

Total Qualification Time Criteria
For All Qualifications

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Contents

1	Introduction	2
	About this document	2
	About these criteria	2
2	Criteria for assigning to a qualification a number of hours for Total Qualification Time.....	5
	The criteria	5
	Qualifications which an awarding organisation proposes to make available	5
	Qualifications which an awarding organisation already makes available.....	6
	Recording a determination.....	7
3	Criteria for assigning to a qualification a number of hours for Guided Learning ..	8
	The criteria	8
	Qualifications which an awarding organisation proposes to make available	8
	Qualifications which an awarding organisation already makes available.....	9
	Recording a determination.....	10

Erratum

This document was updated in March 2017 to correct a minor typographical error in paragraph 2.13.

1 Introduction

About this document

- 1.1 In September 2015, we introduced our new Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF). We did this by publishing new *General Conditions of Recognition*¹ which require awarding organisations to take a consistent approach to determining the level, and describing the size, of regulated qualifications.
- 1.2 This document supports those General Conditions of Recognition, by setting out criteria which awarding organisations must apply when describing the size of a qualification.

About these criteria

- 1.3 These criteria are set and published by Ofqual under section 146(1)(b) of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act') and Condition E7 of the General Conditions of Recognition.
- 1.4 The criteria set out in this document apply to all awarding organisations in respect of all qualifications regulated by Ofqual.
- 1.5 In order to meet the requirements of section 145 of the 2009 Act with respect to a qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must:
 - (a) determine whether that qualification is a relevant qualification for the purposes of the Education and Skills Act 2008 ('the 2008 Act')², and

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-conditions-of-recognition

² Under section 145(9) of the 2009 Act, a qualification will be relevant for 2008 Act purposes if there are, or may reasonably be expected to be, persons seeking to obtain the qualification for the purposes of discharging the duty under section 2(1)(c) of the 2008 Act (the duty to participate in education or training). When determining whether or not a qualification is relevant for 2008 Act purposes, an awarding organisation must apply the criteria set out in Ofqual's *Criteria for determining whether a qualification is relevant for the purposes of the Education and Skills Act 2008* (www.gov.uk/government/publications/criteria-for-determining-whether-a-qualification-is-relevant-for-the-purposes-of-the-education-and-skills-act-2008).

- (b) if it is relevant, determine a number of hours for Guided Learning³ to be assigned to that qualification.
- 1.6 Condition E7.1 builds on this obligation. For any qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available – whether or not that qualification is relevant for 2008 Act purposes – Condition E7.1 requires an awarding organisation to:
- (a) assign a number of hours for Total Qualification Time to that qualification, and
 - (b) assign a number of hours for Guided Learning to that qualification.
- 1.7 As defined under General Condition J1.8, Total Qualification Time is the number of notional hours which represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could reasonably be expected to be required in order for a Learner to achieve and demonstrate the achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of a qualification.
- 1.8 Total Qualification Time is comprised of the following two elements:
- (a) the number of hours which an awarding organisation has assigned to a qualification for Guided Learning, and
 - (b) an estimate of the number of hours a Learner will reasonably be likely to spend in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed by – but, unlike Guided Learning, not under the Immediate Guidance or Supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.
- 1.9 Where a qualification is relevant for 2008 Act purposes, Section 145(5) of the 2009 Act requires an awarding organisation to apply the criteria in this document when assigning a number of hours for Guided Learning to a qualification.
- 1.10 Condition E7.3 further requires an awarding organisation to apply the criteria set out in this document when assigning a number of hours for Total

³ Terms in this document should be interpreted in line with General Condition J1, apart from references to a 'qualification' which, under Condition E7.9, are references to a qualification as a whole and not to individual units.

Qualification Time to a qualification, and when assigning a number of hours for Guided Learning to a qualification.

- 1.11 This means that, whether or not a qualification is relevant for 2008 Act purposes, an awarding organisation must apply the criteria set out in this document when assigning to that qualification a number of hours for Total Qualification Time and Guided Learning.
- 1.12 The rest of this document is structured as follows:
- (a) Section 2 sets out the criteria that an awarding organisation must apply in determining a number of hours for Total Qualification Time to assign to a qualification.
 - (b) Section 3 sets out the criteria that an awarding organisation must apply in determining a number of hours for Guided Learning to assign to a qualification.

