

Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Glossary of Terms

This glossary has been compiled using the Qualification and Curriculum Authority's 'Qualifications and Credit Framework Glossary'.

Accreditation	The process through which the qualifications regulators confirm that a qualification conforms to the requirements of the QCF regulatory arrangements
Assessment	The process of making judgements about the extent to which a learner's work meets the assessment criteria of a unit, or any additional assessment requirements of a qualification
Assessment criteria	Descriptions of the requirements a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved
Assessment standard	The standard that a learner is expected to reach in order to achieve credit for a unit, expressed through a combination of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of that unit
Award	A qualification with credit value between 1 and 12
Award of credits or qualifications	A certificate (electronic or paper-based) issued to an individual that recognises an achievement
Barred combinations (of units)	Units that cannot be counted together as part of a rule of combination for a qualification
Certificate	A qualification with a credit value between 13 and 36
Certificate for a unit or qualification	A record of attainment of credit or a qualification unit or qualification issued by an awarding organisation
Credit	An award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of the designated learning outcomes of a unit

Credit accumulation	The process of putting together a combination of credits to meet the achievement requirements of a qualification
Credit transfer	The process of using a credit or credits awarded in the context of one qualification towards the achievement requirements of another qualification
Credit value	The number of credits that may be awarded to a learner for the successful achievement of the learning outcomes of a unit
Diploma	A qualification with a credit value of 37 or above
Equivalent units	A unit/units from a different qualification or submitted by another recognised organisation that is/are deemed to be of equivalent value and so can count towards a qualification in place of designated mandatory or optional unit/s from it
Exemption	The facility for a learner to claim exemption from some of the achievement requirements of a QCF qualification, using evidence of certificated, non-QCF achievement deemed to be of equivalent value
Guided learning hours	The number of hours of teacher-supervised or directed study time required to teach a qualification or unit of a qualification
Learning outcome	A statement of what a learner can be expected to know, understand or do as a result of a process of learning
Learning time	The amount of time a learner at the level of the unit is expected to take, on average, to complete the learning outcomes of the unit to the standard determined by the assessment criteria
Level	An indication of the relative demand, complexity and/or depth of achievement, and/or the autonomy of the learner in demonstrating that achievement
Level descriptors for the QCF	A set of statements that enable achievements to be located at a particular level in the framework
Mandatory units	Units in a set of rules of combination that must be achieved for the qualification to be awarded

National occupational standards (NOS)	These describe what a person needs to do, know and understand in a job to carry out the role in a consistent and competent way
Optional unit	A unit named in a set of rules of combination that a learner may choose to complete to achieve the required number of units/credits for award of the qualification
Pathway	A route to the achievement of a qualification that requires a combination of credits to be achieved from particular units and is identified by an endorsement to a qualification title
Qualification	An award made to a learner for the achievement of the specified combination of credits, or credits and exemptions, required for that award
Qualification level	An indication of the relative demand, complexity and/or depth of achievement, and/or the autonomy of the learner, represented by a qualification
Qualification specification	A detailed statement defining the purpose, content, structure and assessment arrangements for a qualification
Qualification title	A short description of the level, size and content of the qualification
Qualifications regulators	Government-designated statutory organisations required to establish national standards for credits and qualifications and secure consistent compliance with them
Reasonable adjustments	Defined in the Disability Discrimination Act as reasonable steps to ensure disabled people are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled people, 'substantial' being more than minor or trivial
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	A method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning

Required combinations of units	Units that must be counted together as part of a rule of combination for a qualification
Rules of combination	A description of the credit accumulation requirements for the achievement of a named qualification
Sector Skills Council (SSC)	A body responsible for formulating and reviewing occupational standards for a specific sector across the UK, and for supporting the development of units and qualifications based on these standards; each SSC is an employer-led, independent organisation and is licensed by government
Standards setting body (SSB)	A body responsible for formulating and reviewing occupational standards for a specific sector across the UK, and for supporting the development of units and qualifications based on these standards
Unit	A coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria with a title, credit value and level
Validity of assessment	The fitness for purpose of an assessment tool or scheme – valid assessment gives an accurate measurement of what it is supposed to measure