

## **Ofqual's statistical releases**

# **Consultation on proposed changes to Vocational Quarterly and Annual Qualifications Market Report**



February 2017

Ofqual/17/6164

# Contents

Summary .....	3
Background .....	4
Proposed changes .....	6
Responding to the consultation .....	11

## Summary

This consultation seeks feedback on our proposal to merge two statistical bulletins published by Ofqual: *Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly* and *Annual Qualifications Market Report*. The statistics are part of '[official statistics](#)' which are the statistics produced by public bodies, including government departments and Crown bodies.

We propose to amalgamate the two current statistical bulletins into a single, consolidated report of qualifications for both general and vocational qualifications. The resulting publication will provide a more comprehensive picture of the trends in qualifications in a given academic year. We believe that it will be more useful to our readers in understanding the developments in the area of qualifications and market shares of awarding organisations.

We believe our proposal is in line with the provisions of the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) which recommends reviewing statistical releases and resources allocated to them regularly as well as consulting users before making any major changes to statistical bulletins as good practice. The Code of Practice is published by the [UK Statistics Authority](#) whose objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve public good.

This document gives our rationale for merging the two bulletins, our explanation of the proposed changes and their implementation and information on how to give your feedback on the proposed changes. The consultation also provides opportunity to give feedback on the existing content of the two bulletins which will help us develop content for the new publication.

## Background

The *Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly* (VQ quarterly) presents information on the number of qualifications and certificates issued for regulated qualifications, excluding GCSEs and A levels, during a given quarter in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each quarter, we publish:

- (i) a report containing commentary on data and
- (ii) [accompanying VQ datasets](#) (number of certificates awarded for each qualification).

The release is classed as [National Statistics](#)<sup>1</sup>. The latest release is [available online on gov.uk](#).

The *Annual Qualifications Market Report* (AQMR) provides information on vocational qualifications (VQ) and general qualifications (GQ): GCSE, AS and A levels. It presents information on the number of qualifications and certificates issued for regulated qualifications at subject level during an academic year, as well as market share of awarding organisations providing these qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For each academic year we publish:

- (i) a report containing commentary on data and
- (ii) an [accompanying GQ dataset](#) (number of certificates awarded for each qualification).

The release is classed as Official Statistics. The latest release is [available online on gov.uk](#). Thus, a part of the information provided in the VQ quarterly is also published in the AQMR.

As presented currently, the number of certificates awarded according to qualification level, type, sector subject area and most popular qualifications and awarding organisations (in terms of number of certificates awarded) is duplicated in the AQMR and VQ quarterly. The content unique only to the VQ quarterly report includes an additional breakdown by second-tier subject area as well as certification volumes by awarding organisations by country (England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

Both the reports have been produced in the same format for the past few years. The publications need to be more relevant and accessible to different user styles, given

---

<sup>1</sup> National Statistics are a subset of official statistics which have been certified by the UK Statistics Authority as compliant with its Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

the fast-changing developments in the qualifications landscape and data visualisation.

The changes will also give us an opportunity to make the resulting publication more engaging, clear and informative. More information on the proposal is given ahead. We welcome your feedback on the proposal. Information on how to respond is given towards the back of this consultation.

