



>LSC

Leading learning and skills

Qualifications and  
Credit Framework  
Policy Update:  
**Issue 4.1**

February 2010

This document is of interest to LSC colleagues and external stakeholders, in particular learning providers.

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## Introduction

1. This Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Policy Update is the fourth in a series of regular communications from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) which highlight key areas of work and progress with regard to LSC's remit to implement the QCF across the post-19 further education and skills system. These updates also encompass appropriate aspects of wider Vocational Qualification (VQ) Reform. In addition, the updates contain information on progress, ongoing development and implementation of the QCF Service Layer which, along with policy and business change work, constitutes the programme of work of LSC to deliver VQ Reform and the QCF.
2. This update is a revised version of Issue 4, which was published in December 2009. It follows that published in June 2009 (Issue 3). It provides key information for LSC staff and external stakeholders, particularly learning providers and awarding organisations (AOs). The document is concerned with progress towards QCF implementation across publicly funded post 19 learning and skills provision in England. The next update is planned for April 2010.
3. As a result of Machinery of Government changes, LSC work on Vocational Qualification Reform and QCF implementation will be taken forward by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) once it is established on 1 April 2010. The SFA Delivery Plan, due to be published in a first draft in February 2010, will include a further update on VQ Reform and QCF implementation, including dissemination of the process for confirming funding for vocational qualifications. A further and final iteration of the SFA Delivery Plan will be published in June 2010. As the SFA takes forward QCF implementation, a list of those QCF qualifications which have been confirmed for public funding for post 19 learners will be published on-line at: <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvqrp/support/>, and updated on an ongoing basis in advance of the SFA establishment on 1 April 2010. From 1 April the list will continue to be updated, but it will become the responsibility of the SFA as part of the funding approval process.
4. Background information on the QCF and wider VQ Reform can be found on LSC's web pages: <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvqrp/>.

## Summary of Key Messages

### What is the QCF Offer?

5. **Priorities:** In future, public funding will be targeted on those vocational qualifications/units in the QCF, that Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) Standard Setting Bodies (SSBs) and Sector Bodies (SBs) have advised should be funded, and that are in line with priorities identified by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UK CES) and Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). The Skills Investment Strategy 2010-11<sup>1</sup> (November 2009) identifies the targets and aspirations for the coming delivery year, and the SFA will need to ensure that the types and volumes of qualifications which sector organisations identify for public funding are aligned to these. This will continue to mean a strong focus on target-bearing (full) Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in both Adult Learner Responsive provision and Train to Gain. In 2010 UK CES will publish its first National Strategic Skills Audit, and this will be critical going forward in shaping the QCF offer.

### How will QCF qualifications be identified for public funding?

6. **Remit of SFA:** From April 2010, SFA will be responsible for confirming provision for public funding for post 19 learners in England. In the transition to the QCF, vocational qualifications will be identified through working with sector organisations as sector qualification strategies are completed and action plans identify qualifications that SSCs, SSBs and SBs advise SFA should be publicly funded. The intention is to better align the identification of QCF vocational qualifications for public funding with the Sector Skills Council Approval process. LSC will be discussing with the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils and with the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) and the Joint Council for General Qualifications (JCQ) how to achieve this alignment and over what timescale. As part of

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<sup>1</sup> For further information please see: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/publications/Skills-Investment-Strategy.pdf>

the overall process of confirming QCF vocational qualifications for public funding, LSC/SFA also wishes to use Ofqual qualification purposes as a guide to the expected outcomes of qualifications across Adult Learner Responsive, Train to Gain and other programmes.<sup>2</sup> The potential role of purpose indicators in the SFA's funding approval process will be confirmed and disseminated during March 2010.

### The balance of the offer

7. **Qualifications and units:** The QCF offer will focus on vocational qualifications confirmed for public funding, along with a unit offer across some programmes within clear criteria. For 2010/11, the Train to Gain offer will include QCF vocational qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3 which have been confirmed as target bearing, along with QCF vocational qualifications at Level 1 and Level 4. The Adult Learner Responsive offer will include QCF vocational qualifications at Level 2 and 3 which have been confirmed as target bearing, along with QCF vocational qualifications at Level 4. Entry level qualifications and Level 1 vocational qualifications will also be offered as part of the Foundation Learning curriculum. Unit funding trials will continue in Adult Learner Responsive and will also be extended to the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS).
8. **Target-bearing (full) Level 2 and 3:** For 2010/11, LSC has been working with SSCs, SSBs and SBs to confirm which existing QCF vocational qualifications should be identified as target-bearing (full) Level 2 and Level 3. The first of these qualifications are included in the developing on-line list at <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvqrp/support/>.

### Timescale for transition

9. **Focusing of funding on QCF provision:** LSC has stated that it is the intention to focus funding on vocational qualifications in the QCF from

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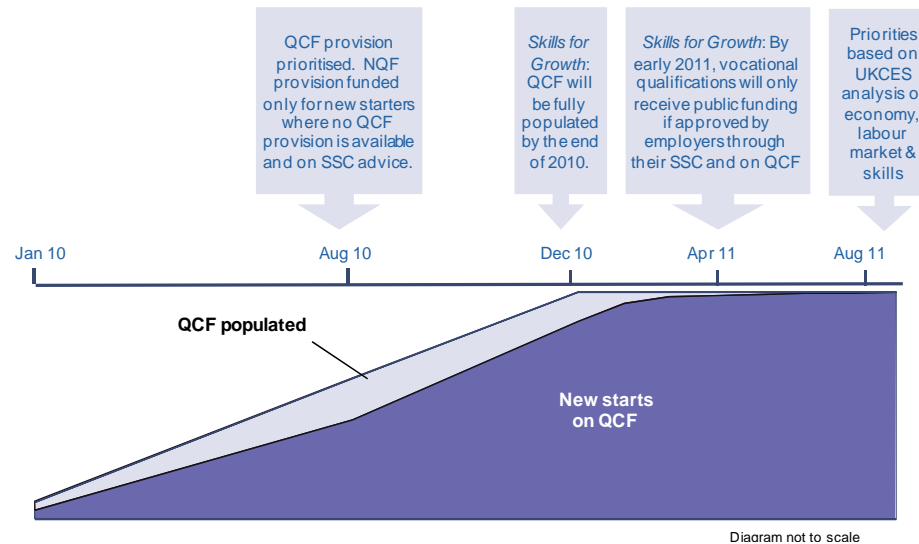
<sup>2</sup> *Identifying purposes for qualifications in the Qualifications and Credit Framework - Testing and trialling* (February 2009) can be found at <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/2126.aspx>.

## Qualifications and Credit Framework

August 2010. LSC has been working closely with sector organisations to monitor the rate of transition of qualifications from the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to the QCF. UKCES estimates that population of the QCF will be 80% complete by September 2010. In January 2010 LSC has met with all sector organisations to review readiness for the QCF in the context of publicly funded qualifications. Given that the UKCES has identified December 2010 for the completion of transition to the QCF for vocational qualifications, LSC will continue to seek to focus funding on QCF vocational qualifications from August 2010, but recognises that transition will not be fully complete. Therefore, some NQF provision will continue to be funded, particularly where QCF provision does not exist (for a limited period and on SSC, SSB or SB advice), or where there are implications resulting from providers having to deliver a significantly new qualification. However, it remains the case that providers are expected to begin to deliver QCF qualifications, in preference to predecessor qualifications, as soon as they become available. By early 2011, as stated in *Skills for Growth*, no vocational qualification will receive public funding unless it has been approved by employers through their Sector Skills Council and is on the QCF. More detail on the timetable for managing the transition from the NQF to the QCF will be disseminated in March 2010.

10. This Policy Update is concerned with the transition of qualifications to the QCF. Provision such as Skills for Life, Functional Skills and Access to Higher Education is not within the scope of this document, or of current implementation of the QCF. LSC has already indicated a clear and ongoing commitment to supporting such provision.

