

# MODULE 7

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## QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ASSESSMENT CERTIFICATION

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# 1. Relation Between Quality Assurance and Certification

Quality assurance of certification processes is fundamental to ensuring that qualifications are generally valued and accepted. It is essential that the players in recognition (certification) systems be subject to quality assurance standards. This ensures consistency across the systems and helps to maintain the legitimacy and value of the system to the individuals participating in it, and to the wider society. It also ensures that those participating in recognition systems are held to the same standard. Inconsistency in developing standards against which individuals are assessed, how they are used across assessment centres or educational institutions and how they are communicated to the user may undermine the confidence of the system. The term certification describes the multiple (and sometimes intermingling) processes of assessing, validating and recognizing learning outcomes, which lead to a qualification. This understanding of the certification process is closely related to the definition of the term qualification used in the NSQF Notification which refers to the issue of qualifications by competent bodies.

While the above definition of qualification refers to the term ‘competent body’ (like the EQF definition of a qualification), the term ‘awarding body’ is used as a descriptor of an institution that awards qualification certificates (documents) formally recognizing the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) of an individual, following an assessment and validation procedure.

To judge that a learner has attained a pre-determined level, he/she must be assessed in some form or other and the outcomes of the assessment process must then be validated to establish whether the performance of the learner satisfies the set standards. Consequently, learners are awarded a grade or a pass/fail. If the validation is positive, learning outcomes may be recognised through the award of a qualification or of its component (a unit) by issue of a certificate, document, title or diploma. However, converting a learner’s performance on an assessment to a clear indication of attainment (such as a grade or pass/fail), is not as simple as might be thought.

VET qualifications also pose a unique set of challenges related to certification. When compared to general or academic education, these processes are different in VET because of:

- the variety of awarding bodies in VET: ministries, examination boards, VET providers, social partners, sectors skills councils, chambers, etc.,
- the range of actors potentially involved in assessment and validation: these can be VET providers and awarding bodies, but also employers or social partners;
- the nature of learning outcomes to be assessed and validated: compared to academic or general qualifications, learning outcomes in VET are closely related to vocational and occupational activities and evidence of them is diverse and may only be ephemeral or fleetingly available to the assessors themselves.

The process of certification can be seen to encompass 3 sub-processes: Assessment, Validation and Recognition, which can be, or not, carried out by the same organisation. It follows that to quality assure the certification process, each of these sub-processes must also be quality assured.

- with regard to quality assurance of assessment (methods and processes used to establish the extent to which a learner has attained particular knowledge, skills and competence), methods include use of centrally defined assessment criteria/ methods/ precise specifications, use of external examination centres or examiners, use of assessment committees or multiple assessors, and systematic training of assessors;
- quality assurance of validation (the process of confirming that certain assessed learning outcomes achieved by a learner correspond to specific outcomes which may be required for a unit or a qualification) as an independent stage from that of assessment make use of validation committees involving multiple stakeholders to reach consensus or to moderate judgments, and use of centrally set evaluation grids or grading keys to grade performances. The key is that the original judgment is subject to independent third party scrutiny before being confirmed.
- quality assurance of the recognition (the process of attesting officially achieved learning outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications) stage of the process mainly involves appointment of one or more awarding bodies recognised as competent to award a qualification, which were either appointed, selected or approved by one or more regulatory bodies, or were themselves the regulatory body or bodies.

The way in which certification standards (which form the basis of the overarching QA framework for certification) are developed, as well as their focus (educational, assessment, occupational, etc.) also varies considerably from country to country. While the methods by which these standards are maintained also differed, they rely on two, ostensibly opposite factors: regulation and binding guidelines on the one hand and trust and autonomy on the other. What tends to vary from country to country was the balance between the level of regulation and the level of autonomy. So it is possible to categorize quality-assurance systems of certification into models along a continuum based on the division of responsibilities. It is possible to describe three broad (and inevitably overlapping) models:

### The prescriptive model

This model represents one end of the continuum. There may be VET qualifications in some countries whose assessment methods are entirely designed by one awarding body, from design of the assessment criteria, to specification of the exact methodology and content of the assessments. Further this same body may be responsible for marking (scoring) the assessment, quality assurance of the marking, validation (grading) of the qualification and its quality assurance, through to the recognition (awarding of a certificate and the quality assurance (through self or external regulation) of the recognition process. Under such a system, the education provider, while potentially having a great deal of responsibility in other important areas such as teaching, mentoring and even curriculum development, in terms of the certification processes is little more than a conduit between the individual learner and the awarding body. In practice, it is comparatively rare to find such extremes in terms of the division (or lack of) of responsibilities, but the scenario does illustrate the point.

