

14 October 2014

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To: Responsible Officers

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and Examinations Regulation
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Dear Responsible Officer

Lifting the accreditation requirement

We consulted during the summer on our proposal to lift the general accreditation requirement currently in place and to re-impose an accreditation requirement for GCSEs, AS and A level qualifications. Having considered the responses to the consultation, we have decided to proceed as proposed.

We will lift the general accreditation requirement at 12 noon on Monday 3 November and immediately re-impose an accreditation requirement for GCSE, AS and A level qualifications.

We will also impose a specific accreditation requirement on individual awarding organisations, where we do not have full confidence in their qualification design, development, approval or quality assurance arrangements. We will write to each awarding organisation on which we intend to impose an accreditation requirement, explaining our reasons and, in accordance with our Taking Regulatory Action policy, allow it to make representations.

At the same time we will introduce a new General Condition of Recognition to confirm that all regulated qualifications must appear on our Register of Regulated Qualifications:

Condition E6 Submitting qualifications to the Register

- E6.1 An awarding organisation must not make available a qualification unless it has first submitted that qualification to the Register.

E6.2 An awarding organisation must ensure that its submission of a qualification to the Register –

- (a) is in a form that may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time,
- (b) contains only accurate information, and
- (c) contains all information about the qualification that is requested on the form.

For the time being the 'form' is as required by RITS.

We will also introduce the following accreditation criterion for all qualifications to which an accreditation requirement applies¹:

An awarding organisation must demonstrate to Ofqual's satisfaction that it is capable of complying, on an on-going basis, with all of the General Conditions of Recognition that apply in respect of the qualification for which it is seeking accreditation, including all relevant Qualification Level Conditions and Subject Level Conditions.

The General Conditions of Recognition and any relevant Qualification and Subject level conditions² will, of course, apply to regulated qualifications, whether or not they are subject to an accreditation requirement. We will continue to audit awarding organisations' compliance with the conditions, focusing particularly on the validity of their qualifications. A valid qualification can be relied on by users as it will give a good indication of a learner's knowledge, skills and understanding; and the results students achieve will have meaning in a context beyond any course or training they have undertaken. In line with Condition E1, a valid qualification will have a clear objective, its content and assessment will meet that objective and it will have the support of users.

Although Ofqual will no longer check each qualification before it is entered onto the Register, an awarding organisation must do so itself, in line with Condition E5:

Assurance that qualifications comply with the conditions:

E5.1 Before submitting a qualification to the Register or for accreditation, an awarding organisation must -

- (a) review that qualification, and
- (b) assure itself that the qualification complies with the requirements of its Conditions of Recognition, making any changes to the qualification which are necessary for that purpose.

¹ Such a criterion is already in place for GCSEs (9-1) and linear AS and A level qualifications.

² Such as those in place for GCSEs and A levels.

When you are assured your qualification complies with the appropriate Conditions you should submit the qualification using RITS, as you do now. From 3 November RITS will allow qualifications not subject to an accreditation requirement to appear on the Register without the need for an accreditation decision. Qualifications that are subject to an accreditation requirement after 3 November will not appear on the Register unless a positive accreditation decision is made. We may consider how you have complied Condition E5.1 during an audit.

Where you are awaiting a decision about a qualification not subject to an accreditation requirement we will, on 3 November, enter it onto the Register. This will not constitute an accreditation decision. Condition E5.1 requires that you checked the qualification complied with the relevant Conditions before submitting it to us and it is therefore your responsibility to make sure it complies. You must let us know before 3 November if you do not want the qualification to be entered on the Register in this way.

The RITS system currently provides a gateway to the regulatory systems used by the Welsh Government and CCEA, as well as Ofqual. Although the accreditation requirement will be lifted only in respect of the regulation of qualifications by Ofqual, you should continue to use RITS to submit any qualifications that you want to be regulated by the Welsh Government and/or CCEA, selecting the appropriate fields on RITS.

For now, the entry for your qualification on the Register will indicate that your qualification is regulated by each of the regulators you have selected. We will add information to the Register to ensure users are not misled. CCEA and the Welsh Government will write to you about the arrangements they have put in place to accredit the qualifications they regulate and to publish information about the qualifications they have accredited. In the short term, the Register will direct users to those publications.

Finally, all qualifications on the Register will be regulated qualifications. The Register will not differentiate between those that are subject to an accreditation requirement and those that are not. To avoid confusion you should refer to your regulated qualifications as 'regulated', not 'accredited'.

If you have any questions about the changes we are making, or the implications for you, please direct these to regulatory.relationships@ofqual.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Jeremy Benson
Executive Director for Vocational Qualifications

CC Roger McCune, CCEA and Kate Crabtree, Welsh Government