

ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

## Moderation and verification of centre assessment judgements

Consultation on awarding organisation controls for centre assessments

**ofqual**

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# Introduction

Our consultation on moderation and verification of centre assessment judgements took place between 25 February and 20 May 2019. Respondents could complete the questions online or download and submit a response. A copy of the consultation is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/moderation-and-verification-of-centre-assessment-judgements>

There were 88 responses to the consultation. In addition, we held 3 consultation events in London, Manchester and Coventry during the consultation period and 2 sessions at Ofqual's awarding organisation conference. There were over 200 attendees across these events.

# Background

Ofqual is the independent qualifications regulator for England. We regulate against 5 statutory objectives, which include the need to secure the standards of qualifications, to promote public confidence in regulated qualifications, and to secure that regulated qualifications are delivered efficiently. We do this by setting rules that awarding organisations must follow, and monitoring to make sure they meet these. We take action if we discover our rules are not being met.

Where assessment judgements are made by centres<sup>1</sup>, our current rules require an awarding organisation to check results for each group of learners before they are issued. In many cases this is not being delivered, and if it were, some vocational and technical qualifications may no longer be deliverable.

We want to make sure our rules allow for qualifications to be delivered in a way that meets the needs of users, while ensuring standards are appropriate whenever and wherever a qualification is taken. We consulted, between February and May, on our approach to regulating these controls, to ensure our rules strike an appropriate balance between ensuring an appropriate level of awarding organisation control over centre-assessment judgements, and ensuring qualifications can be delivered to meet the needs of users. Specifically, we proposed to:

- amend our definition of Moderation and provide a new definition for the term Verification
- require that all centre assessment judgements are subject to either moderation or verification
- require that centre assessment judgements in certain qualifications must always be subject to moderation
- require that for all other qualifications where centres make assessment judgements, moderation should be the starting point
- allow for verification where an awarding organisation can justify why moderation cannot be implemented for a qualification

<sup>1</sup> An organisation undertaking the delivery of an assessment (and potentially other activities) to Learners on behalf of an awarding organisation. Centres are typically educational institutions, training providers, or employers.

- set minimum requirements that an awarding organisation's verification process must meet
- where verification is used, to provide guidance on the circumstances in which an enhanced verification approach should be considered
- require all awarding organisations to have in place a centre-assurance strategy, explaining its approach and rationale for its moderation or verification controls
- set requirements that an awarding organisation's centre-assurance strategy must meet
- put in place guidance about the actions an awarding organisation should take where it discovers through its verification process that a learner has been issued with an incorrect result
- allow awarding organisations to revoke certificates that have been issued in reliance on an incorrect result
- require awarding organisations to meet these requirements by January 2021

## Who responded?

Eighty four people responded to the questions we asked and 4 provided general views

**Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses**

Personal/organisational response	Respondent type	Number
Organisational response	Awarding Organisations	45
Organisational response	Centres	18
Organisational response	Employers	1
Personal response	Individual members of the public	13
Organisational response	Representative Body	11

Sixty two respondents were based in England, 1 was based in Northern Ireland, 2 were based in Scotland and 3 were based in Wales. Twenty respondents did not provide a location.

## Approach to analysis

The consultation included 34 questions and was published on our website. Respondents could respond using an online form, by email or by posting their responses to us.

This was a consultation on the views of those who wished to participate and, while we tried to ensure that as many respondents as possible had the opportunity to reply, it cannot be considered as a representative sample of any specific group.

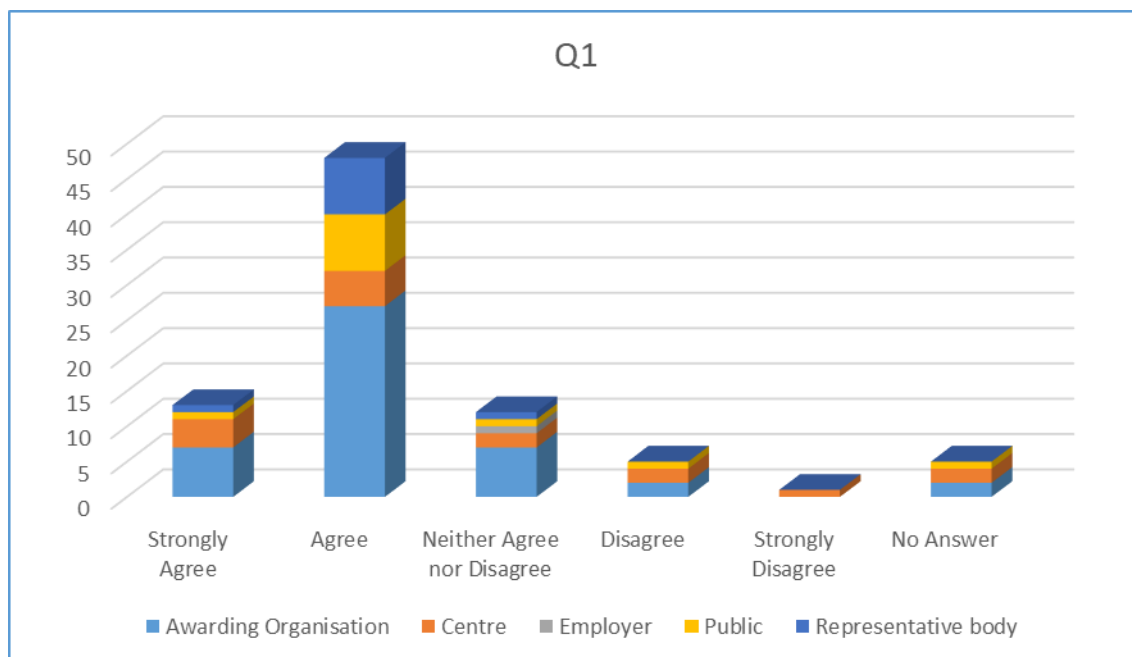
We present the responses to the consultation questions in the order in which they were asked. For each of the questions, we presented our proposals and then asked respondents whether they had any comments on what we had proposed. Respondents did not have to answer all of the questions. Some respondents chose to provide general comments instead of responding to the specific proposals. During the analysis, we reviewed every response to each question.

In some instances, respondents answered a question with comments that did not relate to that question. Where this is the case, we have reported those responses against the question to which the response relates rather than the question against which it was provided.

# Analysis – consultation responses

In this section, we report the views, in broad terms, of respondents to the consultation. We list the organisations who responded to the consultation in appendix A.

**Question 1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to providing separate definitions for Moderation and Verification?**



There were 61 responses to this question either agreeing or strongly agreeing with our proposal. This included 34 awarding organisations, 9 centres, 9 representative bodies, and 9 individuals. Six respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, including 2 awarding organisations, 3 centres and 1 individual. Twelve respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, or did not answer, including 7 awarding organisations, 2 centres, 1 employer, 1 representative body, and 1 individual.

Forty six respondents (32 awarding organisations, 4 centres, 2 individuals, and 8 representative bodies) stated that the definitions were helpful and beneficial. Of these respondents, 3 awarding organisations neither agreed nor disagreed, all of the others either agreed or strongly agreed. Eleven respondents (6 awarding organisations, 4 centres and 1 representative body) noted that the lack of definition currently causes confusion in the sector and that setting out distinct definitions would address this. Other respondents suggested that the definitions would allow for a more consistent approach from awarding organisations.

Four respondents (2 awarding organisations, and 2 centres) commented that the definitions address the wrong aspect of the qualification process and noted it was unhelpful to focus purely on the assessment aspect of the qualification delivery process, rather than addressing it as a holistic process. They further explained that their current understanding of verification encompasses a wide range of internal and external quality assurance activities, which the proposed definitions did not include.

Eleven respondents (8 awarding organisations, 2 centres, and 1 individual) requested further guidance to facilitate a proper understanding of how these definitions would be applied.

Other responses explained that the proposed definitions did not provide sufficient clarity, for example about whether Moderation referred to pre-certification checks and Verification referred to post-certification checks. They requested a clearer division between the two

approaches. One centre, who disagreed with the proposed approach, asked for clarification about why we were seeking to change a system that had been in place for many years. One centre stated that, whilst the definitions could be useful in clarifying the different quality assurance processes used by different awarding organisations, they disagreed with the proposed definitions. Another centre was concerned about 'regulatory divergence', and the potential for additional costs and burden on them if we adopted the changes as proposed, but other regulators, such as Qualifications Wales or CCEA, did not.

**Question 2. Do you have any comments on our proposed definitions for Moderation and Verification?**

Fifty six respondents provided a response to this question (40 awarding organisations, 6 centres, 5 individuals, and 5 representative bodies).

Seven respondents noted positive views of the definitions including that they:

- were clear
- would allow a more realistic and systematic approach to internal quality assurance
- allowed more flexibility
- represented a much lower risk approach than direct claims status (DCS), and
- allowed appropriate risk to be considered for licence to practice qualifications.

Eight respondents (7 awarding organisations and 1 representative body) requested further clarity, guidance and exemplars on a variety of aspects of the proposals, such as:

- guidance on what Ofqual feel the key differences between moderation and verification were
- clear, specific details of the methods awarding organisations would be expected to implement under each method, such as process and policy checks
- how awarding organisations should manage competency or mastery based assessments
- what would constitute acceptable levels of sampling and
- clarification of some of the terms used throughout the consultation such as cohort, group of learners and marking.

Some respondents commented that Ofqual was ignoring the existing DCS model and its current practices and benefits within the sector. They commented that since the current systems were adequate, the proposed changes were unnecessary. Others were concerned that the proposals would lead to delays in awarding certificates which would adversely affect learners from progressing to and within work, particularly for short roll-on-roll-off courses.

Awarding organisation and representative body respondents expressed concern that the use of new definitions for "moderation" and "verification" could cause confusion, as these terms were currently understood to mean different things.

One respondent suggested broadening the definitions to make them better tailored to the vocational and technical qualifications sector, encompassing the wider quality assurance controls and processes included in current verification approaches.

Other respondents expressed concerns about regulatory divergence (and the potential for additional costs and burden on them if we adopted the changes as proposed in our Conditions, but other regulators, such as Qualifications Wales or CCEA, did not) and 1 awarding organisation expressed that they would feel pressured into imposing a moderation approach where it is not suitable.

**Question 3. Are there any alternative approaches we should consider for regulating the controls between awarding organisations and centres that we have not set out? Please provide any suggested alternatives.**

Forty five respondents provided a response to this question (32 awarding organisations, 6 centres, 3 individuals, and 4 representative bodies). Some alternative approaches suggested were:

- focus on the centre controls awarding organisations have in place and broader quality assurance systems
- set out positive and negative indicators in the guidance
- allow some flexibility in what constituted a visit, in order to compensate for cost, geographical and relationship factors
- change the approach to a straight pre-certification/post-certification approach rather than moderation/verification
- allow some mechanism whereby centres could reduce the frequency of visits, including some form of 'highly trusted status'
- consider allowing remote sampling
- require all awarding organisations to mark all assessments, thus removing the requirement for either moderation or verification
- allow centres to make final judgements themselves
- continue to allow DCS.

Nineteen awarding organisations commented that the existing risk based system was all that was needed to secure standards. It allowed them to allocate their resources effectively and provided flexibility in the allocation of external verifier (EV) / external quality assurance (EQA) resource, which was cost-effective for awarding organisations and centres.

Two respondents (1 awarding organisation and 1 representative body) suggested that the proposals were a way for Ofqual to address a "perceived DCS problem" obliquely and that it would be better to address it directly, rather than put in place requirements on all awarding organisations to effect change in a few bad institutions.

Respondents also provided the following general comments:

- the proposals were too focussed on 'marking' and the GCSE/A level assessment model, rather than work-based assessment, which was the norm in vocational qualifications
- moderation would not be an applicable approach for many vocational qualifications
- direct claims status was problematic and historically had enabled centres to conduct problematic and invalid assessment processes. Roll-on-roll-off programmes were an issue, as their short nature meant it was difficult for awarding organisations to factor in timely, managed processes and ensure sufficient resources (people and finance) to operate within this environment. Therefore DCS risked valid achievement and certification and was open to malpractice
- Ofqual must include a way to avoid penalising small awarding organisations and centres with low throughput of certificates



- support for our approach, but concern that the minimum requirements would mean that awarding organisations expended significant resources on 'low risk centres'
- Regulatory divergence (as explained above)
- Ofqual must recognise the importance of internal quality assurance (IQA).

**Question 4. Do you have any comments on our proposed approach to determining which qualifications should be subject to moderation?**

Forty nine respondents provided a response to this question (32 awarding organisations, 7 centres, 4 individuals, and 6 representative bodies).

