

Qualification Information

Understanding Acronyms and Qualification Levels

If you are confused by acronyms such as NQF, QCF, RQF, OFQUAL, GLH and TQT, and the difference between an Award, Certificate and Diploma, then you are not alone. There are many others who are just as confused so here is a summary of how things currently work.

Acronyms:

NQF - National Qualifications Framework
QCF - Qualifications and Credit Framework
RQF - Regulated Qualification Framework
OFQUAL - Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
RRQ - Register of Regulated Qualifications
NDAQ - National Database of Accredited Qualifications
AO - Awarding Organisation
APL - Accredited Prior Learning
GLH - Guided Learning Hours
TQT - Total Qualification Time

Brief History

In the past the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) accredited qualifications, and approved and regulated awarding organisations (such as Highfield Qualifications, British Safety Council, and VTCT).

Qualifications run by these approved awarding bodies were on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) was introduced to take over from the NQF. It was the new Government framework for recognising achievement.

However, on 1st October 2015 the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) replaced the Qualifications and Credit Framework, and National Qualifications Framework. The RQF provides a single, simple system for cataloguing all qualifications regulated by Ofqual.

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. Details of qualifications that are accredited by the regulators of external qualifications are listed on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ), formerly known as the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ).

The Move to a Total Qualification Time (TQT)

Total Qualification Time is a term used within the qualifications regulated by OFQUAL as a part of the Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF). It aims to provide users of qualifications with the minimum length of time it would take the average learner to complete their qualification. It is expressed in 2 ways:

1. Guided Learning Hours - made up of activities that are completed by the learner under the direct instruction of a lecturer, supervisor or tutor whether through physical presence or electronic means.

2. Total Qualification Time - made up of GLHs plus all other time taken in preparation or study not under direct supervision of the lecturer, supervisor or tutor.

The size of the qualification is denoted by the terms Award, Certificate and Diploma and, where in the past this was related to the credit value of a qualification, it is now determined by the allocation of TQT value.

The following boundaries exist for the allocation of a qualification size.

Award = 120 hours or less

Certificate = 121 - 369 hours

Diploma = 370+ hours

Within each of the 3 categories the difficulty of the qualification is indicated by the level. There are 8 levels, Level 1 - Level 8, where Level 1 is the easiest and Level 8 is the most difficult. You could therefore feasibly have a Level 3 Award, Certificate and Diploma in the same subject.

It means that the content was of the same difficulty to learn but fewer hours were required to learn it for the Award than the Certificate and Diploma - indicating less content.

Many units held on the RQF are used by different awarding organisations (AOs). The "sharing" of these units means that the credit awarded is accepted as accredited prior learning (APL) by other awarding organisations.

Some units appear in more than one qualification and the credit/TQT can be transferred. This makes for more flexible career pathways with reduced repetition. The "sharing" also allows learners to gain credit towards qualifications from more than one AO.

Article Credit: Essential Training Solutions

Please note: The above is an edited version, to see the original version visit http://www.essential-training.co.uk/qcf_information.php