In Germany most VET qualifications come with three certificates; one from the vocational school, one from the employer and one from the chamber. All three are quality assured differently. Probably the most important certificate, the one issued by the chamber which allows learners to practice within an occupational field, is entirely under the jurisdiction of the examination boards, although these are, in turn, regulated by the chamber. The qualifications obtained in vocational training institutes (IEKs) in Greece also fit this model of quality assurance. While some of the practical assessments occur within providers' establishments, they are designed by the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training

(OEEK), assessed by examiners appointed by OEEK and are standardised and graded by those examiners.

### The cooperative model

To some extent, this model represents the approximate mid-point of the continuum. Here, for example, while there are some awarding bodies that retain the responsibility of designing assessment criteria and broad methodological boundaries, decisions concerning the exact form and content of the assessments is left to individual providers. The education providers may also be responsible for marking or even grading the examinations but this responsibility is closely overseen by the examinations body, who may themselves be overseen by a regulatory authority. Providers may have to submit their activities to scrutiny, or remain within certain guidelines. They may be required to train their staff to take on some of the quality assurance processes and even to grade learners directly, but the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the quality of the certification process lies within the hands of an external agency. The model essentially relies, therefore, on an element of mutual cooperation and trust, both in formulating practices and in undertaking those practices. This model does often involve separation of responsibilities between the quality assurance of assessment and the quality assurance of validation, even if exactly where the separation occurs varies.

The Irish system of VET quality assurance is very close to the cooperative model. The assessment process is based on qualifications standards that are defined in the national framework of qualifications (NFQ). The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC, the main awarding body for VET qualifications) sets certain requirements concerning the range of assessment methods that are accepted as valid and reliable or the need to put in place certain process (the internal and external verification process). However, the assessment methods and criteria, and the assessment programme, are defined by the provider together with the training programme. These are then approved by FETAC, which also monitors how they are implemented.

In the UK-England, the best example of the cooperative model is national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and apprenticeships. These are based on achieving learning outcomes consistent with national occupational standards. However, the quality assurance of assessment and validation are responsibilities shared by accredited providers and awarding bodies, all overseen by Ofqual, which reports directly to the Parliament, and (in the case

## NZ APPROACH OF ASSESSMENT COORDINATION

- NZ Qualifications Authority - National Assessor standards
- Accredited Assessors, in the workplace and in training institutions
- Providers and Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) must be granted consent to assess standards (accredited) by NZQA
- Training institutions award and issue New Zealand quals at levels 1-6 on the New Zealand Quals Framework
- Internal moderation and national ITO external moderation
- Internal moderation processes embedded in quality management system of training organisation
- NZQA appoints moderators – assessment tools (including strategies), internal moderation plans
- External moderation at least once a year, distance moderation, a moderation visit or participation in a moderation group meeting
- Assessors must be competent in the following
- Use standards to assess candidate performance
- Moderate assessment

## SRI LANKA APPROACH OF CERTIFICATION

- Managed by the Tertiary Vocational Education Council
  - trains, certifies, ongoing professional dev. of Assessors
  - Independent and institution based
  - Assessor standards
- Levels 1 – 4 qual greater emphasis on performance criteria specified in the respective units of competencies
- Levels 5 and 6 quals two stages of assessment, balance towards the underpinning skills applied to the PCs
- Internal moderation panel – external TVEC pre-assessment moderation
- TVEC endorse assessment materials developed by a division and validated by a NITAC
- Institutions select two registered assessors - one acting as the assessor and the other as the verifier. Both assessor and verifier are present for assessment of NVQ level 4 and above
- Assessments for NVQ level 3 and below, the verifier checks the assessment of assessor through documentary evidence and certifies assessor through documentary evidence and certifies
- Accredited institutions obtain the approval of the other TVEC for the selected assessors
- NVQ level 5 and 6 quals may require the appointment of additional specialist assessors for particular areas
- Once notified of results TVEC

of NVQs), in accordance with a code of practice for quality assurance.

