Regulated Qualifications: Principles and Requirements

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Principles and requirements for qualification product approval and accreditation of qualifications

SQA Accreditation has a remit from the Scottish Government to accredit and regulate any type of qualification other than degrees. These include qualifications that assess skills and/or knowledge and understanding.

All regulated qualifications must be formally assessed and externally quality assured.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) and other competence-based qualifications (CBQs) enable the assessment of competence, skills, knowledge and understanding in a specific occupation to the standard required in the workplace. SVQs are a specific type of CBQ that have a one-to-one relationship with National Occupational Standards (NOS).

Other qualifications could, for example, include exam-based qualifications, knowledge qualifications and Workplace Core Skills.

What do these requirements apply to?

These requirements apply to both qualification products submitted for approval and qualifications submitted for accreditation. We only accredit qualifications submitted by approved awarding bodies.

Qualification products

Not all qualifications are based on approved qualification products. The term 'qualification products' is used to describe the documents developed by a submitting organisation that define a qualification and may be used by awarding bodies to develop qualifications.

Qualification products must be approved by SQA Accreditation for the following:

- SVQs
- CBQs intended to be included in a Scottish Apprenticeship
- qualifications specified in legislation or by an industry/sector regulator
- qualifications intended for use by multiple awarding bodies

Qualification products include:

- a qualification structure that includes the qualification title, and the number and combination of units required to achieve it
- unit specifications: which may be approved NOS
- SCQF credit rating for the qualification and component units
- an assessment strategy that gives guidance to those who will deliver, assess and quality assure the qualification
- Core Skills signposting opportunities for assessment of Workplace Core Skills in the assessment of the qualification

Other qualification products may be brought forward for approval. In such cases you should engage with your Accreditation Manager

Qualification requirements

Our requirements fall into three categories:

1. Requirements for all regulated qualifications

2. Requirements for CBQs

3. Requirements for SVQs

The categories apply with increasing specificity (so qualifications that must meet the requirements in category 2 must also meet the requirements in category 1; qualifications that must meet requirements in category 3 must also meet requirements in categories 1 and 2).

1. Requirements for all regulated qualifications

All regulated qualifications must:

1.1.   be outcome based and have identified content and structure

1.2.   satisfy an identified need and demand

1.3.   include a definition of what the qualification measures and what the learner will achieve

1.4.   be developed following a defined qualification development process

1.5.   include a defined maintenance and review process

1.6.   be able to be assessed consistently and objectively

1.7.   specify processes for effective delivery and assessment

1.8.   define assessment methods, ensuring they are fit for purpose and result in fair and consistent assessment

1.9.   define quality assurance requirements, ensuring they are fit for purpose

1.10. define expertise and requirements for all personnel involved in delivery, assessment and quality assurance

1.11. be credit rated and levelled for the SCQF, unless by exception

1.12. follow SQA Accreditation's processes and guidance

2. Additional requirements for regulated competence-based qualifications (CBQs)

In addition to the requirements in section 1, regulated CBQs must also:

2.1.   evidence how NOS have been considered or are incorporated into the qualification

2.2.   include statements of competence, skills, knowledge and understanding that are capable of being measured over time

2.3.   define the assessment strategy and methodology, including:

- internal and external quality assurance requirements

- what must be assessed in the workplace

- what can be simulated and what are the requirements of a realistic working environment

- occupational expertise and qualification requirements of assessors and quality assurers

2.4.   detail the qualification structure, identifying the combination of units required to achieve the qualification

3. Additional requirements for SVQs

In addition to the requirements in sections 1 and 2, SVQs must:

3.1.   have a one-to-one relationship between a NOS and each qualification unit

3.2.   have SCQF credit rating and levelling recommendations approved by SQA Accreditation

3.3.   have qualification products approved by SQA Accreditation

3.4.   show how the content of the NOS signposts to the relevant Workplace Core Skills