've already completed for another qualification, you can simply transfer the credit you've gained to your new qualification. Once you've learnt something new, a record of it stays

with you as you move in and out of education and training, and from job to job.

The QCF also lets you put together your achievements from different places. So your qualification could be made up of units from your training at work and units that you completed at college. Not only that, if you can demonstrate you have the relevant skills and knowledge to complete a unit but don't actually have the recorded evidence to prove it, there's the chance to use this towards a QCF unit or qualification.

'Being able to study towards a qualification at work allows me to progress through the company despite having few school qualifications.'

Claire, a customer service manager completing a QCF qualification through her retail employer





See how Manjit, a part-time student, used the QCF to her advantage.

'When my husband got laid off last year I had to give up my child care qualification half way through the year to find a job. Now he's back in work but we had to move house and I'm still working part-time. I saw the same qualification was being offered part-time by the local college so I went to see if I could start it again. They told me that the credits I'd already got before I left could still count towards the

qualification, even though it's offered by a different exam board. They also offered me some different options to earn credits, including one I can do through a project at work. I've already got some credits from my new course, so I should complete the qualification next year. It's been a life saver for me — I thought I'd have to go back and start the course all over again. I'm already thinking about doing the next level qualification when I finish this one, and carrying on working too.'

Where to go for help

To watch an animation on how the QCF works, and for all sorts of other useful information about the new framework, visit www.qcda.gov.uk/qcf.

You can also find more information on the QCF and vocational qualification reform if you go to www.direct.gov.uk and do a search for 'QCF'.

For advice on learning and qualifications for 13- to 19-year-olds, contact Connexions Direct on 0808 13 2 19 or visit www.connexions-direct.com.

For advice for adult learners, contact the Careers Advice Services on 0800 100 900 or visit www.direct.gov.uk/careersadvice.

For advice on funding in the QCF, visit <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvqrp/support>.

To find out more about how the QCF is regulated, visit www.ofqual.gov.uk.

Size



Qualifications and Curriculum
Development Agency (England)
53-55 Butts Road
Earlsdon Park
Coventry CV1 3BH
Telephone 0300 303 3011
Email info@qcda.gov.uk
www.qcda.gov.uk

Department for Children, Education,
Lifelong Learning and Skills (Wales)
cqfwenquiries@wales.gsi.gov.net
www.cqfw.net

Council for the Curriculum,
Examinations and Assessment
(Northern Ireland)
info@ccea.org.uk
www.ccea.org.uk

QCDA/10/4623
ISBN 978-1-84962-304-9

We want our website and publications to be widely accessible, so please contact QCDA if we're not meeting your needs.

QCDA is developing the QCF with partners as part of a major reform of the vocational qualifications system.

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