Responding to Criticisms of the CASLO Approach (Report D)

Properties of qualifications from the CASLO research programme

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The CASLO Research Programme

This report is part of a series that arose from Ofqual's 2020 to 2024 programme of research into the CASLO approach:

1. The CASLO Research Programme: Overview of research projects conducted between 2020 and 2024.

2. The CASLO Approach: A design template for vocational and technical qualifications.

3. How 'CASLO' Qualifications Work. (This was published in February 2022.)

4. Origins and Evolution of the CASLO Approach in England: The importance of outcomes and mastery when designing vocational and technical qualifications.

5. Responding to Criticisms of the CASLO Approach (Report A): A taxonomy of potential problems.

6. Responding to Criticisms of the CASLO Approach (Report B): Views from awarding organisations.

7. Responding to Criticisms of the CASLO Approach (Report C): Views from qualification stakeholders.

8. Responding to Criticisms of the CASLO Approach (Report D): Properties of qualifications from the CASLO research programme.

9. Understanding Qualification Design: Insights from the 2020 to 2024 CASLO qualification research programme.

Contents

Introduction

The aim of this report is to extend our understanding of how the CASLO approach to qualification design can be operationalised. The CASLO approach is defined by the following key characteristics (Newton & Lockyer, 2022):

1. the domain of learning is specified as a comprehensive set of learning outcomes, which tend to refer to elements of knowledge and skill

2. a standard is specified for each learning outcome, via a set of assessment criteria, which are used to judge student performances directly

3. a pass indicates that a student has acquired the full set of learning outcomes specified for the domain (the mastery requirement)

While these key characteristics constitute the core of all CASLO qualifications, Newton & Lockyer (2022) showed that they could be implemented within this type of qualification design in different ways, which contributes to diversity within the approach. The CASLO approach also includes qualifications that have certain 'hybrid' features, that is, features that are more common in the 'classical' approach (adopted in general academic qualifications such as GCSEs or A levels).

In this documentation review, which is a part of our broader research programme into the CASLO approach to qualification design, we extend Newton and Lockyer's (2022) analysis by using a sample of 6 qualifications. We classified 5 as CASLO qualifications. The remaining qualification, despite exhibiting certain CASLO characteristics, cannot be classed as a CASLO qualification as it adopts the classical approach to qualification design in other respects. Nevertheless, this qualification was also included in this analysis to illustrate that qualification design can be fluid. Attempts to define qualifications through neat categories (rather than placing them along a continuum) can be challenging.

These 6 qualifications were selected with the intention of illustrating variation in the CASLO approach. They were selected from a larger sample of 15 qualifications discussed in our main study (report 6). In the main study, we explored awarding organisations' views on the benefits and potential problems of the CASLO approach, and focused on what underpins validity and perceived positive impact in current CASLO qualifications. For that study, awarding organisations were invited to volunteer 'exemplar' qualifications to be discussed during interviews, and they were asked to provide relevant qualification documentation to help us understand their qualification design. This documentation was reviewed ahead of the interviews and informed our discussions with the awarding organisations.

The sample described in this report includes the following qualifications:

- GQA Qualifications Level 2 NVQ in Fenestration Installation (Fenestration_L2)[1]

- VTCT Level 2 Diploma in Women's Hairdressing (Hairdressing_L2)

- NCFE CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning (Teaching support_L2)

- UAL Level 3 Diploma in Creative Practice: Art, Design and Communication (Creative_L3)

- Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Business (Business_L3)

- CIPS Level 4 Diploma in Procurement and Supply (Procurement_L4)

We provide a description of each of the 6 qualifications before comparing their designs and, where appropriate, we further contrast these designs with the classical approach. Each qualification is described in relation to several key areas:

- purpose and target cohort

- structure

- content and standards

- assessment

- quality assurance

- teaching and learning

While our qualification descriptions are largely based on documentary analysis, they are also occasionally elaborated by explanations provided by the awarding organisations during the interviews. These mostly elucidate the broader contexts and the teaching and learning aspects of the qualifications. Given that most of this report is based on summarising the information found in qualification documentation, we do not cite individual sources that the descriptions are based on in the main body of the report. A list of reviewed documents is included in the References section, with all documents clearly attributed to the relevant qualifications.

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[1] Throughout this report, except for the section titles, we refer to these qualifications using the abbreviated formats provided in brackets in this paragraph.

GQA Qualifications Level 2 NVQ in Fenestration Installation

Qualification purpose and target cohort[2]

The Level 2 NVQ in Fenestration Installation is an occupational qualification[3] aimed at students employed as installers of glass supporting systems, such as window and door units, and conservatories. This qualification is delivered mainly by private training providers and employers on a roll-on, roll-off basis at any time of the year, depending on the existing demand. It may be occasionally offered by colleges that have specialised vocational departments that are equipped with practical training facilities.

To complete this qualification, students should already be in employment and be fully trained to deal with routine assignments of their roles, requiring minimum supervision in undertaking the job. It is a prerequisite that the role in which the student is employed must give them the opportunity to display and evidence the competencies and knowledge that this qualification comprises.

The typical student may differ in the level of experience that they have in the role and range from a relative novice to experienced workers that may already possess the skills and knowledge but have not been formally assessed and qualified. Another group of potential students are those wishing to acquire the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, which certifies that one has the appropriate training and qualifications for undertaking the job at a building site.

While there are no formal entry requirements for undertaking this qualification, centres must ensure that students have the potential and opportunity to gain the qualification. Therefore, GQA Qualifications recommends that each prospective student should be initially assessed prior to commencing the qualification, to evaluate their suitability to undertake the programme of learning. This initial assessment is separate to any actual assessment that is part of this qualification, and its purpose is strictly to evaluate the prospective student's existing knowledge,

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[2] For each qualification described in this report, the content of this section is limited to information that was available in the qualification documentation, for example, a specification.

[3] Occupational qualifications have a clear and direct link to one or more occupations: an individual completing the qualification could reasonably expect to have the knowledge, skills and understanding to move directly into skilled employment in the occupation or to make significant a progression in employment.

skills, and experience in the areas of occupational practice that are part of this qualification. It also enables the identification of any specific needs that the prospective student may have, and the opportunities afforded by their workplace to meet the qualification requirements.

Qualification structure

This qualification comprises 4 mandatory units and 11 optional units clustered in 4 groups, as shown below. To be awarded the qualification, a minimum of 40 credits (232 Guided Learning Hours, GLH) should be achieved, with 15 credits from the mandatory units and a minimum of 11 credits from optional units from group 1, a minimum of 8 credits from group 2, and a minimum of 3 credits from each of groups 3 and 4.

The 4 mandatory units of unequal size include[4]:

> Unit 1: Maintain health and safety in the fenestration installation working environment (4 credits)
>
> Unit 2: Communicating and working with others in the glass and related working environments (3 credits)
>
> Unit 3: Locate, transport, handle and position materials and components in the fenestration installation (4 credits)
>
> Unit 4: Identify and confirm installation requirements in glass and related work (4 credits)

The 11 optional units of unequal size include:

Group 1:

> Unit 5: Prepare and shape fenestration installation products and materials (5 credits)
>
> Unit 6: Prepare the site, equipment and tools for fenestration installation (4 credits)
>
> Unit 7: Remove existing windows and doors and prepare apertures (8 credits)
>
> Unit 8: Prepare and position window and door units ready for installation (3 credits)
>
> Unit 9: Install glass and/or panels into windows and doors (4 credits)

Group 2:

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[4] In this section, and throughout the report, where we refer to unit numbers, we use our own numbering based on the order in which the units are presented in the specification rather than the original unit names or numbers from the specification documents.

Unit 10: Install conservatories (14 credits)

Unit 11: Install windows and doors (8 credits)

Group 3:

Unit 12: Maintain/repair windows and doors or conservatories (6 credits)

Unit 13: Post windows and doors or conservatories installation activity (3 credits)

Group 4:

Unit 14: Understanding the building regulations in the fenestration industry (3 credits)

Unit 15: Knowledge of building regulations in the installation of windows and doors (4 credits)

Content and standards

The learning outcomes and assessment criteria in this qualification combine key knowledge and skills that have been identified by industry experts and professionals as both essential to the role and prerequisites to building occupational competence, and they are mapped to the relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS). The learning domain for the mandatory and optional units is outlined on a unit-by-unit basis in the qualification specification document. In each unit, there are a few high-level learning outcomes specified, accompanied by the relevant assessment criteria. This is illustrated for Unit 4, below.

Unit 4: Identify and confirm installation requirements in glass and related work

LO 1[5]. Know how to identify and confirm the specifications required to complete the installation

AC 1.1 Name the sources of information that may be available to confirm the specification.

AC 1.2 Explain how to confirm the specification is accurate and up to date to ensure all work is carried out to the latest specification.

LO 2. Know how to establish the type, location, characteristics and features of the installation

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[5] For brevity, in all listing examples taken from the actual specification documents and in table headers, we refer to learning outcome(s) as to LO(s) and to assessment criterion/criteria as AC. However, we use 'learning outcome(s)' and 'assessment criterion' or 'assessment criteria' throughout the text of the report for better readability.

AC 2.1 Explain how to establish the type and location of the installation work.

AC 2.2 Explain how to identify the characteristics and features of the site.

AC 2.3 Explain how characteristics, features and other conditions can affect the way the installation is carried out.

LO 3. Be able to examine the materials and components to ensure they meet the specification of the installation.

AC 3.1 Examine the materials and components and confirm that they meet the specification of the installation.

AC 3.2 Inspect the materials and components for damage prior to installation.

LO 4. Be able to ensure that the job specification will meet the requirements of the installation.

AC 4.1 Check that the information available will meet the specification and requirements of the installation.

AC 4.2 Interpret the job specification to establish the type, characteristics and features of the installation.

LO 5. Know how to overcome problems in the confirmation of installation requirements.

AC 5.1 Describe three problems that can occur in the confirmation of installation requirements and explain how these might be overcome.

Indicative content is provided only for a small number of learning outcomes in some units as lists associated with individual assessment criteria in the format exemplified below for Learning Outcome 5 of Unit 1.

Unit 1 LO 5. Be able to adopt a safe system of work.

AC 5.1 Correctly select and use safety equipment, to include:

- Barriers

- Signage

- Electrical isolators

AC 5.2 Correctly select and use personal protective equipment relative to the task and explain the reasons why it is needed.

AC 5.3 Correctly select and safely use equipment required to carry out the work.

AC 5.4 Correctly select and use materials, to include:

- Components

- Consumables

- Substances

AC 5.5 Describe your workplace, indicating the guidance documents relating to safe working in your job role.

In addition to this specification of content, the current building regulations and industry-recognised best practice supplement the specifications by further elaborating the standard to which the learning outcomes and assessment criteria must be met by the student. The learning outcomes and assessment criteria are written in a generic way to match a range of different work environments and allow for their adaptation to different contexts. For example, the same assessment criterion can be applied to assess the same job (for example, an installation of a conservatory unit) which can vary in the type of installation and material (for example, aluminium, timber, plastic, etc.) that was used for its completion.

Assessment

In this qualification, all units are assessed internally, meaning that decisions about students' performance against assessment criteria are made by centre assessors. Assessment takes place in the real-life working environment when students are performing actual installations on customers' premises. Assessors are required to produce an assessment plan for each individual student that details what evidence the student will need to produce to meet the requirements for this qualification. To achieve the qualification, students must fully meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in each unit, which is then graded with a pass or not yet achieved.

The evidence of meeting the learning outcomes and assessment criteria should demonstrate that the student can meet the assessment criteria consistently over an appropriate period of time to the expected standard. The level of complexity with which the different assessment criteria should be achieved by the student, regardless of the specific delivery context, is conveyed through command verbs that require responses of differing breadth and depth. For knowledge questions, centres are expected to have their own indicative answers that are reviewed by the external quality assurer (EQA), who provides relevant feedback. There are no range statements used to augment the learning outcomes and assessment criteria, although the scope of teaching, learning and assessment is implicitly defined by the roles in which students are employed while taking this qualification.

GQA Qualifications recommends that, rather than assessing this qualification unit by unit, assessment opportunities should be looked for when evidence occurs naturally, which may be against learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria from the

different units at the same time while completing a single workplace task. The assessment methods suggested in the guidance document include:

- observation of the candidate (the main source of evidence for each unit across skills and knowledge learning outcomes)

- work products, for instance, photos/videos; work diaries; correspondence with customers, or training records (skills and knowledge)

- professional discussion – to be used when it is not possible to observe them carrying out a task (skills and knowledge)

- oral or written questions for knowledge assessment criteria that use command verbs "explain", "state", "describe", "define", and "list" which cannot be inferred during observation (knowledge)

- witness testimony, written or verbal, to supplement evidence and cover assessment criteria that may not be assessed by observation (skills)

Evidence of meeting the learning outcomes and assessment criteria by the student can be gathered through different assessment methods and the results are combined into a portfolio. Simulation is generally not acceptable as a method of collecting evidence in this qualification, unless it is not possible or feasible to collect naturally occurring evidence. In such cases, real-time simulations that have been pre-approved by the awarding organisation can be accepted. Underpinning knowledge should be evidenced mainly through the student's performance. If evidence obtained in this way is not sufficient, the student will be asked to respond (orally or in writing) to questions, but these responses alone must not be used as an alternative to skills evidence in judging the student's competence.

