

Call for evidence

The availability of fee information, purchasing decisions and securing value for money in the regulated qualifications market



What we want to know

We want to understand how qualification purchasers decide which qualifications to buy, in particular how easy they find it to compare their cost.

We want to hear from you if you:

- buy regulated qualifications (you might be a school, college, training provider, other centre or individual)
- produce and deliver regulated qualifications (you are a regulated awarding organisation)
- represent those who may buy, produce or deliver regulated qualifications (you are an industry body or similar entity)

Qualifications that we regulate include GCSE, AS and A levels, and Vocational & Technical Qualifications, and some Apprenticeship End-Point Assessments.

Please to respond to this call for evidence by 30 September 2018.

Why we want to know

Schools and colleges need to ensure value for money including cost-effective purchasing of their qualifications.

Regulated awarding organisations must comply with Ofqual's rules on 'Making Fee Information Available'. These rules currently give awarding organisations significant flexibility, with different organisations making their fee information available in different ways.

If purchasers of qualifications have difficulty making informed choices, this may reduce the incentives for awarding organisations to deliver efficiencies and other changes that will improve value for money.

We want to understand whether the different approaches to making fee information available mean that schools, colleges and other potential purchasers have difficulty comparing qualifications and choosing between providers.

We also want to hear from awarding organisations to understand their reasons for making fee information available in the way they do and how they interact with potential and existing purchasers.

We will use responses to ascertain if there is any need to improve the accessibility of fee information, and, if so, what action we should take to do that.

Profiling

Please indicate the type of organisation you are representing: (tick box)

• Awarding organisation • School • Sixth Form College • Further Education College • University Technical College • Private training provider • Employer • Professional association • Other types of purchaser • Other (Please specify)

Questions for centres and their industry bodies

Gathering information

When choosing the qualifications you plan to offer, what are the main factors you consider? In your response, please indicate the type of qualifications the factors would apply to, where appropriate. *Open*

How important is price in determining your choice of qualification? *Open*

Where do you find information about the price of qualifications you may wish to offer? *Open*

Switching and negotiating

In the last five years, have you considered switching provider for any qualifications?
Yes/No

When considering switching, how difficult was it to gather all the information you needed on the price and content of the qualifications to make an informed choice?

Very difficult; quite difficult; neutral; quite easy; very easy

What was your experience of this process? *Open*

If you haven't considered switching, why not? *Open*

How important is the price of qualifications when considering providers?
Very important; quite important; neutral; not very important; not important at all

Have you ever attempted to negotiate or re-negotiate qualifications' prices with awarding organisations? *Yes/No*

What was your experience of the negotiation process? For example, did you feel you had enough information to enable you to negotiate effectively? *Open*

At the outset of these negotiations were you initially offered the published price or was the initial offer already at a discount to the published price? *Open*

How confident are you that you have secured value for money in your choice of qualification provider?

Very confident; quite confident; neutral; not very confident; not confident at all

Do you have any comments regarding this response? *Open*

Centre collaboration

Are you aware of the prices other centres pay for the same qualifications? *Open*

Have you considered joint procurement? If yes, what was your experience? If not, why not? *Open*

Invoicing

Do you find the amount and format of information provided on invoices from awarding organisations sufficient to allow you to reconcile your expenditure with your activity and budgets? Please explain your answer and suggest any additional information that would be useful. *Open*

Questions for awarding organisations and their industry bodies

Pricing

How important do you think price is in influencing a centre's choice of qualifications?

Very important; quite important; neutral; not very important; not important at all

Why? *Open*

Do you make your prices freely available on your website? By freely available we mean without the need for registration or by request. *Yes/no*

If you do not make qualification and associated service prices freely available on your website, what are your main reasons for this? *Open*

Do you routinely offer discounts to your published prices and under what circumstances are these offered to centres? *Open*

How do you ensure your published prices provide a useful guide to the actual prices charged to purchasers, even where discounts are routinely offered? *Open*

Centre relationship

Who is the main contact with centres on pricing and procurement (eg relationship manager, sales executive etc) and could you give an outline of the usual process for potential purchasers, from enquiry to delivery? *Open*

Other factors

What factors, other than price, do you consider are important to your customers in their perception of value for money from your qualifications? *Open*

Other comments

If you would like to provide any additional comments relevant to the issues addressed in this call for evidence, please comment below. *Open*

Comments from other respondents

If you are not a purchaser nor an awarding organisation, but would like to provide comments relevant to the issues addressed in this call for evidence, please comment below. *Open*

For all respondents

If you are happy to be contacted about your responses, please supply your name, email address, and organisation name.

If you provide your personal data, we may use it to contact you about your response. We will only share your data with Ofqual staff in relation to this call for evidence. We will not transfer your data outside of Ofqual and your data will not be processed outside of the European Economic Area (EEA).

We will retain your data for 12 months, after which point it will be deleted.

You can request a copy of your data, to have your data amended or corrected, or to have your data erased at any time by contacting us at market.efficiency@ofqual.gov.uk

For further information about how Ofqual processes personal data, please refer to our Personal Information Charter at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual/about/personal-information-charter>

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



© Crown copyright 2018

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.

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.

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