## The self-regulated model

This model seems the antithesis of the prescriptive model, lying at the opposite end of the continuum of division of responsibilities. In this case, the VET provider is also the awardee of the qualification certificates, taking on the responsibility of quality assuring all aspects of the certification process, without deferring to any higher governmental or sub-governmental agency.

An example of the self-regulated model would appear to be that of apprenticeships in Greece, which tend to be entirely under the regulation of the providers, from training and curriculum decisions through to grading and accreditation. It is likely that the quality assurance of private (non-State-funded) CVET in many countries in the EU follows this model. Such a model prevails where the identification of needs tends to be specific to an employer/occupation and that the provision is privately funded given the kudos associated with the branding of the certificate. – be it a professional body or a well-known employer.

Perhaps the most common example of the self-regulated model, alongside that of CVET in many countries, is VET at a tertiary level in universities. Most universities in the EU appear to be unitary awarding authorities in their own rights, acting as providers and awarders of qualifications. While some are overseen by other external bodies, often (as in the case of Ireland and the UK-England) this arrangement is mostly voluntary, with universities working.

together and with the external agency (in Ireland the National Qualifications Authority and in UK the Qualifications Assurance Agency) to provide self-determined quality assurance principles and practices.

## 2. Assessment Unpacked

### Defining assessment

Assessment is the process of measurement. It is a process by which evidence is gathered and judged/evaluated by an Assessment Practitioner in order to decide whether an individual has demonstrated the required skills, understanding and knowledge when compared with a pre-determined standard.

The outcome of the assessment - or measurement - will only hold value if it is measuring what it is supposed to measure (ie it is valid) and that it is done so in a secure, robust and reliable manner (ie it is reliable).

In the education and training sectors, policy drivers influence the approach taken when designing assessment strategies. For example, if the purpose is to select, rank order or sift according to learner achievement then the assessment will be largely norm-referenced, whereas if the policy is to confirm mastery, ie that the learner can do, does know, does understand, then the assessment will be standards-referenced. In the skills sector, as in most countries, India has adopted a standards-referenced model.

With standards-referenced models of assessment, the process of assessment is to establish that candidates have met the required industry-defined standards (the NOS or other nationally-adopted skills standards) and the outcomes reported as 'competent' or 'not yet competent'.

## Assessment principles

Irrespective of the chosen assessment strategy and selected method/s of assessment, assessment systems and practice should adhere to a common set of Assessment Principles. The Principles should allow for flexibility in their interpretation according to the variety of purposes for which assessment is used. They should also reflect international norms: important, given the NSQF ambition to achieve international equivalency.

### Assessment principles

- **Validity** (that the selected assessment method attests to the pre-determined content, skills, behaviours)-
- **Reliability** (the assessment generates the same outcome over time and place, irrespective of the personnel making the judgement/decision)-
- **Comparability** (the assessment decisions/judgements align wherever multiple assessment bodies are assessing against the same standards/benchmarks) –
- **Manageability** (the assessment is manageable and practical for all concerned and remains cost-effective as well as efficient and is capable of scaling-up)-
- **Accessibility** (the assessment avoids placing unnecessary barriers to the demonstration of attainment)

- **Transparency** (the assessment criteria and methodology are clearly identified and shared with teachers/trainers and candidates; similarly, assessment practice is open to external scrutiny).

To support the embedding of these Assessment Principles into current assessment practice, it is assumed that organisations and individuals with responsibility for assessment will:

- demonstrate high levels of integrity and accountability- commit to the avoidance of conflicts of interest and be independent of the employer or training organisation-
- support the development of a high quality, professional community of assessment bodies and professional assessment practitioners.

## Uses of assessment

Assessment may be used in different ways and on different occasions according to its purpose. Such uses of assessment (with clarification) include:

- Diagnostic (finding out what's known and what gaps there might be.
- Formative (checking that learning is happening)
- Summative (tying in all aspects of learning through a final application)-
- Internal/External (allowing the teacher/trainer/supervisor, as assessor, to make judgments v. an independent, third party judge)-
- High stakes/Low stakes (leading to License to Practice v. recognition to motivate)-
- Work-based/simulated (performance in the workplace/simulation requiring integrated technical and soft skills)

Depending on the purpose or use of assessment, then the choice of assessment method or tool might vary as well as the relative importance of each of the Assessment Principles.

