

Skills for Health

Sector Requirements for Approval of Vocational Qualifications on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

PILOT DOCUMENT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are taking responsibility for approving vocational qualifications¹ within their sectors. This document sets out the sector requirements for the approval of vocational qualifications in the health sector (see Annex One). It has been developed by Skills for Health in consultation with Awarding Bodies and other relevant stakeholders (see Annex Two). It is a draft document that applies to the 2008 'approvals' pilot within the health sector. At the end of the pilot the content of the document will be revised according to feedback from the pilot.
- 1.2 The sector requirements are intended to ensure that vocational qualifications are 'fit for purpose'. The requirements form part of Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS) action plans and will be the means by which Skills for Health formally communicates what is required of vocational qualifications in the health sector.

2. The Approvals Pilot

- 2.1 The 'approvals' pilot involves a process through which Awarding Bodies work with SSCs to develop vocational qualifications to meet the needs of the relevant sector. The initial stage of the process is for the relevant SSC and Awarding Body to agree that plans for vocational qualification development align with sector need. On-going dialogue will then take place between Awarding Bodies, the SSC and the Qualification & Curriculum Authority (QCA) regarding the development. Once the vocational qualification has been developed the Awarding Body will submit the product for 'approval' by the SSC. The approval will be based on the sector requirements which are made available to the Awarding Body from the outset
- 2.2 Awarding Bodies must notify Skills for Health of proposed VQ developments. Following initial discussion and agreement of the need to develop the vocational qualification, Skills for Health will give support for further development of the qualification. This is not 'approval' and Skills for Health would expect to work with the Awarding Body throughout the qualification development stage, providing advice and strategic support on meeting the sector requirements (see Annex One) and the approvals procedures.

¹ See Glossary (Page 9) for a definition of Vocational Qualifications.

3. Approval Process

- 3.1 Skills for Health will 'approve' vocational qualifications provided that the proposed qualification(s) meet the sector requirements (see Annex One).
- 3.4 In the unlikely event of a non-resolvable disagreement between an Awarding Body and Skills for Health regarding the 'approval' decision, the Awarding Body will be able to ask for the process to be reviewed. The AB must notify Skills for Health within twenty one days of the 'approval' decision being made, that they want the process to be reviewed.
- 3.5 Skills for Health will not approve qualifications that are not for use by the Health Sector but may be referenced to Skills for Health National Occupational Standards (NOS) and National Workforce Competences (NWCs).
- 3.6 Skills for Health does not approve or endorse products, providers or companies.
- 3.7 Skills for Health will support 'extensions' as long as the relevant requirements are met (see Annex Three).

4. Joint Qualifications

- 4.1 Where a qualification is for use in both Health and Social Care, Skills for Health will consult with Skills for Care & Development prior to making the decision on whether to 'approve' the qualification. In the case of Health and Social Care qualifications both Skills for Health and Skills for Care & Development will be required to 'approve' the qualification.
- 4.2 Where a qualification is defined as 'cross sector' (this could be a qualification developed from Skills for Health NOS or NWC but not for use in the Health Sector) a lead SSC will be named². The 'lead' SSC will be responsible for coordinating the response from the relevant SSCs and providing the 'approval' of the qualification.

² *Further discussion is required as to how the lead SSC will be identified.*

Annex One

Sector Requirements

VQ Characteristics	Requirements that VQs must meet	SQS Ref
Purpose	<p>Proposed vocational qualification(s) must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on robust labour market intelligence and/or emerging sector needs as a result of high profile incidents/issues • Required by the health sector for use in the health sector • In line with the Skills for Health Sector Qualifications Strategy and Action Plans • In line with sector qualification reform proposals • Developed in consultation with relevant employers and representative groups <p><i>Notes for Awarding Bodies:</i> (1) Proposed qualification(s) must include a clear rationale of the need for such qualification(s) and an indication of the anticipated levels of up-take over the subsequent 3 years. This may be the same information as provided via the WBA. (2) Due to the rapidly evolving nature of the health sector and the political dimensions involved it may be necessary to develop vocational qualifications to meet the need of ‘top down’ initiatives. Such initiatives may be based on high profile incidents and issues in the health sector.</p>	2.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

