

06 August 2015

Our Ref: RO37/2015

Dear Responsible Officer

After the QCF: a new qualifications framework

Ofqual's consultation on what should happen after we withdraw the QCF rules, "After the QCF: a new qualifications framework" closed on 17 June 2015. We will publish a summary of our analysis of the responses to the consultation and a regulatory impact assessment in September 2015, but having previously confirmed (see RO31/2015) that we would withdraw the QCF and close the shared unit bank during 2015, we wanted to notify you as soon as possible about our final decisions and when some of them will take effect.

The 119 respondents to our [consultation](#) broadly supported our proposals for a new Regulated Qualifications Framework. They also supported the rules and guidance we proposed to put in place to support the framework and enable us effectively to regulate when the QCF rules are withdrawn.

We received some helpful feedback in the responses and as a result we will be making some amendments to the rules and guidance on which we consulted. An important change that we wanted to bring to your attention is to our proposals on how the sizes of qualifications are described. In the consultation we proposed that all qualifications should have a size expressed in terms of Total Qualification Time (TQT), made up of Guided Learning Hours (GLH), Dedicated Assessment Hours and Invigilated Assessment Hours. Based on the responses we received we have simplified this and decided that all qualifications should have a figure for TQT and, where appropriate, part of this should be expressed in terms of GLH.

In summary we have decided that:

- The Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework will be withdrawn and the QCF Unit Bank closed on 30 September 2015

- The functionality in RITS which facilitates QCF unit sharing will be switched off on 30 September 2015
- A new framework for all Ofqual-regulated qualifications will be introduced on 1 October 2015 supported by level descriptors ranging from Entry 1 to Level 8 for the categories of knowledge and skills
- There will be requirements for every qualification to be assigned to a level in accordance with the level descriptors
- Where the level of a qualification is exceptionally changed, there will be requirements for that change to be undertaken only as part of a planned process and for that change to be communicated to all users
- There will be requirements for all qualifications to have a size, expressed in terms of Total Qualification Time (TQT) and where appropriate, Guided Learning Hours (GLH)
- There will be requirements that where an AO decides to use credit, credit is calculated as TQT divided by 10
- There will be requirements that any awarding organisation intending to allow the recognition of prior learning should publish its policy and follow it
- There will be new guidance in respect of Condition E2 (Titling) concerning the use of particular terms in the titles of qualifications, the removal of the term “QCF” from the title of qualifications, and the use of the term NVQ where a qualification is based on agreed occupational standards, confers occupational competence and requires work-based and/or simulated assessment.

What happens next?

Assuming that existing qualifications are valid and meet our Conditions, the changes we are introducing will have little impact on the way in which users experience them. Qualification structures, delivery and assessment methods and outcomes need not change, although we require you to keep under review, and enhance where necessary, your approach to the development, delivery and award of qualifications to make sure that your approach remains appropriate (Condition D3.1). New qualifications will not have to meet any of the QCF rules, once those rules have been withdrawn.

We want all stakeholders, including users, to understand the changes, and so as we move into September we will be undertaking wider communications with all those who are likely to be affected. We recognise that users are likely to be most interested in the impact of the changes on the qualifications you design and award, rather than in the changes to the rules themselves. We will be developing information materials which you can use with centres and providers to explain the changes or which can be accessed directly by them.

The new rules will be published in September. As we made clear in the consultation, some of these will be subject to sunrise provisions which means they will not have immediate effect for existing qualifications but will only come into force when we write to give notice to you.

We will soon give notice to you that the requirements for all new qualifications to have a measure of size will come into effect on 1 October 2015. For existing qualifications, we have decided that awarding organisations must have allocated a measure of size, expressed in terms of TQT and GLH by no later than 31 December 2017. We may however elect to bring this date forward for specific types of qualifications and will keep this date under review. If we decide to bring the date forward we will give you advance notice and explain our reasons.

Although we have allowed you additional time before bringing the new requirements into force for all existing qualifications, this is to ensure that you properly review your existing qualifications and make evidence-based decisions on TQT and, where appropriate, GLH allocations. We would however encourage you to move to full compliance with the new requirements as soon as you reasonably can.

Similarly, we have decided that from 1 October 2015 we will consider that inclusion of the term “QCF” in the title of a new qualification will be indicative of non-compliance with our titling rules. For existing qualifications, if the term QCF is not removed from the title on the Register and in marketing materials by 31 December 2017 it will be seen as an indication of non-compliance with our titling rules. Students’ certificates can of course continue to have QCF in the title of the qualification where they are awarded beyond 31 December 2017 if the term was in use in the qualification (and appearing on the Register) at the time they started it.

Please note that these changes will only relate to qualifications regulated by Ofqual. The changes will not affect those qualifications which are regulated by others and any queries about their proposals should be directed to those regulators.

We will contact you again in the next few weeks with more information on the technical aspects of the RITS changes and on the publication of the new rules. If in the meantime you have any questions about the contents of this letter or any other aspects of the changes, please contact our Regulatory Relationships team at: regulatory.relationships@ofqual.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Benson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jeremy Benson

Executive Director for Vocational Qualifications