Six respondents (3 awarding organisations, 1 centre, 1 individual, and 1 representative body) stated that they agreed with our proposal, although one individual also noted that Technical Qualifications within T Levels might require a mixed approach, using both moderation and verification for different aspects.

A representative body noted that they agreed moderation should be the starting point, but that there should be a way to allow centres with a track-record of reliability and validity to be treated in a lighter touch way. One awarding organisation disagreed with this proposal, as they felt it did not appreciate that risks often lay at the centre, not qualification, level.

Two centres commented that the moderation decision should be risk based and that new centres should be moderated in the first instance.

One awarding organisation and 1 centre suggested that either all regulated qualifications or all graded qualifications should be moderated.

Seven respondents requested guidance covering a variety of topics:

- how to apply moderation to non-examined assessment or non-graded qualifications
- clear definitions of terms such as what constitutes a group of learners
- Ofqual's expectation on which qualifications should be moderated and which should be verified
- how easy it is to change between approaches, i.e. what they would need to do or provide
- how moderation and verification interact with the quality assurance process
- Ofqual's view of the risk level for different qualification types.

One centre and 1 individual suggested that knowledge-based or exam-based assessments should be moderated and competency or work-based assessments should not be.

One representative body noted there needed to be clearer criteria detailing what would, and would not, be included. Sixteen awarding organisations added that the criteria were inexact and should be decided by independent experts.

Respondents also provided the following general comments:

- it was unclear how these proposals would affect DCS
- a blanket application of moderation across all qualifications would stifle innovation
- concern about the level of scrutiny required for a moderation approach, for example, did awarding organisations need to moderate every piece of learner work prior to the issue of an award?
- the level of detail needed for the awarding organisation's justification about the approach they adopted

- concern that these proposals did not recognise the variety of qualifications within the vocational and technical qualifications sector
- requiring moderation would increase costs, which would have to be passed to employers, and that this was contrary to Ofqual's position that costs and burden should be reduced.

**Question 5. Do you have any comments on the qualifications we have identified that should always be subject to moderation?**

Thirty eight respondents provided a response to this question (23 awarding organisations, 7 centres, 2 individuals, and 6 representative bodies).

Ten respondents (3 awarding organisations and 3 representative bodies) agreed with the proposal to identify some qualifications that should always be subject to moderation.

Four respondents (2 awarding organisations, 1 centre and 1 individual) suggested other additions to the list:

- all externally assessed Creative Arts qualifications
- all licence to practice qualifications
- all 'graded' qualifications and all construction qualifications
- those qualifications which require the issuing of certificates within a short timeframe, in order to improve their validity and public confidence.

Four respondents (2 awarding organisations, 1 individual and 1 representative body) commented that they would not be able to effectively moderate some qualifications, including Technical Qualifications within T Levels, Tech Awards or similar qualifications, as they contained elements and assessments which require different approaches.

Six respondents (1 awarding organisations, 1 centre and 4 representative bodies) requested clarification on:

- how this proposal would affect International GCSEs and International A Levels
- whether this proposal would apply to those areas of the listed qualifications with existing exemptions (for elements of assessment which cannot be effectively moderated)

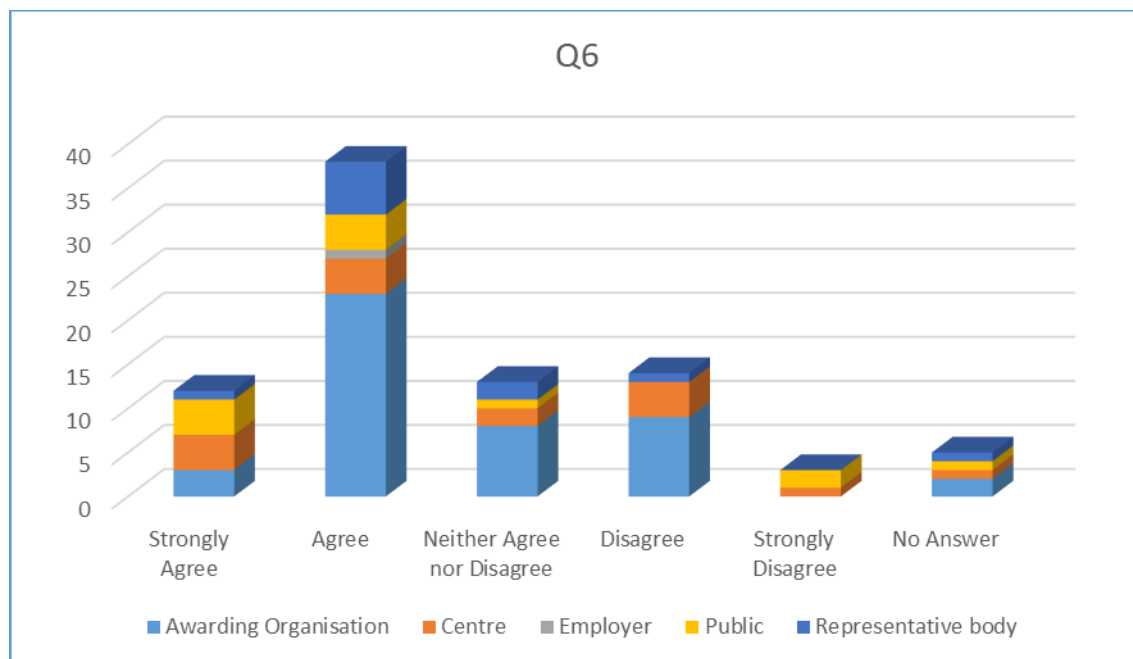
In addition, they stated that the criteria for qualifications included in this list should be clear and definitive, for example, explaining what was meant by a 'sessional high-stakes' qualification. They felt further detail was needed, as they found the proposals unclear, particularly for qualifications in the construction sector.

One centre suggested that Ofqual should permit a mixed approach for different elements of a qualification.

Three awarding organisations expressed concerns that:

- Ofqual had unstated expectations and requirements about which awarding organisations would not know, or be able to address, and that Ofqual should be more transparent in what it wanted to achieve
- Ofqual only considered a GCSE style delivery model to be valid and that the proposals were designed to make other types of delivery model costly and non-compliant
- future expansions of the list would have unforeseen ramifications if done without consultation, especially where those qualifications had been developed with verification in mind.

**Question 6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that qualifications should be subject to stronger verification controls in the circumstances set out above?**



There were 50 responses to this question either agreeing or strongly agreeing with our proposal. This included 26 awarding organisations, 8 centres, 1 employer, 8 individuals, and 7 representative bodies. Seventeen respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, including 9 awarding organisations, 5 centres, 2 individuals and 1 representative body. Thirteen respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, including 8 awarding organisations, 2 centres, 1 individual and 2 representative bodies.

Fourteen respondents (11 awarding organisations, 2 centres, and 1 representative body) agreed that strong controls need to be in place. Awarding organisations that commented stated that they already have similar controls in place and that this is common practice. One awarding organisation stated that higher stakes qualifications should have stronger controls.

Five respondents (1 awarding organisation, 2 centres, and 2 individuals) expressed a view that the enhanced verification approaches as set out in the consultation will lead to increased confidence in the awarding organisation and the compliance of its centres. One centre and 1 individual added that there are currently discrepancies between the verification controls adopted by different awarding organisations and that there is a need to make quality assurance processes more robust. One centre stated that unannounced visits are a good half-way house to gain reassurance that delivery remains consistent. Another individual noted that there is a premium on regulated qualifications which needs to be fiercely guarded, both for national credibility and vitally for many awarding organisations.

Seven respondents (6 awarding organisations and 1 centre) explained that awarding organisations should be allowed to manage their own controls in line with their risk based approach. Of these, 2 awarding organisations suggested that there should be a way for a 'lighter touch' approach to be enabled for centres with a good track record. Another awarding organisation stated that by introducing prescriptive 'causes and effects' into the Conditions, these proposals would stifle innovation.

Four respondents (3 awarding organisations and 1 centre) expressed concern about the requirement to notify other awarding organisations in the event of concerns about a centre. They noted that there are significant legal concerns around this, including defamation and reputational damage which could occur.

Six respondents (3 awarding organisation, 2 centres and 1 representative body) were concerned about the viability of the proposals for a number of reasons including:

- DCS already covered this effectively and employers and FE colleges would find it unacceptable
- the concept of 'stronger' verification was flawed and all decisions should be entirely risk based
- additional controls would undermine the relationship between the awarding organisation and the centre. The awarding organisation was able to encourage continuous improvement through use of EQA, and the provision of support, as part of its relationship with the centre.

Other respondents commented that:

- existing risk based analysis was sufficient and the proposals did not take into account the assessments awarding organisations had in place to manage individual centres
- they felt that the examples in the consultation were unrealistic
- the costs and burdens on all awarding organisations, especially smaller ones, were disproportionate.

**Question 7. Are there any other circumstances in which an enhanced verification approach should be required? Please provide details of any additional circumstances.**

Fifty three respondents provided a response to this question (33 awarding organisations, 10 centres, 4 individuals, and 6 representative bodies).

Respondents listed a number of other circumstances in which an enhanced verification approach should be required:

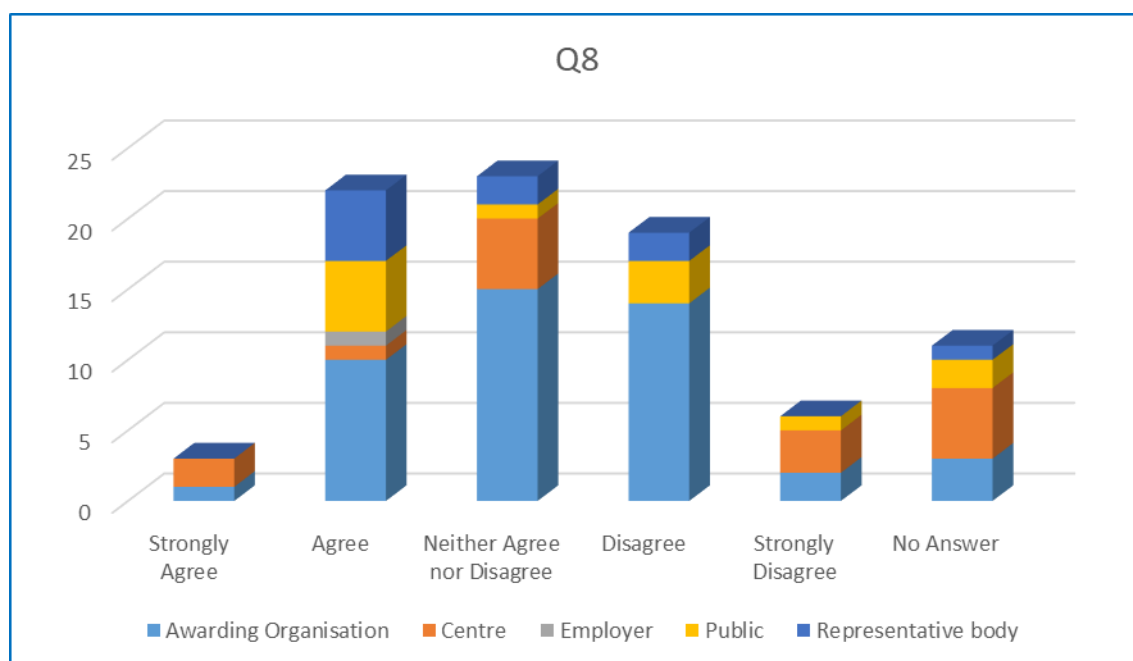
- when third party subcontractors deliver qualifications for the first time
- high staff turnover or any external indication of poor financial controls
- extra-large centres or those with a number of satellite sites
- licence to practice qualifications
- where there were internal quality assurance or training issues
- where there was only a small pool of assessors
- short courses
- roll-on-roll-off courses
- high risk qualifications, such as ESOL.

Respondents also provided a number of general comments:

- there were too many possible permutations to be able to list
- implementation should be decided on a risk based approach
- the examples given in the consultation were fair and appropriate
- any circumstances where enhanced verification may be applied should be listed in centre agreements
- the benefits of an overall verification approach were not well represented in the consultation

- enhanced verification should only be applied where sanctions were in place
- Ofqual should consider the burden on a case by case basis
- an increase in charges for centres could be used to ensure that development was a priority
- these approaches were already part of existing external quality assurance strategies.

**Question 8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our assessment of the additional burden imposed by requiring moderation for the qualifications we have identified?**



There were 25 responses to this question either agreeing or strongly agreeing with our proposal. This included 11 awarding organisations, 3 centres, 1 employer, 5 individuals, and 5 representative bodies. Twenty five respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, including 16 awarding organisations, 3 centres, 4 individuals and 2 representative bodies. Twenty three respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, including 15 awarding organisations, 5 centres, 1 individual and 2 representative bodies.