**Diagram 1: Timeline for focusing funding on VQs in the QCF**



### How will the offer be funded and managed?

11. **2010/11:** In the short term no significant changes are required to the current funding methodology, which is already capable of funding both units and qualifications. Minor changes may be made to allow it to work better in the context of a growing QCF offer (for example, based on evidence emerging through the unit funding trials and linked to how a short programme in the context of the QCF can be defined). Performance and commissioning arrangements will also be largely unaffected for 2010/11, although SFA will be starting to develop a credit success rate to sit alongside the qualification success rate.
12. **2012/13:** In the longer term it is the aspiration to use credit as a consistent metric across entitlement, performance, commissioning and funding, in order to realise the full benefits and flexibilities of the QCF. This will require more far-reaching changes, which should be implemented incrementally between 2011/12 and 2012/13.

## **1. Policy**

### **National Skills Strategy *Skills for Growth* and Skills Investment Strategy**

13. In November 2009, Government published the National Skills Strategy *Skills for Growth* which sets out the national skills priorities. This Strategy emphasises a requirement to make access to skills and training simpler and for skills provision to respond to learner and employer demand. This means ensuring that the skills system is both easier to understand and flexible, with new possibilities to mix work and learning. It will also mean that employers will be able to influence content and delivery of skills provision.
14. The National Skills Strategy commits to address employers' concerns that it can take too long to develop a new qualification or a new Apprenticeship framework. Government will undertake collaborative work with UKCES, Sector Skills Councils, awarding organisations and Ofqual to reduce development times to an average of six months and maximum of twelve months. SFA will need to ensure that the new arrangements for confirming public funding for vocational qualifications in the QCF support this commitment to manage down time from qualification development to delivery. UKCES has a role in ensuring that Sector Skills Councils, through their business plans, make public the development times for qualifications as they are released. SFA will disseminate its anticipated times for confirmation of approval for public funding in March 2010.
15. The National Skills Strategy identifies that, by early 2011, no qualification will receive public funding that has not been approved by employers through their Sector Skills Council. The work being undertaken to align public funding to the QCF in support of the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform agenda is outlined in Chapter 2 of this Policy Update.
16. Also published in November 2009 was the Skills Investment Strategy for 2010-11. The Skills Investment Strategy states that SFA will publish an

annual list of vocational qualifications which will be in receipt of public funding. This list, drawn up on the advice of SSCs, must contain qualifications that confer the skills and knowledge required for employment now, and the transferable skills that everyone will need in their future careers. The list will contain qualifications identified as target bearing (full) at Level 2 and Level 3. The Skills Investment Strategy indicates that target bearing Level 2 qualifications will, in future, be expected to fall within the Certificate or Diploma band of the QCF and target bearing Level 3 qualifications will fall within the Diploma band. Although it is the expectation that by August 2011 all SSCs, SSBs and SBs will be identifying target-bearing (full) qualifications within these band parameters, LSC/SFA would like to apply these band parameters sooner, particularly in the context of Adult Learner Responsive provision. The Skills Investment Strategy also identifies the continuing LSC/SFA work on establishing a Credit Success Rate as a critical part of delivering the full flexibilities of the QCF.

## Qualifications and Credit Framework

### Vocational Qualifications and Sector Qualifications Reform

17. In accordance with LSC's 2009/10 Annual Statement of Priorities, LSC has committed to aligning public funding with vocational qualifications approved by SSCs, SSBs and SBs and identified by them for public funding. This takes forward the recommendation in the Leitch Implementation Plan for England and is integral to the Government's longer-term vision for increasing the skills of the workforce, to make the UK a world leader on skills. From April 2010 onwards, employers (through their SSCs/SBs/SSBs) will have a greater role to play in determining which vocational qualifications should receive public funding. Their role will be twofold; firstly, in their Sector Qualifications Strategies (SQS) and Action Plans, in conjunction with AOs, to meet learner and employer needs. Secondly, to recommend for funding vocational qualifications that are in line with SQS Action Plans and identified priorities.
18. LSC is already implementing the above through the identification by sector organisations of vocational qualifications for public funding and the incremental withdrawal of public funding from qualifications that employers, through sector organisations, do not support. The identification of target-bearing (full) Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in the QCF is a part of this process and has focused initially on identifying appropriate existing QCF qualifications which can be funded through Train to Gain and Adult Learner Responsive provision. LSC has commissioned work to monitor and evaluate the interim definitions for the target-bearing (full) Level 2 and Level 3. This will include an assessment of the implications of moving to the band widths for target-bearing qualifications identified in the National Skills Strategy before August 2011.
19. By August 2010 SFA will have taken some important steps to ensuring that existing systems and processes can better support both the policy imperatives outlined above, and the ongoing implementation of the QCF. Initially this will consist of focused tactical changes to some aspects of existing business systems and processes to improve speed to market

from qualification accreditation to provider delivery. Key steps to be taken by August 2010 include a new process for setting out what is approved for funding, prioritisation of funding of QCF units and qualifications, the cessation of funding of NQF qualifications in some programmes, the continuation of unit funding trials and new definitions of target-bearing qualifications. However for 2010/11, there will be no significant changes to the funding methodology as it will already support the funding of qualifications, units and collective programmes.

20. Currently LSC is aware that there are issues surrounding the timeliness of loading information onto the Learning Aims Database (LAD). The Data Service and LSC are working closely together to reduce this delay and the Data Service has initiated an end-to-end review of the process. Going forward, LSC and Data Service have agreed a plan of work focusing initially on business process with a series of systems upgrades to follow. By August 2011, it is anticipated that systems will be in place in order to implement key changes to funding needed for 2012 to support the QCF. In the interim, as indicated above, LSC and Data Service are working to significantly manage down delay.

### Flexible delivery

21. SFA will seek to encourage more flexible delivery of qualifications; therefore unit funding trials will proceed across the Adult Learner Responsive offer and be extended in 2010/11 to OLASS. Over the next twelve months, LSC/SFA will look at what changes may be needed to realise the flexibilities of the QCF, particularly for target-bearing (full) Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications. The focus will remain on qualifications, but work will need to address how providers can deliver qualification outcomes more flexibly and what that may mean for areas such as the funding formula and performance measures. Over the longer term, SFA has already indicated that, by 2012/13 it intends to align funding to credit, and part of this will be the introduction of a Credit Success Rate, and associated changes to some business processes to increase system flexibility. This Policy Update outlines work being undertaken by LSC in these areas.

## Qualifications and Credit Framework

22. Shared units are one of the key components to ensuring the kind of flexibility necessary to deliver the benefits of credit accumulation and transfer in the QCF. Shared units are available to all awarding organisations to award credit, while restricted units are only available to a specified awarding organisation. At the moment LSC will fund both types of units in order to support the initial growth of the QCF. However, from August 2010, SFA wishes to begin to move towards focusing funding on qualifications predominantly built from shared units on the basis that ongoing funding of restricted units does not represent prudent use of public funds. SFA will work with SSCs, SSBs, SBs and awarding organisations to identify how best to manage this.

## 2. Funding, Performance and Commissioning

23. As part of the Vocational Qualification Reform Programme, LSC was remitted to put in place funding, performance and commissioning arrangements to support the delivery of the QCF across England. Operationally LSC is aiming for a coherent framework that supports QCF flexibilities and has sufficient drivers and checks to deliver big outcomes – an operational framework capable of commissioning and funding credit and units as appropriate but retaining a focus on qualifications, progression and achievement of the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets.
24. LSC/SFA will be implementing operational and policy changes to maximise the opportunities afforded by the QCF. It should be noted that few or no changes are required in order to fund units or QCF qualifications per se, as this is already achievable within the current methodology. For unit-by-unit delivery (modularised delivery) it is performance measures which will need to be addressed over time to better support flexibility. Overall, the changes will aim to align funding, performance and commissioning arrangements with the QCF such that the correct incentives are created and the full flexibilities of the QCF can be used.
25. As already indicated, LSC anticipates that changes will be implemented incrementally. During 2010/11 and 2011/12 the QCF will be fully populated and become a fully developed inclusive framework, with increasing volumes of learners achieving qualifications through credit accumulation and transfer. During this time LSC/SFA will start to put in place the appropriate public funding processes and drivers to stimulate credit accumulation and transfer in time for the full strategic vision to be achieved by 2012/13. There will be a rationalisation and clear focus of public funding on those QCF units and qualifications that make a

## Qualifications and Credit Framework

difference to employability prospects and productivity in the workplace, through the new processes for approval of funding.

