

9 December 2014

Our ref: RO29/2014

Dear Responsible Officer

Withdrawing the QCF rules

Ofqual's consultation on withdrawing the Qualifications and Credit Framework Regulatory Arrangements (the QCF rules) in England and Northern Ireland closed on 16 October 2014. Following careful consideration of the responses to our consultation, we have decided that we should withdraw the QCF rules because they do not always support the development and delivery of valid qualifications. A summary of our decision and an analysis of consultation responses can be read [here](#). Our original consultation, including our review of the QCF, can be read [here](#).

A number of responses to our consultation asked about transitional arrangements and sought more time to plan for changes. For that reason, we will not begin to wind down unit sharing or close the unit bank in January 2015, but will work towards closure of the bank at the same time as the withdrawal of the QCF rules. Subject to further consultation, we expect this to be from summer 2015 at the earliest. When the unit bank is closed, a two-year notice period will start for any withdrawal of shared units.

When we withdraw the QCF rules, awarding organisations will continue to be able to deliver and develop qualifications which retain the features of QCF qualifications, such as unitisation, credit and mastery, so long as the qualifications are valid and otherwise comply with the General Conditions.

In the New Year, we will publish a consultation setting out our implementation plans and drafts of any new guidance and Conditions necessary to enable changes to take place. We are considering further some of the issues raised in responses to our consultation. For example, the use of the term 'QCF' and 'Award', 'Certificate' and 'Diploma' in titling, and how the level of a qualification can be determined and described consistently, for example within a qualifications framework. We will also set out any Conditions or guidance necessary to secure consistent approaches to credit, where an awarding organisation chooses to use it, taking into account responses to our recent consultation on Guided Learning Hours.

We will invite awarding organisations to a series of consultation events to discuss implementation plans and proposed timings, and you will also be able to respond formally to our consultation. The transition process will be planned and phased to manage changes as smoothly as possible. It will be vital to have your input to make sure that we understand and minimise unnecessary impact on awarding organisations. An indicative high level timeline setting out the next steps is at Annex A.

We know that our decision has implications for other processes managed by other Government bodies. We are in discussions with relevant Government departments and agencies, including the Skills Funding Agency. In addition to this, we are establishing a 'Transition Advisory Group' to advise us on the technical aspects of transition and the appropriate sequencing of changes, particularly any IT changes. We have invited the relevant Government bodies, regulators in the devolved administrations, and the awarding body representative groups, the Federation of Awarding Bodies, and the Joint Council for Qualifications to take part in this Group.

Please contact our Regulatory Relationships team at regulatory.relationships@ofqual.gov.uk if you have any questions about this letter, or about our overall approach. As well as keeping JCQ and FAB aware via our Transition Advisory Group, and offering events during our technical consultation, the Relationships team will also collate and make available answers to 'frequently asked questions' as we go through the transition process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy Benson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish underneath the name.

Jeremy Benson

cc. Roger McCune, CCEA and Kate Crabtree, Welsh Government

Annex A High level indicative timeframe

Annex A High level indicative timeframe

This table sets out an indicative high level timeframe for technical consultation and implementation.

What	When	Who
Establishment of a 'Transition Advisory Group'	January 2015, to meet regularly thereafter.	Ofqual. Invitees include: SFA, DfE, DEL, EFA, BIS, FAB, JCQ, Welsh Government, CCEA (regulator), DE, SQA (regulator)
Technical consultation on QCF withdrawal plans opens	February/March 2015	Ofqual to consult publicly
Technical consultation events for awarding bodies	March 2015	Ofqual, awarding organisations
Technical consultation closes	May/June 2015	Ofqual
Ofqual reviews and analyses consultation responses	June/July 2015	Ofqual
<i>Earliest date for closure of the unit bank and withdrawal of QCF rules. Two year notice period for withdrawing shared units begins</i>	<i>Summer 2015</i>	<i>Ofqual</i> <i>Awarding bodies</i>
<i>Earliest end to two year notice period for withdrawing shared units</i>	<i>Summer 2017</i>	<i>Awarding bodies</i>

Milestones in italics are subject to consultation