Comments from those who agreed included using moderation instead of verification, if possible; and that moderation would instil confidence in users of qualifications and that the proposals seemed pragmatic. One awarding organisation noted that the burden should be minimal, as it reflected current practice. However, if additional qualifications were added, it could cause additional burden. One representative body added that centres needed to better prepare for unannounced visits and that awarding organisations would need to ensure they had adequate capacity and expertise to conduct more activity.

Awarding organisations who neither agreed nor disagreed stated that there should be a set of clear criteria on what would be included in the list. Additions to the list would require significant notice to allow them to adapt the qualifications, especially if the qualifications were designed with verification in mind. There was also some concern about whether this was a move towards requiring all qualifications to be moderated.

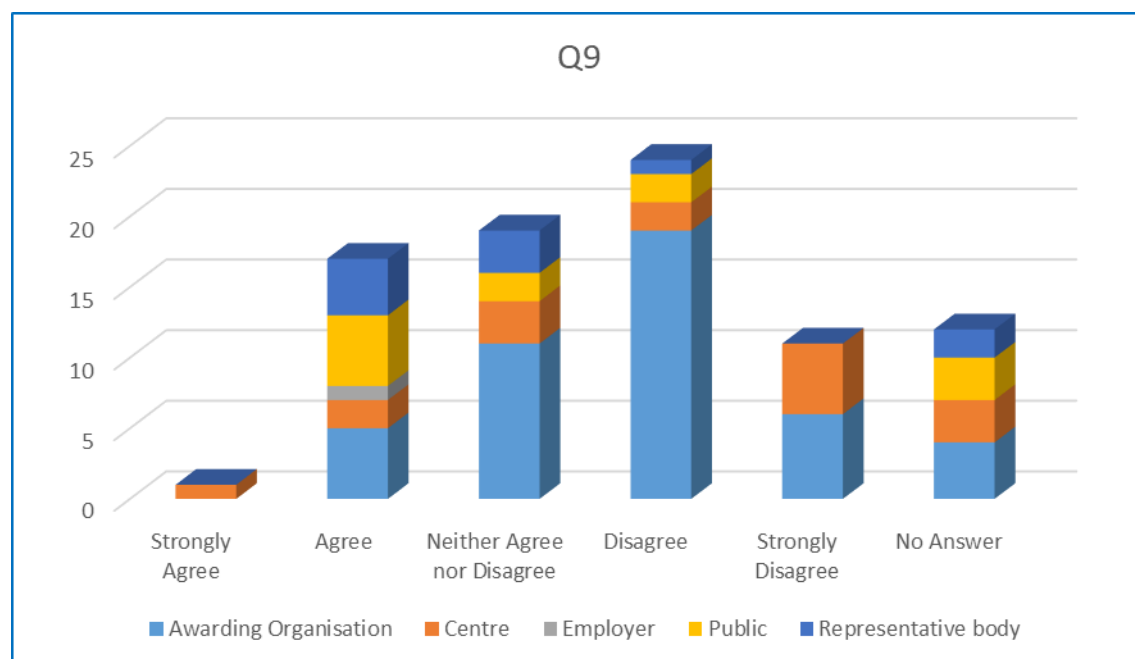
Centres who neither agreed nor disagreed stated that moderation was necessary to uphold standards. They expressed concerns that a move to moderation would be unsuitable for

vocational qualifications and employers who were used to a quick turnaround under the current DCS system. A representative body agreed that moderation should be the starting point unless it was impractical.

Respondents who disagreed requested guidance on a number of aspects of the proposals including a definition of terms such as ‘cohort’ and Ofqual’s expectations of the level sampling should be set at. Others were concerned about how moderation would fit with qualifications that included on-demand assessment. One awarding organisation stated that there was no additional burden in the qualifications identified in the consultation. Other respondents explained that the existing risk based approach was more effective than the proposed ‘blanket requirements’. In addition, changes to the existing DCS system would likely cause impacts for FE Colleges and that the proposals did not account for changes in the qualifications over time.

Centres were concerned that moderation would be excessive for many level 2 and 3 qualifications, especially 1 day courses, would cause considerable additional burden and be unachievable. One individual explained that extra controls meant extra work for teachers and also flagged the costs of visits. One representative body disagreed with the premise that a good awarding organisation was likely to be less burdened by the changes, stating that awarding organisations with effective risk management already significantly exceeded the proposed minimum requirements.

**Question 9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our assessment of the burden imposed in relation to the qualifications that are subject to verification?**



There were 18 responses to this question either agreeing or strongly agreeing with our proposal. This included 5 awarding organisations, 3 centres, 1 employer, 5 individuals, and 4 representative bodies. Thirty five respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, including 25 awarding organisations, 7 centres, 2 individuals and 1 representative body. Nineteen respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, including 11 awarding organisations, 3 centres, 2 individuals and 3 representative bodies.

Many of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed did not add any further comments. Of those who did, 2 awarding organisations noted that in order to make the burden proportionate and manageable, there should be a way to replace visits with other activity, or

reduce their frequency. The 3 representative bodies who commented noted that the proposals must be implemented with consideration for the costs and burden on smaller centres. They also commented that the ability of the awarding organisations to design their own approach should mitigate the burden and the costs and burden of the additional visits.

Of those who neither agreed nor disagreed 4 awarding organisations, 2 individuals and 1 representative body requested further clarity and guidance on the differences between moderation and verification, the definition of a visit, and when verification or post award checking occurred in line with the results or certification. Other awarding organisations noted that there were cost and resource implications of the proposals which would put pressure on awarding organisations, centres and learners. One awarding organisation expressed concern that the minimum requirements represented a “blanket, one size fits all approach” which allowed for no risk-based flexibility. One centre noted that they did not see this as an additional burden and one representative body explained that the burden was best assessed on a case by case basis.

Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, 18 respondents (15 awarding organisations, 1 centre, 1 individual and 1 representative body) commented that the proposed arrangements would increase cost and burden on awarding organisations and centres. Of these, 5 awarding organisations and 1 centre stated that the burden would actually be far greater than the consultation proposals identified. Others explained that:

- the level of burden would depend on which qualifications were allowed to be subject to verification, for example, allowing awarding organisations to decide what qualifications could be subject to verification based on risk levels assigned to centres would be less burdensome
- the minimum number of visits should be lower than proposed, i.e. 1 per year with unannounced visits being decided by the awarding organisation using a risk based approach
- the proposals would not improve the system, only make it worse.

Other respondents had some general comments:

- that proportionality was key rather than a blanket approach
- verification needed to be complemented, not replaced
- they disagreed with Ofqual’s interpretation of Condition H2 as detailed in the consultation, specifically in regard to the requirement for moderation to occur prior to results being issued
- changes to DCS could result in delays to learners entering work or being able to claim licences to practice (for example CSCS cards needed by anyone wishing to work on a building site).

**Question 10. Are there any other regulatory burdens which we have not identified in relation to these proposals? If so, how could these be mitigated or reduced?**

40 respondents provided comments for this question. This included 29 awarding organisations, 5 centres, 3 representative bodies and 3 individuals.

A number of the comments to this question reiterated, or provided further information about burdens that were set out in the consultation, such as the additional burden created by requiring a minimum number of visits per year. Regulatory burdens identified by respondents included:

- six awarding organisations commented on the burden posed by an increased number of visits

- three awarding organisations commented that the proposals would be problematic for centres with low numbers of learners, for example, those offering specialist qualifications, and that a risk-based approach towards the number of visits would be more workable
- three respondents (1 awarding organisation, 2 centres) identified a burden caused by the need for awarding organisations and centres to implement new systems and processes, and the necessary staff training, to meet the proposed requirements
- one awarding organisation made a general comment that the proposals were likely to impose a large burden, and they did not see any benefit in the changes
- one awarding organisation commented that if the proposals resulted in more qualifications being moderated, there would be additional burdens in the recruitment and training of moderators.

Two respondents (1 awarding organisation and 1 centre) commented that the proposals would lead to an increase in the costs of qualifications, which could increase financial pressure on centres and learners. One awarding organisation commented that the proposals could potentially damage international business for awarding organisations.

A number of respondents made general comments about our proposals in relation to the number of visits, which included:

- two awarding organisations commented that clarification was needed about the structure and objectives of visits
- one awarding organisation commented that unannounced visits were likely to cause dissatisfaction amongst centres
- one representative body commented that further education colleges were subject to Ofsted inspections, which they felt made the proposals unnecessary.

Thirteen respondents (12 awarding organisations and 1 representative body) commented that the proposed requirements for awarding organisations to notify other awarding organisations where centre issues were identified were unmanageable.

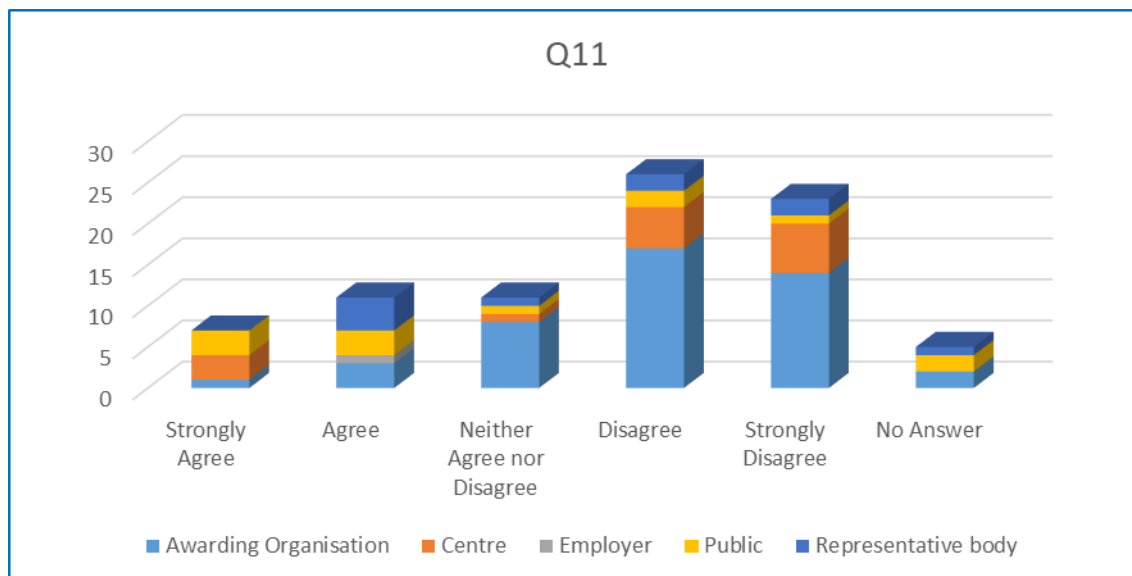
One awarding organisation commented that the proposals might stifle innovation by redirecting awarding organisations' and centres' resources from other activities as the changes are implemented and embedded.

Other comments made by respondents included:

- that the proposals could encourage centres to reduce the number of awarding organisations they worked with
- two awarding organisations commented on the potential for confusion if the terms moderation and verification were not sufficiently well defined
- one centre commented on whether more stringent requirements should be put in place for qualifications at higher levels (for example level 4 and above)
- one individual commented that the onus should be on awarding organisations to find practices that balance maintaining high standards and reducing the burdens on centres
- one individual commented that the proposals might drive a move from centres making assessment judgements to awarding organisations conducting assessments.



**Question 11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the minimum requirements we propose for awarding organisations' controls with centres?**



Seventy nine respondents provided comments on this question. There were 18 responses to this question, either agreeing or strongly agreeing with our proposal. This included 4 awarding organisations, 3 centres, 1 employer, 6 individuals, and 4 representative bodies. Fifty respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, including 31 awarding organisations, 12 centres, 3 individuals and 4 representative bodies. Eleven respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, including 8 awarding organisations, 1 centre, 1 individual and 1 representative body.

Many of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed did not add any further comments. Of those who did, 1 awarding organisation stated that the minimum requirements were necessary to remove the ability for awarding organisations to offer 'light touch' quality assurance. However, they also noted that the proposed requirements were too prescriptive. One centre stated that there was a need for more rigour for some awarding organisations. One awarding organisation commented that it was necessary for all centres to conduct moderation and verification. One centre stated that awarding organisations should produce a standardised approach to internal quality assurance. Two representative bodies expressed concern about the burden of visits and suggested that Ofqual included a way to lighten the requirements on 'trusted' centres.