### Funding

#### Focussing of funding on QCF provision


26. LSC has stated that it is the intention to focus funding on vocational qualifications in the QCF from August 2010. LSC has been working closely with sector organisations to monitor the rate of transition of qualifications from the NQF to the QCF. UKCES estimates that population of the QCF will be 100% complete by December 2010 (this refers to all QCF qualifications, both those which may be publicly funded and those which may be funded through other means). In January 2010 LSC has met with all sector organisations to review the readiness for the QCF, particularly in the context of confirming the pace of transition of critical publicly funded qualifications.
27. Given that the UKCES has identified December 2010 for the completion of transition to the QCF, LSC will continue to focus funding on QCF provision from August 2010 across all publicly funded programmes, but recognises that transition may not be fully complete for some qualifications. By early 2011, as stated in *Skills for Growth*, no qualification will receive public funding that has not been approved by employers through their Sector Skills Council. In March LSC will disseminate further details on how the transition to funding only QCF qualifications by early 2011 will be managed.
28. The SFA recognises that in focussing funding on the QCF from August 2010, the QCF itself may be 80% populated at that time, and that some critical vocational NQF qualifications which are currently publicly funded may not have transitioned to the QCF by August, or are at the stage of only just entering the QCF. Therefore some NQF vocational qualifications may 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 remains the expectation that providers will begin to deliver QCF qualifications in preference to NQF qualifications as soon as they become available. Further details of how the LSC will manage this transition in the context of publicly funded qualifications will be disseminated in March 2010.
29. Ofqual has clarified the position for qualifications with QCF accreditation that are due to expire during the transition period. All awarding bodies can apply to extend qualifications up to August 2010. However, only those with full QCF recognition can extend beyond that point, or submit new units/qualifications for accreditation. Extensions will not be automatically granted, and the awarding organisation will formally have to apply for extension. Where qualification accreditation is extended in this way, public funding will still be dependant upon SSC, SSB and SB advice.
30. Providers have already started delivering QCF provision where appropriate and LSC has started to identify QCF as the provision of choice in Train to Gain, Employment-focused Training, the OLASS and Adult Learner Responsive provision. Diagram 2 identifies the expected transition period in moving from a focus on funding QCF provision across each delivery programme to funding only vocational qualifications on the QCF.

#### **Diagram 2: Transition to SFA only funding vocational qualifications on the QCF by delivery programme**

- Key:**
- ▲ QCF prioritised for funding
  - Only QCF funded where available
  - ✓ Only QCF funded

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	Jan-Jun 2010	Jul-Dec 2010	Jan-Jun 2011
Train to Gain	▲	●	✓
Adult Learner Responsive	▲	●	✓
OLASS	▲	●	✓
Employment focused Training	▲	●	✓
Apprenticeships		●	✓

  
 April 2010    Aug 2010    Early 2011

### Confirmation of Full (target-bearing) Level 2 and 3 Qualifications in the QCF

31. As outlined in Chapter 1, SSCs, SSBs and SBs have a key role in identifying target-bearing (full) vocational qualifications in the QCF at Level 2 and Level 3. LSC will use the SQS Action Plans to support the process of confirming qualifications for public funding and is seeking to align the process of seeking SSC advice on public funding with the SSC Approvals process.
32. More information on the SSC Approvals Process can be found at <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/24918.aspx>.
33. This process of confirming which existing QCF qualifications should be prioritised for public funding has commenced. This initially focused on Train to Gain (starting with Level 2). SSCs, SSBs and SBs were asked to review existing QCF qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 against the credit values they had identified as attesting to occupational competence in

their sectors and sub-sectors. A similar process is now nearing completion to arrive at a list of list of target-bearing qualifications for Adult Learner Responsive provision. For ALR, LSC has asked SSCs, SSBs and SBs to look at purpose identifiers as well as work within the Certificate or Diploma band for Level 2, and the Diploma band for Level 3.

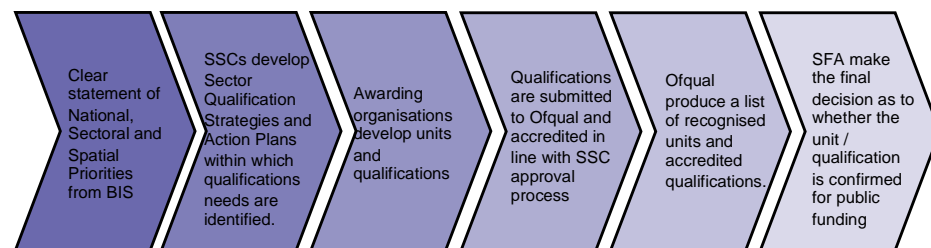
34. The first target-bearing (full) Level 2 and 3 qualifications confirmed for funding in Train to Gain and Adult Learner Responsive provision are now listed on-line, and the list is being added to on a regular basis in advance of August 2010. The developing list is available at <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvqrp/support/>. These qualifications are also uploaded onto the LAD.
35. In recognition of the transitional nature of the interim definition, LSC has allowed a number of qualifications identified as target bearing by sector organisations, which did not fully match the new definition, to be approved for funding for an interim period until March 2010. This will allow the time for awarding organisations to redevelop the qualification in liaison with their sector organisation to meet the required parameters, including taking account of the August 2011 deadline for all target-bearing (full) qualifications to fit within Certificate or Diploma (Level 2) or Diploma (Level 3) bands, or earlier in the context of Adult Learner Responsive provision only.
36. LSC's expectation is that providers should start delivering the new target-bearing (full) Level 2 and full Level 3 qualifications accredited onto the QCF as they become available, where they are replacing existing NQF qualifications. LSC plans to make ineligible for funding the NQF predecessor qualifications when new QCF qualifications are available. This will be the case even where the NQF qualification is still within its accreditation date.

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### SFA Funding Approvals Process

37. SFA's process for approving new units/qualifications for funding from 2010/11 onwards is currently being finalised and will shortly be published. The process will replace current 'Section 97' arrangements and will be focused on sector organisations advising SFA on which vocational qualifications should be in receipt of public funding. The process will take effect from 1 April 2010, when SFA assumes responsibility for approving qualifications for public funding.
38. Diagram 3 shows how the role of SFA fits into the proposed future end-to-end funding approvals process and highlights the roles of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), Ofqual, SSCs, SBs, SSBs and awarding organisations.

**Diagram 3: Proposed Future End-to-End Funding Approvals Process**



39. LSC/SFA intends to work with the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) and the Joint Council for General Qualifications (JCQ) to better align both the identification and confirmation of public funding with the SSC Approvals process.