VQ Characteristics	Requirements that VQs must meet	SQS Ref
<p>Broad content/subject matter</p>	<p>Proposed qualification(s) must be developed with reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Occupational Standards (NOS) and/or National Workforce Competences (NWC) • Skills for Health Learning Design Principles (LDP) <p>Proposed qualification(s) must be mapped to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Occupational Standards (NOS) and/or National Workforce Competences (NWC) • The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework • The Childrens Common Core • Employability factors identified in the Sector Qualifications Strategy <p>In the context of the overall focus of the qualification(s), developers should consider, where appropriate the inclusion of principles relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The needs of service users • Communication and information sharing • Personal and people development • Health, safety and security • Service improvement • Quality • Equality and diversity (including safeguarding and protecting individuals) <p><i>Notes for Awarding Bodies:</i></p> <p><i>(1) The meaning of the phrase ‘developed with reference to NOS/NWCs’ is described in the Glossary at the end of this document.</i></p> <p><i>(2) Where there are no relevant NOS and/or NWCs the proposed qualification(s) will be for a clearly identified role in the health sector.</i></p> <p><i>(3) Details of any relevant current policies or guidelines that underpinned content development should also be provided.</i></p>	<p>6.1, 6.2, 6.3</p>

VQ Characteristics	Requirements that VQs must meet	SQS Ref
Structure	<p>The term 'structure' in this context refers to the ways in which units are combined to create the proposed qualification(s). With regard to structure, Awarding Bodies will need to take into account the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility – is the qualification(s) structure flexible enough to enable effective uptake (e.g. through the use of mandatory and optional units)? • Accessibility – is the qualification(s) structure accessible to the target market? • Progression – is the qualification(s) structure designed to enable progression? (e.g. inwards and outwards progression, entry requirements) • Level – is the qualification(s) structure suitable for the level? • Qualification structure will specify the maximum number of credits that can be APEL'd <p><i>Notes for Awarding Bodies</i></p> <p><i>(1) Where appropriate, the allocation of time between work based learning and other forms of learning must be made explicit by the Awarding Bodies.</i></p> <p><i>(2) Overall, due to the diversity of the health sector the structure of the proposed qualification(s) will be considered on a case by case basis.</i></p>	2.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3
Qualification title	There are no requirements identified beyond the QCF regulations	6.1, 6.2, 6.3

VQ Characteristics	Requirements that VQs must meet	SQS Ref
Use of shared or transferable units	<p>In line with the Sector Qualifications Strategy the use of shared units is encouraged.</p> <p>Shared units may relate to, but not be restricted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Management and leadership • Training and development • Health, safety and security • Team and partnership working • Application of number <p>Where a qualification is to be a component qualification of 'full level 2' or 'full level 3' this must be clearly indicated on the submission for 'approval'.</p> <p><i>Notes for Awarding Bodies</i></p> <p><i>(1) Skills for Health will seek to ensure that shared and/or transferable units are used within proposed qualification(s) where appropriate.</i></p>	2.2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3
Assessment principles and strategy	<p>Proposed qualification(s) must indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How assessment will make the best use of naturally occurring evidence including 'observation' to support assessment of competence where appropriate • Approaches to assessment that are commensurate with the level and credit value of the unit(s) and the QA of assessment/delivery processes • That qualifications leading to assessment of competence will require assessors to have appropriate teaching or assessor qualifications • Approaches to Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) 	6.1, 6.2, 6.3

Annex Two

CONSULTATION TO DEVELOP CONTENT

Circulation via e-mail	Joint Awarding Bodies meeting (31.10.07)
<p>This document has been circulated to the following organisations via e-mail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AQA • CCEA • RIPH • NOCN • AMSPAR • City and Guilds • ABC Awards • NCFE • ITEC • RIPH • Edexcel • VTCT • ASET • QCA – Regulator • EDI • OCN West Midlands • OCR • WCSM • SQA – Accreditation • CPCAB • SSDA 	<p>This document has been discussed at the joint Awarding Bodies meeting on 31st October 2007 where the following organisations were represented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City and Guilds • ABC Awards • NCFE • ITEC • RIPH • Edexcel • VTCT • ASET • QCA – Regulator • EDI • OCN West Midlands • OCR • WCSM • SQA – Accreditation • CPCAB • Skills for Health
Approval Pilot Workshop (13.12.07)	QCA Feedback (February 2008)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDEXCEL • ASET • QCA • SSDA • Skills for Care and Development • Skills for Justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QCA

Annex Three

EXTENSIONS

Extensions to Period of Accreditation

The extensions procedure detailed below applies to qualifications on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. Extensions to qualifications on the NQF should be sought through the existing Skills for Health process.

Skills for Health will support 'extensions' as long as the following criteria are met:

- the Awarding Body seeks support from Skills for Health for the 'extension' between four and six months prior to the end of the current accreditation, unless the need for such an extension request could not have reasonably been anticipated; in such cases a strong rationale will be required as to why the request was not made earlier
- the qualification can reasonably be expected to be 'fit for purpose' at the start of the proposed period of extension
- that the content of the qualification meets current sector need
- that the qualification is developed according to current National Occupational Standards and/or National Workforce Competences
- the qualification has sufficient registrations and % completion rate to warrant continuation of the qualification on the Qualifications and Credit Framework

Skills for Health will support extensions for a period of time that is commensurate with the timetable agreed with the Awarding Bodies to update the current qualification or develop a replacement.