Students are allowed to undergo an assessment multiple times as required. In all such cases, the student should be provided with post-assessment feedback.

Quality assurance

There are both internal and external quality assurance processes operating in this qualification. Internal quality assurance (IQA) is performed by the internal quality advisor who is approved and licensed by GQA Qualifications, and has a working knowledge of the occupational role, understanding of the qualification content and has the relevant assessor/verifier qualification. The internal quality advisor ensures consistent standards for the qualification across assessors within the centre by scrutinising the quality and consistency of evidence collected, and assessment judgements made at their centre. This is done through the planned formative and summative sampling of the assessment decisions.

Formative sampling takes place at different stages of the assessment process and allows advisors to address issues early in the delivery process. This also involves evaluation of assessors' performance through observation of their work, provision of feedback on their assessment decisions, and identification of any development and training needs. Summative sampling is conducted when all units in the qualification have been completed by a student and its purpose is to review the quality of the process of making the final assessment decision by an assessor, prior to external quality assurance (EQA).

The internal quality advisor is also responsible for conducting standardisation activities. Standardisation events should be scheduled throughout the year, preferably quarterly, and concern all the stages of the assessment process, from the initial assessment to the completion of the qualification. Standardisation activities can include reviewing assessment decisions, interpreting the standards, and looking at evidence and feedback provided to students. To facilitate this process, the awarding organisation provides centres with online webinars and training sessions on how to hold standardisation events. Other sessions on best practice in assessment, including a biannual conference that facilitates networking and sharing best practice across centres, are available as well.

EQA is a risk-based process conducted by external quality advisors who are expected to maintain a balance between ensuring that the standards of the delivery and assessment of this qualification are maintained and providing advice, support, and guidance to centres. The external quality advisor oversees centres through physical visits and remote monitoring. During their visit to a centre, the external quality advisor samples assessment decisions and checks compliance of the assessment process and decisions with the relevant requirements. The sample size that is drawn for this check depends on centre-related risk factors. As part of their visit, the external quality advisor also reviews the existing assessment plans for students, carries out observations of assessors during their work, and may interview students and centre staff that are involved in the delivery and assessment. They also review IQA processes, the records of the assessor/IQA activities of continuing professional development (CPD), standardisation events that were held at the centre and conduct observations of internal quality advisor work. Another area that is covered by the EQA process is the check and authorisation of certificate requests made by the centre, although centres may apply for direct claims status (DCS)[6]. The

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[6] As noted in Newton & Lockyer (2022, pp. 14–15), although this term is widely used in the industry, DCS is operated in different ways by different AOs. The term does not appear in the Ofqual regulatory framework. DCS may be conferred upon centres by awarding organisations when they are satisfied that a centre can effectively deliver a qualification and assess it with consistent accuracy. Once granted DCS, the centre can request certification for an individual or group of students without the

EQA process at a centre concludes with provision of feedback, potential corrective actions, and, depending on its outcome, may impact on centre risk rating.

Overall, external quality advisors should ensure that the standard of assessment across centres, qualifications, units, and over time is accurate and consistent. To be able to do so consistently, they are standardised by the awarding organisation (typically, on a minimum of 3 occasions per year) and are expected to have a good understanding of the standards of assessment and QA in this qualification.

Teaching and learning

This qualification is delivered mainly by private training providers and employers on a roll-on, roll-off basis at any time of the year, depending on the existing demand. It is not typically provided by colleges because of the relatively small intake numbers and high provision costs. However, it may be occasionally offered by colleges that have specialised vocational departments that are equipped with practical training facilities.

Teaching and learning take place primarily in real-life working environments when students are carrying out the installation work. The awarding organisation does not prescribe any particular order in which the units in this qualification should be taught, as the different learning outcomes are implicitly interconnected across the units because of the holistic nature of the jobs in this sector.

VTCT Level 2 Diploma in Women's Hairdressing

Qualification purpose and target cohort

The Level 2 Diploma in Women's Hairdressing is an occupational qualification. Its purpose is to develop practical skills to a high level of occupational ability to enable students to independently perform hairdressing services. This qualification is delivered mostly by colleges and private training providers rather than in the workplace. While it allows for progression into a level 3 qualification, this qualification mainly targets individuals who seek to achieve a qualification in a limited time (the approximate duration of 12 months) and move into employment as a junior stylist.

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need for their assessment decisions to be externally quality assured before the award of each certificate. Recent Ofqual regulations permit DCS as long as some form of Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) is undertaken, and certain baseline requirements are met.

The overall structure and range coverage of this qualification largely mirrors the structure of the historical NVQ in hairdressing. According to VTCT, this reflects employer attachment to the NVQ competence-based model of delivery and assessment, with the content of this qualification, as well as the hands-on approach to teaching and learning, being employer-driven and aligned with the needs and expectations of businesses that operate in the hairdressing sector.

Qualification structure

This qualification comprises 7 mandatory and 9 optional units (448 GLH). To be awarded the qualification, a minimum of 52 credits should be achieved by completing all the mandatory units and achieving a minimum of 16 credits across the optional units.

Seven mandatory units of unequal size include:

> Unit 1: Follow health and safety practice in the salon (3 credits)
>
> Unit 2: Working in the hair industry (4 credits)
>
> Unit 3: Client consultation for hair services (3 credits)
>
> Unit 4: Shampoo and condition the hair and scalp (3 credits)
>
> Unit 5: Colour and lighten hair (10 credits)
>
> Unit 6: Cut women's hair (8 credits)
>
> Unit 7: The art of dressing hair (5 credits)

Nine optional units of unequal size include:

> Unit 8: Perm and neutralise hair (7 credits)
>
> Unit 9: Display stock to promote sales in a salon (3 credits)
>
> Unit 10: Promote products and services to clients in a salon (3 credits)
>
> Unit 11: Create an image based on a theme within the hair and beauty sector (7 credits)
>
> Unit 12: Provide scalp massage services (4 credits)
>
> Unit 13: Salon reception duties (3 credits)
>
> Unit 14: Plaiting and twisting hair (3 credits)
>
> Unit 15: The art of colouring hair (7 credits)
>
> Unit 16: Style and finish Afro-textured hair (5 credits)

Content and standards

Units in this qualification have been mapped to the relevant NOS, where applicable. The learning domain for the mandatory and optional units is outlined on a unit-by-unit basis in the qualification specification document. Each unit specifies a few high-level learning outcomes. The standards are specified for each learning outcome through assessment criteria, some with a skill focus and some with a knowledge focus. The knowledge-focused assessment criteria include both assessment criteria that directly correspond to the NOS and were included in the historical NVQ in hairdressing, and some additional assessment criteria that are specific to this qualification. The skill-focused assessment criteria are typically additionally specified by range statements, except for those for the mandatory Unit 1.

In addition to the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and the range, a list of topics that must be covered as the minimum content is outlined in the specification and built into the record of assessment books. This is exemplified for Unit 5 and its Learning Outcome 2 below, adapted and abridged from the qualification specification document (first, the learning outcomes, then the assessment criteria and range for Learning Outcome 2, and, finally, the unit content):

Unit 5: Colour and lighten hair (mandatory)

Learning outcomes:

> LO 1. Be able to prepare for colouring hair
>
> LO 2. Be able to provide a colouring service

LO 2: Be able to provide a colouring service

Skill-focused AC:

> a. Communicate and behave in a professional manner
>
> b. Select and use the application method, products, tools and equipment to colour hair
>
> c. Position yourself and the client appropriately throughout the service
>
> d. Mix and apply the colour using neat sections
>
> e. Monitor the development of the colour accurately, following manufacturer's instructions
>
> f. Remove the colour product thoroughly from the hair and scalp, without disturbing packages still requiring development
>
> g. Apply a suitable conditioner or post-colour treatment to the hair, following manufacturer's instructions

    h. Create a desired look to the satisfaction of the client

    i. Provide suitable aftercare advice

    j. Follow safe and hygienic working practices

Knowledge-focused AC:

    k. Describe the correct use and routine maintenance of tools and equipment

    l. State the importance of restoring the pH of the hair after a permanent colour

    m. Outline the types and causes of problems that can occur during the colouring service and how to resolve them

    n. Describe the aftercare advice that should be provided

    o. Outline safe and hygienic working practices

    p. State how to communicate and behave within a salon environment

Unit 5 LO 2 range

- Used a minimum of 3 colouring products (from the list of 5)[7]

- Considered all possible contra-indications (from the list of 6)

- Considered all factors (from the list of 9)

- Performed all tests (from the list of 6)

- Used all colouring techniques (from the list of 6)

- Given all types of advice (from the list of 4)

Unit 5 content:

- Professional communication in a salon environment (verbal, non-verbal, and written; client confidentiality, etc.)

- Professional behaviour in a salon environment (health and safety practice and procedure, salon code of conduct, respect for clients and colleagues, etc.)

- Application methods for colouring products (semi-permanent, quasi-permanent, permanent and hi-lift tints, and lightening products/bleaches)

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[7] In the Record of assessment book (specification), there are actual examples given instead of the number of examples that we use here for the sake of brevity.

- Tools and equipment used for colouring (combs, plastic bowl, climazone, measuring jugs/scales, foils, etc.)

- Positioning yourself and the client appropriately throughout the service (ensuring correct posture of self and client to minimise fatigue and injury)

- Development of colouring products (following manufacturer's instructions for individual products, wearing personal protective equipment, timing the service, etc.)

- Removal methods (for different products, such as semi-permanent or permanent, and different application techniques, such as cap or foils, etc.)

- Conditioners and post-colour treatments (applying the appropriate product in the correct manner)

- Methods of confirming client satisfaction (body language, facial expressions, repeat booking, etc.)

- Following safe and hygienic working practices (using personal protective equipment, electricity at work, disposal of waste, etc.)

- Maintenance of tools and equipment (appropriate sterilisation, disinfection, using only for intended purpose, etc.)

- The pH scale

- Restoring the hair to its natural pH using conditioner

- Type of problems that can occur when colouring hair and the remedies (scalp irritation, uneven result, hair breakage, etc.)

Assessment

This qualification is assessed internally by the centres and graded as a pass or not yet achieved. All learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and the range have to be met in order to pass the units, all of which have to be passed to achieve the qualification.

Assessments of skill-focused assessment criteria are set and assessed by the centre. While it should typically be conducted in real or realistic work environments, in some units, a certain percentage of evidence (up to 25%) can be obtained through simulation.

The bulk of evidence is produced through the student's performance of practical, time-limited tasks to be finished within the specified maximum service time (for instance, regrowth application of permanent colour: maximum service time of 25

minutes in Unit 5). These tasks should be accomplished on real clients during a fixed number of observations that range from 3 to 8 occasions, depending on the unit.

When possible, all ranges for the skill-focused assessment criteria in all units must be practically demonstrated as part of an observation. However, other forms of evidence can also be produced to show the achievement of range and must be compiled in a mandatory portfolio (in an electronic or paper format). Portfolio evidence may be obtained through observation of work, witness statements, audio-visual media, evidence of prior learning or attainment, written or oral questioning, case studies, and other relevant assignments.

The knowledge-focused assessment criteria in this qualification are assessed in 2 ways: the majority are assessed via a (non-CASLO) multiple-choice question (MCQ) test and the remaining ones are assessed via (CASLO) direct judgement methods. All knowledge-focused assessment criteria from all mandatory units (except for Unit 2: Working in the hair industry) are assessed with an awarding organisation-set, centre-administered MCQ test, and the same is true for 3 out of 9 optional units that are directly mapped onto the NOS. These tests have a pass mark of 70%. Although individual test questions are mapped to specific assessment criteria – so it is possible to pass despite answering questions linked to certain criteria incorrectly – the tests do not need to be retaken as long as the pass mark has been achieved. However, where questions linked to specific criteria have been answered incorrectly, students will need to demonstrate successful performance subsequently, either via oral questioning or via another form of assessment, as requested by the assessor. This is in line with the mastery requirement. The remaining knowledge-focused assessment criteria that are not directly NOS-based, are assessed through assessment methods such as a portfolio of evidence, or, where possible, oral questioning during practical observations.

VTCT does not set any limit on the number of permitted assessment attempts, however, subsequent attempts are subject to a resit fee.

Quality assurance

QA in this qualification is conducted through IQA and EQA processes. The main aims of IQA are to maintain the integrity of the qualification and support the improvement of delivery and assessment within a centre. It is performed on an ongoing basis by a nominated internal quality assurer at the centre, mainly through a planned sampling of assessment in order to review assessment decisions. Other IQA activities can include observations of assessors during the assessment process, facilitating standardisation activities, and interviewing students to monitor their progress and experience of assessment and teaching and learning.

If any corrective measures need to be implemented regarding the assessment judgements (for instance, more evidence has to be collected to evidence some assessment criteria), the ongoing internal sampling approach allows for this to be detected and implemented early in the assessment process. Based on the outcomes of the IQA, the internal quality assurer provides feedback to assessors and identifies their training needs to provide or recommend CPD training that would improve the standard of qualification delivery and assessment in the future cycles.