## Assessment methods/tools

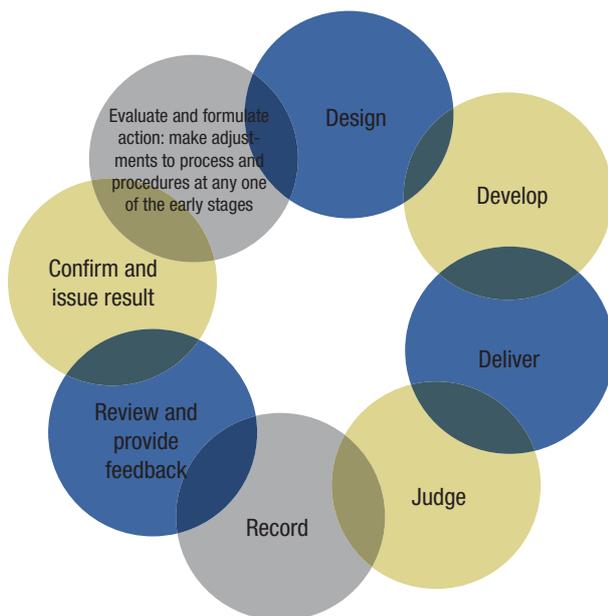
There are a variety of means by which learners' knowledge, understanding and the practical application of acquired skills may be assessed. In the case of NSQF qualifications the choice will usually be prescribed by the standard-setting body.

Assessment methods/tools include:

- Observation – of individual performance and/or within a group (of process, attitudes, behaviours and application of skills).
- practical assessment (of completed artefact).
- witness/third party evidence (from workplace/from trainer oral and written questioning- simulation (role play, scenario-building to replicate work-place).
- course work (structured in line with pre-determined standards of performance) – assignments/reports/projects.
- professional discussion.
- Evidence of own work from the work-place.

Each assessment method has its advantages and limitations; it is the experience and expertise of the Assessment Practitioner, in making the selection, who builds on the advantages and overcomes the limitations.

**Figure 21: Stages in assessment (the assessment life cycle)**



To support Assessment Bodies and Assessment Practitioners in their understanding of how the Assessment Principles may be applied to their work, it is useful to consider assessment in terms of a series of stages or, given the inclusion of evaluation & action planning, a lifecycle. (This lifecycle will form the basis of the standards required to be evidenced by Assessment Bodies seeking accreditation within the NSQF Quality Framework).

Each stage in the cycle is briefly described below together with an indication of which Assessment Principles must be given particular attention:

**Design** – the stage where the assessment strategy/framework, assessment criteria and selected methods are determined by the purpose of the qualification, the level of demand required by the NSQF Level and are in line with all the Assessment Principles - all Principles, but Validity is paramount. (Where relevant, the assessment strategy must align with the agreed industry standard and, as appropriate, the international standard)

**Development** – where the chosen assessment tools/methods together with supporting documentation required by both Assessors and candidates are developed and, as required, specific guidance for the organisation of the assessment session (Reliability, Minimising Bias and Manageability uppermost)

**Delivery** – the stage where the assessment tools/methods are deployed. This includes standardisation of Assessors prior to the live assessment sessions to agree acceptable variations in performance, remove ambiguities and establish confidence that the appropriate standard of performance will be recognized and recorded. (Reliability, Minimising Bias, Comparability, Transparency uppermost).

**Judging** – at this stage Assessors exercise their professional judgement in line with the required standards of performance and in line with the guidance given at the pre-assessment standardisation event (Reliability, Validity uppermost)

**Recording** – the stage at which Assessment decisions are recorded (Reliability and Validity uppermost, but all relevant)

**Reporting** – this stage will follow procedures and protocols laid down by the assessment and/or certifying body

**Standardisation/validation** – the stage where assessment decisions are independently reviewed in line with pre-determined standard of performance. (Reliability, Validity and Transparency uppermost)

**Confirmation and issue of results** – (All Principles)

**Evaluation and Feedback** – this stage requires a systematic review of how assessments have performed with adjustments, as required, being made to procedures & processes at any one of earlier stages, including the identification of training needs (how the Assessment

Principles have been reflected in each of the previous stages will form the basis of such evaluations)

A quality assurance model underpins the working of the lifecycle, hence the final stage of evaluation and feedback. Each stage should have defined processes which are to be followed, with documentation and records available for external scrutiny. Such records will be used to deal with requests for information in line with Complaints and Appeals.

