

## Toward an Awards Qualifications Framework for the Health Sector

### **Skills for Health Learning Design Principles**

#### ***Underpinning the UK Vocational Qualification Reform Programme & SfH Higher Education Strategy proposals***

#### **Background**

Skills for Health are working towards the development and presentation of a National Occupational Standards (NOS) awards and qualifications framework for the health sector. The incremental creation and maintenance of a complex and rapidly changing range of accredited awards and qualifications which are underpinned and mapped to National Workforce Competences (NWC) or National Occupational Standards (NOS) is ambitious. Many developments are underway to help realise this, for example current work across the UK to both create and reform the awarding of credit for learning achieved. A priority for current developments is a commitment to structuring the design of education and training provision to provide increased 'bite sized' learning, greater flexibility in design and progression routes, flexibility and transferability of competence.

Currently qualifications and awards are the primary 'currency' for the measurement of skills, knowledge and or professional standards across the sector. The term 'recognition and reward of learning' is used throughout this paper to define the range of packages of learning, modules, units, awards and qualifications. It is felt to be an important message that the term 'qualifications' does not alone adequately portray the future educational and training design structures or 'currency' that will be needed to meet the needs of the health sector. Emergent priorities together with the need for workforce redesign to widen access and progression routes both horizontally and vertically all magnify the need for new ways of flexibly providing learning and development that meet multiple priorities and expectations.

This paper presents Skills for Health's learning design principles which have been designed to ensure that the creation of future awards, qualifications and other ways of recognising achievement are undertaken in a way that ensures a cohesive approach to the incremental building of a health sector recognition and reward of learning framework. The use of the learning design principles outlined in this document will collectively 'future proof' or ensure that ongoing developments provide the 'packages' of learning and skills, design structures, flexibility, transferability, progression routes and the over all 'fitness for purpose' for the developing recognition and reward of learning framework.

## **Recognition and Reward of Learning Framework - design principles**

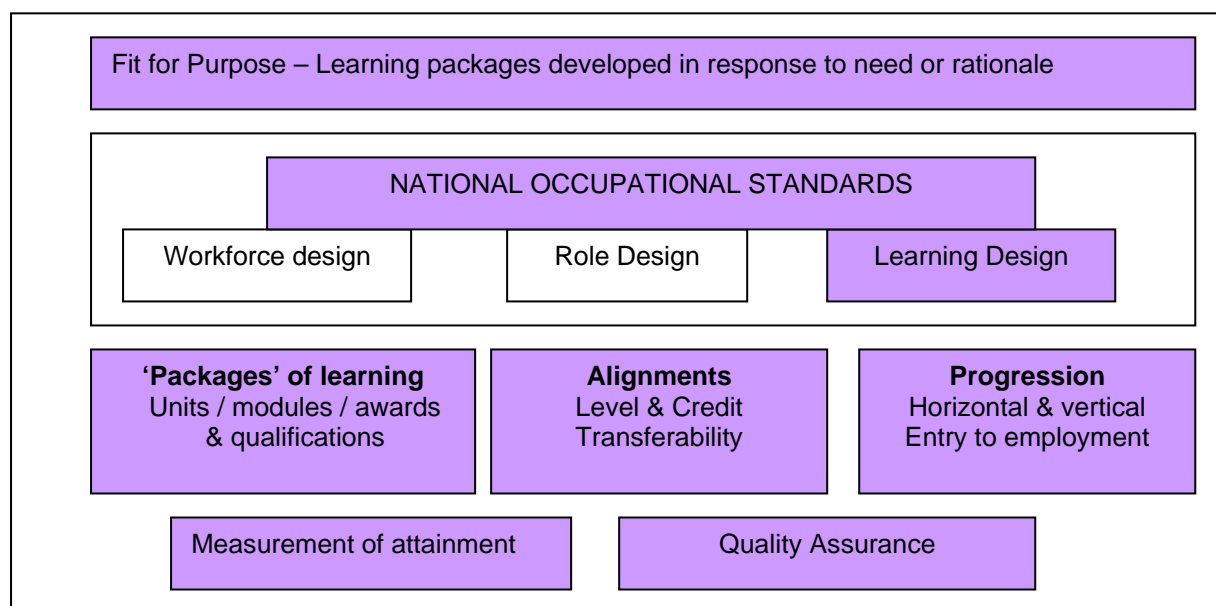
All health related units, modules, awards and qualifications developed with use of the following design principles:-

