

1 August 2017

Office of Qualifications
and Examinations Regulation
Spring Place
Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UB

Telephone 0300 303 3344
Textphone 0300 303 3345
public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofqual

Our Ref: RO56/2017

Dear Responsible Officer

Completing the introduction of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)

We wrote to responsible officers in 2015 about the implementation of the RQF, and the new conditions on Total Qualification Time (TQT) and publication of revised specifications.

In those letters, we set out our expectation that awarding organisations must allocate a measure of size, expressed in terms of TQT and Guided Learning, to each of their existing qualifications by no later than 31 December 2017.

In our letters of [29 September 2015](#) and [7 December 2015](#), we also set out our proposal (and subsequent decision) to bring forward that date to 30 June 2016 for a small group of existing qualifications used for school performance measures and university admissions.

Respondents to our letter of 29 September 2015 commented that assigning TQT and Guided Learning values to qualifications near their end dates would impose an unnecessary regulatory burden. Some also commented that producing a new version of the specification for these qualifications could be confusing for users.

We accepted both of these representations, and exempted qualifications which were being withdrawn on or before 31 December 2017 from the June 2016 deadline.

We have since received a number of further queries from awarding organisations about whether it is proportionate to require them to assign TQT and Guided Learning values to, and produce new specifications for, specific qualifications that will be partway through the withdrawal process in December 2017.

We recognise similar issues arise for these qualifications. We are particularly conscious that producing new specifications for qualifications which are near their end dates could confuse users.

Our proposed approach

Our view is that the best approach is to exempt a limited number of qualifications from the December 2017 deadline for implementing the RQF. In particular, we think we should exempt the following categories of qualifications from this deadline so as not to confuse users or impose unnecessary regulatory burden:

1. all legacy GCSEs, AS and A levels – these qualifications are all being withdrawn as a result of the Government’s programme of reform of GCSE, AS and A levels.
2. all other qualifications which will reach their:
 - certification end date on or before 31 December 2018; and/or
 - operational end date on or before 31 December 2017

This second exemption will only apply where the awarding organisation has – in line with the requirements of Condition D7 – first notified us of its intention to withdraw the qualification, and then provided appropriate information to users by 31 December 2017.

We are therefore intending to publish a notice, under Conditions E3.6 and E7.6, which completes the process of bringing the TQT Conditions into force, and codifies these exemptions. We have attached a draft of this notice at Annex A.

This draft notice also defers the implementation of the TQT Conditions for:

- apprenticeship end-point assessments (EPAs). We announced in [RO55/2017](#) that we are temporarily suspending these requirements for these qualifications, and will consult in due course on whether (and, if so, how) these requirements should apply to EPAs; and
- reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels. Here, we are carrying out further work to inform awarding bodies’ setting of TQT and GLH values, and will determine an appropriate implementation date following that work.

For the avoidance of doubt, these proposals do not affect awarding organisations’ duties under section 145 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009¹, which continue to apply to all regulated qualifications. This means that awarding organisations will still need to:

- determine whether any of their qualifications which fall into the categories listed above are relevant for the purposes of the Education and Skills Act 2008²; and
- where any such qualification is relevant for those purposes, determine a number of hours for Guided Learning to be assigned to that qualification.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/22/section/145>

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/contents>; see also section 145(9) of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Your views

If you wish to give us your views on our proposed approach please email consultations@ofqual.gov.uk no later than 5:00pm on 8 September 2017.

We will then announce our final decision.

Yours sincerely

M. L. Meadows

Michelle Meadows

Executive Director for Strategy, Risk and Research

Annex A: DRAFT Notice in respect of Conditions E3.6 and E7.6

About this notice

This notice is issued under Conditions E3.6 and E7.6 and applies to all awarding organisations.

Terms in this notice have the same meaning as given to them in the General Conditions of Recognition, including the Qualification Level Conditions.

Decisions

Where not already in force, Conditions E3.2(l), E3.4(a), E3.4(c) and E7.1 to E7.5 will come into force at 00.01am on 1 January 2018 for all qualifications except:

- GCSE qualifications,
- GCE qualifications,
- Apprenticeship end-point assessments, and
- Any other qualification –
 - which an awarding organisation will cease to award on or before 31 December 2018, and/or
 - for which an awarding organisation has ceased, or will cease, to register Learners on or before 31 December 2017

provided that the awarding organisation has, by 31 December 2017 –

- notified Ofqual of its intention to withdraw that qualification, and
- in accordance with Condition D7.4(b), provided clear and accurate information about that withdrawal to Learners, Centres, and purchasers of qualifications who are likely to be affected by the withdrawal.

Where not already in force, Conditions E3.2(m), E3.4(b), and E3.5 will come into force at 00.01am on 1 January 2018 for all qualifications except:

- GCSE qualifications (graded A* to G),
- pre-reform GCE qualifications – that is, all GCE qualifications accredited by Ofqual prior to 26 May 2014, and
- Any other qualification –
 - which an awarding organisation will cease to award on or before 31 December 2018, and/or
 - for which an awarding organisation has ceased, or will cease, to register Learners on or before 31 December 2017

provided that the awarding organisation has, by 31 December 2017 –

- notified Ofqual of its intention to withdraw that qualification, and
- in accordance with Condition D7.4(b), provided clear and accurate information about that withdrawal to Learners, Centres, and purchasers of qualifications who are likely to be affected by the withdrawal.