Notwithstanding the importance of quality assurance, the role of the assessment practitioner engaged at every stage of the lifecycle is critical. This staged approach allows for the clear articulation of functional responsibility which, in turn, may be grouped into defined job roles and responsibilities.

## Quality control and quality assurance

### Quality control

Assessment Bodies should define the processes they will use to control the quality of work at each stage of the lifecycle. Where assessment tools are being developed, however, quality control becomes critical. Tools should be developed in line with the Assessment Principles and should comprise both the assessment itself and the necessary accompanying rubric/marketing guide for Assessors. This applies to all assessment methods: theory papers, observation, assessment of completed artefacts, etc. Both the assessment tool itself and its accompanying rubric/marketing guide should be cross-referenced to the pre-determined learning outcomes/standards. (In the case of NOS-based assessments, there should be clarity of cross-referencing to the PCs/Units.)

First versions of the assessment tool and accompanying rubric/marketing guide should have a minimum of one external/independent review before final approval as well as internal sign off by senior Assessment Practitioner.

Prior to the first live assessment session, it is essential that a pre-assessment standardisation exercise takes place in which Assessors will become familiar with the requirements of the rubric/marketing guide and agreement reached on what permissible variations there might be when arriving at judgments of meeting the required standard.

Quality control is also practiced at the point of review of initial results, standardisation/validation of results and

final confirmation. There should be clear lines of responsibility for sign off at each stage prior to the result being forwarded, as appropriate, to the relevant certifying body.

### Quality Assurance

All processes within the assessment lifecycle, as previously indicated, will be subject to an overarching QA model operated by the Assessment Body.

In addition, a quality assurance model will operate at the level of Assessment Practitioners, covering their recruitment, training, standardisation activity, deployment, monitoring, reviewing and, finally, the evaluation of their performance. For each activity, clearly articulated processes and criteria will be in place against which Assessment Practitioners will be managed and supported.

Where Assessment (and Certifying) Bodies seek to work within the requirements of the NSQF, then their internal QA processes will be required to align within the NSQF Quality Assurance Framework.

### Building a community of professional Assessment Practitioners

Given the high premium placed on assessment, it is important that a national Assessment Guidelines supports the development of a community of professional assessment practice at the organisational as well as at the level of the individual.

This means that:

- Accredited Assessment Bodies have clearly defined assessment policies and systems that are embedded and owned by management Accredited Assessment Bodies have demarcated roles and responsibilities for their Assessment Practitioners.
- Accredited Assessment Bodies support the ongoing professional development of their permanent and contractual employees.
- Assessment practice, wherever it takes place, adheres to the Assessment principles
- Assessment decisions are appropriately documented, recorded and issued and that responsibility and accountability for such decisions is transparent in the system
- Assessment Practitioners have opportunities to achieve qualifications and have clear routes for career progression

### 3. Current Practice and Proposed Actions in India

organisation then submits its qualifications on to Ofqual's central qualifications' register.

The regulator is independent of government: the Chief Regulator - head of Ofqual - is accountable to Parliament, in the same way that the Chief Education Inspec-

