

Qualification Development Policy

V2.0

Introduction

This is version two of the Qualification Development Policy and replaces all previous versions. This document is subject to regular revision and maintained electronically by its owner. Electronic copies are version controlled. Printed copies are not subject to this control.

Change history to V2.0

Date	Section	Change	Reviewed by	Signed off By
January 2023	All	Multiple changes due to annual review	N Preston	R Lowbridge

Principles of Qualification Development

SFEDI Awards aims to provide industry led, relevant and fit for purpose qualifications to our Centres and potential learners.

In doing this we develop qualifications that look for new innovations in assessment and quality assurance that continues to promote continuous improvements in the design, delivery, assessment, quality assurance, and awarding of regulated qualifications.

We also aim to create, nurture, and sustain an inclusive culture, where differences are valued and create innovative solutions to meet the needs of industry and those that work within it.

As part of the aim of guarding against the proliferation of qualifications that are not required or duplicate existing provision, SFEDI Awards ensures qualifications have a defined aim that can be measured as part of the development and future review stages. The aim of a qualification should lead to one of the following:

- Preparation of an individual to move to a further qualification within the same or similar area at a higher level
- Preparation of an individual to move to a qualification in a different subject area which is either complimentary to the one covered by the original qualification or where the knowledge and skills developed are transferable to
- Preparation of an individual for employment or progression within employment whether with the same employer, with a different employer or within a different sector
- Provision of the opportunity for an individual to develop themselves personally
- Preparation of an individual for Self Employment or to progress their business

We also ensure that qualifications identified for development have a clear market need through the examination of market intelligence reports, updated governmental guidance or requirements, regulatory guidance or requirements or other forms where there is clear demonstration that the qualification would be used.

The development process also looks to engage existing or potential Centres to ascertain whether there will be a delivery mechanism for the qualification once it has been developed and launched to the market place. Where this is not in place already, it will help to gauge lead times from development completion to availability for potential learners.

SFEDI Awards will also engage with industry to ensure that qualifications developed address the behaviours, knowledge, and skills requirements identified.

To support development activities, SFEDI Awards engages internal staff members with clear demarcations of responsibilities and subject specialists to provide additional support in the drafting process.

Those involved in the process must have completed the following:

- SFEDI Awards induction
- Signed a Conflict-of-Interest form where they have not signed one as part of their role previously or where new conflicts have arisen
- Completed training on the qualification development process and relevant policies, e.g. Fair Access and Reasonable Adjustments, RPL, etc.
- Levelling training using previous examples to practice levelling units/qualifications against the RQF and SCQF

They must also demonstrate suitable knowledge and expertise of the design and development process or be overseen by an individual who has until such time as they develop their own competence.

As qualifications can differ in complexity and size, there are no defined timescales for the development of a qualification as it will be dependent on many influencing factors and sufficient time and resource will be made available as required to support the development process.

To ensure that SFEDI Awards qualifications are available to as wide an audience as possible, we will consider as part of the development process:

- The needs of learners who may wish to undertake our qualifications so that, where not precluded by a legal or regulatory requirement, assessments are flexible in their application or adjustments can be made to ensure continued access
- The information we publish regarding our qualifications and the requirements for delivery, assessment and achievement is easily accessible and provided in differing formats as required so that they can be accessed and understood without ambiguity
- The quality assurance processes are clearly defined and applied consistently across learners to ensure no unintended bias or discrimination is introduced into the system
- The content and requirements for achievement within the qualification standards are monitored to ensure that no unintended direct or indirect discrimination is introduced that precludes an individual or individuals who share a particular characteristic from participating
- Maintain a clear record where a particular element of a qualification, its delivery, assessment and/or awarding could or has led to direct or indirect discrimination as a result of a legal or regulatory requirement and seek to access and implement guidance on how these could be overcome from the relevant authorities or regulating bodies to accommodate learners where we can to our fullest ability.