### Funding methodology

40. By 2012/13, it is envisaged that a new articulation of learner entitlement and a greater flexibility in how learning is structured will present an opportunity to support providers through a potentially different funding methodology, based on credit. The use of the credit as a consistent metric across entitlement, performance, commissioning and funding will enable a more transparent operational framework that is able to support policy intent. This transparency will support the choices that learners and employers make for their learning with appropriate drivers and checks, to balance the risk of some learners taking longer to achieve than others, and others taking a shorter time to achieve their expressed learning aim.
41. However, LSC/SFA recognises that credit is still a relatively new concept and sufficient time needs to be allowed to build trust in the consistent application of credit across the QCF and the robust regulation of credit by Ofqual. LSC/SFA also needs to build up the evidence base linking credits to the underlying costs and activity associated with their delivery. LSC/SFA believes that by 2012/13 there should be a consistent and clearer relationship between provider input and learner output (learning hours and learning output) to enable funding to be aligned to credit.
42. For 2010/11, no significant changes to the current funding methodology are expected, as the existing methodology will remain based on activity and cost and can already support the funding of qualifications, units and collective programmes. This will ensure stability as SFA undertakes further work on moving towards the closer alignment of funding and credit identified above. SFA will continue to focus on the achievement of target-bearing (full) qualifications, but will need to better support enhanced flexibility in terms of how learners may complete and achieve those qualifications, for instance through smaller episodes of learning. Some improvements may be implemented for the 2010/11 funding method, including amendments to short programme modifier for units taken as stand alone rather than as part of a qualification.
43. Key issues that remain in the interim period include:

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- Firstly, there is at present insufficient evidence linking activity input to credit (achievement). Work will be undertaken as to how credit relates to activity levels. As a transitional measure, options are also being explored for more consistent ways of relating activity to funding between the programmes within the existing funding methodology
- Secondly, work will be carried out to consider how to apply the programme weighting factor (pwf) at both the unit and qualification level
- Thirdly, LSC is considering how to continue to support the completion of target-bearing (full) qualifications whilst encouraging greater flexibility through modularised delivery
- Fourthly, SFA will undertake a consultation with the sector to explore how funding may change moving towards 2012/13 in terms of better alignment with credit. Further details on this consultation will be disseminated later in 2010.

### Unit funding trials

44. LSC has been running unit funding trials in ALR and Train to Gain to support the testing of a Credit Success Rate (CSR) measure to track learner progression to qualifications. The trials also test how the technical features of the QCF, in particular the rules of combination and the requirement for a Unique Learner Number (ULN); can be used to ensure providers support learners to progress from units to qualifications.
45. In 2010/11, unit funding trials are being extended in ALR. It is also proposed that unit funding trials be introduced in OLASS from early 2010. The unit funding trials in using SME flexibilities in Train to Gain are being concluded.
46. LSC has commissioned an evaluation of the LSC unit funding trials undertaken since 2008/09. The evaluation will run until the end of March

2010. Limited evidence is available as yet, but some early findings are becoming available. While funding has not been found to constrain take-up with the trial sites, there are concerns around the potential prohibitive costs of unit registration, certification and delivery in the context of current mechanisms for funding and charging for units. However, within employer-responsive models, it has been observed that some employers have welcomed the ability to customise provision by adding individual units to publicly-funded full awards. It is not yet clear if there are similar effects in learner-responsive models.

### Affordability update

47. LSC has been conducting a study into the affordability of the associated costs of implementing and delivering the QCF. This will run until March 2010.
48. Preliminary findings from awarding organisations are as follows:
  - Designing and accrediting QCF qualifications is a significant activity for AOs, and in many cases has required additional resource
  - Few AOs have experienced additional delivery costs associated with supporting learning providers to deliver and assess QCF qualifications. AOs are doing a great deal to reduce their and learning providers' administrative costs, which has included changing assessment processes in the design of QCF qualifications
  - Most AOs do not appear to have made marked changes to their charges in 2009 as a result of development costs. Some state that they intend to absorb such costs, while others are reviewing their charges and anticipate making any changes in 2010 or 2011. A few have revised pricing structures; some, in light of the

## Qualifications and Credit Framework

QCF have introduced lower charges for units and small packages of units

49. Preliminary findings from learning providers are as follows:

- Familiarisation and developing lesson plans and teaching materials have largely been absorbed by existing staff and teaching costs
- Some providers have had to make more substantive changes in some curriculum areas, and incurred some costs around training and cover to enable these to be made. This has tended to be greater for 'early adopter' providers who made the most significant changes to take advantage of the flexibilities of the QCF by offering units, small packages of units and new awards
- Management information systems are being adapted in some learning providers to enable curriculum areas to record unit achievement more systematically
- Most providers have absorbed any added complexity of advising potential learners, although they are not yet making the more complex offers to learners
- In summary, as yet there has been little impact on learning providers' costs. However, this will be kept under review as the scale of introducing QCF qualifications grows into 2010, as understanding of the implications grows and as more providers introduce the QCF flexibilities to their offer.

### Adult Learning Grant

50. The Adult Learning Grant (ALG) is intended to provide low income adults with financial help for learning. It is targeted at adults who are studying

full time (450 guided learning hours over the academic year) for their first full Level 2 or Level 3 qualification, subject to an income assessment.

51. A critical change being recommended for 2010/11 is to allow learners, in exceptional cases, to take longer than two years to complete their first Level 2 or 3 qualification. This is significant as one of the criteria for eligibility to ALG is that a learner must be in full time learning. As a result of the QCF the change effectively allows learners to complete some units on a full time basis and therefore accumulate the associated credit. They can then take a break from their learning (when they would not be eligible for ALG) but on their return they could complete the remainder of the units necessary for their first full Level 2 or 3 qualification and still be entitled to ALG.
52. The full extent and implications of the credit-based approach will not be evident until 2011/12 due to the time lag in the achievement and reporting of qualifications and credits. It has been proposed to change the ALG criteria in two phases: (i) an interim definition in 2010/11 focused on full time and full qualification; and (ii) a final definition from 2011/12, based on further work and evidence from the reforms.
53. An evaluation of the implications of this change (that is, any increase in learner numbers and/or any changes to unit costs throughout the year) is proposed to inform the position for 2011/12.

## Performance

### Credit success rate (CSR)

54. As already indicated, the QCF has the potential to change the mix and balance of provision between units and qualifications. For 2010/11, units, as well as qualifications, will be delivered through ALR, OLASS and Employment-focused Training. LSC/SFA will continue to encourage the completion of qualifications but will also seek to support flexibility in their

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delivery, where appropriate. There is therefore a need for a more holistic performance measure that can capture each provider's performance across the breadth of its provision. The introduction of a credit success rate is one way of supporting measurement of flexible delivery.

55. The intention is to start to develop credit success rates within SFA performance and contract management framework from 2010/11 onwards. Initially, these will be used as underpinning and contextual reports for providers to become familiar with, and for SFA to understand patterns of delivery to agree adoption within the framework for 2012/13 (with parallel running in 2011/12). The pilots will help to ensure that LSC/SFA is clear on how this can best support the flexibilities of the QCF alongside robust management arrangements.
56. By 2012/13, the intention is that credit, as a consistent measure of achievement across all publicly funded skills programmes, will support an outcomes-focused commissioning and performance framework. This in turn will enable flexibility to deliver units and qualifications to meet learner and employer needs within an overall suite of measures. In this respect, it is the intention to seek to support the Credit Success Rate for inclusion within the Framework for Excellence, Ofsted inspection indicators, Minimum Levels of Performance (MLP) calculations, and contract management arrangements. This will give a consistent measurement of success for providers to sit alongside the qualifications success rate measure.
57. Currently the main provider performance measure is the Qualification Success Rate (QSR). This has been included within the performance arrangements for the provision of learning and skills, at provider and national aggregate level, since the inception of LSC.
58. It has been agreed that the QSR be supplemented with two further measures: a unit CSR and a credit-weighted qualification success rate (credit-weighted QSR). The CSR would be calculated in a manner similar to the QSR, comparing the number of credits achieved to the number of enrolments on the unit. It would also replace the current FE

short course QSR, and so fits within the existing QSR structure as a short course. A credit-weighted qualification success rate would be a measure of progression towards a qualification (where a learner enrolls on a qualification and achieves some of the units). The relevant credit-weighted qualification success rate would then be attributed to the provider of those units.

59. It is proposed that the CSR is applied differently across the different delivery programmes to reflect their different objectives, as set out in Table 1 below. CSR is relevant to all programmes except Train to Gain (where the focus is on qualifications). Credit-weighted qualification success rates are relevant to all programmes except Employment-focused Training (which includes short courses, small qualifications and parts of qualifications alongside non-accredited skills development packages).