EQA aims at ensuring that all students taking this qualification are both appropriately and consistently assessed and their results internally quality-assured, in line with VTCT standards and requirements. It is conducted by external quality assurers that are appointed and standardised on at least 2 separate occasions per year by VTCT and allocated to a specific centre. The external quality assurer will support their centre and conduct the annual EQA process, through:

- centre monitoring activities, such as physical and/or remote EQA visits and informative meetings
- sampling and quality checking of assessments, the IQA process (including standardisation), and evidence generated by the students

The sampling strategy and sample size for each centre are determined based on risk factors (for example, a centre's level of experience in delivering this qualification), centre activity, and findings of the previous EQA processes for the centre. During the EQA, the external quality assurer typically accesses and reviews assessment evidence records as per the devised sampling strategy. They may also randomly sample students that are being assessed on the day and observe their practical assessment, review their portfolio evidence, and interview the students and members of the assessment team.

VTCT processes claims for student certificates only after the EQA visit for the centre has been conducted, unless a centre has been approved for DCS. The EQA process concludes with an EQA report which includes feedback and a risk rating for the centre. This new risk rating will determine the details and level of the future EQA processes for the centre.

Teaching and learning

This qualification is delivered mostly by colleges and private training providers rather than in the workplace. In order to accommodate potential constraints of college-based delivery, some flexibilities were included in the qualification requirements. For instance, not every assessment has to be done on a real-life model (or paid client), as it is acceptable that mannequin dolls can be used when there is no alternative.

VTCT does not provide guidance on the order in which the content of this qualification should be taught. Centres that have been approved to deliver the qualifications are expected to have the necessary expertise in teaching and learning. However, the teaching order of the units is largely determined by the logic of the process that a client will go through during the delivery of the entire service, as well as by each centre's individual circumstances and constraints. The order of assessments follows a similar path, with the different aspects of knowledge and skills being assessed repeatedly across the units as conjoint parts of a whole, all-around service. For a fee, VTCT provides centres with optional teaching and learning resources, for instance, video content.

NCFE CACHE Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning

Qualification purpose and intended cohort

The Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning is an occupational qualification. It can be completed in colleges and sixth form provision, or with private training providers. There is a compulsory placement component of flexible duration.

This qualification is aimed at individuals that are already working or aiming to work in roles directly supporting children and young people's learning in schools and colleges. This qualification can either be completed within one academic year or achieved at each student's own pace. There are no entry requirements set by NCFE other than students being at least 16 years old, but centres may determine their own entry requirements.

A typical student is often a mature, part-time, student who wants to enter the teaching assistant profession, or someone who may already be in this occupation or volunteer at a school but would like to have their skills and experience certified. The qualification also allows for progression onto the Level 3 Certificate or Diploma in Supporting Teaching and Learning.

Qualification structure

The qualification consists of 11 mandatory units of unequal size (32 credits or 225 GLH) that must be completed to be awarded the qualification. These include:

> Unit 1: Understand schools and colleges as organisations (2 credits)

> Unit 2: Understand children and young people's development (3 credits)

Unit 3: Safeguarding children and young people (3 credits)

Unit 4: Equality, diversity and inclusion in a learning environment for children and young people (3 credits)

Unit 5: Maintain relationships with children and young people (3 credits)

Unit 6: Support the health and safety of children and young people (3 credits)

Unit 7: Support positive behaviour in a learning environment for children and young people (4 credits)

Unit 8: Contribute to teamwork in a learning environment (3 credits)

Unit 9: Understand children and young people's play and leisure (3 credits)

Unit 10: Promote an effective learning environment (3 credits)

Unit 11: Provide displays in a learning environment (2 credits)

Content and standards

The learning domain for the mandatory units, which can be knowledge-based, skill-based, or contain a mixture of both knowledge and skills, is outlined for each unit in the qualification specification document. For each unit, firstly, there are a few high-level learning outcomes specified, accompanied by the relevant assessment criteria. Secondly, a section on "additional information about the unit" provides more details about each unit's content that is to be assessed (for instance, an indicative range of applicable situations) and, if applicable, how this content links to the content of other units for the purpose of holistic assessment. The details of each of these 2 sections are illustrated below for Unit 6.

Unit 6: Support the health and safety of children and young people

LO 1. Understand health and safety legislation in a learning environment.

AC 1.1 Identify current legislation for health and safety in a learning environment.

AC 1.2 Describe how health and safety is maintained through policies and procedures in a learning environment.

AC 1.3 Explain the importance of taking a balanced approach to risk management.

LO 2. Be able to contribute to health and safety in a learning environment.

AC 2.1 Show how to risk assess **potential hazards and risks**[8] to the health, safety and security of children and young people within own indoor and outdoor environments.

AC 2.2 Demonstrate how to deal with hazards to minimise risks to the health, safety and security of children and/or young people.

AC 2.3 Show children and young people how to take responsibility for their own health, safety and security within own indoor and outdoor environments.

AC 2.4 Show children and young people how to take a balanced approach to risk.

AC 2.5 Describe the procedures in place for dealing with accidents and **emergency situations**.

Additional unit assessment guidance

Potential hazards and risks to the health, safety and security of children and young people, for example, physical, security, fire, food safety, personal safety.

Consideration to the level of **risk** of serious injury should be given.

Emergency situations

These include accidents, illness, fires, security incidents, missing children or young people.

Opportunities for holistic assessment could present for Unit 6 AC 2.5 and Unit 3 AC 2.3[9]. When considering cross referencing opportunities, the assessor must ensure all criteria are met in full and a statement of competency is recorded.

Assessment

This qualification is assessed internally by the centres and graded as achieved or not yet achieved. To pass a unit, students must achieve each of the unit's learning outcomes by meeting all of their corresponding assessment criteria. To be awarded the qualification, all units must be achieved.

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[8] Bolding is replicated here as in the original qualification documentation.

[9] Unit 6 AC 2.5 Describe the procedures in place for dealing with accidents and emergency situations. Unit 3 AC 2.3 Describe the actions to take in response to emergency situations including fires, security, incidents, missing children and young people, medical emergency.

Although assessment in this qualification is often conducted at unit level, centres may devise assessments in a more integrated way, and assess holistically across units. This is sometimes also suggested in qualification documents. In the example from the specification at the end of the previous section, related assessment criteria from Units 3 and 6 are suggested as potentially likely to be assessable holistically, within a single assessment opportunity. In such cases, it is emphasised that when such integrated assessment across units is conducted, the assessor must ensure that all assessment criteria are met in full for each relevant unit.

In the specification, NCFE recommends a range of practical, oral, and written methods to assess both students' knowledge and understanding, and practical skills. Methods for evidencing skill-based assessment criteria might include direct observation of student by a tutor or assessor (preferable method of assessment in this qualification), expert witness evidence, professional discussion, student's own work products, reflective diary or activity plans, simulation of skills where permitted, oral questions and answers.

The following 3 methods are recommended for assessing the knowledge-focused assessment criteria only and NCFE does not consider them appropriate for evidencing practical competency in skill-based assessment criteria:

- written and pictorial information

- scenario or case study

- task set by CACHE[10] (for this type of task, NCFE provides centres with exemplar tasks)

None of these methods are mandatory and centres can use the most appropriate ones that suit their contexts. This is intended to facilitate flexibility in terms of assessment setting within the placement or work context that is unique for each student. Recognition of prior learning is also allowed. Assessment can be resat multiple times, with no restrictions on the number of resits.

Quality assurance

QA in this qualification is conducted through IQA and EQA. IQA is performed by a centre-based internal quality assurer who provides assessors and the centre with ongoing support and guidance. IQA is aimed at scrutinising whether the standards for this qualification are maintained by the centre throughout the delivery and

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[10] NCFE CACHE qualifications is a trademark owned by NCFE as a result of the merger that took place in 2015 between NCFE and the Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education (CACHE), a longstanding provider of vocational qualifications for those working in the care and education sectors.

assessment processes. IQA activities include holding regular standardisation meetings with assessors, observing assessment practices, sampling across student work, assessors, assessment methods, units, and assessment outcomes to confirm that the assessment decisions are appropriate, and providing feedback to assessors on how to improve their practices and ensure CPD.

EQA is conducted periodically (typically, up to 2 times a year) by an NCFE-appointed external quality assurer within each centre. Its purpose is to check and verify the IQA processes in the centre (including standardisation), ensure that the standards are interpreted correctly, and students are graded accordingly, and review the accuracy of the centre's records maintenance. The EQAs also scrutinise whether the assessment tasks had been appropriately designed and may also observe assessments that are taking place, as well as interview students and centre staff. The external quality assurer also supports their centre(s) between EQA visits by ensuring that the centre(s) have all the information that is needed to deliver, assess, and IQA the qualification appropriately.

EQA is based on risk-based sampling of centre assessment decisions for a cohort of students. It follows NCFE's internal risk rating guide for centres and assessors, and accounts for other relevant centre-related factors (for example, number of registered students, assessors, or internal quality verifiers). Sampling and checking of assessment decisions can take place before or after certification if a centre has DCS status. If a centre does not have DCS status, a sample of assessment decisions is checked prior to certification.

If, as a result of EQA, any student evidence that was accepted by the centre has been deemed non-admissible, the external quality assurer will discuss this with the centre and request a resubmission of evidence that meets NCFE standards and requirements. EQA provides the centre with feedback that recognises both areas of good practice and areas where issues in assessment and IQA practices have been identified. Centre risk rating may change as a result of EQA.

All NCFE-appointed external quality assurers and moderators must attend a mandatory annual qualification and standardisation training event, which are held up to 3 times a year. During standardisation, samples of student work from a range of units are scrutinised and external quality assurers and moderators will review and discuss assessment decisions to reach a group consensus. Student work scrutinised at previous standardisation sessions is also compared with current student work to ensure the consistency of EQA decisions over time.

Teaching and learning

This qualification can be completed in colleges and sixth form provision, or with private training providers. There is a compulsory placement component of flexible

duration. Delivery for this qualification can be flexibly devised by centres depending on the needs of student groups, for example, either online (except for the placement aspect) or face-to-face, or a combination of both.

In addition to the content specification described earlier, centres are provided with a Tutor Guidance document which, for each unit, provides "hints, tips and teaching aids" for tutors, examples of assessment tasks, links to resources, and exemplar schemes of work. NCFE does not provide centres with, and has no control over, the order of unit delivery, although it is suggested that content related to safeguarding legislation should be delivered earlier in the course.

UAL Level 3 Diploma in Creative Practice: Art, Design and Communication

Qualification purpose and intended cohort

The Level 3 Diploma in Creative Practice: Art, Design and Communication is a vocationally-related[11] qualification. It is typically delivered in colleges, over one year of study, and is equivalent to 1.5 A levels.

This qualification enables students to develop the skills, competencies, and knowledge that are necessary for pursuing a career in the creative industries and arts or other industries that require creative talent. While there are no formal entry requirements for this qualification, it is recommended that students have a minimum of 4 GCSEs at grade 4 or above, with one of these qualifications being in a creative arts subject (or the equivalent Level 2 qualification in an appropriate subject).

A typical student of this qualification will be a post-GCSE (or equivalent level 2 qualification) student that wishes to access entry-level employment roles, training programmes or apprenticeships in the creative sector, become self-employed, or progress to higher education (HE). Students who have completed the Level 3 Diploma may also choose to progress onto year 2 of the Extended Diploma in Creative Practice: Art, Design and Communication.

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[11] Vocationally-related qualifications are broader in scope than occupational qualifications and may provide an introduction to an area of work without developing a recognised competence or without leading directly to employment. They often certificate taught programmes delivered in a classroom or workshop setting. Next steps might include progression into employment in the particular sector, apprenticeship, continuation in employment, or the development and certification of competence through occupational qualifications.

Qualification structure

This qualification consists of 3 mandatory units of equal size that add up to 72 credits (540 GLH) and must be completed in sequence, with the synoptic Unit 3 being completed after the "developmental", "formative" Units 1 and 2 have been achieved. In this qualification, Units 1 and 2 are referred to as developmental or formative, in the sense that they represent stepping stones to achieving the final synoptic unit. Although these units are assessed summatively, and have to be passed, they do not contribute to the overall qualification grade (for more details see Assessment section below). The 3 mandatory units are:

> Unit 1: The creative process (24 credits)
>
> Unit 2: Developing creative practice (24 credits)
>
> Unit 3: Responding to a set brief (24 credits)

Content and standards

The learning domain for Units 1 and 2 is outlined on a unit-by-unit basis in the qualification specification document and is specified in 2 ways. First, a set of higher-level learning outcomes and their corresponding assessment criteria are listed. Second, the learning outcomes are accompanied by a content section that outlines the content that should be taught for each learning outcome in the unit. All the content within the unit must be taught to students, unless "e.g." is used in the specification. To fit the variety of specialist practices and student interests within the creative industries, the learning outcomes and assessment criteria are formulated in a broad, flexible way to be adaptable to multiple contexts.

In contrast to Units 1 and 2, the synoptic Unit 3 does not introduce new content. Its focus is on consolidating the application of knowledge, understanding, and skills acquired in Units 1 and 2 in a response to an assessment brief. Therefore, the learning domain for Unit 3 is specified through assessment outcomes, while the standards for the assessment outcomes in this unit are specified in the grade descriptors and correspond to the pass/merit/distinction grades.

The way the learning domain is outlined in this qualification is illustrated below for Unit 1 (first, the learning outcomes and then the content for Learning Outcome 3) and Unit 3 (assessment outcomes). The grading grid with requirements for the pass/merit/distinction grades is also exemplified below, for Assessment Outcomes 1 and 6.