**Table 10: Current practice and proposed intervention in India**

Practice of current system	Proposed intervention
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are SSCs designing fit for purpose assessment strategies?</li> <li>2. Are VTPs ensuring trainees are appropriately prepared for assessment?</li> <li>3. Are the assessment tools fit for purpose?</li> <li>4. Are A/bodies following robust/documented procedures for development of assessment tools?</li> <li>5. Are A/bodies ensuring consistency/security of delivery of assessment?</li> <li>6. Where more than one a/body involved, how do we know the assessments are comparable?</li> <li>7. Are the Assessment practitioners appropriately trained &amp; supported?</li> <li>8. Are the posted results valid &amp; reliable?</li> <li>9. Where more than one a/body involved, how do we know the assessments are comparable?</li> <li>10. Are the Assessment practitioners appropriately trained &amp; supported?</li> <li>11. Are the posted results valid &amp; reliable?</li> <li>12. Where more than one a/body involved, how do we know the assessments are comparable?</li> <li>13. Are the Assessment practitioners appropriately trained &amp; supported?</li> <li>14. Are the posted results valid &amp; reliable?</li> </ol>	<p><b>PURPOSE OF INTERVENTION</b></p> <p>To ensure the system is robust enough to scale up the system is capable of continuous improvement the certification process is rigorous, defensible, holds value &amp; status confidence &amp; credibility in the system the system is capable of achieving its goal of international equivalence/recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft an Assessment Guidelines capturing the required stages of the lifecycle</li> <li>• Review &amp; evaluate existing practice re robustness, scalability, continuous improvement</li> <li>• Train assessment practitioners in line with acknowledged good assessment practice</li> <li>• Introduce systematic reporting to assist accountability &amp; transparency</li> <li>• Use standardised procedures &amp; documentation with regard to assessment practitioners: recruitment, training, deployment, monitoring</li> <li>• Monitor and review practice</li> <li>• Promote informal networking of assessment bodies and of assessment personnel</li> </ul>

### 4. Regulation of Qualifications in the UK: A Briefing Note

*(To note that there is no single over-arching regulatory system in the UK: responsibility for this is delegated to the level of the country concerned, although, in practice, each regulator follows similar, if not identical, practice. This background briefing note refers to the regulation of Vocational Qualifications in England)*

#### Regulation

Regulation of qualifications in England is effected via the regulation of the organisations that design, develop, operate and award the qualifications. The focus of regulation is therefore strategic, putting the onus on the organisation to prove that it meets - and continues to meet - the regulatory criteria. The regulator, Ofqual, exercises oversight through initial approval and on-going audit, including a requirement that regulated organisations submit annual Statements of Compliance. Regulated organisations are known as awarding organisations. Once regulated - recognised is the official term - the awarding

tor, the head of Ofsted, the independent monitoring/review body of publicly funded education & training, is accountable. Both bodies, therefore, are seen to provide an invaluable, independent role by overseeing the quality of publicly funded education, training & the certificated outcomes achieved by learners and trainees.

There are almost 200 regulated organisations in England. These vary from small, specialist, sector-specific awarding organisations to very large, multi-sector, international organisations, such as Pearson. They are all required, however, to demonstrate compliance in line with Ofqual's requirements.

The awarding & qualifications' sector in England - and the UK generally - operates as a market. Educational and training providers, including employers, exercise choice when selecting the most appropriate qualification to meet the needs of their learners/trainers/employees. If the course is to be funded from the public purse, however, then the provider must ensure the qualification chosen is both one offered by a regulated awarding organisation and is on the central government's list of 'approved' qualifications.

Central Government's role in the qualifications & awarding business - beyond policy development - is limited to that of determining which qualifications- and courses - it will fund from the public purse. The funding is for both the course delivery and payment of the qualification fee. Two government departments are relevant here: the Dept for Ed (DfE) which has responsibility for 14-18 learners and the qualifications they take, as well as shared responsibility for Apprenticeship programmes and the associated qualifications; the Dept for Business, Innovation & Skills, (BIS), which shares responsibility for Apprenticeships and has sole responsibility for adult training, skills development and the qualifications/courses considered critical for older learners. Both Depts publish annual lists via their agencies of which qualifications are eligible for public funding. In practice, the content of such lists reflects Government's current education/skills development priorities.

It follows, therefore, that most awarding organisations seek to get their qualifications on to the relevant lists managed by government departments and their relevant agencies. (BIS has an agency, Skills funding Agency, SfA, which is responsible for this). To do so, they must not only meet Ofqual's regulatory requirements but also any further requirements laid down by the Gov Dept. In both cases, where the qualification is deemed to meet a training, skills development need, the demonstrable involvement of industry/employers in the design, development and delivery of the qualification is essential.

For awarding organisations to operate successfully in the market, therefore, it is critical that their qualifications, as a minimum, are attractive to the customer, ie the education, training provider and employer by meeting the following requirements:

- being regulated and on 'a list', therefore eligible for public funding
- demonstrate evidence of demand, ie endorsement by industry and/or HE
- provide for progression (clear sign posts for successful candidates to where the qualification might lead)
- ease of delivery, manageability of assessment, good support materials
- excellent customer service in support of course & qualification delivery
- affordability

In recent years, the evidence that awarding organisations need to provide in support of their submission of

qualifications to Ofqual's qualification register as well as to the approved lists operated by both DfE and BIS, has focussed more and more on the nature and extent of employer involvement/engagement in the design & development process of the qualification. The onus is therefore on the awarding organisation to put considerable effort into establishing, maintaining and enhancing their direct links with industry, at the level of both individual employer as well as their representative bodies, such as SSCs.