Of those who neither agreed nor disagreed, 2 awarding organisations and 1 representative body stated that the requirements would force unmanageable burdens on awarding organisations and centres, in some cases resulting in a nine-fold increase in visits, and that the requirements would be better as good practice indicators in guidance. Two awarding organisations requested clarity on:

- what constituted a visit

- the aim and objective of the visits
- the meaning of terms such as the number of assessment cycles, and
- whether the visit requirement was intended to be on a qualification or centre basis.

Another awarding organisation noted that the proposals did not take centre-based factors, such as quality assurance and oversight, into account. They also stated that unannounced visits were impractical and of little value.

Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, 12 awarding organisations, 3 individuals and 4 representative bodies stated that the number of visits requirement was excessive, burdensome and unnecessary. Three awarding organisations and 1 centre highlighted the impracticality of the requirement for an unannounced visit, especially those which would require curriculum experts to attend. This was because it would require awarding organisations to expend resources on low risk centres. Two awarding organisations suggested that Ofqual allow alternative methods.

Four awarding organisations agreed in principle with the proposals, but explained that they would have a disproportionate effect on smaller centres; 1 centre commented that these proposals could put a lot of these centres out of business. Four awarding organisations stated that the requirements were disproportionate to the risk and that awarding organisations already had robust procedures in place.

One centre explained that these proposals could cause significant confusion, as centres could face different approaches for different qualifications from the same awarding organisation.

Other respondents commented on other risks, including how the proposals would relate to international centres, the lack of clarity around when awarding organisations would need to notify other awarding organisations and how this should occur, and how centres with direct claims status would be affected by the changes.

**Question 12. Are there any additional controls that should be in place where third parties are involved in the delivery of qualifications on behalf of approved centres?**

Forty eight respondents provided comments for this question. This included 33 awarding organisations, 9 centres, 3 representative bodies and 3 individuals.

Six respondents (5 awarding organisations, 1 centre) commented that awarding organisations would already be expected to have adequate controls in place through their agreements with centres. One awarding organisation commented that not all awarding organisations permit these types of arrangements and 1 centre said that there were concerns inherent with such models.

Six respondents (4 awarding organisations, 1 centre and 1 representative body) commented that management of centres and third parties was something that should be risk-based, and not prescribed by the regulator. One awarding organisation commented that Ofqual should instead ensure that an awarding organisation's risk-based approach was fit for purpose rather than replacing it with prescriptive requirements.

Three respondents (1 awarding organisation, 1 centre and 1 individual) commented that third parties delivering qualifications should be subjected to the same controls as those centres directly approved by awarding organisations. One centre commented that third parties should be subjected to enhanced controls and one individual commented that third parties should be licensed on a qualification by qualification basis. One commented that third parties should only be allowed if they were 'satellites' of approved centres.

One representative body commented that further education colleges managed sub-contracting well and were audited by Ofsted, so should not be subject to additional requirements from Ofqual.

**Question 13. Are there any other requirements we should set? Please explain any additional requirements you have identified.**

Thirty four respondents provided comments for this question. This included 22 awarding organisations, 5 centres, 4 representative bodies and 3 individuals.

Fourteen awarding organisations and 1 representative body commented that awarding organisations should be able to manage centres using a risk-based approach, with flexible minimum requirements, as opposed to prescriptive requirements. One centre commented that risk should be managed by awarding organisations using dedicated staff.

Where respondents identified additional requirements that we should set, or requested further clarification, these included:

- one centre commented that centres should be obliged to notify awarding organisations about changes to key members of staff, or to the ownership of the centre
- two respondents (1 centre and 1 awarding organisation) commented that awarding organisations should be required to directly approve third-party providers who delivered qualifications on behalf of centres. One individual commented that the centre should have overall responsibility for monitoring third parties and Ofqual should check this on an annual basis
- one individual said that there should be additional controls applied to short-courses, while one awarding organisation requested clarification about how the proposed minimum requirements would apply to roll-on-roll-off qualifications
- one representative body commented that awarding organisations should be expected to work together to develop common templates for centre-assurance processes to help centres. They said that Ofqual could provide common guidance for centres on quality assurance processes. One also commented that visits should be required on a qualification basis and 'unannounced visits' should be replaced with 'short notice visits'
- a comment that awarding organisations should have a system for employers and others to verify that certificates were valid, which would support the proposals relating to the revocation of certificates
- one awarding organisation requested clarification about what was meant by 'enhanced verification'
- one individual commented that they would welcome clarification on the expectations Ofqual had about individual levels of moderation and verification on a qualification by qualification basis
- one awarding organisation requested clarification on the expected approach to sampling.

Other comments made by respondents to this question included:

- one awarding organisation commented that there should be better sharing of information, both between awarding organisations, and between awarding organisations and Ofsted, with tighter controls from Ofqual supporting this

- one centre commented that Ofqual's proposed Conditions should include sufficient flexibility to evolve to suit the changing market
- one awarding organisation commented that the level of oversight by awarding organisations of centres should be subject to amendment based on minimum levels of activity at centres.

**Question 14. What do you anticipate the burden will be on awarding organisations and centres of requiring an awarding organisation to meet the minimum verification requirements relating to centre controls that we have set out?**

70 respondents provided comments for this question. This included 41 awarding organisations, 15 centres, 7 representative bodies and 7 individuals.

Three awarding organisations commented that it was likely the costs and burden incurred as a result of our proposals would be passed on to centres and staff, and that the additional burden could distract them from performing their job. Two respondents (1 centre and 1 awarding organisation) made similar comments, including that the cost could be passed on to learners.

A number of respondents' comments related to the impact of meeting our minimum requirements for the number of times awarding organisations visit centres each year. These comments included:

- several respondents commented that unannounced visits could pose safety concerns and safeguarding issues for certain qualifications, where it may not be possible to turn up unannounced
- one awarding organisation commented that they currently visited only a third of their centres each year, so the proposals would require significantly more visits than it currently conducted
- one awarding organisation commented on whether the visits to centres were for each qualification offered by a centre, or just for each centre offering qualifications
- one awarding organisation was concerned that an increased number of visits could signal a lack of trust between awarding organisations and centres
- a request for clarification about the purpose of visits, what was meant by the term 'visit', and whether this could include remote activities, as well as how minimum visit requirements would apply to distance learning centres, where the burden of visiting was likely to be greater
- one individual commented that the burden of conducting three visits a year was unreasonable.

Respondents also commented on the costs and resource implications of meeting our proposed minimum requirements. These comments included:

- six respondents (2 awarding organisations, 4 centres) commented on increased costs, with one suggesting these could double
- one awarding organisation commented that our proposals would result in wasted resource, for example through unnecessary visits to low-risk centres just to meet the requirements
- one representative body and 1 individual commented on the associated costs of training, oversight and travel that would be incurred as a result of meeting our proposed minimum requirements

- one centre commented that some awarding organisations would lack the staff, systems and technology to implement the changes.

Three awarding organisations made comments about the impact on the number of centres offering qualifications. They said that the additional burden could discourage small centres or awarding organisations from offering regulated qualifications. Other respondents also commented more generally on capacity issues within centres:

- two respondents (1 awarding organisation and 1 centre) commented that the issues would be greater for centres that worked with multiple awarding organisations
- three respondents (2 representative bodies and 1 centre) commented on the additional recruitment and resourcing that would be required to meet the proposed requirements.

One awarding organisation said that it did not think that our proposed minimum requirements took account of the quality assurance work awarding organisations already put in place. One commented that these arrangements were sufficient and should not be tampered with.

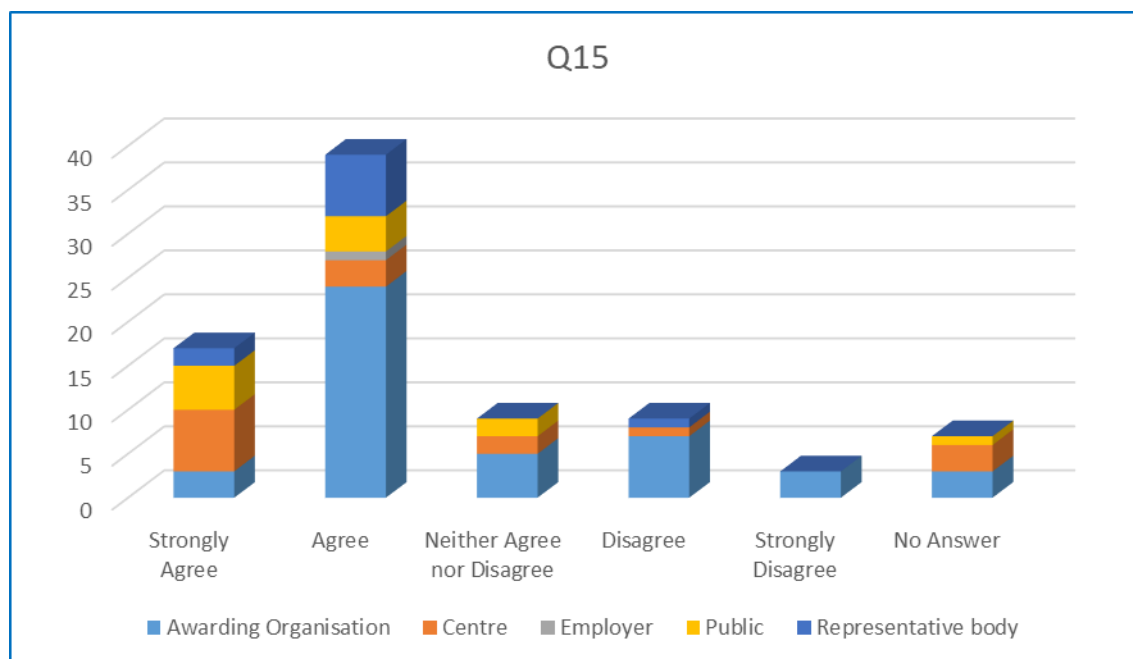
Two respondents (1 individual and 1 centre), without identifying specific burdens that had not been included, commented that they thought our assessment under-estimated the likely burden of our proposals.

One individual commented that the burden was necessary to ensure quality assessment and to ensure learner achievement.

Other comments made included:

- three awarding organisations said they would welcome guidance on the level of visits needed where moderation was used, and clarification about which qualifications should be moderated or verified
- that it would be difficult to communicate the changes with centres that were used to previous verification models
- a perceived risk of an increase in legal challenges by centres against actions taken by awarding organisations
- one centre commented that it was concerned the proposals could lead to delays in the certification process.

**Question 15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to require an awarding organisation to set out its moderation and verification approach as part of a centre-assurance strategy?**



Seventy seven respondents provided comments on this question. There were 56 responses to this question either agreeing or strongly agreeing with our proposal. This included 27 awarding organisations, 10 centres, 1 employer, 9 individuals, and 9 representative bodies. Twelve respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, including 10 awarding organisations, 1 centre and 1 representative body. Nine respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, including 5 awarding organisations, 2 centres and 2 individuals.

Many of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed did not add any further comments. Of those who did, 13 awarding organisations, 5 centres and 1 individual welcomed the proposal and thought this would offer clarity to qualification users. Some of these respondents had further comments, including:

- concern about repetition of existing documentation and the additional burden this would create for awarding organisations
- that there was a need for this, as a decline in standards had been perceived
- it is appropriate that awarding organisations explained their reasoning and had clear protocols with regard to quality assurance
- there should be a clear, published process in place.

Five awarding organisations stated that they agreed with this proposal and had a similar strategy currently in place. Four representative bodies noted that this would help to clarify awarding organisation reasoning for decisions to centres and the regulator. They also commented that the proposals should encourage awarding organisations to standardise their reasoning for adopting different approaches, in order to relieve the burden on centres. One expressed concern that this requirement could drive awarding organisations away from including centre assessment in qualification delivery.

Other respondents raised concerns about the lack of clarity on what information needed to be included in the strategy, whether Ofqual intended to audit this activity, and what value this document would add to regulation.

