Information on the new qualifications for support staff in schools
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Who is this document for?
This guidance is for you if you are considering taking a qualification to:
- prepare for working in a school
- enhance skills and knowledge relevant to your current role in school
- develop knowledge and understanding to prepare for a new role

Why are the qualifications changing?
The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is the new framework for creating and accrediting qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is expected that all vocational qualifications will have been accredited to the QCF by the end of 2010. This is the point that the QCF will replace the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for vocational qualifications.

All qualifications currently accredited to the NQF, including those for school support staff, have to be redesigned to meet the requirements of the QCF.

What is the QCF?
QCF qualifications are made up of units. Every unit and qualification in the QCF has a credit value based on the length of time it takes the average learner to complete – one credit represents 10 hours’ work. Each unit and qualification also has its own level, between Entry level and level 8, to show how difficult it is.

What qualifications are available?
The new QCF qualifications for support staff in schools are at levels 2 and 3 on the framework; details are shown on the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification title</th>
<th>Credit value</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 Award in Support Work in Schools</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>This is a knowledge based qualification suitable for all support staff roles in schools, including site staff, administrators etc as well as those who work directly with children and young people. It seeks to develop the knowledge and understanding that all those working in a school setting will need and covers areas such as safeguarding, communication and relationships, child development and understanding the school context. As it is a knowledge based qualification, it can be taken by learners not yet employed in a school, as well as providing initial training/induction for those new in post.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 Certificate in Supporting the Wider Curriculum in Schools</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>This qualification has been developed to meet the needs of those working as midday assistants/supervisors or who support the wider activities of the school such as before and after school clubs. It incorporates the units in the Level 2 Award in Support Work in Schools and shares units with the certificate in supporting teaching and learning, recognising that many in teaching assistant roles also undertake midday duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>This qualification is for those members of the school workforce who directly support the teaching and learning of pupils. The qualification incorporates the units in the Level 2 Award in Support Work in Schools in support work in schools and adds competence units to reflect the role of those supporting pupils’ learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Award in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>This is a knowledge based qualification suitable for support staff roles in schools that directly support the teaching and learning of pupils. It seeks to develop the knowledge and understanding for working in a school setting and covers areas such as safeguarding, communication, child development and understanding the school context. As it is a knowledge based qualification, it can be taken by learners not yet employed in a school, or those in school who are seeking a higher level role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Certificate in Cover Supervision of Pupils in Schools</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>This qualification is for those working in the role of cover supervisor in schools. It incorporates the units of the Level 3 Award in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools. This qualification also includes some units that are in the Level 3 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools. However it omits those that are about actively advancing pupils’ learning and includes a unit on providing cover to reflect the differences between the cover supervisor and teaching assistant roles. Learners moving from one role to the other will be able to demonstrate competence in the new role through the achievement of credit from specified additional units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>This qualification is for those members of the school workforce who directly support the teaching and learning of pupils. The qualification incorporates the units in the Level 3 Award in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools. Additional units cover the generic knowledge and skills required to work in a teaching assistant or similar role at Level 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 Diploma in Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>This qualification is for those members of the school workforce who directly support the teaching and learning of pupils. The qualification incorporates the units in the Level 3 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools. Additional units cover the specialist roles of some staff working at Level 3 e.g. supporting bilingual pupils or supporting pupils with moderate or severe special educational needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does the introduction of the QCF mean that staff with existing qualifications should take the QCF versions as well?
No, there is no intention that anyone should retake qualifications as the result of the introduction of the QCF. The QCF qualifications are based on the same standards that underpin the current NVQs; what has changed is the way that qualifications are designed. The new structure makes it easier to add additional units as your role changes and develops without having to repeat training you have already done.

Are there any entry requirements for the qualifications?
There are no formal entry requirements for the qualifications. However, you will need to have sufficient language and literacy skills to be able to achieve the qualification you have chosen. Your training provider will be able to help if you need to improve these.

If you choose to take one of the certificates or the diploma, you will have to demonstrate to the assessor that you are able meet the requirements of these qualifications in your work in school, so you will be needing to be working in a school (employed or in a voluntary capacity). Your school and provider will be able to help you decide the size and level of qualification suitable for your role.

How will the new QCF qualifications work in practice?
The examples below show how people in different circumstances might use the new QCF qualifications:

Example A
Jenny would like to work in a school but competition is fierce for any jobs that come up in her area. She decides to make herself more attractive to schools by taking the Level 2 Award in Support Work in Schools at her local college. This helps prepare her for her new role by helping her understand how schools work and the responsibilities of the staff who work in them. Jenny starts work in a local school as a teaching assistant; her school supports her to achieve the additional units she needs for the Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning.

Example B
Nilufer already has a Level 3 qualification for teaching assistants. However, her school has asked her, as a Turkish speaker, to take responsibility for working with a group of pupils at the school whose home language is Turkish. Nilufer’s local authority is offering training for those working with children with English as an additional language linked to the award of two relevant QCF units. Nilufer likes the idea of her achievement being recognised in this way and her school supports her to do the training and assessment.

Example C
Mark already has a Level 2 NVQ in Supporting Teaching and Learning but wants to progress to a more senior role in his school. He therefore decides to take the Level 3 Award in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools which provides the underpinning knowledge and understanding needed for a higher level role. With this new understanding, Mark is able to take on increased responsibilities and quickly decides to enrol with a training provider to take the additional units that he needs for the Level 3 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools. After a while, Mark moves to another school where he is asked to focus particularly on working with pupils with behaviour and attendance issues; Mark decides to take some additional QCF units related to his new role and achieves sufficient credits to be awarded the Level 3 Diploma in Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning in Schools.

Example D
Mary gets a job as the bursar in a local school; she has qualifications in business administration but has never previously worked in a school or children’s setting. She finds that taking the Level 2 Award in Support Work in Schools helps her understand how her role supports the work of the school as well as making her feel more confident in communicating with children and their parents.
Example E
Nazeera works as a midday supervisor and also supports in an after school club. She takes the Level 2 Certificate in Supporting the Wider Curriculum in Schools. After a time, Nazeera also starts providing classroom support for a pupil with special educational needs in addition to her other roles. She is pleased to find that her existing qualification gives her substantial credits towards the Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools and decides to complete the additional units that she needs to be fully qualified for her teaching assistant role.

How do I find out more?
If you are already working in a school, your line manager or CPD leader should be able to help you decide on the qualification most suitable for you; the school may also have links with local training providers. Guidance for school leaders on support staff qualifications is available on the TDA web site.

Six awarding organisations will be offering the qualifications (see below) and they may also be able to help with finding a local training provider.
Useful Links

Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA)
There is a wide range of QCF resources available on the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency website (www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/4374.aspx).

Training and Development Agency for Schools
There is a wide range of resources for school support staff, their managers and those who support their professional development or have a role in advising them on appropriate qualification routes on the Training and Development Agency for Schools website (www.tda.gov.uk), including:

- Information on Continuing Professional Development
- A Skills for Life Planner (http://www.tda.gov.uk/support-staff/developing-progressing/skills-for-life.aspx)
- Guidance on Apprenticeships in Supporting Teaching and Learning (http://www.tda.gov.uk/support-staff/developing-progressing/skills-for-life.aspx)

The awarding organisations offering the qualifications covered by this guidance are:

- Ascentis (www.ascentis.co.uk)
- CACHE (www.cache.org.uk)
- City and Guilds (www.cityandguilds.com)
- Edexcel (www.edexcel.com)
- NCFE (www.ncfe.org.uk)
- OCR (www.ocr.org.uk)