

Further Education Minister Sion Simon introduces the new Qualifications and Credit Framework

NOCN Chief Executive Professor Jill Brunt welcomes the ministerial statement on the new Qualifications and Credit Framework.:

"as an organisation, we have been at the heart of credit based learning for many years. We know how well this works for providers, employers and most importantly, learners and we are delighted that this approach to learning and qualifications will be available as a national system, enabling as many people as possible to really make their learning count. "

Learners will be more able to study in 'bite-sized chunks', building up a portfolio of accredited training which suits their individual needs under a new system approved today by Further Education Minister Sion Simon.

The new Qualifications and Credit Framework will enable people to gain qualifications at their own pace, from a number of sources, in a way that suits them - and to carry the modules with them if, for example, they change jobs. Employers will find it easier to find or develop employees with the skills they need for business success. By 2010 all key vocational qualifications will be approved by Sector Skills Councils and readily available to learners in small, credit-based units of learning.

Further Education Minister Sion Simon said:

"The Qualifications and Credit Framework means that, for the first time, all learning counts. The new system will ensure that no learning is ever lost, as qualifications will be flexible enough to incorporate relevant modules of training gained at a pace that suits the learner. In this way, we'll enable people with family, work and other responsibilities to gain the qualifications they need to get on life and develop their careers in a way that makes maximum use of their talents."

This new modular approach to the way vocational qualifications are awarded will make them more relevant to the needs of employers and more flexible and accessible for learners, without compromising quality. Following a two-year pilot, there are now almost 1,000 qualifications on the framework and today's announcement will pave the way for many more.

This week, Network Rail has placed a new qualification in track engineering, which they developed by working with Qualification and Curriculum Authority and the Sector Skills Council GoSkills, on the QCF.

This will enable Network Rail staff to achieve formal, transferable recognition for skills development at Levels 2 (GCSE equivalent) and 3 (A level equivalent), while helping the company develop a world-class workforce that meets its specific skills needs.

By ensuring that units of learning are recorded on an individual learner record, the QCF will also ensure that a wider range of learners' achievements is recognised, which is simple for all learners and employers to understand. The new framework will reduce bureaucracy in accrediting and assessing qualifications.

The reforms will give learners:

- * greater choice in the units of study they can take;
- * flexibility on how they study and when they complete each unit;
- * recognition of their achievements in the learner achievement record -with the potential to remove the need for individual learners to have to give employers, providers or awarding bodies paper records of all their previous achievements.

The key change for employers is:

- * a system in which vocational qualifications are developed and approved based on employers' needs.

The Government offered unitised 'bite-sized chunks' of learning in a recent package of support to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) get the training that they need most to stay competitive - and wants to allow people taking whole qualifications to be able to do so in the same bite-sized way. The new system will also be compatible with qualifications frameworks across Europe, ensuring people who work elsewhere in the EU will be able to build a portfolio of qualifications.

Ministers have also agreed that level 2 qualifications (equivalent to five good GCSEs) on the Qualifications and Credit Framework should for now be made up of at least 13 credits - where SSCs agree this meets their sector's skill demands - to be considered as "full". A qualification that is "full" is eligible for state funding. Credits are the building blocks of qualifications on the QCF. 13 credits represents a certificate-level qualification.