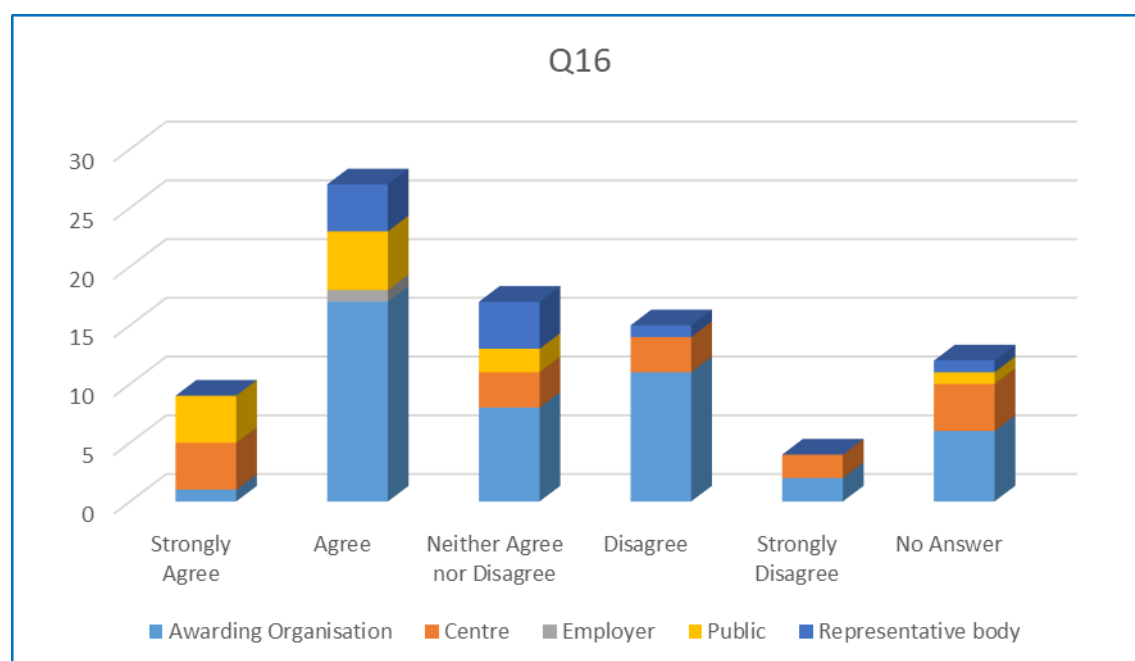
Of those who neither agreed nor disagreed, 2 awarding organisations stated that they agreed with the proposal in principle, but were concerned that the potential for different approaches on the same qualification, and the many variables, could make this a very complicated document. One awarding organisation queried the value of the document. Two

awarding organisations and 2 individuals stated that awarding organisations have procedures to follow and that this information already existed in centre agreements and other documentation.

Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, 6 awarding organisations, 1 centre and 1 representative body stated that awarding organisations already have a strategy in place which did not place additional burden on centres. They said that this information was contained in centre agreements and handbooks, therefore producing another document is burdensome and bureaucratic. In addition, they commented that it was unclear how these strategies would be standardised.

One awarding organisation requested clarity on the use and function of the strategy, whether it should be produced at a centre or qualification level, and whether this should form part of the qualification specification.

**Question 16. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the centre-assurance strategy an awarding organisation produces should meet the requirements we have set out?**



Seventy two respondents provided comments on this question. Thirty six respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with our proposal. This included 18 awarding organisations, 4 centres, 1 employer, 9 individuals, and 4 representative bodies. Nineteen respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, including 13 awarding organisations 5 centres and 1 representative body. Seventeen respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, including 8 awarding organisations, 3 centres, 2 individuals and 4 representative bodies.

Many of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed did not add any further comments. Of those who did, 4 awarding organisations and 1 representative body explained that they are meeting current requirements, but it would be helpful to have guidance on whether the centre assurance strategy would require them to rewrite existing information as a standalone document, or if it can reference existing documentation. Three awarding organisations and 2 representative bodies stated that they agreed with this approach, but highlighted that Ofqual must be open to feedback prior to finalising the requirements.

Three awarding organisations were concerned about the focus of the strategy being on qualification risks rather than centre risks. They commented that if this requires them to build

in all possible permutations it would create a complex and confusing strategy and remove awarding organisations' flexibility. Two awarding organisations suggested that the strategy needs to allow awarding organisations to justify why they had not meet the proposed requirements. Another awarding organisation explained that the strategy could help to minimise adverse effects, but highlighted that the burden of this requirement would be greater on awarding organisations with large numbers of qualifications.

Of those who neither agreed nor disagreed, 5 awarding organisations requested guidance on how to write the strategy, including:

- the extent to which awarding organisations must identify every situation that may occur and the actions they would take
- how they should reference existing information
- what specifically needed to be included in the strategy.

One centre and 1 representative body explained that the approach should be to permit more flexibility and be based on a proportionate risk basis, especially around the number of visits.

Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, 5 awarding organisations and 1 representative body stated that the proposals did not take into account different qualifications and information that already existed in different documents. Three awarding organisations disagreed with the proposal on the grounds that it would impose significant additional burden on them. They added that Ofqual could reduce this burden by providing guidance on how the strategy should be structured and completed. For example, the type of justifications which would be acceptable and whether similar qualifications could be grouped into one strategy, instead of separate strategies.

Two centres suggested that the centre assurance strategy should include information from awarding organisations including sampling plans and intended levels of sampling, what information would be captured and held on centre performance for monitoring purposes, and how standardisation was carried out. Another centre explained that the requirements were not workable, particularly the number of visits.

**Question 17. Are there any other factors that our guidance should cover? Please explain any additional factors you have identified.**

Thirty two respondents provided comments for this question. This included 24 awarding organisations, 3 centres, 3 representative bodies and 2 individuals.

Two awarding organisations and 1 representative body commented that they would welcome guidance on when a qualification should be subject to moderation or verification. One awarding organisation commented that it would like a clearer definition of terms used in our requirements and guidance, such as 'enhanced verification' and 'visit'.

A number of respondents made general comments about the need for any guidance to be cleared, rather than commenting on whether additional guidance was needed. These comments included, from awarding organisations:

- the need for further clarity about exactly what the requirements were
- guidance on what awarding organisations must report when submitting their annual Statement of Compliance to Ofqual
- for the guidance to set out exact expectations, rather than just a longer explanation of what was covered by the Conditions
- for the guidance to provide examples rather than a list of factors to consider



- guidance that takes account of different types of centre, including international centres and those that do not follow traditional academic years, and the criteria that must be met before a centre can issue results on behalf of an awarding organisation.

One representative body commented that it would be helpful to provide guidance for centres on common quality assurance processes and controls.

Respondents also commented on the need for consistency, and that guidance could help to ensure this. One awarding organisation commented that guidance could help ensure fairness in the centre-approval process. Awarding organisations also commented that in order to ensure consistency, Ofqual should provide templates setting out the form that information should take.

Other comments made by respondents included:

- one awarding organisation commented on the need to consider divergence between regulatory requirements across the qualifications regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- one centre commented on the need for guidance on activities that could increase the reliability of centre-based assessment decisions, including robust internal quality assurance undertaken by suitably qualified individuals, assessor training, regular standardisation exercises and working from clear unambiguous assessment guidance
- one individual commented that the proposals should be admin-neutral for schools
- one representative body commented that they were concerned about the risk of the proposals focussing on the reliability of qualifications over their validity.

**Question 18. What do you anticipate the burden will be of requiring an awarding organisation to produce a centre-assurance strategy? Are there any ways we could minimise this burden?**

Fifty four respondents provided comments for this question. This included 37 awarding organisations, 8 centres, 4 representative bodies and 5 individuals.

Twelve awarding organisations commented that they already held much of the information required to be included in a centre-assurance strategy, and that it would be unnecessarily burdensome if they were to collate this into a separate document. Awarding organisations commented that the burden could be reduced by relying on existing documentation where this is available and for these to be allowed to exist in separate documents if necessary. Three respondents (1 individual, 1 representative body and 1 centre) also commented that awarding organisations should already have this information in place, although there could be some burden involved in pulling this together.

Four awarding organisations commented that the main burden caused by requiring a centre-assurance strategy would be the time and money needed to produce it.

Four awarding organisations commented that they were not clear how the production of a centre-assurance strategy would improve compliance, and said it would increase burden. Two awarding organisations also commented that the burden would be increased if they had to produce separate strategies for each qualification, whereas a single over-arching strategy would be less burdensome.

A number of awarding organisations commented on the time it would take to produce a centre-assurance strategy. Whilst one commented that awarding organisations should already have such documents in place so there would be no additional time, others commented that they would need to review all of their qualifications to produce this. It could take 4 months for new qualifications, and longer for existing ones. When commenting on the

time taken, awarding organisations and centres commented that despite this, it would be a useful exercise to review and draw together the information and that it was necessary to secure compliance.

Other comments on the time needed to produce a centre-assurance strategy included:

- one awarding organisation commented that implementation in January 2021 would not allow sufficient time to adapt, as it was in the middle of an academic year
- one awarding organisation queried what would be considered a 'new' qualification, in relation to our proposal to require such qualifications to meet the requirements as soon as they are developed.

Respondents who commented on this typically suggested extending the implementation timeline as a way of minimising the burden of meeting our requirements.

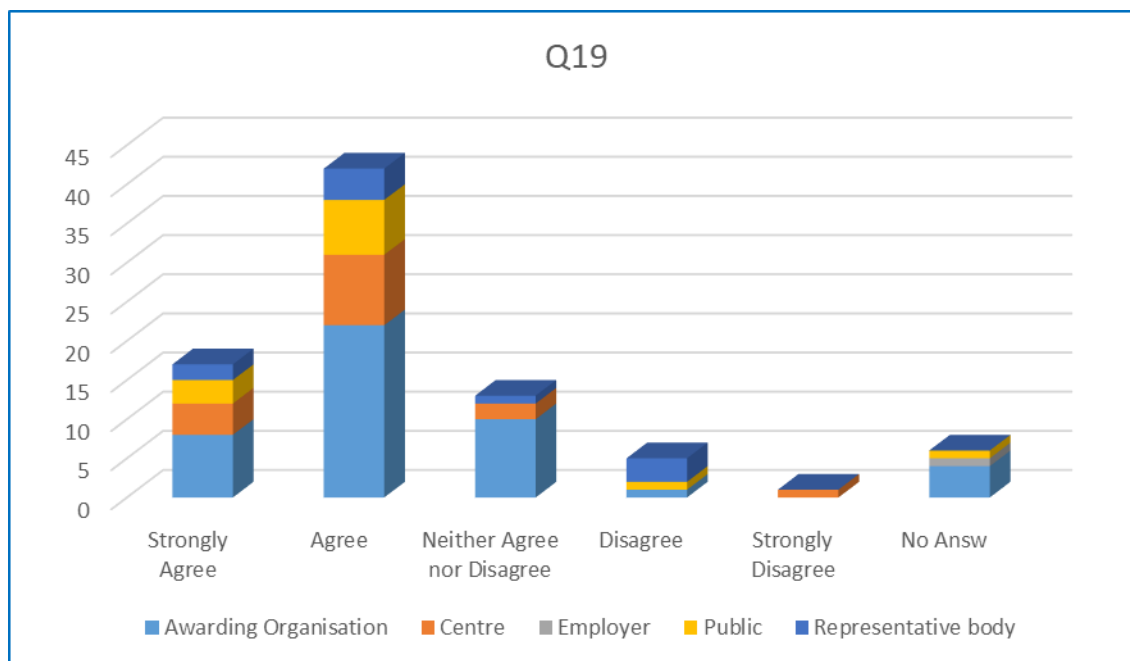
Other comments relating to the burden of producing a centre-assurance strategy included:

- one awarding organisation commented that in addition to the burden of producing the strategy, there would be a burden associated with training centres on any new processes
- one awarding organisation commented that retrospectively applying it to existing qualifications was likely to cause a burden
- that as a result of producing the strategy, awarding organisations may need to make changes to existing policies and procedures, which could take time to roll-out
- that there would be an ongoing burden associated with keeping the strategy under review
- one awarding organisation commented that existing qualifications had evolved as a result of various government policies and sector initiatives. A wholesale review would be a significant undertaking, but could ultimately lead to more manageable and efficient processes underpinned by clear principles
- one centre commented that not all awarding organisations had these processes written down and the approach should lead to policies being documented
- one representative body commented on the potential for additional costs as a result of producing centre-assurance strategies to be passed on to colleges.

Respondents who suggested ways to reduce the burden of producing a centre-assurance strategy made the following comments:

- four respondents (2 awarding organisations and 2 centres) commented that Ofqual should provide clear guidance and exemplars setting out what a centre-assurance strategy should include
- three respondents (2 centres and 1 representative body) commented that there should be guidance on what constituted an appropriate system for quality assurance, and on using a risk-based approach for centres
- one representative body commented that the strategy should be common across awarding organisations so that it could be more easily understood by centres.

**Question 19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to put in place guidance about the actions an awarding organisation should take where it discovers incorrect results have been issued for a qualification subject to verification?**



Seventy eight respondents provided comments on this question. There were 59 responses to this question either agreeing or strongly agreeing with our proposal. This included 30 awarding organisations, 13 centres, 10 individuals, and 6 representative bodies. Six respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, including 1 awarding organisation, 1 centre, 1 individual and 3 representative bodies. Thirteen respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, including 10 awarding organisations, 2 centres and 1 representative body.

