

# Changes to Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

In autumn 2015, the organisations responsible for regulating qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland introduced changes to the way qualifications are designed, compared and regulated. The regulated qualifications frameworks in these countries have been removed and replaced.

## What qualifications are affected?

The changes will affect qualifications categorised as **QCF** (Qualifications and Credit Framework), **NQF** (National Qualifications Framework), **VRQ** (Vocationally Related Qualifications) and **NVQ** (National Vocational Qualifications).

## How will this affect providers of SQA qualifications?

There will be no direct effect on providers of SQA qualifications. The content, delivery and outcomes of SQA qualifications are unlikely to change. However, you may notice some minor changes to the information available for each qualification as well as changes to the titling.

Many SQA qualifications are approaching their scheduled time for review and any changes that are needed as a consequence of review and the new regulated qualifications frameworks will be implemented at that time.

## What are the new requirements?

**Ofqual** introduced a new Regulated Qualifications Framework (**RQF**) on 1 October 2015. This replaced both the QCF and NQF in England and Northern Ireland.

There is no change to the number of qualification levels, although there have been some changes to the level descriptors, which no longer include autonomy and accountability. Previous QCF requirements, like credit and units, have been made optional.

All qualifications now require Total Qualification Time (TQT) to be specified. This is the same notional time that forms the basis of credit (eg credit = TQT/10). Also, a new description for Guided Learning Hours (GLH) now includes invigilated assessment.

Qualifications Wales (**QW**) regulates qualifications in Wales. The QCF was included as a pillar of the Credit and Qualifications Framework in Wales (**CQFW**). This is now the **Regulated Qualifications** pillar after the removal of the QCF. QW has adopted the same level descriptors and TQT requirements as Ofqual for the Regulated Qualifications pillar.

The Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (**CCEA**) will regulate vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland, after a handover from Ofqual which is anticipated to take place in April 2016. CCEA will continue to use Ofqual's database and adopt the RQF requirements at present.

## **How will the changes be applied and by when?**

All awarding bodies have until December 2017 to apply the new requirements. The removal of reference to QCF, in qualification titles, from the Regulators' databases will happen in spring 2016. Where a qualification is scheduled to be reviewed prior to December 2017, the remaining changes will be applied at that point.

These additions will not result in any changes to qualification content or qualification delivery, unless the planned review indicates need for change.

In many cases the qualification review depends on sector or industry bodies that set and maintain the National Occupational Standards underpinning certain qualifications. SQA will work with these organisations to keep qualifications up to date.

## **Will the levels change?**

No. Ofqual has stated that although some changes have been made to the level descriptors, the levels of the RQF will be equivalent to the levels of the QCF.

## **What do I need to do?**

You do not need to do anything. SQA will keep you informed of any changes.

We welcome your feedback on the content of our qualifications and on GLH and TQT/Credit levels. This will be useful when we review our qualifications. If you would like to provide feedback, please complete an [SQA Comment Form](#).

## **How will this affect funding?**

Funding is set by academic year. If you are currently able to draw down funding for your qualifications this is unlikely to change radically for the 2016–17 academic year.

However, in England there are changes to the funding streams that are available through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). If you have any concerns relating to how these changes affect you, please raise this with your SFA contact.

You can find information on qualifications funded in England on [The Hub](#).

Currently, funded qualifications in Wales are listed on [DAQW](#). At the end of March 2016 DAQW will be replaced by a new database called Qualifications in Wales (QiW).