2 Criteria for assigning to a qualification a number of hours for Total Qualification Time

- 2.1 This section sets out the criteria that must be applied by an awarding organisation in determining, under Condition E7.1(a), a number of hours for Total Qualification Time to assign to a qualification.
- 2.2 An awarding organisation must determine the number of hours for Total Qualification Time to be assigned to a qualification which it proposes to make available applying the criteria in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.10, as relevant.
- 2.3 An awarding organisation must determine the number of hours for Total Qualification Time to be assigned to a qualification which it already makes available applying the criteria in paragraphs 2.11 to 2.15, as relevant.
- 2.4 In all cases an awarding organisation must comply with the criteria in paragraphs 2.16 to 2.18.

The criteria

Qualifications which an awarding organisation proposes to make available

- 2.5 Where an awarding organisation provides Guided Learning to Learners in respect of one or more qualifications which are similar to the qualification for which the determination is being made ('Similar Qualifications'), the awarding organisation must estimate the number of hours of Total Qualification Time which a Learner is reasonably likely to undertake in respect of each Similar Qualification.
- 2.6 Where Guided Learning is provided by one or more Centres and/or third parties in respect of a Similar Qualification, an awarding organisation must gather estimates from a reasonable number of those Centres and third parties of the number of hours of Total Qualification Time which a Learner is reasonably likely to undertake in respect of each Similar Qualification.
- 2.7 Where neither paragraph 2.5 nor 2.6 applies, an awarding organisation must estimate the number of hours of Total Qualification Time which it considers a Learner is reasonably likely to undertake in respect of the qualification.
- 2.8 In arriving at any estimate under paragraph 2.7 an awarding organisation must have due regard to any relevant information which is reasonably available to the awarding organisation, including information from Users of

Similar Qualifications and any organisations with relevant expertise including employer organisations, funding agencies, inspectorates and relevant statutory bodies.

- 2.9 An awarding organisation must ensure that the number of hours for Total Qualification Time that it assigns to a qualification which it proposes to make available includes the number of hours that it has assigned to that qualification for Guided Learning.
- 2.10 In addition, when assigning a number of hours for Total Qualification Time to a qualification which it proposes to make available an awarding organisation must have due regard to:
- (a) any estimates gathered under paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6,
 - (b) in relation to those estimates under paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6, any relevant information which is reasonably available to the awarding organisation, including information from Users of Similar Qualifications and any organisations with relevant expertise including employer organisations, funding agencies, inspectorates and relevant statutory bodies, and
 - (c) any estimate arrived at under paragraph 2.7.

Qualifications which an awarding organisation already makes available

- 2.11 Where all or part of the Guided Learning in respect of a qualification is provided by an awarding organisation, the awarding organisation must estimate the number of hours of Total Qualification Time which it considers that a Learner is reasonably likely to undertake in respect of the qualification.
- 2.12 In arriving at any estimate under paragraph 2.11 an awarding organisation must have due regard to any relevant information which is reasonably available to the awarding organisation, including information from Users of Similar Qualifications and any organisations with relevant expertise including employer organisations, funding agencies, inspectorates and relevant statutory bodies.
- 2.13 Where all or part of the Guided Learning in respect of a qualification is provided by one or more Centres and/or third parties, an awarding organisation must gather estimates from a reasonable number of those Centres and third parties of the number of hours of Total Qualification Time they consider to be reasonably likely to be undertaken by a Learner in respect of the qualification.
- 2.14 An awarding organisation must ensure that the number of hours for Total Qualification Time that it assigns to a qualification which it makes available

includes the number of hours that it has assigned to that qualification for Guided Learning.

- 2.15 In addition, when assigning a number of hours for Total Qualification Time to a qualification which it makes available an awarding organisation must have due regard to:
- (a) any estimate arrived at under paragraph 2.11,
 - (b) any estimates gathered under paragraph 2.13, and
 - (c) in relation to those estimates under paragraphs 2.11 and 2.13, any relevant information which is reasonably available to the awarding organisation, including information from Users of Similar Qualifications and any organisations with relevant expertise including employer organisations, funding agencies, inspectorates and relevant statutory bodies.

Recording a determination

- 2.16 Where a qualification contains a choice of optional routes which have differing numbers of hours for Total Qualification Time, an awarding organisation must assign the lowest number of those hours to that qualification.
- 2.17 An awarding organisation must record its determination, together with the reasons for it, and retain all supporting evidence gathered under paragraphs 2.6, 2.8, 2.10(b), 2.12, 2.13 and 2.15(c) for so long as it continues to offer the qualification.
- 2.18 An awarding organisation must ensure that it is capable of providing a reasoned justification for its determination to Ofqual on request, together with all supporting evidence which it has retained under paragraph 2.17.