Eighteen awarding organisations and 3 centres stated that guidance would be helpful to have a regulatory context for this challenging area. Respondents also added that:

- Ofqual should ensure that the guidance is clear and unambiguous
- Ofqual should include examples and details of unintended consequences which could stem from the proposed requirements, and consult with awarding organisations on these
- guidance should not be prescriptive and should permit awarding organisations some discretion or freedom in unusual situations
- Ofqual should acknowledge where a change in results may be unnecessary or could lead to an adverse effect
- guidance should take into account the wide range of vocational qualifications
- guidance should explicitly address that people could lose their livelihood if certificates are revoked.

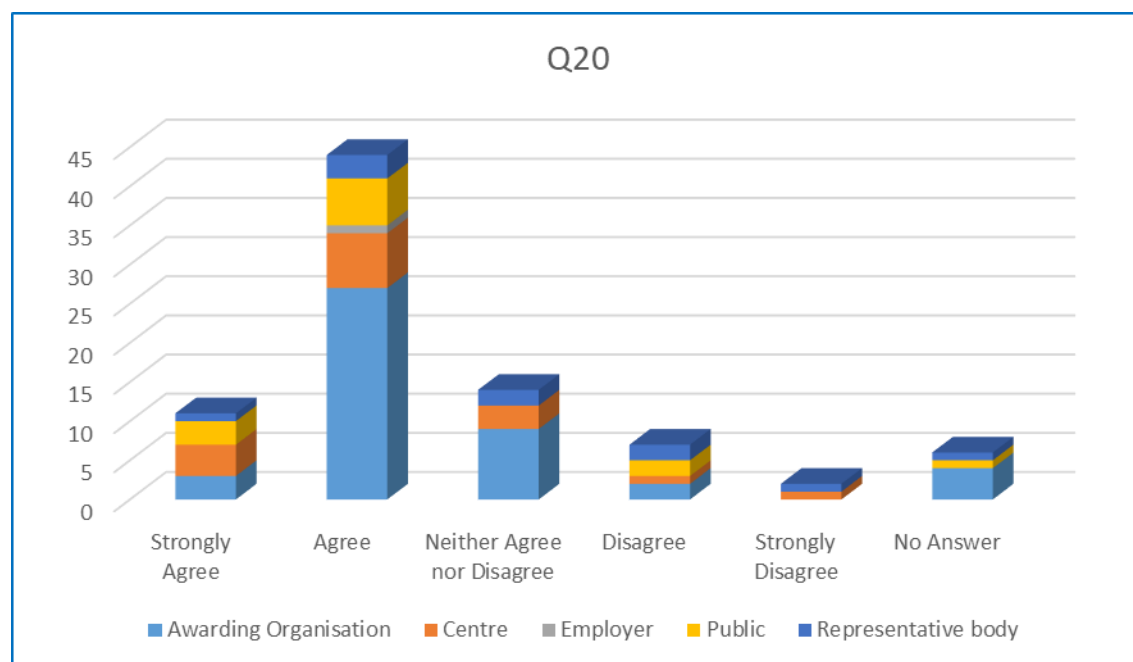
One awarding organisation added that Ofqual should support awarding organisations when they were first implementing this guidance. Another awarding organisation expressed a concern that they were encouraged to interpret unclear requirements and then penalised for these interpretations.

Three awarding organisations and 1 representative body stated that the proposals were reasonable and a critical requirement. One centre added that in cases where an awarding organisation discovered incorrect results had been issued for a qualification subject to verification, consideration should be given to revoking results and certificates for the whole cohort. Two centres stated that they would like guidance on how to address awarding organisation requirements, including how far back malpractice investigations should go.

Of those who neither agreed nor disagreed, 5 awarding organisations stated that guidance and support was welcome. One of these expressed concerns about the weighting of time factors in the guidance being different to current practice. Another was confused as to the expectations Ofqual held in relation to appeals, for example, how learners could appeal moderated results when awarding organisations had not decided on the result.

Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, one individual noted that awarding organisations already had set processes for looking at these situations, which the guidance contradicted. One centre said that it would welcome guidance from awarding organisations on how to manage this challenging situation. Two representative bodies expressed concern that learners would be unfairly impacted by this guidance and that it should instead reflect the imperative to treat learners fairly. Another representative body stated that current approaches worked well and did not need to change.

**Question 20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to put in place a provision for an awarding organisation to revoke a certificate where it discovers it has been issued on the basis of an incorrect result?**



Seventy eight respondents provided comments on this question. There were 55 responses to this question either agreeing or strongly agreeing with our proposal. This included 30 awarding organisations, 11 centres, 1 employer, 9 individuals, and 4 representative bodies. Nine respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, including 2 awarding organisations, 2 centres, 2 individuals and 3 representative bodies. Fourteen respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, including 9 awarding organisations, 3 centres and 2 representative bodies.

Nineteen awarding organisations agreed with the aim in principle, but said that guidance needed to address the practical challenges of revoking certificates, including what awarding organisations should do if they were unable to contact the learners. One individual added

that it should be sufficient for awarding organisations to prove that they had tried to contact learners.

One awarding organisation expressed concern that it would not be considered appropriate to revoke a certificate if several months had passed, except in extreme circumstances, although they agreed with the approach in general.

Respondents also offered general comments, including:

- other remedies were available and should be attempted before revocation of certificates, such as the provision of further evidence
- some assessments did not lend themselves to 'retakes'
- consideration should be given to revoking results and certificates for the whole cohort
- good verification practice should mitigate the need for revocation in most instances
- in the event of revocation, learners should be provided with an explanation of how to meet the deficient areas
- Ofqual should consider allowing online verification of the certificates, making revocation easier.

One centre stated that this ability was necessary to uphold the integrity of the qualification. Another noted that awarding organisations must ensure that they consistently apply the requirements. One representative organisation supported the proposal, especially in regards to licence to practice qualifications.

Of those who neither agreed nor disagreed, 4 awarding organisations suggested that further guidance was necessary to inform how awarding organisations should act in instances where they were unable to contact learners whose certificates had been revoked. They also commented on the weighting considerations of revocation where learners were using certificates to secure employment, and on balancing their considerations between public confidence and extenuating circumstances.

Two other awarding organisations said that they would like further information about what Ofqual's expectations were in terms of which actions would constitute 'all reasonable steps' and whether the intention was that this guidance would apply at centre level.

Three centres explained that they were concerned about revocation being misapplied and that the revocation decision should be open to appeal by the learner. They also noted that awarding organisations must handle this process sensitively. One representative body stated that this guidance would be likely to lead to more certificates being revoked.

Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed, 2 awarding organisations stated that they had no direct contact with the learners, so physically revoking certificates could prove problematic. They were also concerned that since there were existing procedures through which they were able to revoke certificates without creating an additional adverse effect, additional guidance would conflict with this. One centre added that consideration needed to be given to the difficulties of revocation and the effects where learners had used these qualifications to access employment or further study. One representative body added that revocation was a sanction on a potentially blameless individual and as such, should not be used.

One awarding organisation commented that revocation should always be the last resort and one individual added that all the relevant checks should be made before issuing the certificate, to prevent negative impact on the learner. One representative body stated that current approaches worked well and did not need changing.

**Question 21. What do you think the impact will be, on awarding organisations or centres, of any requirement to capture and retain evidence of assessments for the purpose of correcting results following verification?**

Fifty nine respondents provided comments for this question. This included 38 awarding organisations, 12 centres, 6 representative bodies and 3 individuals.

Twenty respondents (13 awarding organisations, 2 individuals, 2 representative bodies and 3 centres) commented that requirements in relation to the retention of evidence already existed and expected our proposals to have little or no additional impact in this area. They did not identify any issues, within practical limits, and commented that the main impact would be where evidence was not stored electronically.

Six awarding organisations commented on the potential burden caused by a requirement to retain learner evidence. They commented that the extent of this would depend on the period for which evidence must be retained, and could be significant for courses that were run over a number of years. One centre commented that it would be a challenge for awarding organisations to capture data, ensuring that it was accessible and auditable for a given time.

Three awarding organisations commented that where records were not stored electronically, this would present a significant burden. One commented that meeting these requirements would require a move towards electronic storage by awarding organisations and centres. Additionally, there were concerns about the ability of some centres to store evidence electronically; 1 centre commented that investment in IT may be necessary in order to do this.

Two representative bodies and 1 individual commented that they would welcome further guidance on the retention of evidence. They commented that it would be important for clear guidelines to be provided, particularly in relation to the timelines for retaining evidence. They also commented that it would be important to have guidance on exactly what should be kept, in what form, for example electronically, and the security arrangements around storing evidence.

Five awarding organisations made comments suggesting ways in which the retention of evidence could be minimised, for example by linking the time period for which it is retained to the frequency of awarding organisation visits. They commented that centres should only be required to retain evidence until the next awarding organisation visit, unless there is an issue with the centre's assessment decisions. Three awarding organisations commented on the implications of retention of evidence in relation to GDPR requirements.

One centre commented that it was important that requirements relating to retention of evidence were put in place as they identified this as an area of current concern.

**Question 22. How would the proposed approach impact upon the reviews and appeals procedures currently in place at awarding organisations or centres?**

Fifty three respondents provided comments for this question. This included 36 awarding organisations, 10 centres, 4 representative bodies and 3 individuals.

Thirty two respondents (28 awarding organisations, 2 centres and 2 individuals) commented that as there are already requirements to have appeals processes in place, there would be minimal impact and that the proposals were broadly in line with current practices. One awarding organisation commented that there was likely to be an impact on verified qualifications, but not on moderated qualifications.

Eight awarding organisations and one individual commented that our proposals would make appeals processes more challenging and that timescales may need to be extended. They

also commented that policies would need to be made clearer, including how appeals will function after certificates had been issued.

Two respondents (1 centre and 1 representative body) commented that the proposals could lead to an increase in the number of appeals and this may require more in-depth policies and procedures to be put in place. Four respondents (2 awarding organisations, 1 centre and 1 representative body) commented that an increase in appeals could increase the administrative burden and time required for running an appeals process.

Respondents also commented on factors that would need to be considered as part of an appeals process, including:

- two organisations commented that as verification took place at centre-level, then appeals should take place at this level too, as an awarding organisation would not be able to manage an appeal of a decision made by a centre
- one centre commented that it would be helpful for all awarding organisations to follow consistent appeals procedures
- one representative body and 1 awarding organisation commented that it was important that fairness was considered at the heart of any appeals system and that appeals about assessment evidence would be beneficial to all learners.

One centre commented on the importance of centres publicising reviews and appeals procedures.

**Question 23. Do you have any views on the timescale for implementing the approach set out in this consultation? Please provide any comments.**

Fifty two respondents provided a response to this question (37 awarding organisations, 5 representative bodies, 5 individuals, 4 centres and 1 employer).

Twelve respondents (7 awarding organisations, 1 centre, 3 individuals and 1 representative body) agreed with the proposed timescale. Three of the 12 emphasised that this was dependent upon Ofqual communicating the final decisions as soon as possible, whilst 1 stated that this was dependent on the extent of the changes.

Forty respondents (30 awarding organisations, 4 representative bodies, 3 centres, 2 individuals and 1 employer) expressed concerns regarding the proposed timescale, including:

- twenty eight respondents (23 awarding organisations, 3 centres and 2 representative bodies) stated that there needed to be a minimum of 12 months before implementation of the final decisions. A number of respondents proposed a period of 18 months, with a small number suggesting a longer period before implementation.
- sixteen respondents (13 awarding organisations, 2 centres and 1 representative body) provided reasons why they believed the proposed timescale was too tight. Comments included concerns that there would be insufficient time for revisions to be made to awarding organisation policies, processes, procedures and supporting IT functionality. Awarding organisations would need to communicate with centres, change centre agreements, recruit additional staff, and increase administration support for visits. The changes would also necessitate a range of staff training to ensure a clear understanding of the changes being implemented.
- eight respondents (7 awarding organisations and 1 representative body) stated that the timescale should be linked to academic years. Many qualifications begin in the autumn, therefore it would be more sensible to introduce changes from September. A proposed start date of September 2021 was suggested by some respondents.

- six awarding organisations stated a preference for a single date for implementation. They suggested that separate implementation dates between existing and new qualifications would cause confusion and be a greater burden.
- one awarding organisation expressed a preference for having a start date of September 2020 for new qualifications and a start date of September 2021 for existing qualifications.
- one awarding organisation expressed a concern about meeting the deadline for new qualifications if an awarding organisation has adopted a verification approach, particularly if this involved negotiation with Ofqual.

There were also 7 comments (5 awarding organisations and 2 representative bodies) for this question which raised concern about applying the new requirements on a qualification by qualification basis. If a centre started to deliver a new verified qualification, the awarding organisation would apply the proposed implementation approach to the centre, not just to the new qualification. An awarding organisation was probably not likely to conduct an unannounced visit and only consider evidence related to one specific new qualification, they would look at evidence from across the centre/qualification type.