- Recognition and reward of all learning developed in response to robust intelligence on requirement or rationale
- Flexible and constantly developing units / modules of learning which both stand alone and enable defined packages of learning which are underpinned and mapped by the use of National Workforce Competences.
- A structure that ensures alignments with UK and European educational level descriptors (see appendix 1), Career Frameworks, The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) and country specific level and credit frameworks.
- Packages or units of learning which meet the needs of the employer, learner, education or training provider, professional bodies and regulators from use of 'rules of combination' in construction of awards and qualifications.
- A structure that facilitates and promotes the principles of skills escalation by the provision of horizontal and vertical progression routes which also provide the opportunity to study a breadth and/or depth of knowledge and skill as required.
- The reward and recognition of different types of learning (formal, work based, experiential, informal and theoretical)
- Reliable and valid quality assured assessment of learning and flexible continued learning development.

It is recognised that the principles outlined are closely aligned to good practice and standards in learning design adopted by our multiple learning provision partners. We see this as offering the Skills for Health design principles validity and reliability.

Figure 2 (on next page) illustrates the Skills for Health reward and recognition of learning design principles. The principles require both context in application and country specific detail for interpretation and further exploration in use. The purpose of presenting the principles is to inform and offer the parameters of each of these identified broad and often complex considerations for developing NWC based training and education.

**Figure 2 Skills for Health Learning design principles**



*Notes – Brief definitions of each learning design principle to indicate the parameters and complexities of each – not designed to be an exhaustive definition of each.*

1. **Fitness for purpose:** Clearly identified need and or rationale for the development of packages of learning. This will be closely aligned to the emergent Sector Skills Agreements and labour market intelligence to inform on requirements / priorities etc
2. **NWC / NOS based –** Close alignment with NOS based workforce and role design and other definitions of proficiency / performance and educational requirements. The use of NWC /NOS to underpin and inform curriculum / training development and learning outcomes and mapping to offer transferability of functional competence.
3. **Packages of learning –** To capture unitization or modularisation in award and qualification design, 'stand alone' units of learning and new ways of recognising achievement. Encompasses design to provide flexible routes / progression, transferability and blended learning approaches.
4. **Alignments –** Recognition driven by use of educational level descriptors, country specific level and credit frameworks, Career Frameworks, The NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) – Multiple requirements regarding alignments to frameworks to ensure recognition / fitness for role / progression routes and the transferability of competence and wider learning.
5. **Progression –** The importance of promoting horizontal and vertical progression and the need for breadth and or depth in learning design and provision – responsiveness to workforce design and role needs, skills escalation, widening entry and participation, career development etc
6. **Measurement of attainment –** To include guidance on assessment of competence in practice. From full accreditation / validation of learning to other assessment / accreditation standards that meet local / country requirements. Measurement of attainment ranging from recognition for the learner for locally developed and provided learning to the requirements of national statutory regulation and or professional standards for practice.
7. **Quality –** From Quality Assurance (QA) of Higher Education, Endorsement of vocational qualifications by Skills for Health, further developments in kite marking of awards and qualifications such as the Foundation degree and other work in progress to recognise and quality assure learning to meet local / country requirements and QA standards.

## Appendix 1 Educational Level Descriptors

National Qualifications Framework (NQF) England, Wales and Northern Ireland <i>Under review</i>	Credit and qualifications Framework Wales (CQFW)	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)	England & Northern Ireland Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Exemplars of Awards and Qualifications Across the UK	European Qualifications Framework (EQF)  DRAFT
8	8	12	Doctorate	Doctorate	8
7	7	11	Masters	Masters & (S)NVQs	7
6	6	10	Honours	Advanced Higher	6
5	5	9	Intermediate	HND / Degree	5
4	4	8	Certificate	Diploma	4
3	3	7		Foundation Degree	3
2	2	6		SVQ /NVQ /VQ	2
1	1	5		Apprenticeships	1
Entry	Entry	4		Learning pathways	
		3		Access / BACC	
		2			
		1			
		ACCESS			