The role of the regulator, Ofqual, and the additional requirements laid down by the government of the day via its 'approved for funding lists' are, between them, intended to safeguard the public when making choices in the awarding & qualification market.

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13/2/15

## 5. SKYPE SESSION

### The Role of OfQUAL (Julie Swan)

The English context: in England, Awarding organisations design, develop, deliver and award qualifications. They are responsible for assessment and for certification. They are not responsible for teaching, although many awarding organisations provide materials to support teaching and learning. In many sectors/for some qualifications awarding organisations compete with each other for business, for a share of the market. Regulation is 'optional' – unless public funding for providers/students is sought. Many awarding organisation seek regulation even when it is not needed for funding. OFQUAL regulate about 160 awarding organisations (AOs) which between them make available about 20,000 different qualifications – some are taken in very large numbers, some are very specialist. Awarding organisations include professional bodies, commercial organisations, charities. Some offer a wide range of qualifications, others provide qualifications in one niche area only. OFQUAL do not regulate degrees.

OfQUAL aims to intervene to address unhelpful market pressures - eg a 'race to the bottom', to intervene so qualifications are comparable when they need to be, to allow people to access information that will help them decide which qualification is best for them and finally to enable awarding organisations to be innovative and responsive and to avoid unnecessary burden - we focus our regulations on outcomes not process.

## How do we regulate

We 'recognise' organisations to award regulated qualifications, if we are satisfied with their Identity, constitution and governance, their integrity, their Resources and financing, their competence. Once recognised we hold awarding organisations to account for the quality and standards of their qualifications

Once recognised an awarding organisation must comply on an on-going basis with our Conditions of recognition. The Conditions cover both the organisation's governance and resources and the lifecycle of a qualification. We check their compliance by looking both at the way an awarding organisation designs, delivers, marks and awards qualifications (its systems) and by looking at individual qualifications.

We try to target our intervention. When we decide where we direct our resources we consider the impact - if something went wrong with a qualification and/or an awarding organisation, taking into account how a qualification is used (what it's for), the market factors (e.g. are there multiple providers competing to provide similar qualifications), the employment sector (e.g. strength of institutions/mechanisms to drive the right content for occupational qualifications), the underlying funding - private vs public purchasers and the internal drivers for high standards (e.g. professional body oversight)

We can take action if an awarding organisation breaches or is likely to breach a Condition. We can, for example direct the organisation to comply, fine the organisation, withdraw recognition and we can also use other forms of influence to bring about the changes needed. We are increasingly focusing on the validity of qualifications. Validity is the degree to which it is possible to measure

**Figure 22: The general conditions of recognition**

Part 1: The awarding organisation		
<b>A: Governance</b>	<b>A1</b>	Suitability for continuing recognition
	<b>A2</b>	Establishment in the EU or the EFTA
	<b>A3</b>	Safeguards on change of control
	<b>A4</b>	Conflicts of interest
	<b>A5</b>	Availability of adequate resources and arrangements
	<b>A6</b>	Identification and management of risks
	<b>A7</b>	Management of incidents
	<b>A8</b>	Malpractice and maladministration
<b>B: The A0 and Ofqual</b>	<b>B1</b>	The role of the responsible officer
	<b>B2</b>	The annual statement to Ofqual
	<b>B3</b>	Notification to Ofqual of certain events
	<b>B4</b>	Notice to provide information to Ofqual
	<b>B5</b>	Representations regarding qualifications
	<b>B6</b>	Cooperation with Ofqual
	<b>B7</b>	Compliance with Regulatory Documents
	<b>B8</b>	Compliance with undertakings given to Ofqual
<b>C: Third Parties</b>	<b>C1</b>	Arrangements with third parties
	<b>C2</b>	Arrangements with Centres
	<b>C3</b>	Arrangements with publishers
Part 2 - The regulated qualification		
<b>D: General requirements for regulated qualification</b>	<b>D1</b>	Fitness for purpose of qualifications
	<b>D2</b>	Accessibility of qualifications
	<b>D3</b>	Reviewing approach
	<b>D4</b>	Responding to enquiries and complaints procedures
	<b>D5</b>	Compliance of qualifications with Regulatory Documents
	<b>D6</b>	Compliance of units developed by others with Regulatory Documents
	<b>D7</b>	Management of the withdrawal of qualifications
	<b>D8</b>	Making available information to meet Teachers' needs