**Question 24. For awarding organisations: Do you agree that the average cost of a single centre visit is in the region of £280? If not, what figure would you consider to be more representative?**

53 respondents provided comments for this question. Although this question was aimed at awarding organisations, some other respondents also commented. Responses to this question included: 40 awarding organisations, 7 centres, 2 representative bodies and 4 individuals.

Twelve respondents (11 awarding organisations and 1 centre) commented that they agreed with our estimate.

Five respondents (3 awarding organisations, 1 representative body and 1 centre) commented that they estimated the cost would be higher than we had estimated, but were not able to provide specific figures about what a more accurate estimate would be.

Of those that provided more specific estimates, these included:

- 24 awarding organisations, 2 centres and 1 representative body estimated the cost to be between £155 - £600 per day. Four commented that there could be additional costs for travel and subsistence, and for geographically remote or international centres
- 1 awarding organisation and 1 centre commented that more specialist skills are likely to cost more, possibly between £1000 - £1500 per day
- 1 individual commented that costs would be in the region of £275 - £400 per visit.

In addition to these estimates, awarding organisations made some general comments, which included:

- remote monitoring would be less expensive than face-to-face visits (3 awarding organisations)
- that the level of increase in costs caused by these visits may lead to awarding organisations having to notify Ofqual as part of Ofqual's reporting requirements under the General Conditions
- that there were additional costs to visits for activities such as provision of support to centres, staffing and recruitment for visits.



**Question 25. For centres: Are you able to estimate current costs of visits?**

Twenty three respondents provided comments for this question. This included 7 awarding organisations, 12 centres, 1 representative body, 2 individuals and 1 employer.

Some respondents to this question made general comments about the types of costs incurred, whilst others provided more specific estimates.

Of those that provided specific estimates:

- awarding organisations estimated the average cost to be between £100 - £330
- eight centres estimated costs to be between £300 - £500 per visit,
- one centre estimated the average cost to their business, which provides multiple qualifications from multiple awarding organisations to be £5850
- other centre estimates ranged from £800 - £3500
- two individuals estimated costs between £260 - £900 per visit
- one representative body estimated the cost to be around £1000 per visit.

Of those that made general comments, these included what the cost of a centre visit consisted of, including: staff cover, venue hire, transporting of portfolios, assessor time, and payments to the awarding organisation.

**Question 26. Would awarding organisations be likely to pass on a proportion of any incremental cost of these proposals to centres, in the form of increased centre fees?**

Fifty nine respondents provided comments for this question. This included 37 awarding organisations, 12 centres, 5 representative bodies, 4 individuals and 1 employer.

Eighteen awarding organisations commented that whilst they would try to absorb additional costs where they could, it was inevitable this would not always be possible, so some costs would have to be passed on to centres. Six awarding organisations made similar comments, saying that there would be no other way to cover increases than to pass these on to centres.

One awarding organisation commented that the extent to which costs would be passed on would depend on the approach taken to visits – costs would be more likely to be passed on if visits were required for every qualification as opposed to every centre. Four awarding organisations commented that these additional costs could threaten the ability of awarding organisations to remain in business and that smaller organisations could be affected to a greater extent, as they would be less likely to be able to absorb costs. Two awarding organisations commented that an increase in fees would ultimately disadvantage learners.

One awarding organisation commented that there would be additional costs incurred by awarding organisations if they conducted an unannounced visit which had to be rescheduled.

One awarding organisation commented in relation to our General Conditions, that the extent of the increase could lead to the awarding organisation having to make a formal notification to Ofqual as a result of an increase in costs that is above the rate of inflation.

Twenty four respondents (12 individuals, 10 centres, 1 employer and 1 representative body) commented that they agreed that awarding organisations would be likely to pass on any increase in costs to centres.

Representative bodies who responded commented that:

- awarding organisations did not want to increase fees for centres, recognising the challenging financial situation in schools and FE colleges
- awarding organisations would not be able to absorb all of the costs imposed by the proposed requirements
- centres did not have the capacity to absorb additional costs and may be forced to withdraw qualifications or reduce choice in the event of increased fees
- it would be important to consider any increases as part of wider work relating to the price of qualifications.

**Question 27. What impacts might centres expect as a result of increased visits, including the requirement for unannounced visits, by awarding organisations?**

Sixty five respondents provided comments for this question. This included 33 awarding organisations, 16 centres, 7 representative bodies and 8 individuals and 1 employer.

Thirteen awarding organisations commented that it would be difficult for centres to accommodate the likely increased number of visits from awarding organisations. This would particularly be the case for centres that worked with a large number of awarding organisations. Three awarding organisations, 9 centres and 1 representative body raised concerns about the possible increased workload, financial and administrative burden caused by an increased number of visits and that some of these may be passed on to centres and learners.

Twelve awarding organisations and 3 individuals commented specifically on the proposals relating to unannounced visits. They commented that this would be a particular concern for work-based provision, or for centres such as prisons, where security considerations could impact the feasibility of unannounced visits. These comments were also reflected by centres. One awarding organisation was concerned that unannounced visits may be seen to indicate a lack of trust between awarding organisations and centres.

Five awarding organisations made comments about the relative impact of an increased overall number of visits. Two awarding organisations commented on the impact on large centres due to the number of awarding organisations they are likely to deal with, while 2 also commented on the impact on smaller centres due to an increased pressure on limited resources. Two individuals made similar comments relating to the pressure on centres' resources. Five awarding organisations and one representative body commented that low-risk centres were likely to see an increased burden, as they were likely to experience a greater increase in the overall number of visits compared to what they currently experience. Two respondents (1 awarding organisation, 1 representative body) commented on the impact of the proposals on overseas centres, who would experience a greater increase in costs due to the practicalities of visiting such centres.

Respondents to this question made some recommendations about ways that the impacts could be reduced, including:

- two awarding organisations commented that allowing monitoring activities, such as remote monitoring, in place of visits could reduce the impact of our proposals. One centre and one representative body also made similar comments
- collaboration between awarding organisations could reduce the impact of an increased number of visits.

Other respondents who commented on the impact of these proposals commented that:

- centres would experience greater scrutiny, but this would not necessarily translate to better monitoring or safeguarding of standards

- there would be no significant impact but the proposals would bring about a more effective approach to quality assurance
- while centres may be inconvenienced, if they were doing what they should be doing and could evidence this, there should not be a problem in being open and transparent
- the impacts on centres would depend on the awarding organisation's approach
- visits should be intended to support rather than punish centres.

**Question 28. For awarding organisations: What cost would you anticipate the development of a centre assurance strategy document for the relevant qualifications offered by your awarding organisation would be?**

Forty three respondents provided comments for this question. This included 35 awarding organisations, 3 centres, 1 representative body and 4 individuals.

Awarding organisations provided a range of estimates for the cost of developing a centre-assurance strategy. Of those that provided specific estimates, these ranged from £100 to £90,000.

- three awarding organisations provided estimates of up to £5,000
- seven provided estimates of between £5,000 - £10,000
- two provided estimates higher than £10,000
- one commented that the cost would be likely to be several thousand pounds, but did not provide a specific figure.

Eleven awarding organisations commented that they would need to conduct further analysis of staff time and costs involved, and that they would need more clarity on the exact requirements and the form of the document before they were able to do this.

Where respondents made general comments without providing a specific estimate, these included that:

- costs would be generally low, and definitely below our estimate of £8,000
- costs were expected to be minimal as it was mainly a case of pulling existing information together
- the cost would be dependent on whether a single centre-assurance strategy was required, or whether separate documents were required for each qualification
- in addition to one-off costs for producing a centre-assurance strategy, there were likely to be ongoing costs involved in keeping it under review.

Although this question was aimed at awarding organisations, some other respondents also commented on this question:

- one centre suggested a cost of £3,000 - £5,000 for the initial strategy, with an additional £300 - £600 per qualification. Another provided an estimate of £50 - £400
- one individual commented on the time requirement to produce the strategy, estimating that about 5 days would be needed for its development
- one individual commented that any cost would be off-set by the increased quality assurance that would be brought about by the proposals
- one representative body provided an estimate of £50,000 - £100,000 for developing a centre-assurance strategy,

- one representative body commented that although it could not comment on the cost of the strategy, it would be likely to contribute to additional costs to centres.

**Question 29. Do you have any views on how centre-assurance strategies should be implemented for existing qualifications? Please provide your views.**

Forty five respondents provided comments for this question. This included 35 awarding organisations, 4 centres, 2 representative bodies and 4 individuals.

Eleven awarding organisations and 1 representative body commented that they would welcome additional information about the level of detail that should be included in a centre-assurance strategy. In relation to specific considerations about how to implement centre-assurance strategies, awarding organisations also commented that:

- changes would need to be implemented clearly, as many centres understand the current arrangements, so there is a risk of changes causing confusion. Centres would need advance notice of any changes in order to implement them. Centres also commented that they would need training and support from awarding organisations in order to implement any changes
- producing a centre-assurance strategy would require an in-depth review of qualifications to ensure the right arrangements are in place. There was a suggestion that this could take up to 24 months to complete, and as a minimum, a full academic year, for example if changes to processes were needed as a result of our proposals.

Respondents provided mixed views as to whether a single implementation date should apply, or whether a phased approach would be more effective. One awarding organisation commented that a single implementation date for all qualifications would provide greater clarity. Other awarding organisations however preferred a phased approach. Three commented that only new qualifications should be subject to an implementation date, with older qualifications updated as and when they were reviewed. Alternative approaches to phasing the introduction included for centre-assurance strategies to be implemented for moderated qualifications first, or for awarding organisations to implement them according to a risk-based approach.

Respondents also commented on what the centre-assurance strategy itself should look like. One awarding organisation commented that awarding organisations should approach implementation of centre-assurance strategies in the way that works best for them. Some commented that this would mean being able to draw on information in existing documents that could be reviewed and updated as necessary, whereas others said that new policies and procedures would be needed as part of their implementation. In relation to the format of the centre-assurance strategy, 1 centre commented that Ofqual should provide a template setting out what this should look like.

In terms of implementation, 3 awarding organisations commented that it would be more effective to implement centre-assurance strategies by producing a single document that covered a range of qualifications, stating that different documents for each qualification would be unfeasible to produce.

One centre expressed a concern how an awarding organisation would determine which centres it worked with, including, for example, whether staff in centres would need to hold particular qualifications.

One representative body commented that it did not think centre-assurance strategies were necessary.

**Question 30. Are there any regulatory impacts that we have not identified arising from our proposals? Please identify any additional impacts.**

Thirty three respondents provided comments for this question. This included 21 awarding organisations, 6 centres, 2 representative bodies and 4 individuals.

Seven awarding organisations queried the impact of our proposals, given that this was an area they did not feel had previously been identified as an issue, or as non-compliant with Ofqual's requirements. They were concerned about the impact of existing DCS and verification models being non-compliant. Awarding organisations commented on the impact of this in relation to the statements of compliance, which they submitted annually to Ofqual, and whether non-compliance in this area needed to be declared as part of that process.

Two awarding organisations identified the potential for divergence between qualifications regulators, if Ofqual proceeded to implement these changes, but regulators in Wales and Northern Ireland did not. Awarding organisations commented on the possible impact of our proposals either on very large, or very small centres, as they were likely to affect these centres to a greater extent than others.

Other comments made by awarding organisations included that:

- the proposals could impact on awarding organisations' international business, particularly in relation to the need to conduct a prescribed number of visits to centres each year
- as a result of the proposals, some awarding organisations may decide not to offer certain qualifications, which could affect the choice of qualifications available to learners
- there was likely to be a resource strain and cost pressure on awarding organisations caused by having to comply with our proposed requirements
- it might be necessary to consider the extent to which Ofqual's requirements reflect differences between vocational and general qualifications
- the proposals could have an effect on qualifications in sectors where a quick turnaround is required between assessments being taken and results being issued.

Centres that responded to this question commented that:

- the consultation proposals underestimated the costs and delivery costs that would be incurred by complying with these new requirements, for example through staff training and development costs
- centres might choose to reduce the number of awarding organisations they work with to minimise the impact of the proposals (for example to reduce the overall number of visits they are subject to).

One individual commented that prescriptive requirements could affect awarding organisations' ability to remain financially viable. They also commented that increased requirements on awarding organisations could lead to a need for enhanced auditing from the regulator, in order to ensure that the requirements were being met. One representative body commented that this could have an effect on the relationship between awarding organisations and the regulator. One representative body commented that the proposals could impact on learners, particularly where qualifications were being used for access to work. They commented that delays caused by additional awarding organisation checks could negatively impact learners.