SFEDI Awards will also ensure that:

- Common and clear titling conventions are used so the knowledge and skills to be addressed within a unit and/or qualification are not ambiguous
- We avoid and remove gender stereotyping within unit and/or qualification content and the corresponding titles
- The requirement for prior knowledge, experience and/or qualifications are limited to those essential to achievement of the qualification, e.g. where there is a legal or regulatory requirement or where possessing a minimum competence level in areas such as literacy and numeracy will allow an individual to adequately understand and complete the requirements of the qualification at that level
- That the wording of the requirements contained within a unit and/or qualification do not preclude the use of assistive arrangements, for example a scribe or assistive technologies such as screen readers
- That the wording within a specification is clear and intelligible and, where required, additional guidance will be provided to help Centres and/or learners to understand the content further, e.g. reading lists, signposting to further information, meanings of acronyms
- That mandatory elements within a unit and/or qualification are made mandatory following clear reasoning so as not to preclude an individual or individuals who share a particular characteristic from participating where there is no clear rationale for making the element mandatory

The following principles will be considered in the development of all assessment methodologies:

Validity

The extent to which evidence and theory support the interpretation that the assessment outcomes meet their intended uses. The evaluation of validity involves the development of a clear argument to support the proposed interpretation of the outcomes and as a consequence the intended uses of the assessment.

The validity argument should be built on statements of the proposed interpretation and supporting evidence collected from all stages of the assessment process.

Guidance materials intended for the support of learners, Assessors/Trainers, and Verifiers should clarify any aspects of validity where a specific point or points are intended. It is the responsibility of the Head of Quality Assurance to ensure that such guidance materials are fit for this purpose and are formed from representation of stakeholders.

Each qualification developed will be accompanied by indicative content to set out how to interpret the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria to provide guidance so that the validity of the qualification is maintained.

Reliability

Reliability is about consistency and so concerns the extent to which the various stages in the assessment process generate outcomes, which would be replicated where the assessment is

repeated. Reliability is a necessary condition of Validity, as it is not possible to demonstrate the validity of an assessment process, which is not reliable. The reliability of an assessment is affected by a range of factors such as the sampling of assessment tasks and inconsistency in marking by human Assessors/Trainers.

Consistency of the human element is to be maintained through processes of standardisation including guidance materials, standardisation meetings, material reviews and feedback.

Comparability

Generating assessment outcomes that are comparable in standards between assessments within a qualification, between similar qualifications, with other Awarding Bodies, and over time. Where an assessment has equivalent forms then it is important to ensure comparability of outcomes. There are two reasons for this:

- To reach fair comparisons about the attainment of learners. It is impossible to produce different forms with exactly the same content and statistical specifications, such as the level of difficulty or demand on the learner. Therefore, a requirement to ensure comparability of outcomes makes sure the level of difficulty or demand of the assessment is considered when setting standards so that learners taking the different forms can be compared fairly, and
- To ensure that the outcomes can be used as a measure of standards. Outcomes from different forms of the same assessment must be comparable if they are to be used to measure standards over time. Both expert judgements and statistical procedures such as assessment equating can be used to ensure comparability of outcomes from different forms of the same assessment. It is, however, important to ensure that assessments are not so similar that they become predictable, as this would be a threat to validity.

Qualifications, where appropriate, will detail any and all mandatory assessment methodologies alongside guidance on their completion. Where a qualification does not list mandatory assessment methodologies, a Centre will be required to pre-approve assessments with SFEDI Awards so as to ensure that a fair comparison can still be maintained across the delivery and assessment of the qualification requirements.

Sampling of folders and standardisation processes in line with the Quality Assurance and Standardisation policies will also aid in ensuring continued comparability whether there are mandatory assessment methods or pre-approved methods used.

Manageability

Manageability relates to the feasibility of carrying out particular assessment processes. A manageable assessment process is one, which places reasonable demands on Centres and learners. The evaluation of the reasonableness of the demands will be based on the scale of the assessment process on the learners, balanced by the usefulness of the outcomes.

As with the other requirements validity, reliability, comparability and minimising bias, when developing assessments, the Qualification Development Group must ensure that judgements about manageability are balanced with considerations around the other requirements.

Minimising Bias

Minimising bias is about ensuring that an assessment does not produce unreasonably adverse outcomes for learners who share a common characteristic. The minimisation of bias is related to fairness to all learners and is also closely related to statutory equality duties.

Qualification Format

Qualifications will follow titling conventions as set out by the relevant Regulator(s) and will be clear and user-friendly to minimize and/or remove the potential for confusion. As such qualification titles will include:

- The SFEDI Awards name
- The RQF or SCQF level
- The size indicator – Award, Certificate or Diploma to indicate the hours for completion
- A title that clearly describes the behaviours, knowledge, and skills covered by the qualification content, i.e.. 'it is what it says on the tin'

The titling convention will be as follows:

Ofqual/Qualifications Wales

SFEDI Awards Level <> <Award/Certificate/Diploma> in <Subject Matter>

SQA Accreditation

SFEDI Awards <Award/Certificate/Diploma> in <Subject Matter> at SCQF Level <>

Once the title has been assigned and agreed for a qualification then this will be used consistently across all materials whether hard copy or electronic.