Unit 1: The creative process

LO 1. Understand the role of the creative process within the creative industries

1.1 Analyse the stages and activities within the creative process

1.2 Explore creative processes within the context of the creative industries

LO 2. Understand how to plan a response to a brief

2.1 Analyse the requirements of a brief

2.2 Develop a project proposal that meets the requirements of a brief

2.3 Review the implementation of the project proposal to meet the requirements of a brief

LO 3. Understand the role of research within the creative process

3.1 Explain how research sources and methods are used to support creative processes

3.2 Undertake research in response to a brief

3.3 Use research to influence and inform creative processes

3.4 Assess the effectiveness of research to influence and inform creative processes

LO 4. Understand intent and purpose within the creative process

4.1 Explore intent and purpose within creative processes

4.2 Apply intent and purpose within own creative process

4.3 Assess intent and purpose within own creative process

LO 5. Understand the role of visual language to record and communicate ideas

5.1 Analyse visual language in creative processes

5.2 Apply visual language in creative processes

5.3 Assess the effective use of visual language within creative processes

LO 6. Understand how reflective practice informs and directs the creative process

6.1 Apply reflective practice to inform and direct creative processes

6.2 Demonstrate how reflective practice has informed personal progress

6.3 Assess the effectiveness of reflective practice to inform and direct creative processes

LO 7. Understand methods for generating ideas within a brief

7.1 Explore methods for generating ideas

7.2 Generate ideas using different methods

7.3 Consider ethical design and social responsibility

7.4 Assess the effectiveness of methods used to generate initial ideas

LO 3 content

- Primary research e.g., observations, interviews, surveys, focus groups, experimentation

- Secondary research e.g., journals, articles, books

- Research sources e.g., library, internet, museum gallery, contextual, practical materials

- Academic conventions and Harvard referencing

- Define and use of contextual research

- How research can be used in the creative process:

    - in initial stages

    - to explore consumer/audience user needs, themes or subjects

    - to identify context: historical, contemporary, social, ethical, environmental, cultural considerations

    - for planning including project proposals, timelines, materials and resource requirements

    - to gather feedback

- Reviewing how research findings informed own practical activities e.g., ideas development, refinement, outcomes, solution

- How to record research

Unit 3: Responding to a set brief

Assessment outcomes:

1. Understand the requirements of a set brief within a vocational context

2. Plan and realise a project in response to a brief

3. Use research to inform a creative project

4. Use practical skills to meet the requirements of a brief

5. Generate and develop ideas in response to a brief

6. Produce outcomes in response to a brief

7. Present development work and outcomes

8. Apply reflective practice to a creative project

Unit 3 grading grid (Assessment Outcomes 1 and 6)

Assessment outcome	Pass	Merit	Distinction
1. Understand the requirements of a set brief within a vocational context	Clearly presented project proposal that appropriately considers the requirements of the brief and is sufficient in supporting the development of ideas	Purposefully presented project proposal that extensively considers the requirements of the brief and is effective in supporting the development of ideas	Imaginatively presented project proposal that comprehensively considers the requirements of the brief and is thorough in supporting the development of ideas
6. Produce outcomes in response to a brief	Valid outcomes are attempted that capably communicate concepts and ideas to an identified consumer/audience	Considered outcomes are realised and effectively communicate concepts and ideas to an identified consumer/audience	Imaginative outcomes are realised and decisively communicate concepts and ideas to an identified consumer/audience

Assessment

Assessments for all units in this qualification are set and graded by the centre. The Units 1 and 2 are awarded pass/fail only. The final, synoptic, unit (Unit 3) is graded with a fail/pass/merit/distinction and the unit grade directly translates into the overall qualification grade. While Units 1 and 2 do not contribute to the overall grade of the qualification, they must be passed before students attempt the synoptic graded assessment in Unit 3. To achieve a unit, all the learning outcomes and their associated assessment criteria (for Units 1 and 2) and all assessment outcomes (for Unit 3) must be met. In the absence of compensation in qualification-level grading, the fact that Units 1 and 2 do not contribute to the overall qualification grade is intended to prevent students' early, developmental, work during the course unduly influencing their final qualification outcomes.

Units 1 and 2 are assessed through a portfolio of evidence. The portfolio is used to evaluate the ongoing development of student knowledge, skills, and understanding, in preparation for their synoptic assessment in Unit 3. The portfolio is assembled holistically, presenting an integrated body of evidence of achievement across the

learning outcomes within each unit (recognising the integrated nature of evidence occurring across the learning outcomes), and judged against the relevant assessment criteria.

A wide range of evidence can be incorporated into the portfolio, including records of research processes, reflection and evaluation, annotated sketchbooks, studio or workshop journals, presentations, blogs or vlogs, and so on. Students are encouraged to develop evidence that demonstrates their achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria in the most appropriate form.

Assessment for the synoptic Unit 3 is also holistic, against a single, integrated, assignment, judged against the relevant assessment outcomes and the grading criteria. It takes place at the end of the learning programme. The assignment involves responding to a vocationally-relevant project brief, typically used in the creative industry. To assist centres with its development, UAL provides sample assessment briefs, demonstrating how they should be designed to allow students to address all assessment outcomes and access all grades within the qualification. As a mandatory part of their evidence for this unit, students must present a completed project proposal and a summative evaluation. Other evidence that demonstrates the achievement of all the assessment outcomes can take the same variety of forms of evidence as in Units 1 and 2.

In Units 1 and 2, students who submit evidence that fails to meet the pass criteria are allowed one opportunity to submit additional evidence within a time frame agreed by the centre. In Unit 3, if the assessment is graded as a fail by the centre, the student is given a single opportunity to improve and resubmit their work for reassessment. The grade for resubmitted work is capped at a pass, while those students that do not pass on resubmission are awarded a fail.

Quality assurance

This qualification is quality assured both internally and externally in an annual cycle that allows for an early implementation of corrective actions, if required. Internal verification is carried out by an internal verifier on a sample of students' portfolios for Units 1 and 2 and it scrutinises the delivery or assessment plans, student progression, assessment design and the accuracy and consistency of assessor decisions within the centre. Centres can determine their own verification methodology.

UAL supports centres in conducting standardisation activities for all units prior to commencing assessment. They organise annual assessment standardisation events that centres are expected to either attend in person or access through the video recording. During these events, standardisation resources are provided to centres and discussed, including exemplar portfolios for the different grades, examples of

graded assessments and practice around providing feedback to students. These resources are kept in the UAL's digital repository and accessible as CPD materials to centres.

EQA includes a number of contact points (CP) between a centre and members of the UAL EQA team. This approach is risk-based, with the level of risk allocated to a centre dependent on different indicators. A standard annual QA cycle for this qualification consists of 2 CPs per centre – the quality monitoring visit (CP2) and the external moderation visit (CP3). They are conducted by different UAL-appointed external moderators (EM) or senior external moderators (SEM). EMs and SEMs are trained, standardised, and monitored by UAL to ensure that their judgements about the accuracy of the reviewed evidence are consistent across the centres.

In addition to these 2 CPs, all newly approved and high-risk centres receive an additional advisory visit (CP1) from their SEMs prior to CP2 and CP3. CP1's focus is on providing additional support and setting the expected standards. The SEM assists the centre with the internal verification process, planning of their assessment process, including assessment planning and review of the quality, level and format of the assessment briefs set by the centre, as well as their authentication with UAL. The centre is provided with the SEM's feedback that acknowledges both the centre's strengths and weaknesses and recommends remedial actions if needed.

The areas of focus for the CP2 visit are similar to those for CP1 in their primarily supportive nature. The CP3 moderation is a comprehensive QA review of internal verification processes, assessment records for all units, student portfolios, and centre-graded summative assessments of the synoptic unit outcomes. The EM conducts the moderation on a stratified sample of student work, across all the grades, assessors, and qualification levels.

Following the CP3 moderation, centres are given feedback on their performance. If the EM considers the grades that were issued in the centre not to be accurate, the centre is asked to review them and this may be additionally followed by a request for a regrade, once authorised by the Chief Examiner at UAL. The grades given by centres are not finalised and released to students until the moderation process has been completed and the grades signed off by the board of UAL examiners.

Teaching and learning

This qualification is typically delivered in colleges. Centres that wish to deliver this qualification must have the resources to implement the teaching programme in its entirety for the centre's chosen specialist practice within the creative industries (for example, advertising and marketing, fashion/textile design, photography, fine arts, etc.). This includes tutors who are artistic practitioners and can deliver the content of

this qualification from a practical perspective. A scrutiny of resources is conducted through the centre approval process.

The teaching programmes may vary across centres as they would typically reflect only the specialism(s) taught at the particular centre. However, all centres are required to cover the same learning outcomes and assessment criteria and ensure coherent sequencing of continuous, interactive and integrative teaching, learning, and assessment in the offered specialism.

To support the vocational focus of the qualification, centres are expected to develop an approach to teaching and learning which involves collaboration between centres and industry, providing students with structured work experience or placements, and which involves employers and industry practitioners in the qualification delivery and/or assessment. UAL's recommendation is that centres should enrich the learning experience that they provide. Centres are encouraged to organise field trips and visits to exhibitions and events for students. As part of the induction, UAL requires centres to provide students with a course handbook and any other supporting material to facilitate effective learning.

The learning in Units 1 and 2 should be based on multiple sub-projects and occur through workshop sessions (for instance, a drawing session) during which tutors will work closely with students and provide them with formative feedback. The project-based, synoptic assessment in Unit 3 brings all the previously developed knowledge and skills together and allows for its practical demonstration in an integrated way. Therefore, when teaching this unit, tutors should support, scaffold, and guide students by creating a structured timeframe to learning, ensuring that students have a thorough and in-depth understanding of the assessment outcomes and grade descriptors. The teaching approach for this unit should, whenever possible, focus on fostering student independence, autonomy, and self-motivation, as well as developing planning and time management skills, and the ability to independently measure own progress and achievement.

UAL supports centres in the planning and delivery of this qualification with different types of training and resources. The UAL-organised delivery groups support newly-approved centres through discussing delivery models and reviewing assessment materials. Annual attendance at these events is recommended to all centres, as part of their CPD. UAL offers annual subject-specific conferences to centres that involve presentations from guest speakers, briefings on changes to the qualification and education landscape and networking opportunities. Monthly newsletters with updates from UAL and the wider sector are also provided. Other resources available to centres include exemplars of delivery plans, schemes of work for the units, and a glossary of terms used in the specification.

Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Business

Qualification purpose and intended cohort

The BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Business is a vocationally-related qualification. It is equivalent in size to one A level and can be taken alongside other BTEC Nationals or A Levels as part of a 2-year programme of learning. This qualification is usually delivered in colleges or sixth form provision.

There are no formal entry requirements, but students are expected to have qualifications at Level 2, such as 5 GCSEs at good grades and/or BTEC qualification(s) at Level 2 and/or achievement in English and mathematics through GCSE or Functional Skills. Centres are responsible for ensuring that prospective students have a reasonable expectation of achieving this qualification.

The qualification is recognised by HE institutions as contributing to meeting admissions requirements for many courses. It provides an introduction to study of the business sector and is aimed at students that are interested in developing an awareness of professional practice through applied learning. A typical student will either intend to progress to a wide range of HE courses, including those that are not business-related, or move into employment in the business sector directly or via an apprenticeship, or become self-employed.

Qualification structure

This is a 'hybrid' qualification, incorporating units with externally set and marked assessments that do not adopt the CASLO approach, which enable it to be included in Department for Education performance tables[12]. Only the internally assessed units in this qualification adopt the CASLO approach.

This qualification comprises 3 mandatory units that cover 83% of the content, and 5 optional units. Two of the mandatory units are externally assessed and one internally

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[12] Performance tables include only qualifications that have been approved by the Department for Education for teaching to 16- to 19-year-olds from September 2016 onwards. These qualifications are reported in the Applied General qualification category of the performance tables, alongside qualifications such as A levels and other vocational qualifications. Applied General qualifications are advanced (level 3) qualifications that allow entry to a range of HE courses, either by fully meeting the entry requirements or being accepted alongside other qualifications at level 3 such as A levels (Department for Education, 2016).

assessed, as are the optional units (for more details on external and internal assessment, see the Assessment methods section below). To be awarded the qualification, a minimum of 360 GLH[13] should be achieved by completing all the mandatory units (300 GLH) and at least 1 optional unit (a minimum of 60 GLH).

Three mandatory units of unequal size include:

Unit 1: Exploring business (GLH 90; internally assessed)

Unit 2: Developing a marketing campaign (GLH 90; synoptic, externally assessed)

Unit 3: Personal and business finance (GLH 120; externally assessed)

Five internally assessed optional units of equal size include:

Unit 4: Recruitment and selection process (GLH 60)

Unit 5: Investigating customer service (GLH 60)

Unit 6: Market research (GLH 60)

Unit 7: The English legal system (GLH 60)

Unit 8: Work experience in business (GLH 60)

Content and standards

Similarly to other BTEC Nationals (Regulated Qualifications Framework; RQF), the qualification has been developed in consultation with universities to ensure that it supports progression to HE. Likewise, employers and professional bodies were consulted in order to determine whether the content was appropriate and consistent with current practice for students planning to enter employment directly in the business sector. The learning domain is specified differently for internally versus externally assessed units.

In the internally assessed units that adopt the CASLO approach, the learning domain is defined by 4 elements. First, a set of higher-level learning aims is specified. Second, a number of more detailed assessment criteria is listed for each of the learning aims at different grade levels in a hierarchical manner. Third, each of the learning aims has its key content areas outlined and, fourth, each of the key content areas is specified by its detailed content that should be covered in teaching. This is illustrated below for Unit 1 (first, learning aims and assessment criteria at all grade levels, and then, the key content areas and their specific content for Learning Aim D):

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[13] For this qualification, only the number of GLHs is available but not the number of credits.