**Table 1: Objectives of measures by delivery programme**

Delivery programme	Success Measure	Progression Measure
Train to Gain		✓
Adult Learner Responsive	✓	✓
OLASS	✓	✓
Employment-focused Training	✓	
Apprenticeships <i>(subject to confirmation)</i>	✓	✓

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60. By developing a more granular credit success measure and a progression measure, alongside a Qualification Success Measure, LSC/SFA will have at its disposal a comprehensive suite of measures that can be used in an appropriate manner to encourage providers to support increased flexibility of learning – one of the benefits of the QCF for learners.

### Statistical First Release Reporting

61. Initial work has begun on specifying possible changes to the Statistical First Release (SFR) in order to accommodate the QCF. In the short term, the priority is to ensure that QCF provision (i.e. qualifications and units) can successfully be captured within the SFR format. This means being able to count the following achievement and participation:

- Learners participating in and achieving full qualifications (whether 'in one go' or built up in units through rules of combination) within the QCF. This can be subdivided into target-bearing qualifications and other qualifications
- Learners participating in and achieving units within the QCF

62. The main data source for participation and achievement will continue to be the Individualised Learner Record (ILR), in conjunction with the LAD. The conclusion of the work to date has been that each of the measures set out above can be derived from these data sources.

63. In the longer term, new ways of accessing and building up skills may require a new definition for adult skills targets (as indicated in the National Skills Strategy). This will have a more far-reaching impact on the format of the SFR. In addition, changes to performance measures, including the development of a credit success rate and credit-weighted qualification success rate may also be reflected in the SFR.

## Commissioning and Allocations

64. The QCF presents the opportunity to articulate the offer to learners and employers through delivery programmes in terms other than qualifications. Having an offer made up of units and qualifications requires a commissioning process that can support it. For 2010, however, few significant changes are expected. For 2010/11, where units are part of the offer for a programme, LSC/SFA will continue with the approach used in 2009/10 for the unit funding trials. This is essentially a line within the provider allocation setting out an agreed amount to be focused solely on unit delivery to support engagement and progression. It has already been stated that, alongside this, we need to examine how to support modularised delivery.

65. A number of options have been identified for potential future application, and further work needs to be undertaken to identify their relative merits. Options being considered include commissioning based on:

- Learner numbers and cash allocation
- As above but with the addition of the number of unit achievements
- As above but with the addition of the number of learners progressing to a full qualification.

### 3. Business Change in Delivery Programmes

66. LSC has developed, and is working to, a detailed action plan for each of Train to Gain, Adult Learner Responsive provision, the Offender Learning and Skills Service, Employment-focused Training, and Apprenticeships to support the integration of the QCF into the offer for each. These action plans are tailored to support achievement of the following activities for each delivery programme:
- Mapping of current provision and conversion to the QCF
  - Identification of gaps in priority areas and developing QCF provision to address those
  - Alignment of business processes and systems
  - Communications that inform and support individuals working to deliver or enable provision within the programmes, or those with potential to benefit from them.
67. This business change work sits alongside that being done to align funding, performance and commissioning to support QCF implementation through each delivery programme as outlined in Chapter 2. This includes the potential use of primary purpose identifiers in terms of QCF qualifications across SFA delivery programmes.
68. Significant progress has been made in the implementation of the QCF in **Train to Gain**. As outlined in Chapter 2, a list is now available identifying those target-bearing (full) Levels 2 and 3 QCF qualifications which meet the minimum credit values for occupational competence in their area and have been approved to date for funding under Train to Gain. This chapter focuses on recent work undertaken to implement the QCF in Adult Learner Responsive provision, and work now beginning with regard to QCF provision in OLASS, Employment-focused Training and Apprenticeships.

#### Adult Learner Responsive

69. LSC funds Adult Learner Responsive provision to offer demand-led learning and skills development opportunities through Further Education (FE) mainstream funding, which includes Formal First Step learning. Through this offer, it is now expected that providers will start delivering QCF provision where it is appropriate and available. This follows LSC's commitment to prioritise QCF accredited provision for funding over other accredited provision from August 2009.
70. Positioned alongside Adult Learner Responsive provision, and also funded by LSC, are Adult Safeguarded Learning programmes which include Personal and Community Development Learning; Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy; Wider Family Learning; and Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities. These programmes are generally not in scope for the QCF as, for the most part, they do not aim to support achievement of accredited qualifications and units. Government has made a continued commitment to these programmes as vehicles for recognising the importance of learning for its own intrinsic value and particularly learning for cultural, leisure, community development and personal fulfilment purposes.
71. In progressing to full implementation of the QCF in Adult Learner Responsive provision, SFA will fund only accredited provision that is in the QCF. However, it will maintain some funding of non-accredited provision where it supports current stated policy objectives from August 2010. Two such examples of which may be provision for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, and Formal First Step where a short confidence-building episode of learning is deemed to be a necessary precursor to progression. Even for these priority learners, however, providers should first seek to satisfy the identified learning needs from within the QCF, only reverting to non-accredited provision where no suitable QCF provision is available. All non-accredited Adult Learner

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Responsive provision will be reviewed and funding will continue only where it supports stated policy objectives from August 2011.

### OLASS

72. The Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) delivers learning and skills to learners in prisons and offenders supervised by probation in the community to increase each offender's chances of gaining sustainable employment, thus contributing to a reduction in re-offending rates. The OLASS core curriculum in custody has three specific strands:

- Provision of functional skills, where OLASS will use the same qualifications and provision as approved for Adult Learner Responsive
- Vocational skills to equip offenders with appropriate occupational competence for employment within a given sector, aligned with the Train to Gain strategy and qualifications
- Employability skills, incorporating provision that is unique to the OLASS programme.

73. OLASS includes both vocational and non-vocational provision, as well as a mixture of both units and qualifications. It is planned that the vocational provision in the OLASS core curriculum will be built from QCF units and qualifications from August 2010.

74. LSC is proposing to extend unit funding trials to OLASS from early 2010 given:

- The extent to which provision is already delivered in a modularised way
- Offenders have limited access to provision and hence need to use what is on offer in their institution, so picking up units which they can 'bank' and build into a progression pathway is helpful

- It is not always possible to complete a full qualification in custody so being able to undertake units and complete 'on the outside' helps progression
- Many offenders have few formal qualifications and these tend to be lower level, so the 'small steps' approach helps motivation
- Offenders are often moved between institutions so the unit based approach means they are more likely to complete an episode of learning before being moved.

75. The trials would use units that are already in the QCF and be drawn from the vocational strand within the OLASS core curriculum but also cover employability skills. Within those units, LSC will work with sector organisations to identify units to be trialled. The list of units will be disseminated through OLASS provider networks in early 2010. The current OLASS funding methodology will be analysed, and future methodology developed based on learner hours and underpinned by enhanced understanding of delivery costs (including by type of establishment). The trials will involve close working with sector organisations and providers to support ongoing QCF implementation.

76. The current OLASS offer will be mapped to identify non-accredited and NQF provision with a view to establishing priority areas for encouraging conversion to the QCF. This will involve LSC working with SSCs to address QCF provision gaps in established priority areas and with awarding organisations to encourage development of relevant QCF provision.

77. To underpin a coordinated approach to offender management, collaboration is being undertaken with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). OLASS Careers Information and Advice providers will be engaged to ensure integrated support is available to OLASS learners to leverage the opportunities offered by the QCF.

78. The Virtual Campus project is a web based learning and resettlement system for offenders that allows access to resources to assist offenders

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in learning and on their journey to resettlement into the community. The system has recently been piloted in West Midlands and East of England. Planning has now commenced for a national roll-out of the Virtual Campus, including around ways of ensuring that the QCF is integrated in the system. Rollout has been approved in principle by the Ministry of Justice subject to completion of a satisfactory IT security audit.