<b>E: Design and development of qualifications</b>	<b>E1</b>	Qualifications having an objective and support
	<b>E2</b>	Requirements on qualification titling
	<b>E3</b>	Publication of a qualification specification
	<b>E4</b>	Ensuring an assessment is fit for purpose and can be delivered
	<b>E5</b>	Assurance that qualifications comply with the conditions
	<b>E6</b>	Submitting qualifications to the Register
<b>F: Providing qualifications to purchasers</b>	<b>F1</b>	Information on fees and features of a qualification
	<b>F2</b>	Packaging qualifications with other products or services
	<b>F3</b>	Invoicing
<b>G: Setting and delivering the assessment</b>	<b>G1</b>	Setting the assessment
	<b>G2</b>	Language of the assessment
	<b>G3</b>	Use of language and stimulus materials
	<b>G4</b>	Maintaining confidentiality of assessment materials
	<b>G5</b>	Registration of Learners
	<b>G6</b>	Arrangements for Reasonable Adjustments
	<b>G7</b>	Arrangements for Special Consideration
	<b>G8</b>	Completion of the assessment under required conditions
	<b>G9</b>	Delivering the assessment
<b>H: From marking to issuing results</b>	<b>H1</b>	Marking the assessment
	<b>H2</b>	Moderation where an assessment is marked by a Centre
	<b>H3</b>	Monitoring the specified levels of attainment for a qualification
	<b>H4</b>	Adjudication by Ofqual of specified levels of attainment for a qualification
	<b>H5</b>	Results for a qualification must be based on sufficient evidence
	<b>H6</b>	Issuing results
<b>I: Appeals and certificates</b>	<b>I1</b>	Appeals process
	<b>I2</b>	Compliance with Ofqual's appeals and complaints process
	<b>I3</b>	The design and content of certificates
	<b>I4</b>	Issuing certificates and replacement certificates
<b>J: Interpretation and definitions</b>	<b>J1</b>	Interpretation and definitions

what needs to be measured by implementing assessment procedures. Valid qualification means primarily good educational outcomes

For a qualification to be valid:

- it must have a recognised purpose
- The knowledge, skills and understanding that comprise the qualification content must be valued by end users
- The performance described by each result must be an accurate reflection of what that candidate can do outside the test or assessment environment
- The assessments must classify candidates' abilities reliably

We have a Qualification framework in which each qualification receives a level. It includes 1 – 8 plus 3 Entry levels. The level indicates the relative level of demand of

different qualifications. We have mapped the levels to the European Qualifications Framework – this helps mobility.

**Table 11: EQF and the Qualifications and credit framework**

EQF	QCF
	Entry (1)
	Entry (2)
Level 1	Entry (3)
Level 2	Level 1
Level 3	Level 2
Level 4	Level 3
Level 5	Level 4/5
Level 6	Level 6
Level 7	Level 7
Level 8	Level 8

We are planning to introduce a new framework for regulated qualifications that will:

- retain the levels, but introduce new level descriptors
- introduce a consistent way of describing the size of qualifications – which is the time it typically takes learners to complete a qualification
- help people understand the range of qualifications on offer - but it can only provide partial information

The main challenges are to make sure that the qualification covers the right content to the right standard, especially when there isn't a common, clearly described view within a sector about what people must know, under-

stand and be able to do for specific roles. Expectations about what qualifications can and should be expected to do must be managed. Considering the importance of assessment in qualifications, building assessment expertise into the system is urgent, especially the assessment of generic skills, including the 'softer skills' employers value, alongside technical skills. It is not easy to achieve an appropriate balance between reliability, validity and manageability (including cost), avoiding inappropriate statements about the 'equivalence' of different qualifications.

OfQUAL strives to fulfil its role in a wider national and international system.

## FURTHER READING

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