Hours for units and/or qualifications will be allocated using the recognised definitions below:

Guided Learning Hours

Guided Learning Hours (GLH) is activity that is undertaken by an individual that is taught, instructed by or under the direct supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training whether face to face or through real time electronic means, e.g. video conferencing.

Direct Learning Hours

Directed Learning is activity that is undertaken by an individual that is not under the direct supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education including the accessing of pre-recorded training sessions where there is no real time interaction.

Assessment Hours

Assessment is activity that the learner undertakes to evidence their competency against the knowledge and/or skills requirements of the qualification in order to achieve the qualification.

Total Qualification Time (TQT) Hours

Time that an 'average' learner would take to complete the Guided Learning + Direct Learning + Assessment hours.

Notional Hours

Time that an 'average' learner would take to complete the Guided Learning + Direct Learning + Assessment hours.

Where qualifications are assigned credit values, this will be done on a basis of 10 TQT hours = 1 credit or 10 Notional Hours = 1 credit.

As part of the development process, the level descriptors for the RQF or SCQF will be used to decide the intended level of the qualification with a review of the finalised content being completed against the descriptors to ensure it reflects the intended level requirements.

Where there is no agreement on the level of the qualification as a result of the review of the finalised content, the decision will be made as part of the ratification process.

Where agreement has been reached, the rationale for the level allocated will be reviewed as part of the ratification process prior to submission.

Publishing of Qualification Information

It is important that all relevant documentation is prepared and published prior to a qualification being launched within the marketplace to ensure that sufficient understanding and planning can take place.

This information comes in many forms both electronically and hard copy but should be consistent in its approach across all qualifications.

The published information will include:

- Qualification specification
- Website listing
- Fees and prices

Qualification Development Process

Where there is an identified need for the development of a qualification, the Head of Quality Assurance will lead on the development of the qualification to ensure a consistent approach is followed and that regulatory requirements are met at all stages.

They will also bring their expertise in the design, development and implementation of regulated qualifications and will take ownership of the drafting process.

In the development of the qualification, the Head of Quality Assurance will identify and engage with subject area specialists who will form part of the drafting and review process at all stages.

At all stages, the Conflict of Interest policy will be followed to remove and/or manage any potential conflicts between the design and development process and subject area specialists that may be engaged.

Where associates are engaged to support the development process, they will be required to sign an Associate Agreement prior to commencing work.

On completion of the qualification drafting process, the Head of Quality Assurance will head up the development of the assessment methodology.

In the design of the methodology, the Head of Quality Assurance will consider the following when designing the assessment(s):

- That assessments can be flexible to allow for alternative methods to be used to support access where the prescribed methods may be prohibitive to an individual or individuals who share a particular characteristic
- Where not precluded by a legal or regulatory requirement, the content and requirements of units and/or qualifications are:
 - free from gender, ethnic, political, cultural or other discrimination or stereotyping
 - uses content, resource and assessment materials that recognise the achievements and contributions of individual learners
- That any reasonable adjustments that are made to an assessment does not introduce the potential for an unfair advantage or disadvantage to a learner or other learner(s) and maintains the accuracy and validity for the measurement of knowledge and skills for the awarding of a unit and/or qualification.

Depending on the type of qualification being developed, there may be specific regulatory assessment requirements that need to be addressed before the qualification is finalised. These requirements, should they emerge, will be taken account of in the design of the assessment methodology.

The means of assessment chosen for each unit and qualification offered will be carefully considered. At all times, the purpose of the unit and the assessment criteria must be at the forefront of any decisions that are made.