**Question 31. We have not identified any ways in which our proposals will prevent innovation by awarding organisations. Do you have any comments on this assessment? Please provide specific examples.**

Forty respondents provided comments for this question. This included 33 awarding organisations, 2 centres, 4 representative bodies and 1 individual.

Of those who responded, 10 awarding organisations commented that requiring a minimum number of visits in order to meet our requirements for verification, was likely to limit flexibility and innovation in approaches taken by awarding organisations. One awarding organisation commented that the proposals appeared to be more prescriptive about how awarding organisations should carry out verification checks, as opposed to focusing on the outcomes to be achieved, which could limit innovation.

Four awarding organisations commented that the proposals ignored the potential that technological innovation could provide, with 4 also commenting that a more flexible approach to what was defined as a 'visit' could encourage greater innovation. Two centres also commented that the proposals could lead to a move away from innovative approaches from awarding organisations, such as remote sampling.

Twelve awarding organisations commented that the proposals were likely to place a strain on awarding organisation resources, which would be likely to restrict the innovation. They commented that this could mean resources being used unnecessarily to visit low-risk centres. Centres also commented that our proposed requirements were likely to be resource intensive, in particular relating to visits, and this could restrict innovation.

Awarding organisations commented that requiring everything to be considered as either moderation or verification could restrict awarding organisations' ability to develop alternative methods of quality assurance. They noted that the approaches to verification may impact on the qualifications that awarding organisations choose to develop, and make them less likely to develop roll-on-roll-off qualifications. Two awarding organisations commented that the proposals might drive awarding organisations towards a more rigid 'tick-box approach' to complying with our requirements.

Two awarding organisations commented that our proposals would not present any barriers to innovation. One representative organisation commented that the proposals in the consultation appeared sufficient to encourage innovation.

**Question 32. We have set out our view that our proposals would not impact (positively or negatively) on people who share a particular protected characteristic. Are there any potential impacts that we have not identified?**

We received comments on this question from 44 respondents (33 awarding organisations, 7 representative bodies, 4 centres)

There were 14 comments where respondents (9 awarding organisations, 3 centres, 2 representative bodies) did not see any potential impacts on people who share a particular protected characteristic.

Of the comments received, 29 identified potentially negative impacts on people who share a particular protected characteristic.

- fourteen comments (12 awarding organisations, 2 representative bodies) raised similar concerns about the potential impact on smaller centres who may be forced to cease running courses as a result of increased cost and added burden from the proposed changes to verification. A number of respondents stated that some of the qualifications taken by learners with protected characteristics were offered by these smaller centres, so these learners could be disproportionately affected
- four awarding organisations raised concerns about the potential impact of the verification proposals upon specialised or niche qualifications which were often taken by people who share a particular protected characteristic, particularly learners with disabilities

- one representative body suggested that the proposals could impact on poorer or disadvantaged groups' progression into employment
- one awarding organisation raised concern about the potential impact of the verification proposals on online delivered qualifications, particularly for those learners with disabilities.

In addition to commenting on the impact of our proposals on those who share a protected characteristic, 3 awarding organisations also commented on the potential impact of unannounced visits on learners' mental health.

We received 1 positive comment about the potential impact of the proposed changes. The respondent felt that verification rather than moderation approaches offered the opportunity for more flexibility to support those with protected characteristics.

**Question 33. Are there any additional steps we could take to mitigate any negative impact you have identified would result from our proposals, on people who share a protected characteristic?**

We received comments on this question from 21 respondents (14 awarding organisations, 5 representative bodies, 1 centre and 1 individual), 7 of which repeated concerns raised in the previous question.

Fourteen respondents (8 awarding organisations, 4 representative bodies, 1 centre and 1 individual) offered suggestions of how to mitigate potential negative impacts of the proposals.

- seven awarding organisations included proposals relating to verification visits, including removing no-notice visits, permitting short notice of visits, reducing the number of visits, and allowing awarding organisations to adopt a risk-based approach to centre visits
- one awarding organisation suggested allowing the use of video conferencing and/or recording for verification
- one awarding organisation suggested Ofqual be more prescriptive in defining regulatory requirements, so that planning by awarding organisations could be more efficient and effective, rather than open to interpretation
- one representative body suggested Ofqual facilitated joint work with awarding organisations to simplify and harmonise their processes and avoid placing additional costs and administrative burdens on centres
- one representative body proposed Ofqual keep under review the impact on centres and awarding organisations in meeting these new requirements, in order to help ensure a wide range of qualifications remain both viable and valid.

**Question 34. Do you have any other comments on the impacts of our proposals on people who share a protected characteristic?**

We received comments on this question from 8 respondents (7 awarding organisations, 1 representative body).

- four awarding organisations reiterated the concern raised in question 32 regarding the potential impact on smaller centres. Respondents explained that this could impact on different groups, including learners with special educational needs, disadvantaged learners, vulnerable learners and female learners from communities who have difficulty accessing learning

- other comments raised more general concerns rather than the potential impact on people who share a particular protected characteristic. These comments queried the cost of introducing the proposed changes and the overall benefit to learners.



## **Views expressed – consultation engagement events**

### **Background**

As part of our consultation we held three consultation engagement events. These were in:

- London on 2 April 2019
- Manchester on 9 April 2019
- Coventry on 2 May 2019

Our consultation engagement events were attended by over 200 people in total.

At these events, we set out our proposed approach, working through each broad area and discussing existing approaches, stakeholders' views of the proposals, and providing opportunity for attendees to discuss these, provide feedback, and ask questions.

### **Views expressed**

Attendees at these events did not provide formal feedback on a question by question basis, so have not been included in the analysis section above (although attendees may also have responded formally to the consultation, in which case their views will have been included as part of the analysis of responses).

Attendees were instead asked to consider our proposals by theme. The majority of views at the events mirrored those reported in the formal consultation analysis above. As such, we do not repeat these in detail, but instead provide a brief overview of the issues raised.

### **Visits**

The main issue raised by respondents at our events related to our proposal to require awarding organisations to conduct a minimum of 2 centre visits each year, plus an additional unannounced visit. Attendees commented that:

- they recognised the benefits of contact between awarding organisations and centres, although in many cases, they would seek to manage these relationships through support and guidance throughout a course, rather than checks to identify issues at the end of courses
- the overall number of visits would be unnecessarily burdensome, and in some cases unmanageable, and that there were resource and cost implications associated with this
- the proposals were overly prescriptive and that it was not clear that an increased number of visits would necessarily lead to better controls. Attendees preferred a more risk-based approach, with the number of visits scaled up or down according to the risks associated with a particular centre
- unannounced visits were, in some cases, unworkable, due to restrictions on access to certain types of centres (for example prisons and care environments)
- certain types of centre, such as international or geographically remote centres, would be hard to visit as frequently as we proposed
- they would welcome clarity on what constitutes a visit, for example whether this had to be face-to-face, or whether remote activities could constitute a visit
- increased visits could lead to unintended consequences such as awarding organisations and centres reducing the range of qualifications they offered to reduce the overall burden, particularly where centres work with multiple awarding organisations

- they would welcome greater clarity about the purpose of the visits and what an awarding organisation should check.

### **Moderation and verification definitions**

Attendees had a number of questions about the meaning of moderation and verification. While the majority supported the proposal to distinguish between different approaches, they wanted further information about:

- whether the decision to apply a moderation or verification approach applied at the level of the qualification, or on a centre by centre basis
- what activities verification included, as in many existing qualifications, what was understood by verification went wider than our proposed definition
- which qualifications would be subject to each of these approaches
- the importance of ensuring verification wasn't seen as a weaker approach, when it could in fact provide robust controls.

### **Minimum verification requirements**

Attendees supported the proposed approach to setting minimum requirements where a verification approach was used. Attendees commented that:

- they would welcome additional information about our proposal to require awarding organisations to set requirements for the retention of evidence where a verification approach was used. Attendees requested further information on this, for example about how long evidence should be retained for
- further information about the approach to sampling would be helpful
- setting minimum requirements could in some cases prevent awarding organisations from applying a risk-based approach, with some centres currently subject to lower levels of control than those proposed, where they are considered low-risk
- many of the minimum requirements are already being met by awarding organisations

### **Enhanced verification**

Many attendees supported the proposal to require an awarding organisation to enhance its approach beyond our minimum requirements in certain circumstances. A number of awarding organisations and centres told us that such approaches were already in place, and the controls are scaled up or down based on specific risks relating to centres. As they felt these controls already existed, they commented that it was unnecessary for Ofqual to prescribe such an approach.

Attendees did however want further clarification about exactly what was meant by the term 'enhanced verification' and whether this was intended to be a separately defined level of control, or whether it was intended to refer to a more over-arching risk-based approach.

### **Notifications to other awarding organisations**

Attendees had concerns about the proposal for awarding organisations to notify other awarding organisations where they identified an issue with a centre that caused them to enhance their verification approach with that centre. Attendees commented that:

- in many instances, an awarding organisation would seek to work with a centre to address issues, rather than taking action and reporting to other awarding organisations
- it was not clear at what level an issue would become notifiable to other awarding organisations

- there could be a high volume of notifications, meaning that big issues get lost in the 'noise'
- there were concerns about the implications of sharing such information with other awarding organisations
- there were not currently mechanisms in place to support such arrangements, and that awarding organisations would often not know which other awarding organisations a centre is working with.

### **Centre-assurance strategies**

Attendees at the events generally supported the proposal to require awarding organisations to put in place a centre-assurance strategy. Many said that the information was already available to them in other documents, so would just need to be drawn together rather than creating something entirely new.

Some attendees asked for more information on the format these should take, including whether there needed to be a separate document for each qualification, or a single overarching strategy. They also asked for information about whether the information could be retained in separate documents or needed collating into a single document, and how the document should be structured.

Attendees commented on the potential cost and burden of producing this document, and the timescales required to develop and implement it, which would be dependent on the issues raised above about the format and structure of the document.

### **Revocation of results and certificates**

Attendees generally supported this as an approach, with many commenting that they would always consider whether to revoke an incorrect result or certificate if an issue was identified. They found the proposal to provide guidance on this helpful. The main concern related to the practicality of recovering a revoked certificate as awarding organisations often do not have a way of directly contacting learners and learners might have left the centre by the time an issue was discovered. In addition, certificates might be used for the purpose of issuing other permits, and it would be difficult to revoke something issued by a third party in reliance on a certificate.

### **Implementation**

Attendees made a number of comments about the proposal that awarding organisations should be fully compliant with our proposed requirements by January 2021. Whilst some attendees said this was a reasonable timeframe, others that offered a large number of qualifications told us that they did not think it would be possible to meet this deadline. A number of attendees suggested the implementation date should be moved to align with an academic year, so that changes were not being made part way through a year, suggesting that September 2021 would be a more reasonable timeframe.

# Appendix A: list of organisational consultation respondents

When completing the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate whether they were responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. Below we list those organisations that submitted a non-confidential response to the consultation.

1st4sport Qualifications  
AAT  
ABRSM  
AQA  
Ascentis  
ASCL  
ASDAN  
ASQ  
Association of Colleges (AOC)  
Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP)  
Awarding First  
Bridgwater & Taunton College  
British Association of Construction Heads  
British Canoeing Awarding Body  
CABWI Awarding Body  
Cambridge Assessment International Education  
Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity  
CIPD  
City& Guilds (CGLI)  
CMI  
CPCAB  
Crossfields Institute  
East Essex Vocational Training Ltd  
ECTIB  
Equestrian Qualifications GB Ltd  
Federation of Awarding Bodies  
Federation of Industry Sector Skills and Standards  
First On Scene training  
Gatehouse Awards Limited  
Gateway Qualifications  
HMC (Headmasters' & Headmistresses' Conference)  
Hounslow School  
IAO  
In at the deep end Ltd  
Lantra  
Laser Learning Awards  
LAURUS Development  
Learning Resource Network

Leicestershire Police (EMCHRS L&D)  
LJW Skills Consultancy  
Logic Certification Limited  
Mountain Training England  
MP Awards  
NASWUT  
National Education Union  
NCFE  
NOCN  
North Yorkshire Police  
Northumbria Police  
OCN London  
OCN NI  
OCR  
Open Awards  
Pearson  
Police Federation of England & Wales  
Portico Consulting Ltd  
Qualsafe Awards  
Remote First Aid  
Severn Park Fire & Rescue Training Centre  
SFJ Awards  
Shorecliffe Training  
Skillsfirst  
SLQ  
South Bromsgrove high school  
SQA  
The Manchester College (part of LTE group)  
The Student Room  
TQUK  
UAL  
VQ Assessment Services Ltd  
WCSM  
WJEC  
YMCA Awards



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