3 Criteria for assigning to a qualification a number of hours for Guided Learning

- 3.1 This section sets out the criteria that must be applied by an awarding organisation in determining, under section 145(3)(b) of the 2009 Act and Condition E7.1(b), a number of hours for Guided Learning to assign to a qualification.
- 3.2 An awarding organisation must determine the number of hours for Guided Learning to be assigned to a qualification which it proposes to make available applying the criteria in paragraphs 3.5 to 3.8, as relevant.
- 3.3 An awarding organisation must determine the number of hours for Guided Learning to be assigned to a qualification which it already makes available applying the criterion in paragraph 3.9.
- 3.4 In all cases an awarding organisation must comply with the criteria in paragraphs 3.10 to 3.12, as relevant.

The criteria

Qualifications which an awarding organisation proposes to make available

- 3.5 Where all or part of the Guided Learning in respect of a qualification will be provided by an awarding organisation, the awarding organisation must:
 - (a) where the awarding organisation provides Guided Learning in respect of one or more Similar Qualifications, calculate the number of hours of Guided Learning provided by the awarding organisation to a Learner in respect of each Similar Qualification, or
 - (b) where paragraph 3.5(a) does not apply, estimate the number of hours of Guided Learning which the awarding organisation intends to provide to a Learner in respect of the qualification.
- 3.6 In arriving at any estimate under paragraph 3.5(b), an awarding organisation must have due regard to any relevant information which is reasonably available to the awarding organisation, including information from Users of Similar Qualifications and any organisations with relevant expertise including employer organisations, funding agencies, inspectorates and relevant statutory bodies.

- 3.7 Where all or part of the Guided Learning in respect of a qualification will be provided by one or more Centres and/or third parties, an awarding organisation must:
- (a) where Guided Learning in respect of a Similar Qualification is provided by one or more Centres and/or third parties, gather statements from a reasonable number of those Centres and third parties of the number of hours of Guided Learning which they provide to a Learner in respect of each Similar Qualification (whether made available by the awarding organisation or other awarding organisations), or
 - (b) where paragraph 3.7(a) does not apply, gather estimates from a reasonable number of Centres and/or third parties of the number of hours of Guided Learning which they would be likely to provide to a Learner in respect of the qualification.
- 3.8 When assigning a number of hours for Guided Learning to a qualification an awarding organisation must have due regard to:
- (a) any numbers calculated under paragraph 3.5(a) or any estimate arrived at under paragraph 3.5(b),
 - (b) any numbers gathered under paragraph 3.7(a) or any estimates gathered under paragraph 3.7(b), and
 - (c) in relation to any numbers gathered under paragraph 3.7(a) and any estimates gathered under paragraph 3.7(b), any relevant information which is reasonably available to the awarding organisation, including information from Users of Similar Qualifications and any organisations with relevant expertise including employer organisations, funding agencies, inspectorates and any relevant statutory bodies.

Qualifications which an awarding organisation already makes available

- 3.9 In respect of a qualification which it makes available, an awarding organisation must:
- (a) calculate the number of hours of Guided Learning which it provides to a Learner in respect of the qualification,
 - (b) where any Guided Learning in respect of the qualification is provided by one or more Centres and/or third parties, gather statements from a reasonable number of those Centres and third parties in regard to the number of hours of such Guided Learning which those Centres and/or third parties provide to a Learner, and

- (c) assign a number of hours for Guided Learning to the qualification having due regard to the number calculated under paragraph 3.9(a) and the numbers gathered under paragraph 3.9(b).

Recording a determination

- 3.10 Where a qualification contains a choice of optional routes which have differing numbers of hours for Guided Learning, an awarding organisation must assign the lowest number of those hours to that qualification.
- 3.11 An awarding organisation must record its determination, together with the reasons for it, and retain all supporting evidence gathered under paragraphs 3.5(a), 3.6, 3.7, 3.8(c), and 3.9(b) for so long as it continues to offer the qualification.
- 3.12 An awarding organisation must ensure that it is capable of providing a reasoned justification for its determination to Ofqual on request, together with all supporting evidence which it has retained under paragraph 3.11.

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