Awarding Bodies will write to the Programme Manager (Qualifications) requesting a letter supporting an extension to the period of accreditation.

If support is to be given to the extension Skills for Health will provide the Awarding Body with a letter to be submitted to QCA. The letter will state the date to which the extension is supported.

If support cannot be given Skills for Health will provide a written response detailing the reasons for this.

GLOSSARY

Approval

The following definition of Approval is taken from “The principles, scope and process for piloting SSC approval of reformed vocational qualifications” QCA, 10th September 2007 (Version 2.0):

“For the duration of the pilot, the term ‘approval’ is defined as:

Confirmation from an SSC that a VQ is needed by their sector and can be demonstrated as being so via a Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS) and/or SQS action plan. For sectors where no SQS or SQS action plan has been signed off by the SSDA, the development of VQs needs to take account of Sector Skills Agreements and other relevant Labour Market Information as appropriate.”

National Occupational Standards (NOS) and National Workforce Competences (NWC)

National Occupational Standards (NOS) and National Workforce Competences (NWC) specify the knowledge, skills and understanding required by individuals to carry out their work. They do this by describing good practice in the workplace in terms of what an individual needs to be able to do, as well as what they should know and understand.

Both NOS and NWC are identical in terms of development and presentation, however, NWC have not gone through to approval by the Accrediting Bodies in the four countries.

Reference to National Occupational Standards (NOS) and National Workforce Competences (NWC)

Skills for Health require that VQs are developed with reference to the relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS) and National Workforce Competences (NWC). Such an approach should use the NOS/NWC to inform the content of VQs from the outset, rather than simply mapping to NOS/NWC at the end of the VQ development stage. In this way, the content of the VQs will be clearly integrated with the employment expectations set out in the NOS/NWC.

This process is likely to include the following stages:

- identify the NOS/NWC that are relevant to the area covered by the proposed VQ
- use the content of (mostly) the knowledge and understanding in the NOS/NWC to develop the learning outcomes in the VQ
- use the content of the performance criteria and scope to identify opportunities for activities that can be assessed through simulation or real work opportunities
- show the relationship between the VQ and the NOS/NWC through a tracking document

Since NOS/NWC are often written in quite generic terms there will be a need to add value through more specific content within the VQ. This will serve to amplify the content of the NOS/NWC.

Mapping

The term 'mapping' is used to mean a tracking exercise that shows the relationship between the proposed Vocational Qualification and other relevant frameworks. The mapping document will usually be a tracking from the VQ units to the content and/or levels of the relevant framework (e.g. Knowledge and Skills Framework, The Childrens Common Core).

Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS)

A Sector Qualification Strategy (SQS) are developed and maintained by Sector Skills Councils. An SQS sets out the strategy for the development of qualifications designed to meet the needs of the relevant sector.

Sector Skills Councils identify skills needs, analyse the current provision and agree interventions with key partners to improve the match between employment need and the supply of education and training. SQS will be used by the qualifications regulatory authorities of the four home nations and SSCs to influence Awarding Body provision

Vocational Qualifications (VQs)

The following definition of Vocational Qualifications (VQs) is taken from "The principles, scope and process for piloting SSC approval of reformed vocational qualifications" QCA, 10th September 2007 (Version 2.0):

"A qualification is in scope (i.e. a VQ) if its primary purpose is:

- to provide learners with knowledge, skills and/or competence directly relevant to work or employment, either within one or more sectors or for specific occupations; and/or
- to provide enhanced labour market opportunities for those currently in work or employment.

For example, the range of different sub-purposes for VQs which are in scope for this process include all those which are designed to:

- (i) assure a learner's competence in the full range of knowledge and skills in order to give entry to/advancement in a specific set of occupations (e.g. current NVQs, technical certificates and some VRQs)
- (ii) provide the learner with some of the underpinning knowledge or understanding associated with a specific set of occupations, but not offer full workplace competence (e.g. some VRQs, where the relationship with NOS is looser, or there is a relationship with a number of sets of NOS)
- (iii) offer learning in a subset of skills and knowledge relevant to a particular specialisation within an occupation or set of occupations, e.g. for top-up or to refresh skills, for CPD or extension purposes
- (iv) offer a range of sector-related knowledge, skills and capabilities as a pre-entry qualification for preparation for employability in the sector."