

Managing the Transition from the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) implementation: managing down NQF provision

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Introduction

- 1 From 1st April 2010, the Skills Funding Agency will be responsible for confirming provision for public funding for post 19 learners in England. From August 2010 the Skills Funding Agency intends to focus funding on vocational qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and begin to manage down the volume of vocational National Qualification Framework (NQF) provision funded, in line with the timescale, agreed by the UK Vocational Qualification Reform Programme Board (UK VQ RP) that all vocational qualifications will be on the QCF by December 2010.
- 2 The Skills Funding Agency recognises that in focussing funding on the QCF from August 2010, the QCF itself may be 80% populated at that time, and that there may be some critical (publicly funded) vocational NQF qualifications that might not have transitioned to the QCF by August. Therefore some NQF vocational qualifications will continue to be funded. In the main this will only be where QCF provision does not exist, and only for a limited period and on sector advice. However, in order to allow time for providers to deliver new provision where that new provision differs significantly in content from its NQF predecessor (or indeed where there is no NQF predecessor) there may also be a need to continue to fund some vocational NQF provision for a limited period, even where QCF provision does exist and has been approved for funding. But it will remain the expectation that providers will begin to deliver QCF qualifications in preference to NQF qualifications as soon as they become available.
- 3 This paper sets out the proposed approach to managing down publicly funded vocational NQF provision and ensuring a smooth transition to publicly funded QCF provision for post 19 learners in England. This approach has been agreed with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and shared with other delivery partners in the UK Vocational Qualification

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Reform Programme (including the Federation of Awarding Bodies and the Joint Council for General Qualifications). This approach has been formally approved by the Director of College and Learning Provider Services (Skills Funding Agency).

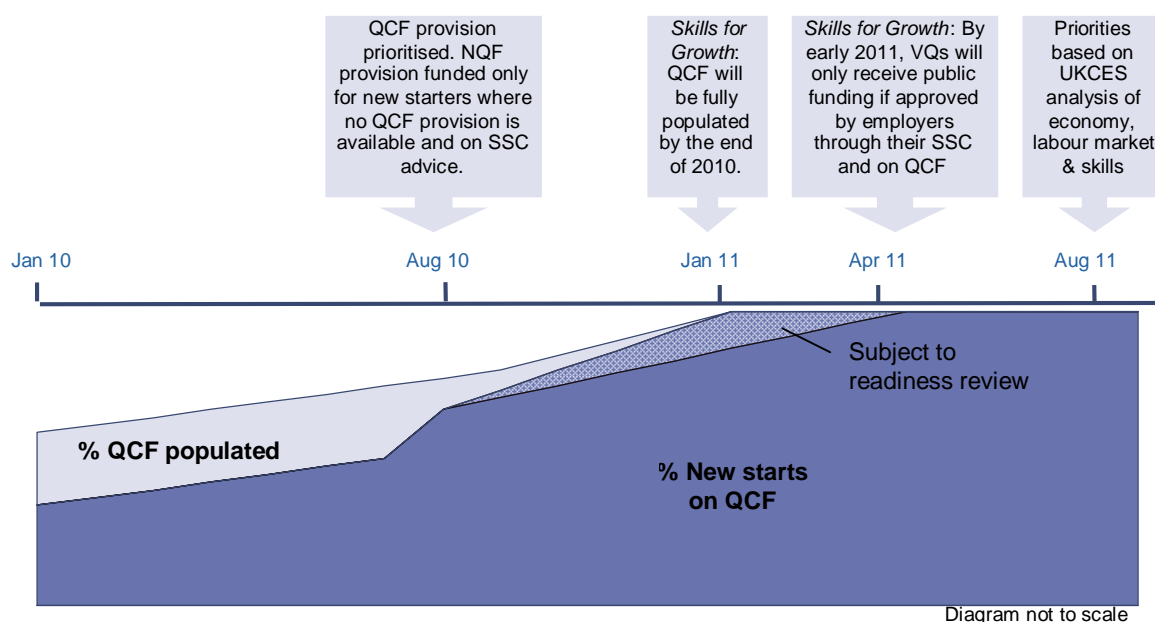
- 4 This approach takes into account recent provider concerns regarding transition times to the QCF. However, it also recognises that QCF population will be approaching completion by the summer/autumn of 2010; that for many qualifications there may not be a fundamental change in the content in this phase of QCF implementation; and that any continuation of funding for NQF provision beyond the published timescales poses a risk to the successful implementation of the QCF and the managing down of NQF provision.

Proposed approach

- 5 Although the Skills Funding Agency intends to focus funding on the QCF from August 2010, the National Skills Strategy (*Skills for Growth*, November 2009) indicates that, by early 2011 the transition to the QCF in public funding terms must be complete with no vocational qualification in receipt of funding unless it has been approved by a sector organisation and is within the QCF.
- 6 In order to arrive at a situation where only QCF vocational provision is funded and delivered by early 2011, the following transition steps are proposed:
 - a **April '10 List – August '10 Delivery:** If the QCF qualification is accredited and confirmed for funding by 1st April 2010, providers will be required to deliver it (and new starts on NQF predecessors will not be funded) from 1st August 2010.
 - b **September '10 List – January '11 Delivery:** If the QCF qualification is accredited and confirmed for funding after 1st April and up to 31st August 2010 inclusive, providers will be required to deliver it as soon as possible. New starts on its NQF predecessors will not be funded from January 2011.
 - c **Readiness review:** In August 2010, the Skills Funding Agency will consider QCF readiness, focusing in particular on whether critical provision (in terms of volumes and identified priorities) is available on the QCF and if there are areas of critical provision not yet available. The Skills Funding Agency will review the position as to whether any funding of appropriate and identified critical NQF provision for new starts should be permitted beyond January 2011.
- 7 A list of NQF qualifications which will not be funded will be published alongside each of the published lists of approved QCF qualifications. This will ensure clarity on what NQF provision will not be funded for new learners as the switch to appropriate QCF provision is made.
- 8 For all NQF qualifications without a direct QCF successor it is intended that new starts will not be funded from January 2011, or sooner if funding approval is already due to end before that date. However, we will need to monitor this, again taking into account the sector readiness review work.

- 9 In order to ensure providers have ready access to lists of accredited QCF qualifications confirmed for funding, a 'live' list will be available on the LSC (Skills Funding Agency) website (<http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvgrp/support/list>) which will be updated on a regular basis through the transition period and whilst the Skills Funding Agency takes forward necessary re-engineering work to ensure that the Learning Aims Database (LAD) can more effectively respond to the QCF. A 'freeze' of the list will be taken on the 1st April 2010 and on the 1st September 2010. These will form the definitive lists for delivery as of 1st August 2010 and 1st January 2011 respectively. The Agency operates a QCF Service Desk to which queries relating to vocational qualification reform and QCF implementation should be directed. The email address is: qcf servicedesk@lsc.gov.uk
- 10 Qualifications and units approved for funding will continue to be added to the Learning Aims Database (LAD), which will remain the primary source for funding returns and will include funding rates and programme weighting factors. The online list, meanwhile, will provide the earliest notice of newly approved provision and will allow easy tracking of the notice periods set out above.

Diagram 1: Timeline for prioritisation of vocational qualification funding on QCF



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