Unit 1: Exploring business (internally-assessed)

Learning aims:

A: Explore the features of different businesses and analyse what makes them successful

> AC to meet "Pass":
>
> > A.P1 Explain the features of two contrasting businesses.
> >
> > A.P2 Explain how two contrasting businesses are influenced by stakeholders.
>
> AC to meet "Merit" (in addition to meeting the AC for "Pass"):
>
> > A.M1 Assess the relationship and communication with stakeholders of two contrasting businesses using independent research.
>
> AC to meet "Distinction" (in addition to meeting the AC for "Pass" and "Merit"):
>
> > A.D1 Evaluate the reasons for the success of two contrasting businesses, reflecting on evidence gathered. [Shared by Aim A and B]

B: Investigate how businesses are organised

> AC to meet "Pass":
>
> > B.P3 Explore the organisation structures, aims and objectives of two contrasting businesses.
>
> AC to meet "Merit" (in addition to meeting the AC for "Pass"):
>
> > B.M2 Analyse how the structures of two contrasting businesses allow each to achieve its aims and objectives.
>
> AC to meet "Distinction" (in addition to meeting the AC for "Pass" and "Merit"):
>
> > B.D1 Evaluate the reasons for the success of two contrasting businesses, reflecting on evidence gathered. [Shared by Aim A and B]

C: Examine the environment in which businesses operate

> AC to meet "Pass":
>
> > C.P4 Discuss the effect of internal, external and competitive environment on a given business.
> >
> > C.P5 Select a variety of techniques to undertake a situational analysis of a given business.
>
> AC to meet "Merit" (in addition to meeting the AC for "Pass"):
>
> > C.M3 Assess the effects of the business environment on a given business.

AC to meet "Distinction" (in addition to meeting the AC for "Pass" and "Merit"):

C.D2 Evaluate the extent to which the business environment affects a given business, using a variety of situational analysis techniques.

D: Examine business markets

AC to meet "Pass":

D.P6 Explore how the market structure and influences on supply and demand affect the pricing and output decisions for a given business.

AC to meet "Merit" (in addition to meeting the AC for "Pass"):

D.M4 Assess how a given business has responded to changes in the market.

AC to meet "Distinction" (in addition to meeting the AC for "Pass" and "Merit"):

D.D3 Evaluate how changes in the market have impacted on a given business and how this business may react to future changes.

E: Investigate the role and contribution of innovation and enterprise to business success

AC to meet "Pass":

E.P7 Explore how innovation and enterprise contribute to the success of a business.

AC to meet "Merit" (in addition to meeting the AC for "Pass"):

E.M5 Analyse how successful the use of innovation and enterprise has been for a given business.

AC to meet "Distinction" (in addition to meeting the AC for "Pass" and "Merit"):

E.D4 Justify the use of innovation and enterprise for a business in relation to its changing market and environment.

D: Examine business markets

Key content area	Content
D1 Different market structures	Market structures: perfect competition, imperfect competition.
	Features of different market structures: number of firms, freedom of entry, nature of product.
D2 Relationship between demand, supply and price	Influences on demand, e.g. affordability, competition, availability of substitutes, level of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), needs and aspirations of consumers.

	Influences on supply, e.g. availability of raw materials and labour, logistics, ability to produce profitably, competition for raw materials, government support.
	Elasticity: price elasticity of demand.
D3 Pricing and output decisions	Impact on pricing and output decisions in different market structures.
	Reponses by business to pricing and output decisions of competitors in different market structures.

In the externally assessed (non-CASLO) units, the learning domain is defined via 3 elements. First, a set of assessment outcomes is identified. Second, a number of content areas is listed and, third, each of the content areas is specified by its essential content which must be covered in teaching before students attempt the external assessment. The ways of outlining the learning domain in the externally assessed units in this qualification are illustrated below for Unit 2 (first, the assessment outcomes, and then the content areas and their essential content for content area B):

Unit 2: Developing a marketing campaign (synoptic, externally-assessed)

Assessment outcomes:

1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of marketing principles, concepts, processes, key terms, data sources and definitions

2 Analyse marketing information and data, demonstrating the ability to interpret the potential impact and influence on marketing campaigns

3 Evaluate evidence to make informed judgements about how a marketing campaign should be planned, developed and adapted in light of changing circumstances

4 Be able to develop a marketing campaign with appropriate justification, synthesising ideas and evidence from several sources to support arguments

Content areas:

A Introduction to the principles and purposes of marketing that underpin the creation of a rationale for a marketing campaign

B Using information to develop the rationale for a marketing campaign

C Planning and developing a marketing campaign

Content area B

Content area	Essential content
B1 Purpose of researching information to identify the needs and wants of customers	To identify target markets.
	To identify size, structure and trends in the market.
	To identify competition.
B2 Market research methods and use	Primary research, to include survey, interview, observation, trials, focus groups.
	Secondary research:
	- internal – business data on customers and financial records to include loyalty cards and sales records.
	- external – commercially published reports, government statistics, trade journals, media sources.
	Importance of validity, reliability, appropriateness, currency, cost.
	Quantitative and qualitative data, when and where used.
	Sufficiency and focus of the research.
	Selection and extraction.
B3 Developing the rationale	Interpretation, analysis and use of data and other information to make valid marketing decisions.
	Identification of any further sources of information that may be required.
	Evaluation of the reliability and validity of the information obtained.
	Product life cycle.

Assessment

Overview

In this qualification, all units are separately assessed and graded before a qualification-level grade is determined based on unit grades. Individual units are graded using the following scale: distinction (D); merit (M); pass (P); near pass (N); and unclassified (U), with the grade of N used only for externally assessed units.

The internally assessed units are directly graded. In these units, the assessment criteria are hierarchical and holistic which means that to achieve grade D, a student must have met all the assessment criteria at the performance level for grade D and, thus, also at the lower performance levels for grades P and M, as no compensation is allowed.

The externally assessed units are first marked, using analytic levels-based mark schemes. Then, the P and D grade boundaries are set for each unit, using a range of qualitative and statistical evidence, supported by grade descriptors, while the grade boundaries for other grades are determined arithmetically. Once grade boundaries are determined, unit marks are converted to grades, in a compensatory model based on mark totals across the assessment outcomes.

To achieve the qualification, students must be awarded grade N or above in all the externally assessed mandatory units and grade P or above in the internally assessed mandatory units. In this qualification, it is possible to achieve the qualification grade of P despite only achieving grade U in the optional unit. If a student achieves more than one optional unit, the mandatory units along with the optional unit with the highest grade are used to calculate the overall result.

To enable qualification-level aggregation, each unit grade is assigned a certain number of points, depending on unit size, and the qualification grade is awarded on a scale of P, M, D, and D*, depending on the overall sum of points achieved for all of the units, according to pre-specified point-based grade boundaries. This allows for partial compensation across units, within the above-mentioned constraints related to grade U.

External assessment

External assessment constitutes 58% of all the assessment in this qualification, and is set, marked, and graded by Pearson. Students are permitted to resit external assessments during their programme.

Unit 2, in which students focus on developing a marketing campaign, is synoptic. Therefore, to assess the achievement of the assessment outcomes for this unit, as well as the learning acquired across the programme, a synoptic assessment is used in the form of a written scenario-based vocationally-relevant task. This requires students to demonstrate their ability to integrate and apply the relevant skills and knowledge in their response.

This unit is assessed under supervised conditions over 2 days. On the first day, students receive Part A of their Research Pack under low-control conditions for a 2-hour preparation period with access to a computer and the internet. During this preparatory session, students may prepare summary notes that can be taken into their Part B assessment on the following day. The assessment concludes on the

second day with a 3-hour supervised Part B written examination that is conducted under medium-control conditions. The paper contains 2 activities that require extended responses. This assessment is available twice a year in December to January and May to June. The maximum number of marks for this examination is 70.

Unit 3, in which students develop skills and knowledge needed to understand, analyse, and prepare financial information, is assessed with a written examination lasting 2 hours. The paper contains a mixture of short-response and extended-response questions. This assessment is available twice a year, in January and May to June. The maximum number of marks for this examination is 80.

Internal assessment

For the internally assessed Unit 1, and all optional units, centres can select the most appropriate assessment method and grade the assessments themselves. While these assessments should be engaging and challenging for students, Pearson's guidelines and requirements state that they should be summative in their nature. They can take a variety of forms, including written reports, projects, time-constrained practical assessments with observation records and supporting evidence, recordings of performance, sketchbooks, working logbooks and reflective journals, presentations with assessor questioning, and so on.

Centres should ensure that internal assessment uses varied methods across the units, so that students can develop a broad range of transferable skills throughout the qualification. Pearson provides centres with examples of suitable assessment for all units (assignment briefs) to enable an understanding of how to target assessment criteria and ensure that students have opportunities to achieve each of the relevant grades. For some units, there are also authorised assignment briefs available, if centres prefer to use a ready-made product. Pearson also provides a glossary of command verbs, which help to explain the standards and requirements of the learning aims and assessment criteria. Further support and guidance on assignment writing can also be sought from Pearson regionally based quality assurance managers and on Pearson-managed subject or qualification online forums. All internal assessments must meet the national standards set by Pearson and be fair to all students, allowing them to demonstrate the full range of achievement at all grade levels.

Internal assessment may cover either the whole content of a unit and be administered at the end of unit delivery, or it can be administered in several parts, in a continuous approach, during the delivery of the unit. Depending on the breadth and depth of the unit's content, a different number of internal assessments that may require various forms of evidence are recommended for each unit by Pearson. For example, for the mandatory Unit 1, there are 3 recommended summative assessments (2 reports and a presentation) that could each jointly cover multiple

interrelated learning aims and/or assessment criteria. Similarly, for the optional Unit 8, a maximum number of 2 summative assessments (a report and participation in a recruitment and selection activity) is given. However, Pearson allows centres to use only one assessment for the whole unit or to combine learning aims and assessment criteria across different units in a single assessment.

The requirements for meeting the learning aims at the pass, merit, and distinction levels are also described in the specification for each internally-assessed unit. The grade descriptors cited below illustrate how the standards that must be met for each grade for Learning Aim A of the optional Unit 8 are typically specified. There is no 1-1 mapping in the specification between learning aims, assessment criteria and the grading criteria.

> **For distinction standard**, learners will evaluate the recruitment processes, reach a reasoned conclusion and make insightful reference to how it is linked to the success of a selected business. The report will consider the problems that can impact on a business if there are staff shortages or if unsuitable employees are selected because of ineffective recruitment systems.
>
> **For merit standard**, learners will analyse the different recruitment methods, looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the systems in place.
>
> **For pass standard**, learners will examine the factors for workforce planning and the reasons for businesses having to recruit additional employees. The report must demonstrate an understanding of the recruitment methods and why the different processes are used. Learners will indicate whether external bodies and/or agencies contribute to the process of assessment or interviewing, highlighting their specific contribution to the practice. The report will show a clear understanding of the importance of sequencing in the recruitment process and the use of technology or new technologies in this field.

There are some limitations on the number of resubmissions of internal assessment. Students are typically allowed a single opportunity to resubmit improved evidence if the lead internal verifier believes that there is a reasonable expectation that a student will perform better in a second submission. If granted, the resubmission must be made within 15 working days and no further guidance from the assessor should be given to the student when completing their resubmission. In exceptional circumstances, and if authorised by the lead internal verifier, a student who has not achieved the level of performance that is required for a pass in their resubmission may be offered a single retake opportunity using a new assessment brief. In that case, the grade they can achieve is capped at pass.

Quality assurance[14]

The internally assessed units in this qualification are quality assured both internally and externally in an annual cycle that comprises 3 stages. Each year, this cycle starts with a centre signing the annual quality declaration that is a statement of compliance with Pearson standards for delivering and assessing the qualification. At this stage, the centre has to register their lead internal verifier (LIV) for this qualification. The LIV's main responsibilities are to manage assessment and internal verification, support and organise training for the rest of the assessment team, and act as the point of accountability for the qualification at the centre.

LIVs also undertake annual compulsory standardisation of centre assessors and IVs. Mandatory centre standardisation materials are provided by Pearson and include examples of assessments and assessment decisions at both unit and learning aim level, for different units and/or learning aims every year (for instance, assignment briefs and assessed student work, including that with borderline judgements, with assessor and internal verifier (IV) comments), as well as activities to be undertaken during centre standardisation. These standardisation materials focus mostly on the mandatory units and some more popular optional units. Where centres design their own assignment briefs, these must be internally verified prior to being used. This internal verification is intended by Pearson to ensure that assignment briefs present students with the opportunity to target all assessment criteria and grades. In addition to centre-led annual standardisation, Pearson offers additional optional online live and pre-recorded standardisation events that use authentic student materials to further support comparability of standards across centres.

The second stage of the QA cycle is mostly supportive and is initialised at the start of the academic year with the allocation of a BTEC Centre Assessment Standards Reviewer to the centre. The main function of this reviewer is to identify whether the centre may benefit from additional support before the standards verification process starts in January. If, based on certain risk factors, the centre is considered to require additional support, it undergoes the holistic review that must be conducted by the reviewer in person or remotely by the end of December. The purpose of the holistic review is to scrutinise the centre's assessment standards and internal verification policies and processes to ensure effective delivery of the qualification.