## Proposed changes

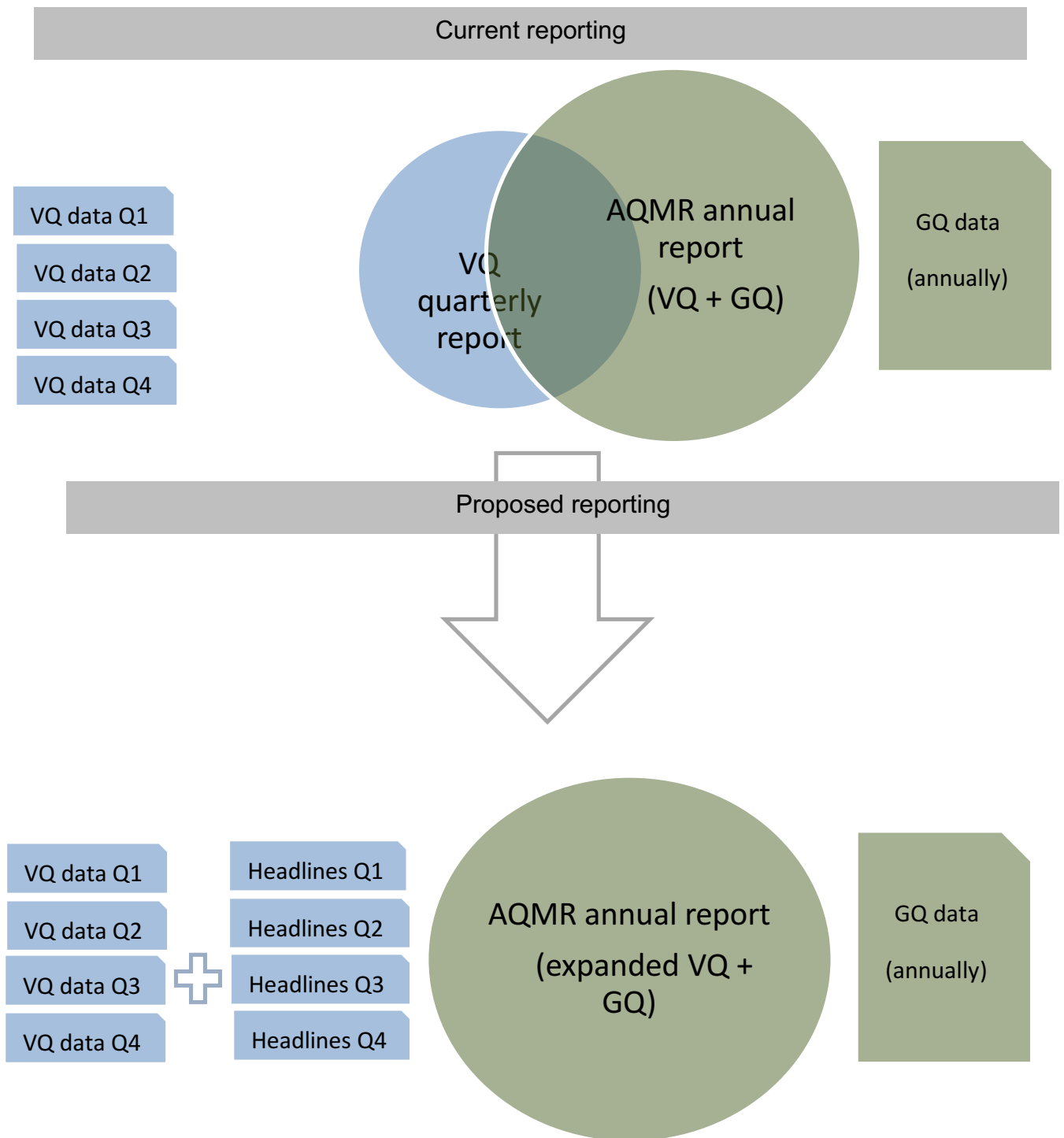
We propose to:

- ✓ merge VQ quarterly report with the AQMR;
- ✓ publish the new report annually;
- ✓ continue publishing GQ dataset annually;
- ✓ continue publishing VQ datasets quarterly (and introduce supporting headline statistics).

The resulting statistical release will be published annually.

The current reporting and the proposed reporting are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: summary of current situation and proposed reporting



## Advantages and disadvantages of the proposal

The advantages and disadvantages are:

- No duplication of VQ content between VQ quarterly and AQMR
- + One consolidated market report (VQ and GQ)  
Resource saving (enabling us to improve this and other publications)
- VQ commentary will not be available each quarter in its current form (although we will introduce headline statistics each quarter)

Under this proposal, Ofqual's commentary for each quarter's results in its current form will no longer be available. However, we realise the importance of quarterly updates of the VQ market for our users and therefore propose to carry on publishing VQ datasets every quarter. In addition, we propose to start providing headline statistics every quarter, along with data, so that we can highlight key trends. The headline statistics that we believe will provide a useful summary for a quarter are: change in the number of qualifications and certificates by level and sector subject area compared to the same quarter in previous year. The headline statistics can be reviewed at regular intervals if the nature of qualifications market and user need requires. Examples of headline trends are given in Figure 2 and Figure 3. Please note that Figure 2 and Figure 3 should be treated as examples and may not be representative of actual data or the final design.



Figure 2: Sample headline trends - number of available **qualifications** by level and sector subject area compared to the same quarter in previous year

	July-September 2015	July-September 2016	% change
<b>Number of available qualifications</b>	31,600	31,211	-1
<b>Number of available qualifications by level</b>			
Entry level	3,535	3,486	-1
Level 1	4,210	4,121	-2
Level 1/2	318	321	1
Level 2	10,343	10,169	-2
Level 3	9,537	9,500	0
Level 4	2,137	2,111	-1
Level 5	939	922	-2
Level 6	323	321	-1
Level 7	252	253	0
Level 8	6	7	17
<b>Number of available qualifications by sector subject area</b>			
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	1,277	1,213	-5
Arts, media and publishing	2,171	2,172	0
Business, administration, finance and law	3,653	3,594	-2
Construction, planning and the built environment	2,164	2,119	-2
Education and training	1,632	1,640	0
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	3,617	3,628	0
Health, public services and care	3,508	3,421	-2
History, philosophy and theology	68	69	1
Information and communication technology	733	754	3
Languages, literature and culture	1,500	1,382	-8
Leisure, travel and tourism	1,482	1,487	0
Preparation for life and work	5,579	5,502	-1
Retail and commercial enterprise	3,890	3,881	0
Science and mathematics	289	310	7
Social sciences	37	39	5

