



# FAQs on the QCF

## 1) What is the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)?

The QCF will be replacing the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which is likely to close for accreditations at the end of 2010.

The QCF is the Governments' new framework for recognising vocational achievement through the award of credit for units and qualifications across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It aims to provide more flexible qualification routes, enabling progression to be achieved in small steps. Learners will be able to transfer some of their credit (through units) across levels and qualifications avoiding repetition of learning.

## 2) What will the new QCF qualifications be called?

The new qualifications will be called Award, Certificate or Diploma. The names indicate the relative size of qualification in terms of time required to complete them. The names do not link to the difficulty involved which is indicated only by the level of the qualification/unit.

Award – 1-12 credit qualifications  
Certificate – 13-36 credit qualifications  
Diploma – 37+ credit qualifications

## 3) How is the ISMM helping centres to start offering QCF qualifications?

Through a tutor conference; website updates at [www.ismm/education.co.uk](http://www.ismm/education.co.uk), email support at [education@ismm.co.uk](mailto:education@ismm.co.uk), email updates, and head office support via 01582 843260.

## 4) Are there already qualifications on the QCF?

Yes. A number of awarding bodies took part in a two-year trial prior to the QCF officially opening in 2008. We are currently re-developing our NQF qualifications for the QCF, by working with employers and teaching centres. We plan to have ISMM qualifications on the QCF by September 2010.

## 5) Will there be any change to the existing ISMM qualifications I currently offer?

The content of the new qualifications will be similar to the existing ones. Given that we have to use a standard template to write the units, the units will look different in layout.

The naming of qualifications and units will be much more consistent across awarding organisations under the QCF, bringing greater clarity to learners and employers regarding what is involved in completing the qualification.

## **6) What does Credit mean?**

Credit is achieved when a unit is completed. The credit value is a measure of the notional learning time it would take the average learner to complete all the learning outcomes of the unit, with one credit being equal to 10 hours. Notional learning time includes contact time, directed self-study and time to complete any assessments. Many units will still include guided learning hours (ie contact time and directed study). There is no requirement at this time to evidence the notional hours in credit for funding purposes.

## **7) What benefits does the QCF offer?**

### **Flexibility**

Learners can choose to study at a pace, place and time that suit their individual circumstances: they will be able to bank units towards a qualification as they complete them.

### **Progression**

More flexible routes to gaining full qualifications, enabling learners to make progress in smaller steps.

### **More choice**

Units will be developed according to sector requirements so units will be responsive to future employer requirements.

### **Transparency**

Learners and employers will be able to glean consistent information from the name of the qualifications, as all vocational qualifications will use the same naming system.

## **8) How can I find out more about my qualifications as they are re-developed for the QCF?**

We will invite you to our annual tutor conference and also update our website regularly. We will email you to advise you of developments in our qualifications.

## **9) Will the level 2 and 3 QCF Awards be used as a Technical Certificate in the Apprenticeship?**

We will apply for them to be used as a Technical Certificate in the same way that the current level 2 and 3 Awards can be used.

## **10) What is a ULN and what is it used for?**

The Unique Learner Number (ULN) is the new identifier which will be allocated to every person undertaking regulated education and training. The 10-digit identifier remains with them for life and will not be recycled. Centres will need to register with the MIAP's Learner Registration Service (LRS) to obtain ULNs for their learners. Providers will then be required to submit ULNs to their awarding organisation on registration in order for them to populate learner records with QCF achievements.

## **11) How do QCF units combine to make a qualification?**

The list of units contributing to a qualification is set out in the 'rules of combination'. The QCF offers the opportunity for more flexibility in what can go into these rules but it is not a 'pick and mix'. To ensure the rules of combination meet the needs of the sales industry, they can only go on to the QCF when approved by the relevant SSC/SSB or UKCES.

The rules state the combination of mandatory and/or optional credit. Credit can come from more than one level, but more than 50% of the credit must be at the level of the qualification. Some qualifications will still require 100% at that level.

## **12) How will QCF qualifications be publicly funded?**

We do not expect any major changes to public funding, with regard to the introduction of the QCF, until full implementation in 2010/2011. In the meantime, the LSC will be funding a mixed economy of QCF and NQF provision, placing increasing emphasis on the delivery and gradual shift to QCF provision as it becomes available.