The third stage of the QA cycle involves risk-based standards verification conducted at all centres by Pearson's standards verifiers, with the extensiveness of the process determined according to centre risk rating. Its aim is to ensure that assessors across the centres are making accurate and consistent assessment decisions. The standards verification process also involves sampling of assessment records at the

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[14] This section describes the quality assurance processes for internally assessed units only.

centre to examine whether feedback given to students complies with Pearson's guidance of not specifically instructing students what to do to achieve certain grades. If standards verification identifies that centres were overly generous or overly strict in grading of internal assessment, centres will need to adjust the grades (across the whole cohort to avoid any possible disadvantage) and will receive a specific report with the rationale for these adjustments. Centres will then be required to provide another sample that includes records of all the students with amended grades and additional students for standard verification, to ensure that amendments have indeed been carried out throughout the cohort. If deemed justified, resubmission opportunities may be granted by the LIV to some students on condition that they met the original deadline, are considered capable of achieving an improved outcome, and can complete the resubmission within 15 days from receiving feedback. After the QA cycles have been completed, centres receive individualised feedback that allows them to improve their delivery, internal verification and assessment approach.

The qualification does not offer DCS. Certification claims for the cohort that has been reviewed in the standards verification process can be made only after Pearson has completed the whole QA cycle for this qualification.

Teaching and learning

This qualification can be delivered in centres (usually schools and colleges) that have the necessary resources, including specific resources that may be required for some units. Centres can contextualise the qualification and choose the delivery format that meets the needs of their students, including direct instruction in classrooms, group and peer work, and e-learning. They are encouraged by Pearson to work with employers to facilitate contextualised delivery and assessment of this qualification.

The mandatory content ensures that all students acquire the same foundation of knowledge, understanding, and skills that will equip them for progression. At the same time, a choice of optional content allows students to pursue learning that matches their own professional interests, local labour market needs and supports progression choices. Through the completion of vocational tasks, this qualification aims to ensure applied learning that brings together knowledge and understanding, and practical and technical skills. This is also believed to encourage the development of vocational behaviours and skills, such as communication, teamwork, or research and analysis, that are transferable to different work and educational contexts. The delivery of each unit is based on the collaborative engagement of the student and tutor through different activities.

Centres are supported by Pearson with face-to-face and online training and professional development events, as well as teaching and learning materials. The training events focus on preparing teachers to deliver the programme by familiarising

them with the qualification structure, planning and preparation for internal and external assessment, and QA processes. Support materials include delivery guidance for each unit, example schemes of work for all mandatory units, guidance on internal and external assessment, and ideas and suggestions for teaching and learning resources. Examples of various study activities and case studies are also available to teachers in a format that is adaptable to the centre's delivery model. Various activities are suggested in the delivery guides including class and group discussions, exploring and discussing business and analysing practices, policies, and procedures, practice tasks, real-life business case studies, diaries to log relevant and related experiences, seminars with visiting speakers who are business practitioners and video materials with talks on business topics.

Other resources for teaching and learning that can be procured by centres either through Pearson or its endorsed publishers include textbooks, revision guides, and revision workbooks in e-book and print formats, as well as teaching and assessment packs that include e-learning materials. General suggestions as to the kind of resources that should be accessed by students are listed in each unit in the specification. While purchasing any Pearson-endorsed resources to deliver this qualification is not compulsory, centres are expected to make sure that students have full access to appropriate learning materials and publications. To prepare students for the requirements of all assessments in this qualification, teachers can use exemplar assessment materials provided by Pearson and available for both internally and externally assessed units on their website.

The order of unit delivery in this qualification is not prescribed. However, links between the units are reflected in the specification through the listing of interconnections for each individual unit. It is also recommended that assessment for the synoptic Unit 2 should only be attempted towards the end of the programme of study.

CIPS Level 4 Diploma in Procurement and Supply

Qualification purpose and intended cohort

The Level 4 Diploma in Procurement and Supply is a vocationally-related qualification, equivalent to the first year of an undergraduate degree course. It is delivered internationally, with over half of the students being from the UK. It is assessed in English (except in China, where the qualification is delivered and assessed in Mandarin).

The qualification can be delivered in tutor-led programmes with CIPS-accredited centres, through distance learning with tutor support or through self-study, with flexible start and end dates. To enter this qualification, students are required to have at least 2 A levels (or international equivalent) or a CIPS Level 3 Advanced Certificate qualification, or to demonstrate relevant experience in a business environment over a minimum of 2 years.

This qualification is a common entry route to the procurement profession into roles such as buyer, procurement or purchasing specialist or executive, or supply chain, inventory or logistics analyst. It also targets students that are already working in an operational, managerial or supervising capacity within procurement and have the CIPS Level 3 Advanced Certificate in Procurement and Supply Operations, who wish to progress. It allows for progression into the CIPS Level 5 Advanced Diploma in Procurement and Supply and supports working towards Member of the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (MCIPS) status.

Qualification structure

This qualification comprises 8 mandatory core units. To be awarded the qualification, a minimum of 60 credits (250 GLH) should be achieved.

Eight mandatory units of unequal size include:

> Unit 1: Scope and influence of procurement and supply (12 credits)
>
> Unit 2: Defining business need (6 credits)
>
> Unit 3: Commercial contracting (6 credits)
>
> Unit 4: Ethical and responsible sourcing (6 credits)
>
> Unit 5: Commercial negotiation (6 credits)
>
> Unit 6: Supplier relationships (6 credits)
>
> Unit 7: Whole life asset management (6 credits)
>
> Unit 8: Procurement and supply in practice (12 credits)

Content and standards

The content of this qualification aligns with the competencies set out in the managerial level of the CIPS Global Standard and was developed in collaboration and consultation with practitioners, employers and academic specialists in Procurement and Supply. The learning domain is outlined on a unit-by-unit basis in the qualification specification document and is specified through 3 elements. First, a set of higher-level learning outcomes is identified. Second, a number of more detailed assessment criteria is listed for each of the learning outcomes. Third, each

of the assessment criteria is defined in more detail by its indicative content. This is illustrated below for Unit 2 (first, the learning outcomes and assessment criteria and then, the indicative content for Learning Outcome 2):

Unit 2: Defining business need

LO 1. Understand how to devise a business case for requirements to be sourced from external suppliers

AC 1.1 Analyse how business needs influence procurement decisions

AC 1.2 Identify how costs and prices can be estimated for procurement activities

AC 1.3 Analyse the criteria that can be applied in the creation of a business case

AC 1.4 Interpret financial budgets for the control of purchases

LO 2. Understand market management in procurement and supply

AC 2.1 Analyse the different types of markets utilised by procurement and supply

AC 2.2 Compare the competitive forces that influence markets

AC 2.3 Contrast the breakdown between direct and indirect costs and the types of data that can provide information on cost and price

LO 3. Understand the use of specifications in procurement and supply

AC 3.1 Analyse different types of specifications used in procurement and supply and sources of information that can be used to create specifications

AC 3.2 Identify sections of specifications for through life contracts

AC 3.3 Identify the risks that can result from inadequate specifications and mitigation approaches

AC 3.4 Identify opportunities to regulate short- and longer-term specifications

LO 2. Understand market management in procurement and supply (indicative content)

AC 2.1 Analyse the different types of markets utilised by procurement and supply

- Such as manufacturing, construction, retail, financial, agriculture, services

AC 2.2 Compare the competitive forces that influence markets

- Bargaining strength of suppliers and buyers

- Availability of substitutes and threat of entry

AC 2.3 Contrast the breakdown between direct and indirect costs and the types of data that can provide information on cost and price

- Collate sources of information to estimate the breakdown of costs between direct and indirect costs for purchased goods and services

- Use information to prepare budgets or to negotiate prices

- Research market data and use to estimate and negotiate current and future prices and costs for purchased goods and services

Assessment

While it has some elements of the CASLO approach, overall, this would not be classed as a CASLO qualification. Although it adopts the CASLO approach to specifying the learning domain via learning outcomes and assessment criteria, as shown above, the assessment criteria are not used as standards to grade assessments directly. Rather, they represent specifications for the externally set and marked tests, which are used as the sole assessment approach to certifying achievement in this qualification.

All questions within each test are derived from the unit content and the learning outcomes, and there are no optional questions. Each question assesses only one learning outcome rather than attempts to target content across multiple learning outcomes in an integrated way. Within each unit, all learning outcomes are weighted equally for assessment. This means that all learning outcomes in a unit are assessed, and that this assessment equally covers each of these learning outcomes. This approach to exhaustive sampling of the learning domain in assessment is another feature of the CASLO approach, though adapted to fixed-form external examinations. There are 2 assessment methods, depending on unit:

- Selected-response tests (multiple-choice questions with a range of response types) in Units 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 (graded pass/fail)

- Constructed-response tests (essay-type questions, some scenario- or data source-based and some not) in Units 1 and 8 (graded fail, pass, merit, distinction)

These tests are numerically marked and awarded with a compensatory approach, using pre-determined percentage grade cut-scores, as another departure from the CASLO approach. Within this, the selected-response tests do have a relatively high cut-score of 70%, which reflects an element of the mastery approach, alongside the requirement that all units have to be passed to achieve the overall qualification. Therefore, no qualification-level compensation is allowed. The overall qualification

outcome is not graded (unlike the constructed-response tests, with grades thought to provide motivational boost for students). The fact that, in the procurement sector, most professionals develop a specialism within the function, and work jointly in teams without needing to have a detailed understanding of other specialisms, provides the rationale for this qualification not requiring complete mastery across all learning outcomes. The unit-level grading structure is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Unit-level grading structure of Procurement_L4

Unit grade	Constructed-response tests (Units 1 and 8)	Selected-response tests (Units 2–7)
Distinction	75% and above	N/A
Merit	60 – 74%	N/A
Pass	50 – 59%	70% and above

Each selected-response test has a maximum mark of 60. Each constructed-response test has a maximum mark of 100. The 3 25-mark constructed-response questions used in this qualification may be divided into up to 3 component sub/part-questions with clearly indicated marks for each part, for example: Part (a) = 5 marks; Part (b) = 10 marks; and Part (c) = 10 marks. Depending on their response, students can achieve full or partial marks on each question, in accordance with the mark scheme. According to CIPS, the aim is that within one assessment all questions of a given mark value are of the same degree of difficulty and complexity, which are partly determined by the specific command verbs used. These command verbs are defined in a glossary that is provided to centres.

All constructed-response tests are marked according to mark schemes by CIPS assessors that are trained and qualified within procurement to at least the MCIPS level. Mark schemes are intended to facilitate effective standardisation and provide sufficient information to markers to enable them to award appropriate marks accurately and consistently. They are left sufficiently open to accommodate variations in responses due to a student's geographical location and local legislation. Alongside mark schemes, CIPS provides grade descriptors for individual grades in constructed-response tests, illustrated below for pass and distinction. These are intended to further support assessor judgements in addition to mark schemes rather than being used to directly grade student responses.

> **Pass**: Satisfactory answers which link to the task set by the assessment item and demonstrate sufficient understanding and analysis of the scope and influence of procurement and supply, as required by the assessment item.
>
> Mark allocation must enable candidates to achieve a pass if the fundamentals of the question have been adequately addressed in accordance with the command word. Taking into account the parameters of the question and the command

word, as minimum, candidates should be able to examine the topic together with thoughts or judgments about it.

Distinction: Answers demonstrate an excellent depth and breadth of understanding and analysis of the assessment criteria as prescribed by the assessment item.

Mark allocation should enable candidates to achieve a distinction where they have comprehensively addressed all aspects of the question in accordance with the command word. At this level and grade, candidates are likely to have referenced appropriate techniques, theory and/or models in their answers.

Examinations are conducted on-screen, and can be taken either at centres under controlled conditions or at home with remote invigilation. Assessments for each unit are available 4 times a year in March, May, July and November. Students can freely choose the date of each assessment. Assessment for multiple units can be booked for the same examination series. Examination sessions for the selected-response assessments last 1.5 hours each and sessions for the constructed response assessments take 3 hours each, totalling 15 hours of examination time for the whole qualification. Students get feedback on how they performed in the assessment in the form of a percentage score broken down to each individual learning outcome.

Quality assurance

As assessment for all units is external, this qualification has only one (external) QA process in place that is conducted by CIPS separately for the constructed- and selected-response tests.

Constructed-response tests

QA for the constructed-response tests is conducted by senior standards verifiers (SSVs) and qualification lead verifiers (QLVs) appointed by CIPS. SSVs are responsible for the construct validity of examination questions that are produced through a process in which a team of CIPS-appointed procurement and supply specialists develops and reviews questions for each unit, in line with the relevant guidance and specification for writing assessments. The questions are then reviewed to ensure that they are valid and reliable and comply with accessibility requirements before they are signed off for use in live tests.

SSVs are also responsible and accountable for ensuring that appropriate standardisation and moderation takes place for each unit to ensure marking accuracy and consistency. Standardisation takes place before marking commences and is arranged and chaired by the principal marker for each unit. A minimum of 2 mandatory standardisation sessions of blind marking should be scheduled, and if a

team fails to reach standardisation, then a third session must be arranged. When standardisation has been completed, the principal marker produces a report that flags any problem areas. Based on the results of the report, each member of the team is approved for marking in accordance with the CIPS set parameters.