## Employment-focused Training

79. Employment-focused Training is aimed at helping the unemployed into sustainable employment. Much of the provision in this area comprises job-focused skills training and relevant qualifications and parts of qualifications, alongside non-accredited skills development packages. The provision is organised around the following three customer offers all of which can be supported by the QCF:

- *Employability*, which includes basic skills (i.e. literacy/language, numeracy and generic employability skills). Generic employability qualifications on the QCF have cross-sectoral scope and as such will continue to rely on the approval role of Asset Skills, the lead sector body for both basic and employability skills
- *Pre-Employment Training (PET)* comprises short sharp interventions (up to 8 weeks full-time) for participants who are quite close to the job market and who need to 'brush up', refresh or re-learn skills to become job ready. It will be necessary to develop sector-specific routeways for delivery of this provision, predominantly in less complex occupational fields. SSCs will have a key role in advising and approving units and qualifications for this provision
- *Work-Focused Training* provides a significant skills intervention for those individuals who need to learn new skills or skills at a

higher or different level. This predominantly includes Level 2 and Level 3 units and qualifications, building on elements of generic pre-employment and short-term interventions, using Rules of Combination for competency in more complex occupational fields

80. Employment-focused Training makes use of recognised units and qualifications where appropriate to enhance returns to the labour market and benefit individuals. There is an opportunity to have more content within this offer formally recognised by using QCF units. This would allow learners to benefit from the flexibility of the QCF through the transfer and accumulation of credit from these units should they wish to use them towards a full qualification in the future.
81. In the future SFA will work with key delivery partners to identify the skills and curriculum areas that it deems to be priorities to assist people back into work. This will then be shared with SSCs for them to identify where current provision of an appropriate standard for their sector exists or in the absence of existing provision, to commission the development of appropriate units and qualifications. SSCs will highlight to SFA the units and qualifications they feel fit the requirements for this delivery programme within their sector. SFA will require the relevant SSC, SB or SSB to endorse all units and qualifications where the programme is aimed at securing employment in a specific sector.
82. As part of the action plan for embedding the QCF in the Employment-focused Training offer, LSC will engage with providers, awarding organisations, SSCs, SSBs, SBs, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Job Centre Plus (JCP) to support and integrated approach to helping the unemployed into sustainable employment.

## **Apprenticeships**

83. The Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE) and associated guidance have now been published. This allows Issuing Authorities (SSCs) to begin to work with employers and other partners to develop frameworks that will meet the conditions of a recognised English Apprenticeship framework. The final version of the SASE will be available from October 2010, and from 6th April 2011, there will be no new Apprenticeship starts against frameworks which do not comply with the SASE.
84. The guidance can be found on-line at:  
<http://www.dius.gov.uk/consultations/~media/publications/S/SASE-Consultation-Guidance>
85. Apprenticeship frameworks must consist of a minimum of 37 credits on the QCF, of which at least 10 must be achieved through a competence-based qualification or element of an integrated qualification, which specifically relates to the occupation or job role. There must also be a minimum of 10 credits from a knowledge-based qualification or element of an integrated qualification.
86. The SASE defines the competence element as the practical competencies required for a specific occupation or job role. This may be acquired through a separate 'competence' qualification, or alternatively, units from previously separate qualifications may be combined to create an integrated qualification.
87. Given that the same definition of occupational competence as for other employer responsive provision applies, we would not expect SSCs to need to start 'from scratch' in defining what constitutes competence for an Apprenticeship framework (including defining the credit value).
88. In the main, NAS/SFA would expect the competence element of a SASE-compliant framework to be supplied by a qualification that has previously been confirmed as conferring occupational competence at Level 2 or 3. There may be exceptions in certain instances, however, particularly if an SSC chooses to develop an integrated qualification.
89. NAS/SFA are alert to the fact that this may result in issues regarding size and affordability. In developing their frameworks, SSCs should understand that the overall Apprenticeship programme must remain affordable and able to meet existing targets within the constraints of existing resources.
90. Development work with SSCs for the new SASE requirements is already underway. NAS and LSC QCF and Sectors teams will be working with SSCs to ensure that they are ready for the deadline of 6th April 2011, at which all new starts must be on SASE-compliant frameworks. However, it is expected that SSCs will start work now to redevelop their frameworks in the context of the QCF.
91. Work is also commencing to develop a new funding model, in parallel with the development of new Apprenticeship standards and with the commitment to aligning the funding methodology for all programmes to the QCF. The proposal is to work with a group of SSCs (including representation from the Joint Apprenticeships Unit) as a pilot group, to assist in defining the proposals and understanding the implications.
92. LSC will immediately begin to carry out modelling to assess the likely affordability of the Apprenticeship programme, based on the full Level 2/3 definitions and the SASE. It will be reporting back in good time on any feasibility issues which need to be taken into account.

## 4. Systems and Processes

93. The implementation of the QCF will result in some changes to LSC's business processes and systems relating to funding, performance and commissioning. These changes will be phased in, broadly categorised either as tactical changes (short-term quick wins) or strategic changes (long term). The changes will be quantified, risk assessed and transformed in a controlled way, involving key stakeholders across LSC and the sector:

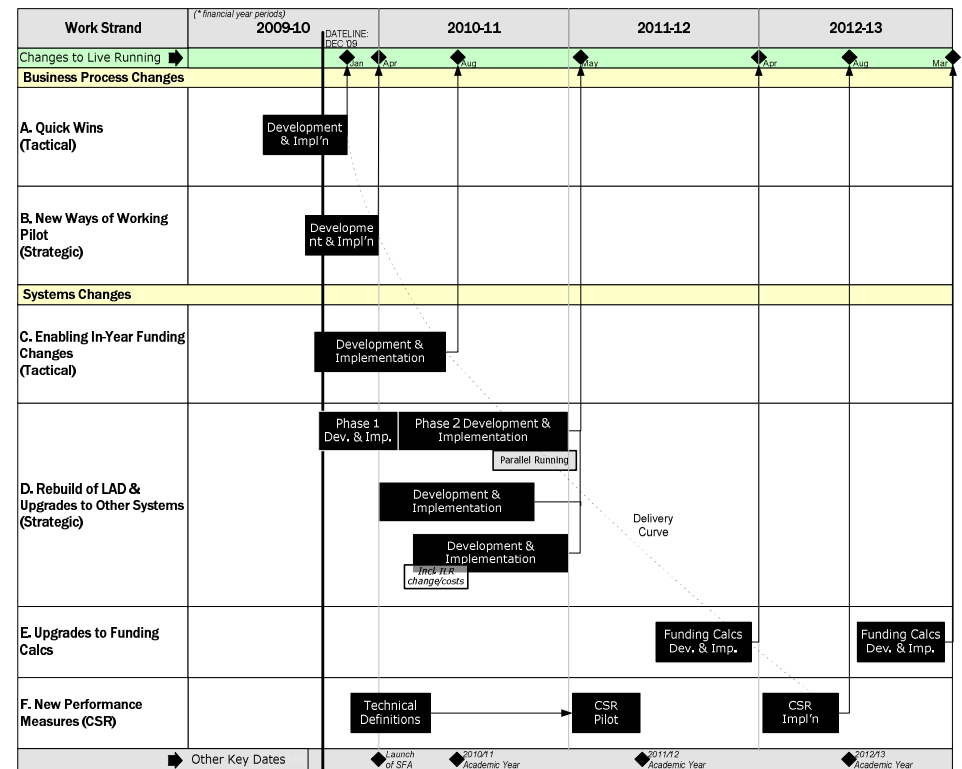
- *Tactical Changes* will be analysed, developed and implemented as part of our business as usual strand of work
- *Strategic Changes* are to be part of a programme of change. It is anticipated that the programme will include all the QCF requirements. Once the funding is agreed, this work will be commissioned

94. The LAD is a key enabler for the success of the QCF implementation strategically and the current operational delivery and usability problems with the LAD will need to be addressed. Proposals to replace the LAD with a user friendly and flexible system have commenced, and all relevant stakeholders will be involved to ensure a system that is fit-for-purpose in the medium to long term. In addition, the end-to-end process from a qualification being accredited to funding information being added and published is time consuming and not transparent. This will also be addressed to ensure a clear and efficient business process fits seamlessly with any new system.