To ensure that the specified level of attainment set for the qualification will promote consistency in measuring the levels of attainment of learners over time and between similar qualifications, the

Head of Quality Assurance must base their decision, only after considering the levels of attainment set for the qualification previously, if applicable, or similar qualifications available by checking assessment methods used for similar qualifications at similar levels, e.g. reviewing findings relating to assessment delivery and feedback from external quality assurers, Centres, and learners into the appropriateness of assessment arrangements

In addition, they should:

- consider feedback from Centres and learners collected via quality assurance activities
- consider lessons learned from on-going unit and qualification reviews in relation to current assessment materials and tasks, e.g. any trends are noted and materials re-formatted to ensure the process is fit for purpose
- review, if appropriate, the National Occupational Standards or other relevant professional standards to identify specific assessment requirements
- review previous achievement statistics to ensure that assessment processes are working/appropriate
- review trend analysis/issues raised in relation to received enquiries, appeals, complaints

The presumption will be that the first language for the development and delivery of assessments will be English and that of the nation within the UK where the assessment takes place if different to English.

The provision of assessments in an alternative language that is not related to one of the nations within the UK may cause delay in the conducting of an assessment to allow for appropriate timeframes for the production of the documentation in the language required.

It may also incur additional costs that could be met by the Centre if it is deemed that the provision of the assessment in an alternative language would not be beneficial to the wider provision of the assessment in future.

An assessment will not be provided in an alternative language where there is either a legal or regulatory requirement or, where the translation of the assessment material would impact the rigor and consistency of the assessment and awarding of a qualification.

Assessment design will consider:

- If the assessment is appropriate to, and aligns with, the learning outcomes, e.g. learning outcomes that relate to a learner being able to 'demonstrate' something are not assessed by knowledge based assessments
- The need for mandatory assessment methods, e.g. discussion, observation of practice, etc. and, where mandating an assessment method, it is justified and does not place undue burden on the Centre or learner or cause barriers to access that are not justified for instance by legal requirements for the assessment of the qualification
- Whether RPL is an appropriate form of assessment and whether its application is limited or altered from standard practices due to other considerations, e.g. legal or professional standards requirements
- Whether arrangements permit reasonable adjustments to be made, while minimising the need for them

- If the assessment can be delivered efficiently and allows Centres to develop cost effective arrangements for its delivery, using only the resources which would be reasonably expected to be required or which are provided by SFEDI Awards
- If it allows each learner to generate evidence/details which can be authenticated
- If it allows each specified level of attainment detailed in the specification to be reached by a learner who has attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding and whether it allows Assessors/Trainers to be able to differentiate accurately and consistently between a range of attainments by learners
- That it does not contain a material inconsistency between the level of demand of two or more optional tasks, assessments or units that may result in prejudicing a group of learners taking/not taking the task, assessment, or unit
- That the unit(s) can be assessed individually or synoptically, in accordance with the unit format and rules of combination for the associated qualification
- That it can be supported by SFEDI Awards, i.e., we have sufficient competent staff and/or other resources to deliver and/or quality assure the assessment methods. The Operations Manager will be part of the development group to ensure this is the case and if not possible the assessment method is either removed or additional resources are procured/trained
- That the assessment will be as accessible to as many learners as possible and not create unnecessary barriers or unfairly disadvantage learners with a particular characteristic

Regulatory Submissions

On completion of the development process, and at the direction of the Head of Quality Assurance, the Operations Manager will complete the submission process to the Regulator(s) using the prescribed systems and methods required.

Where the qualification submission is not approved, the Operations Manager will update the Head of Quality Assurance on the outcome and a decision will be made as to whether the qualification will be updated and resubmitted or whether it will be withdrawn from development.

Ofqual

On completion of the development stage, the Operations Manager will complete the submission to Ofqual using the Portal.

If Ofqual require additional checks for the qualification prior to entering the qualification onto the Portal or the Register then this will be managed by the Operations Manager in consultation with the Head of Quality Assurance to ensure all relevant information is provided.

Qualifications Wales

On completion of the development stage, the Operations Manager will complete the submission to Qualifications Wales using the QiW system.

If Qualifications Wales require additional checks for the qualification prior to entering the qualification onto the QiW then this will be managed by the Operations Manager in consultation with the Head of Quality Assurance to ensure all relevant information is provided.

SQA Accreditation

On completion of the development stage, the Operations Manager will complete the submission to SQA Accreditation using the relevant paperwork, at present the AC2 process.

If SQA Accreditation require additional checks for the qualification prior to entering the qualification onto the regulatory system, then this will be managed by the Operations Manager in consultation with the Head of Quality Assurance to ensure all relevant information is provided.

Publication of Documentation

The Operations Manager will organise the publication of the relevant documentation through the SFEDI Awards website and updates sent to the Centre network to inform them of the new qualification being available for approval for delivery.

Contact Us

If you have any queries about the content of this policy, please contact our customer service department.

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