Given that marking is conducted on-screen, real-time monitoring of marking accuracy and consistency is undertaken throughout the marking period for each examination series using seed scripts. Seed scripts, which have been initially marked by the principal markers and agreed with the SSV, are seeded into each marker's allocation with marks removed at a predetermined rate. Principal markers monitor the results of seed script marking in their teams and if variance from the pre-determined marks has been detected, they provide further mandatory moderation and guidance to markers. All scripts that are marked by team members to be a marginal fail are double-marked by the principal marker.

SSVs must take immediate action when marking is found to deviate from the standard and provide the QLV with a summary report after all marking has been concluded. The QLV is responsible and accountable for ensuring the consistency, appropriateness, and integrity of, as well as standard maintenance for CIPS assessments for all units. They also provide reports for each examination series that uses constructed-response tests to the Assessment Quality Board.

Once the marking has been completed and prior to the release of results, CIPS reviews statistical data for each question, unit and marker. This review includes a comparison of the current examination series results to the statistical norms and historical series results in terms of any significant deviations between, for instance, the overall average pass and current pass rates. Typically, results that fall outside +/–10% of the historical averages are investigated in more detail regarding the question performance, validity of these questions and their balance in the assessment. Marking reports submitted by the SSV, principal markers, and markers are scrutinised, and an in-depth review of standardisation and seed script marking reports conducted, checking whether the mark schemes were consistently applied.

Factors that may have contributed to deviations from the usual results profile are also considered (for instance, the proportion of UK-taught students versus international ones; the balance of the overall difficulty of the assessment; any changes to legislation or teaching materials; or adverse circumstances such as political unrest, pandemic or potential exam content security breach). If any adjustments of results are recommended for any of the units, they are finalised only after this has been signed off by the Assessment Quality Board.

Selected-response tests

Once at least 80% of the results for the selected-response assessments have been received, a statistical analysis is conducted, and the item or test performance reviewed prior to results being released to students. Item statistics and grade percentages for each unit are compared to statistical norms and historical examination series results. Questions that have a negative discrimination index and low facility index (<20%) are further scrutinised for potential errors, ambiguity and difficulty alignment with the qualification level. Depending on the outcomes of this review, decisions about making adjustments prior to the release of results are considered.

As with the constructed-response tests, if the overall results (the unit average and patterns of results over time) in the current examination series deviate from historical performances, factors that may have contributed to these differences are investigated before any adjustments are made.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning in this qualification is flexible, with the start and end date determined by the student's individual progression through the programme. The unitised design makes this qualification appealing to students that wish to complete only a single unit or several individual units without achieving the whole qualification. Students can choose between 3 learning modes, depending on their own preferences:

- classroom learning, following a structured, tutor-led programme with a CIPS-accredited centre

- distance learning that includes tutor support

- self-study at own pace

CIPS believes that the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and indicative content clearly define the content that must be taught and learned to pass each of the assessments. As the assessments are based solely on the respective unit content rather than any other resources, centres and self-taught students can choose their course materials, although CIPS-developed course books are also available for a fee. CIPS further supports their centres in the delivery of this qualification with materials, some of which are subject to a fee, including newsletters, online resources for tutors that are based on the unit content, monthly guest speaker 'Teach Meet' events (for example, webinars), and advisor support. In their studies, students are also supported with having free access to resources in the Knowledge Hub, where they can access videos, revision webinars, and other course material.

Comparisons

In the sections below, we compare and contrast the contexts and approaches taken in the 6 qualifications in our sample within each of the key areas.

Qualification purpose and intended cohort

There are 2 main purposes across the qualifications in this sample. Three of the qualifications (Fenestration_L2, Hairdressing_L2 and Teaching support_L2) have primarily an occupational purpose. Upon completion of these qualifications, students should be able to perform the relevant job independently. Creative_L3 and Business_L3, as vocationally-related qualifications, provide applied learning in primarily college settings and enable progression to HE, related higher-level vocational courses or entry-level employment. Procurement_L4 is officially classed as a vocationally-related qualification, perhaps due to adopting a qualification design not commonly used for regulated qualifications with an occupational purpose and focusing on knowledge rather than skills constructs. Nevertheless, this qualification has a largely occupational focus, as it enables progression into employment or on to higher employment roles.

Across (and, in some cases, within) the 6 qualifications in this sample, it is evident that CASLO qualifications serve a wide variety of students, who, due to their different circumstances, may benefit from different delivery approaches. The students can differ in their starting points in terms of levels of experience or educational background, as well as in their intentions for progression. For instance, Business_L3 and Creative_L3 target recent Level 2 (mostly GCSE) students. Fenestration_L2 and Procurement_L4 are aimed at those that are already working in the sector and wish to upskill or be certified, or those that would like to enter this sector. The students of Fenestration_L2 may differ in the level of experience that they have in the role and range from a relative novice to experienced workers that may already possess the skills and knowledge, but have not been formally assessed and qualified. Possibly as an acknowledgement of this openness to varied cohorts, few qualifications prescribe strict entry requirements, although centres themselves may impose them in some cases.

Qualification structure

The qualifications in the sample differ in size (from around 200 to almost 600 GLH), and vary in the number and size of their units. Three qualifications (Creative_L3, Teaching support_L2 and Procurement_L4) comprise mandatory units only. The optional units in the other 3 qualifications reflect their flexible nature and adaptability

to serve students wishing to choose alternative career pathways and/or pursue different professional interests within a field.

Of the 3 qualifications that allow a choice of optional units, Fenestration_L2 has the most complex structure. In this qualification, each student has to achieve a fixed number of credits from completing all the mandatory units. In addition, they have to achieve a fixed minimum number of credits from each group of optional units. Credits achieved from all optional units combined should secure (or exceed) the overall minimum number of credits required from completing optional units. In contrast, Business_L3 has the least complex structure, as it offers 5 optional units of equal size, of which only one has to be completed in addition to completing all the mandatory units.

Content and standards

In all qualifications, the learning domain is specified on unit-by-unit basis. Within this, there are some similar approaches to specifying unit-level content, although some differences can be noted in how high-level outcomes for units are conveyed and referred to. Most qualifications specify the learning domain through learning outcomes (or learning aims in Business_L3). In the case of the Business_L3 externally assessed units and the Creative_L3 synoptic unit, these high-level outcomes are referred to as assessment outcomes rather than learning outcomes. In most of these qualifications, these high-level outcomes are, at least loosely, linked to relevant NOS.

Most qualifications specify standards for each learning outcome through assessment criteria. The exceptions to this, again, are the Business_L3 and Creative_L3 externally assessed and synoptic units for which standards are specified through grade descriptors. For Business_L3, these grade descriptors operate jointly with an awarding process that combines a range of qualitative and statistical evidence for particular grades. Importantly, while Procurement_L4 does specify assessment criteria for each learning outcome, these are not used as standards to directly grade student performance, but to determine the coverage and demand of the tests that are used to assess students.

In addition to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria, all qualifications except Fenestration_L2 and Procurement_L4 specify core mandatory content in the form of lists of topics that must be covered as a minimum. This content is typically associated with individual learning outcomes or learning aims. In the Business_L3 externally assessed units, this content is associated with the assessment outcomes. In the Creative_L3 synoptic unit, because it does not introduce new content, there are no additional content lists. Procurement_L4 specifies lists of indicative rather than mandatory content which are attached to individual assessment criteria rather than learning outcomes. Fenestration_L2 specifies indicative content only for a

minority of its knowledge learning outcomes, as lists attached to individual assessment criteria rather than learning outcomes. In most qualifications, the learning outcomes and assessment criteria, as well as other content specifications, are written in relatively broad terms to match a range of different work environments, specialist practices, or student interests, and allow for their adaptation to different contexts.

In all 6 qualifications, learning outcomes and assessment criteria are specified in a similar style (with the exception of the externally assessed units in Business_L3). Learning outcomes tend to be prefaced by the phrase "The learner will". In the units where assessment criteria are used, they are prefaced by "The learner can" (apart from in Business_L3). As previously mentioned, the learning outcomes and assessment criteria tend to incorporate certain command verbs, which are used to denote their focus on knowledge versus skill, their complexity level, as well as to provide specificity in terms of the activity required to meet them.

As can be seen in Table 2, the learning outcomes are formulated similarly across several qualifications, commonly using command verbs "understand", "know", or "be able to", each of these featuring across at least 3 qualifications.[15] However, these verbs are less frequently used in Creative_L3 and Business_L3. In addition to "understand", the learning outcomes in Creative_L3 most commonly involve verbs such as "use" and "develop". The learning outcomes in Business_L3 are predominantly formulated with verbs "examine", "analyse", "evaluate" and "investigate". Learning outcomes using the verbs "demonstrate", "apply" and "plan" appear across 2 different qualifications in each case.

Interestingly, although Hairdressing_L2 appears to exclusively formulate its learning outcomes using "be able to", each of these overarching learning outcomes is associated with some knowledge-focused assessment criteria and some skill-focused assessment criteria. Therefore, in this qualification, the learning outcomes appear to capture aspects of both knowledge and skills under the term "be able to", rather than specifying knowledge-focused and skill-focused learning outcomes separately. The latter approach was more common across most of our sample.

With respect to assessment criteria, as can be seen in Table 3, these are most frequently formulated using the command verbs "describe", "identify" and "state", which appear across at least 2 qualifications, and "explain" which appears across all

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[15] Note that in this table, as well as in Tables 3 and 4, for qualifications with optional units, an example combination of optional units was selected by the research team in line with relevant rules of combination, and numbers were calculated based on that selection. The example combinations comprise optional Units 7, 8, 11, 13, and 15 (as numbered on pages 9 to 10 of this report) for Fenestration_L2, optional Units 9, 12, 13, and 15 (as numbered on page 16) for Hairdressing_L2, and optional Unit 6 (as numbered on page 35) for Business_L3.

of the qualifications.[16] These command verbs tend to feature in knowledge-focused assessment criteria, which may be, to some extent, over-represented in our sample, given that some qualifications are predominantly focused on assessing knowledge (for instance, Procurement_L4). However, this also demonstrates a focus on knowledge-related aspects of the learning domain, rather than just skills, across other qualifications.

Note that in Business_L3, the higher-grade assessment criteria appear to entail a higher level of complexity, which is consistent with Bloom's taxonomy. In contrast, in the Creative_L3 graded synoptic unit, all command verbs are present across all assessment objectives (counted as learning outcomes in Table 2) and must be met even for a pass. In turn, the difference between pass, merit, and distinction is reflected in the sophistication and extent of how the outcomes are to be met, as captured by the grading criteria. Some overlap can also be seen between the command verbs used in learning outcomes and assessment criteria in some qualifications, as in Business_L3 and Creative_L3 in particular.

Table 4 below summarises the information from Tables 2 and 3 in terms of average GLH per unit, number of learning outcomes and assessment criteria per unit, and average number of assessment criteria per learning outcome. As it can be noticed, there was substantial variation in terms of average GLH per unit (between 20 and 180) as well as in terms of average GLH per learning outcome (between 3 and almost 26 hours).

Similarly, a great deal of variability can be seen in the number of learning outcomes per unit (which is between 2 and 7 on average) and assessment criteria per unit (which is between 5 and almost 25 on average). Interestingly, although the number of assessment criteria per learning outcome varies on average between 2 and 6 across qualifications, most qualifications have only 2 or 3 assessment criteria per learning outcome on average. This might suggest that, although atomistic assessment criteria specifications are often associated with the CASLO approach, this may not be a feature of all current CASLO qualifications. However, atomisation at the learning outcome level may be more prevalent, with several qualifications specifying 4 or more learning outcomes per unit on average. Clearly, these are crude statistics, based on a very small sample, and with little intrinsic significance. Nevertheless, they are helpful in illustrating the diversity of approaches to content domain specification within the overarching CASLO approach.

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[16] Only verbs appearing 5 or more times across the assessment criteria are included in this table, except for Business_L3, where none of the verbs appear more than 4 times and, thus, all are included. The other exception is Creative_L3, where verbs appearing only once, but commonly used across the qualifications, are also included. Other command verbs that were used more sporadically across the assessment criteria in some qualifications, are excluded from this table to save space.