95. Diagram 4 below is an illustration of the delivery timetable for changes to LSC systems and business processes as a result of implementation of the QCF. The 'delivery curve' shows that the approach is to de-risk the transition as much as possible through a phased approach, focusing first on processes, then on systems, and only then moving on to change

methodologies. The diagram is followed by more detail as to the nature of the tactical and strategic changes envisaged.

**Diagram 4: Delivery timetable for systems and process changes**



### Tactical Changes

96. It is recognised that operation of the LAD has run into significant challenges with the implementation of the QCF and is not as responsive

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as is required. Tactical and strategic investment and development is required to improve the service of the LAD and its dependant systems. There are a number of changes that can be implemented in the short-term by August 2010 to start to address this and support the QCF, including:

- upgrading functionality of the LAD to improve productivity, efficiency and ease of use. This will include additional audit fields, new functionality to make in-year changes to eligibility and funding of specific learning aims. (This will also result in changes to other, impacted Data Collection systems).
- streamlining business processes using the existing IT systems
- engaging key stakeholders to analyse the end-to-end processes and with a view to identifying opportunities for improvement, defined in Diagram 4 as B (New Ways of Working Pilot). Phase 1 of the pilot will include implementing a new SFA funding approvals process and best practice in April 2010.

97. By August 2010 LSC will have undertaken some tactical changes to SFA's business systems and processes to improve speed to market from qualification accreditation to provider delivery. This will include changes to the processing in terms of speed to market and efficiencies and a communications brief for all key stakeholders. It will also include shadow arrangements to identify best practice and feed into the strategic analysis work. There will also be internal system changes to existing architecture to provide additional support to the business and stakeholders, including enabling in-year funding changes for new starters.

## Strategic Update

98. By 2012 we will have undertaken strategic changes to SFA's business systems and processes so that we can receive, store and use data at unit, qualifications and framework level more efficiently and utilise rules of combination to reflect the flexibilities of the QCF.

99. In the longer term there will be phased changes to existing systems, including LAD, that will include functionality to:

- create a hierarchical entitlements structure (as well as rules of combination and incentives)
- recognise prior learning
- implement a credit success rate performance measure
- include non-sector specific units and qualifications in the publicly funded offer.

100. Changes to the LAD will be carried out in a phased manner, with parallel running at each stage until the new systems are stable. The Phase 1 database build will commence in 2009/10, with the bulk of the development and implementation work expected to follow in 2010/11.

101. Phase 2 of the New Ways of Working Pilot will define a target operating model that encompasses best practice business processes that link to the new IT systems to be implemented, to provide a more efficient and flexible funding process in the future.

## 5. Progress on the changes being made to support QCF on the Personal Learning Record

### Transition Service

102. Changes are being made to the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) Personal Learning Record to support the additional services around credit accumulation and transfer for the QCF from September 2010. The Transition Service, currently in operation, focuses on providing an optional service for awarding organisations to ensure that there are processes and technology in place to enable the submission of QCF achievement data to the Personal Learning Record from September 2010. Where appropriate, this phase is also supporting credit accumulation.
103. A number of improvements have been made to facilitate achievement data transfer between awarding organisations and the Transition Service Learning Record based on feedback to date. Based on this feedback, Release 3 of the Transition Service went live on 29 September 2009, offering the enhanced functionality around Managing Information across Partners (MIAP)/ULN validation and additional reporting capability. Also, real achievement data from participating awarding organisations has been submitted to test the full functionality of the live system.
104. The QCF Transition Service Release 3 is the last planned release before the changes are made to the Personal Learning Record in September 2010 to support the additional services around credit accumulation and transfer for QCF. All three releases have been supported by a dedicated service management team whose objective is to support awarding organisations and providers that have chosen to participate in the Transition Service.

### Full integration with the Personal Learning Record

105. From September 2010, the changes implemented to the Personal Learning Record will provide enhanced QCF functionality for learners, careers advisers, providers and awarding organisations.
106. The enhancements to this service will focus on the additional functions required to facilitate credit transfer. Additional functionality will include:
- Ability for a learner to manage access to their QCF achievement data by learning providers, careers advisers, awarding organisations, employers and other approved third parties, through a permissions model consistent with a best practice data sharing framework
  - Ability for learners and providers, as well as awarding organisations that choose to use this service, to submit Rules of Combination (RoC) queries and view the combination of credits required for a particular qualification to be awarded
  - Ability to view potential future learning pathways based on what the learner has already achieved by running Routes to Achievement (RtA) queries. This is an optional function of the Personal Learning Record, enabling a learner (or other third party granted delegated access) to explore the ways in which they could transfer their credit achievements towards obtaining a qualification within the QCF
  - Ability for learners to review progress towards a particular qualification
107. LSC is currently holding workshops in England, Wales and Northern Ireland with awarding organisations, a range of learning providers and careers advisers. These workshops will continue until spring 2010 to ensure that stakeholders have enough support and information to use the full functionality in the timescales given, and are able to help inform development of the requirements. The National Learner Panel has also

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been consulted on a number of key issues in respect of the changes to the Personal Learning Record.

108. The LSC QCF Service Desk provides five day a week support for QCF queries. Contact details are:

- Telephone: 0870 2670054 (8.00am-6.00pm weekdays excluding public holidays)
- or email: [qcf servicedesk@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:qcf servicedesk@lsc.gov.uk)

## 6. Careers Information and Advice

109. LSC is in the process of defining a programme of support for advisers to ensure they are ready to help learners make the right learning decision in the QCF. This programme of support is being developed following workshops with advisers and in consultation with colleagues involved in the establishment of the Adult Advancement and Careers Service. Tailored support documents for advisers on QCF implementation will be available in early 2010. The documents will outline key messages for advisers to help learners to:

- Understand changes to funding and entitlements that affect the learner
- Access and interpret QCF achievement data and supporting functions to help plan future learning episodes in the QCF through the MIAP Personal Learner Record.

110. LSC will also be conducting an evaluation to monitor adviser readiness and identify future support needs.

## 7. Provider Communications

### Provider Communications Plans Summary

111. In October 2009, LSC was asked by BIS to act as the 'audience owner' for communications with post 19 publicly funded providers in England by co-ordinating targeted communication activities in collaboration with key QCF delivery partners.

112. As part of this remit LSC has been developing an integrated milestone communications plan together with the delivery partners, including key messages around the two key benefits identified for providers (namely that providers are designing provision and curriculum around unit-based learning; and providers are increasing retention and progression rates of learners), with timeframes and distribution channels for the period up to the end of March 2010.

113. The objectives of this plan are to:

- Support clear and timely communication of QCF messages to publicly funded providers in England (including further awareness raising of the QCF and also to ensure that providers are offered appropriate support)
- Identify and formalise opportunities for feedback from providers on their readiness
- Ensure alignment of communications activities and collateral across delivery partners, specifically in the context of the establishment of SFA and the central role of the QCF in the context of the National Skills Strategy
- Ensure appropriate and timely delivery of provider-focused communication materials.

114. The review and amendment of the plan encompassed:

- A focus group held in November with a selected sample group of providers from across the post 19 sector to test the plan, validate the direction of travel and ensure all major topics were covered
- A workshop held in November, with representatives from delivery partners, to identify synergies across key messages, reduce duplication and agree joined-up ways of working.

115. This work is informing the development of a comprehensive communication plan to clarify immediate key messages to providers. It is intended that the plan will undergo monthly review, involving delivery partners, as appropriate. Further workshops with a selected group of providers and with the delivery partners will be held in early 2010 to review the next iteration of the plan focusing on activities between January and March 2010.