Figure 3: Sample headline trends - number of **certificates** by level and sector subject area compared to the same quarter in previous year

	July-September 2015	July-September 2016	% change
<b>Overall number of certificates awarded</b>	3,789,200	3,293,650	-13
<b>Number of certificates by qualification level</b>			
Entry level	467,550	409,900	-12
Level 1	715,600	590,600	-17
Level 1/ Level 2	752,050	614,650	-18
Level 2	1,112,150	924,050	-17
Level 3	687,100	699,700	2
Level 4	29,700	28,700	-3
Level 5	17,150	19,000	11
Level 6	5,750	5,850	2
Level 7	2,050	1,150	-44
Level 8	100	50	-32
<b>Number of certificates by sector subject area</b>			
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	49,500	46,850	-5
Arts, media and publishing	384,200	372,650	-3
Business, administration, finance and law	220,700	189,250	-14
Construction, planning and the built environment	117,500	117,950	0
Education and training	35,100	29,750	-15
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	159,200	149,350	-6
Health, public services and care	393,100	356,700	-9
History, philosophy and theology	26,200	22,800	-13
Information and communication technology	239,550	187,050	-22
Languages, literature and culture	450,250	388,900	-14
Leisure, travel and tourism	202,350	177,950	-12
Preparation for life and work	1,052,150	867,200	-18
Retail and commercial enterprise	196,150	177,600	-9
Science and mathematics	253,800	198,900	-22
Social sciences	9,450	10,700	13

**Note: figure 2 and figure 3 should be treated only as examples and may not represent actual data or the final design**

We propose to expand the scope of the resulting AQMR report to include additional VQ content which is currently only available in the VQ quarterly report. This will ensure that trends given in the current VQ quarterly report also get reported in the new AQMR report. Ofqual will continue to answer any queries based on the datasets. We can also redeploy resources to improve our overall suite of official statistics.

We believe that the proposed solution aligns with [the UK Statistics Authority's Business plan 2016-2020](#) which aims to focus “on the release of data, metadata and key headlines, moving away from traditional ‘statistical bulletins’ and static publications whenever appropriate, informed by users.”

### Timings

Subject to this consultation, we plan to publish the new AQMR for the academic year 2016-17 in January 2018 and in each January thereafter. The AQMR for academic year 2015-16 will be released as scheduled (July 2017). The VQ quarterly report for quarter 4 of 2016 will be released as scheduled (March 2017). However, from quarter 1 of 2017 onwards no standalone VQ quarterly report will be released. The VQ quarterly datasets, along with new quarterly headline statistics, will however be released. The timeline of the proposed changes for the next 12 months is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Timeline of the proposed changes for the next 12 months

	Jan 2017	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Dec	Jan 2018
Existing AQMR							2015-16					
New AQMR												2016-17
Existing VQ quarterly			Q4 2016									
New VQ headline trends							Q1 2017		Q2 2017		Q3 2017	
Existing VQ quarterly data			Q4 2016				Q1 2017		Q2 2017		Q3 2017	

## Responding to the consultation

We value your feedback on these proposed changes. Please respond to the consultation by completing your responses online at

[https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Consultation\\_StatisticalReleases/](https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Consultation_StatisticalReleases/)

### Your details

To evaluate responses properly, we need to know who is responding to the consultation and in what capacity. Your response will only be considered if you complete the following information section.

We will publish our evaluation of responses. Please note that we may publish all or part of your response unless you tell us in your answer to the confidentiality question, that you want us to treat your response as confidential. If you tell us you wish your response to be treated as confidential, we will not include your details in any published list of respondents, although we may quote from your response anonymously.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is **5pm on 24 March 2017**.

We wish to make our publications widely accessible. Please contact us at [publications@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:publications@ofqual.gov.uk) if you have any specific accessibility requirements.



© Crown copyright 2017

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [publications@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:publications@ofqual.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofqual](http://www.gov.uk/ofqual).

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation

Spring Place  
Coventry Business Park  
Herald Avenue  
Coventry CV5 6UB

Telephone 0300 303 3344  
Textphone 0300 303 3345  
Helpline 0300 303 3346