Table 2 Command verbs in learning outcomes

Qualification	N LOs	N "Be able"	N "Understand"	N "Know"	Other verbs (N)
Fenestration_L2	69	32	1	35	Record (1)
Hairdressing_L2	43	42	-	1	-
Teaching support_L2	32	12	16	4	-
Creative_L3	21	-	8	-	Use (4) Develop (3) Plan (1) Generate (1) Produce (1) Present (1) Apply (1) Solve (1)
Business_L3	16	1	-	-	Examine (3) Analyse (3) Evaluate (2) Investigate (2) Demonstrate (2) Explore (1) Apply (1) Plan (1)
Procurement_L2	27	-	22	1	Demonstrate (4)

Table 3 Command verbs in assessment criteria

Qualification	N AC	N "Describe"	N "Explain"	N "Identify"	N "State"	Other verbs (N)
Fenestration_L2	150	20	32	2	20	Check (8) Select (7) Ensure (6) List (5) Use (5)
Hairdressing_L2	273	66	25	4	46	Outline (25) Follow (11) Use (9) Communicate (8) Provide (7) Select (7) Prepare (6) Position (5)
Teaching support_L2	95	28	8	20	-	Show (11) Demonstrate (7) Use (7)
Creative_L3	44	1	1	1	-	Assess (10) Explore (7) Apply (5)
Business_L3	27	-	3 (P)	-	-	**P:** Explore (3) Undertake (3) **M**: Assess (4) Analyse (4) **D**: Evaluate (4) Justify (2) Assess (1)
Procurement_L2	85	3	6	18	-	Analyse (21) Compare (11) Differentiate (5)

Table 4 Summary of some qualification design features

Qualification	N units	N LOs	N AC	N GLHs	Mean GLHs per unit	Mean GLHs per LO	Mean LOs per unit	Mean AC per unit	Mean AC per LO
Fenestration_L2	9	69	150	232	25.8	3.4	7.7	16.7	2.2
Hairdressing_L2	11	43	273	448	40.7	10.4	3.9	24.8	6.3
Teaching support_L2	11	32	95	225	20.4	7.0	2.9	5.94	3.0
Creative_L3	3	21	44	540	180	25.7	7	14.67	2.1
Business_L3	4	16	12 (P)	360	90	22.5	4	6.75	1.69
			8 (M)					P: 3	P: 0.75
			7 (D)					M: 2	M: 0.5
								D: 1.75	D: 0.44
Procurement_L2	8	27	85	250	31.2	9.3	3.4	10.6	3.2

Assessment

Most qualifications are assessed and graded directly against their assessment criteria and assessment outcomes, although there are some exceptions. As mentioned earlier, in Hairdressing_L2, some of the knowledge-focused assessment criteria from across the units are assessed on a single occasion with a centre-administered but externally-set MCQ test that is numerically marked and has a pass threshold of 70%. Nevertheless, all assessment criteria that lack assessment evidence from the test (owing to incorrectly answered questions) must be assessed subsequently using other assessment methods to ensure that the CASLO mastery requirement is achieved. The externally assessed Business_L3 and Procurement_L4 units, which are numerically marked, are the other 2 exceptions that do not adopt the CASLO approach to assessment.

At unit level, in most qualifications, all learning outcomes and assessment criteria have to be met to achieve a pass or another relevant grade for the unit, in line with the mastery model. The exceptions are Procurement_L4 and the externally assessed units of Business_L3, in which compensation is allowed (although with a rather high pass mark in one assessment method in Procurement_L4).

At qualification level, all qualifications except Business_L3 require that all the relevant units are passed for the overall qualification to be achieved. In Business_L3, although most units still have to be passed, partial qualification-level compensation is allowed. This is possible through use of a points-based aggregation model where lower performance in some units can be balanced by a higher performance in other units to achieve a higher qualification grade. Further compensation is introduced through the possibility of achieving the qualification without passing one optional unit.

In all 3 occupational qualifications (and in their individual units), the overall qualification outcome of either a pass or a fail grade (or achieved/not yet achieved) is possible. In the vocationally-related qualifications, the grading approach differs for each qualification, with some using the binary (pass or fail) outcome, and others awarding multiple grades (including merit and distinction). There are similar differences for unit-level grading.

In Business_L3, individual units are graded using the following scale: distinction (D), merit (M), pass (P), near pass (N) and unclassified (U), with the grade of N being used only for externally assessed units. These unit-level grades are aggregated to derive the qualification-level grade. In addition to these grades, the qualification-level grading scale also includes D*. In Creative_L3, for the 2 formative units only pass or fail grades can be awarded. Unlike in Business_L3, in Creative_L3, the qualification-level grade rather than being an aggregation of grades from all the units, is determined by the grade in the synoptic unit, and can be distinction, merit, pass or

fail. In contrast to either of these qualifications, in Procurement_L4, the units assessed using constructed-response tests are graded distinction, merit, pass or fail, whereas the units assessed with MCQ tests can be awarded a pass or a fail grade. The overall qualification-level result is also graded either with a pass or a fail.

While all the occupational qualifications in our sample use internal assessment in all their units (with the exception of Hairdressing_L2, which also has an externally-set MCQ test for some knowledge-related assessment criteria), the vocationally-related qualifications have each adopted a different approach. Creative_L3 has all units assessed internally, Procurement_L4 has all units assessed externally, and Business_L3 combines the 2 models. External assessments in all these qualifications adopt the classical approach, with numerical marking and compensatory aggregation.

Where internal assessment is used, the awarding organisations recommend that it is conducted holistically across learning outcomes and assessment criteria in each unit in all the qualifications in our sample. In the 3 occupational qualifications, evidence of combined skills and knowledge is produced through a student's performance in practical tasks, and typically assessed through direct observation by an assessor. All 3 qualifications either explicitly state, or at least imply, that direct observation should be the main and preferred assessment method. However, if any of the required skill- or knowledge-focused assessment criteria were not to occur naturally during an observation, a student could be further questioned orally (or another authorised method of assessment could be used, for instance, a witness statement) to prove their competence. In Hairdressing_L2, the majority of knowledge-focused assessment criteria for some units are additionally assessed through a VTCT-set, centre-administered MCQ test, which is supplemented with either oral questioning or other forms of evidence for criteria related to incorrectly answered questions. This supplementation is intended to ensure that full mastery across all knowledge assessment criteria is demonstrated through at least one assessment method. Records of observations, and any other assessment evidence, is gathered in paper-based or electronic portfolios for all these qualifications.

In Creative_L3 and Business_L3, the internally assessed units allow for greater flexibility in assessment methods than is possible in the other, aforementioned occupational qualifications. However, in contrast to Creative_L3, Business_L3 appears to provide more explicit recommendations, or steers to centres regarding the most appropriate methods, for certain units and learning aims.

There is less flexibility in this respect in the terminal synoptic unit of Creative_L3 and in the Business_L3 externally assessed units. In Creative_L3, a holistic project mirroring a creative industry vocational brief is conducted that involves a compulsory project proposal and summative evaluation (in addition to a flexible range of evidence types for completing the project brief, similarly to the internal units). In

Business_L3, written extended-response synoptic tasks and an examination based on short- and extended-response questions are administered. Similarly to Business_L3, Procurement_L4 also uses 2 assessment methods: a multiple-choice and a constructed-response test, which are permanently assigned to certain units.

Most qualifications allow resits, though sometimes with restrictions on the number of resits or the maximum grade that could be achieved (for instance, in Business_L3).

Quality assurance

The 5 CASLO qualifications in our sample have established procedures for both internal and external QA. The exception is Procurement_L4 which, despite exhibiting some CASLO characteristics, cannot be classed as a CASLO qualification, mostly because of its model of awarding organisation-set and delivered assessment. This qualification is, thus, subject to only an external QA process.

Both the internal and external QA processes are referred to somewhat differently across the different awarding organisations. The internal QA processes are named "internal quality assurance" (VTCT; NCFE; GQA) and "internal verification" (UAL; Pearson). The key actors of this process are "internal quality assurer" (VTCT, NCFE), "internal verifier" (UAL; Pearson) and "internal quality advisor" (GQA). The external QA processes are referred to as "quality assurance" (Procurement_L4), "external quality assurance" (VTCT; UAL; GQA), "verification" (NCFE) and "standards verification" (Pearson). The key actors in this process are "external quality assurer" (VTCT, NCFE), "external moderator" (UAL), "centre assessment standards reviewer" (Pearson), "standards verifier" (Pearson), "external quality advisors" (GQA) and "senior standards verifiers" and "qualification lead verifiers" (Procurement_L4). Despite the differences in the terminology used to name the QA processes and some variance in the detail of QA implementation across the awarding organisations, these terms seem to be essentially interchangeable.

Given that 5 of the qualifications use predominantly internal assessment, there is an emphasis on QA processes that are internal to the centre, including standardisation of assessors. In some qualifications, for instance in Creative_L3 or Business_L3, awarding organisations provide support for centre standardisation activities such as standardisation materials or example activities. For Creative_L3, UAL also organises annual standardisation events for centres. In Business_L3, additional optional online live and pre-recorded standardisation events that use authentic student materials are offered. In Fenestration_L2, online webinars and training sessions on how to conduct standardisation are available.

External QA includes both supportive and monitoring elements. In their supportive role, EQAs visit centres and offer continuous advice and guidance on IQA and other processes, assessment design, evidence collection, interpretation of standards, and

so on, starting when a centre is approved for delivery of the qualification. In their monitoring role, EQAs periodically review the appropriateness and effectiveness of these processes as well as assessment decisions and standards.

In terms of monitoring of assessment decisions and standards, different qualifications operate different approaches. In some qualifications, for example Creative_L3 and Business_L3, the required samples of assessment decisions are verified before certification and appropriate actions are taken if issues are spotted prior to releasing the certificates for the relevant session. In other cases, including where DCS is given to centres, this process could happen either before or after certification, with potential remedial actions taking place in future assessment cycles. In all qualifications, the sampling strategy and sample size for each centre are determined based on risk factors (for instance, a centre's level of experience in delivering a qualification) and the findings of the previous EQA processes for the centre. A stratified sample of student work, across the grades, assessors, and qualification levels is usually reviewed within each centre.

Teaching and learning

Despite accommodating a variety of students, some qualifications have relatively strict requirements regarding the delivery setting. For instance, Fenestration_L2 requires most of the delivery to be conducted in the workplace. Teaching support_L2, although primarily a college-based qualification, requires the practical element (placement) to be completed with an employer or in another self-arranged school or college. The other qualifications, for instance, the college-based Creative_L3 and Business_L3, are more flexible and do not have similarly strict work placement requirements. Procurement_L4 allows various delivery modes, including classroom learning, distance learning with tutor support and self-study. Delivery of the college-based qualifications (Hairdressing_L2, Creative_L3 and Business_L3) is aligned with the duration of an academic year, whereas the other 3 qualifications can be delivered more flexibly on a roll-on, roll-off basis.

In 2 occupational qualifications (Fenestration_L2 and Hairdressing_L2), the teaching order of the units is largely determined by the logic of the service being provided to a client or customer and preferences of the centre. In Teaching support_L2, the order of unit teaching is flexible, although it is recommended that the safeguarding legislation unit is delivered earlier in the course. Similarly, there are no rules about the order of unit delivery in Business_L3 and Procurement_L4, although it is recommended that the synoptic Unit 2 in Business_L3 is assessed towards the end of the course. In contrast, in Creative_L3, Units 1 and 2 must be delivered prior to the synoptic Unit 3, which makes this qualification an exception in the sample.

The delivery of all 3 vocationally-related qualifications is supported by the awarding organisations, with different types of learning resources available to centres. In

contrast, the occupational qualifications do not tend to provide that much teaching and learning support, although further resources may be provided on demand, sometimes subject to additional fees, as in Hairdressing_L2.

Discussion

Our description-based comparisons of the 6 qualifications in this sample have shown many similarities but also revealed a certain degree of diversity within, and hybridisation of, the CASLO approach. Some of the observed diversity appears to spring from the different qualification purposes, delivery contexts and accountability pressures, and shapes individual approaches that awarding organisations take towards their qualifications.

Although, collectively, the qualifications compared in this report give an impression of offering a plethora of flexibilities to their end users, the nature and scope of some of these flexibilities can be constrained by different contextual aspects. The qualifications from certain subgroups that can be identified within this sample – for instance, occupational qualifications, or those primarily delivered in colleges – have their own relatively strict requirements in some respects but, at the same time, allow for flexibilities in other aspects. While occupational qualifications predominantly favour direct observation as an assessment method and do not compromise on this preference lightly, they do not normally have strict time constraints on qualification completion time. In contrast, college-based qualifications typically have to adhere to the time constraints of an academic year but allow a lot of flexibility in evidence-collection methods, often allowing centres to use less time-consuming assessment methods. Procurement_L4, the qualification that provides a great deal of flexibility in delivery of teaching and learning – enabled by its detailed learning outcomes and assessment criteria specifications – offers the least flexibility in terms of assessment, as it is based entirely on awarding organisation-set and delivered testing. This, however, enables fast result turnaround and certification, which are considered important in this sector.

Some of the qualifications adopted certain hybrid features, sometimes in response to government requirements for the design of qualifications that are included in performance tables, as in the case of Business_L3. Compared to the majority of qualifications in our sample, Business_L3, as well as Creative_L3, implement finer-grained grading scales to support the use of their results for the purposes of HE selection. Moreover, the contrast between the grading approaches of Creative_L3 (grading at qualification level only) and Procurement_L4 (grading at unit level only), provides a thought-provoking illustration of how the same design mechanisms can be incorporated into qualifications to play quite distinct roles, depending on other contextual and design features.

All qualifications in this report advocate for holistic assessment, despite the somewhat noticeable differences in the level of specificity of their learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Interestingly, the degree of specificity of learning outcomes and assessment criteria does not seem to relate to how easily holistic assessment can be devised for, and used in, a qualification. Learning outcomes and assessment criteria in Business_L3 are specified in a broader, more coarse-grained manner than in some occupational qualifications, and it provides more comprehensive content elaboration and teacher support than many. Yet, despite its rather atomistic specification of learning outcomes specifications, Fenestration_L2 arguably provides greater opportunity for holistic assessment than Business_L3, both across and within units.

In conclusion, the many similarities observed across the qualifications compared in this report support the viability of the definition of the CASLO approach as a design template. At the same time, the hybrid aspects of some of these qualifications well illustrate that qualification design can be fluid and responsive to contextual factors. This challenges the attempt to define qualifications through neat categories, as well as attempts to impose strict design templates onto qualifications that are quite distinct.

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