### Provider support from LSIS

116. The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) is supporting colleges and learning providers to get ready for the QCF through two programmes: the QCF Readiness Provider Support Programme and Foundation Learning Support.

117. In autumn 2009, LSIS hosted two QCF readiness conferences for learning providers on 19 and 21 October in Manchester and London respectively. Senior managers from a wide range of providers attended to hear the latest QCF policy information and developments from keynote QCDA and LSC speakers. Attendees also heard about the LSIS support offer which includes a consultancy service for action planning – available through a team of QCF regional contacts, funding for action research projects, continuing professional development activities for practitioners and a range of resources. Presentations from the conferences are available on the QCF provider support website which can be found at: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/QCF>.

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118. Foundation Learning Support is providing help to colleges and learning providers delivering personalised learning programmes at Entry Level and Level 1 of the QCF. The support includes a bespoke consultancy service for Foundation Learning action planning, professional development opportunities, regional networking opportunities and funding for Foundation Learning action research projects.
119. Both programmes are underpinned by a dynamic champions' training programme to prepare nominated key staff to lead on the implementation of the QCF or Foundation Learning within their organisations. A number of aspiring champions have attended the first of their three training days.
120. For more information, including advice on how to access support or register for the champions' training programme, visit [www.excellencegateway.org.uk/QCF](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/QCF) or [www.excellencegateway.org.uk/foundationlearning](http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/foundationlearning).
121. The Association of Learning Providers (ALP) and the Association of Colleges (AoC) support the LSIS QCF Readiness Programme by working with work based learning providers and further education colleges respectively to help them develop the necessary expertise and systems to get ready for the QCF by December 2010. Websites of these organisations respectively providing information for providers can be accessed through the following links: <http://www.learningproviders.org.uk/topics/details/qualification-and-credit-framework-qcf/>; and <http://www.aoc.co.uk/>
122. QCDA has developed useful resources that complement the LSIS programme, supporting stakeholders to fully operate in the QCF. These resources are available on the QCDA website: [http://www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_22230.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_22230.aspx)

**Annex A – QCF Participation Update  
September 2009 (Full Year Data for 2008/09)**

**Introduction**

123. This document contains an overall view of publicly funded enrolments on QCF provision for the academic year 2008/09. The full year figures in the report are compared to part figures returned in last update in May 2009. The figures below are based on a completion rate 95% of providers in receipt of public funding from LSC.

124. LSC receives two major data return type from publicly funded learning providers to support its main stream funding models. They are:

- Learner Responsive (which supports 16-18 and Adult Learner Responsive funding)
- Employer Responsive (which supports Train to Gain and Apprenticeship funding)

125. The most recent figures for both data returns indicate that, overall, LSC provided public funding to support 229,361 enrolments in the academic year 2008/09 (this is up from 191,921 in May). A more detail breakdown of these figures is provided below.

**Public Funding by Enrolments – QCF Qualifications**

*Learner Responsive (College based delivery)*

	<b>Jul 09 (Full Year)</b>	<b>May 09 (Part Year)</b>
<b>16-18:</b>	<b>73,086</b>	<b>63,779</b>
- of which Entry and Level 1:	43,988	39,754
- of which Level 2 and above:	29,098	24,025
<b>Adults:</b>	<b>93,854</b>	<b>72,674</b>
- of which Entry and Level 1:	32,288	25,973
- of which Level 2 and above:	61,566	46,701
<b>Number of Providers</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>400</b>

*Employer Responsive (Train to Gain and Apprenticeships)*

	<b>Jul 09 (Full Year)</b>	<b>May 09 (Part Year)</b>
<b>16-18:</b>	<b>6,824</b>	<b>5,683</b>
- of which Entry and Level 1:	658	766
- of which Level 2 and above:	6,459	4,917
<b>Adults:</b>	<b>7,248</b>	<b>15,355</b>
- of which Entry and Level 1:	542	10,271
- of which Level 2 and above:	6,708	5,084
<b>Number of Providers</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>283</b>

**Qualifications and Credit Framework**

**Public Funding by Enrolments – QCF Unit Funding Trials**

*Learner Responsive (College based delivery)*

(Note: Learner Responsive unit funding trial for adult learners started as of 01/01/09)

	<b>Jul 09 (Full Year)</b>	<b>May 09 (Part Year)</b>
<b>16-18 (funded only by exception):</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>16</b>
- of which Entry and Level 1:	36	12
- of which Level 2 and above:	3	4
<b>Adults:</b>	<b>9,395</b>	<b>3,815</b>
- of which Entry and Level 1:	7,649	3,139
- of which Level 2 and above:	1,746	676
<b>Number of Providers</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>44</b>

*Employer Responsive (Train to Gain only)*

(Note: Employer Responsive support for SMEs started as of 01/01/09)

	<b>Jul 09 (Full Year)</b>	<b>May 09 (Part Year)</b>
<b>Adults:</b>	<b>1,899</b>	<b>945</b>
- of which Entry and Level 1:	0	0
- of which Level 2 and above:	1,899	945
<b>Number of Providers</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>9</b>

**Public Funding by Enrolments – Generic QCF Unit Funding**

*Learner Responsive (College based delivery)*

(Note: Generic funding for adults on non-Skills for Life units ceased as of 31/12/08)

	<b>Jul 09 (Full Year)</b>	<b>May 09 (Part Year)</b>
<b>16-18:</b>	<b>12,234</b>	<b>10,215</b>
- of which Entry and Level 1:	6,135	5,692
- of which Level 2 and above:	6,099	4,523
<b>Adults:</b>	<b>24,728</b>	<b>18,891</b>
- of which Entry and Level 1:	16,004	12,219
- of which Level 2 and above:	8,724	6,672
<b>Number of Providers</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>139</b>

*Not available in Employer Responsive*

**Qualifications and Credit Framework**

**Annex B – Timeline and Milestones – 2010-2**

Q4 09	Q1 10	Q2 10	Q3 10	Q4 10	2011	2012
<p><b>Oct</b> – Begin focussing of funding on QCF provision through key programmes</p> <p><b>Dec</b> – SSC/B identify credit values for target-bearing Level 2 and 3. Initial list of confirmed QCF qualifications published for Train to Gain</p> <p><b>Dec</b> – Agreement on how CSR can be used within quality assurance and framework for Excellence</p>	<p><b>Feb</b> – Draft SFA Delivery Plan</p> <p><b>Feb</b> – List of QCF qualifications confirmed for public funding available on-line and subject to regular updates</p> <p><b>Mar</b> – SFA publish the new process to approve QCF units and qualifications for funding</p> <p><b>Mar</b> – Timelines for managing the transition from NQF to QCF published.</p> <p><b>Mar</b> – New funding approvals process published</p>	<p><b>Apr</b> – SFA assumes responsibility for confirming public funding (section 97 repealed)</p> <p><b>Apr/May</b> – Updated list of qualifications confirmed for public funding through each programme published (alongside adult entitlement list)</p> <p><b>May</b> – SFA Funding Guidance published</p> <p><b>June</b> – Final SFA Delivery Plan published</p>	<p><b>Aug</b> – Public funding focused on QCF provision across all programmes.</p> <p><b>Aug</b> – SFA processes and systems are enhanced to support the QCF</p>	<p><b>Dec</b> – <i>Skills for Growth</i>: the QCF will be fully populated by the end of 2010</p>	<p><b>Early '11</b> – <i>Skills for Growth</i>: By early 2011, no qualification will receive public funding that is not approved by employers through their SSC and on QCF</p> <p><b>Mar '11</b> – Credit Success Rate included in provider performance arrangements through Framework for Excellence</p> <p><b>Aug '11</b> – Rules of combination embedded in SFA systems</p>	<p><b>August '12</b> – Funding on the basis of credit is implemented through SFA systems</p>

