

# **Research into the Current Centre Recognition and Centre Qualification Approval Arrangements**

**Research Study Conducted by  
MORI Social Research Institute**



**Aug - Sept 2005**



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# 1. Introduction

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This report presents the findings from a survey of centres delivering accredited qualifications in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, carried out by Market and Opinion Research International (MORI) on behalf of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), Awdurdod Cymwysterau, Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (ACCAC), Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

## Background & objectives

The research carried out by MORI is part of a wider programme of evaluation and consultation carried out by QCA, ACCAC, CCEA and SQA over the past year. Further details about the consultation can be found on QCA's website ([www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk)).

The two main aims of the MORI research are:

- to assess the actual burden centre recognition and qualification approval brings to centres, and
- to establish which factors inform a centre's decision whether to seek approval from one, or more, awarding body(ies).

## Methodology

In total, 1,000 individuals with direct contact with awarding bodies at centres delivering accredited qualifications in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup> were interviewed. The survey took place from 22<sup>nd</sup> August to 16<sup>th</sup> September 2005 and was conducted by telephone. The table below shows the breakdown of interviews in terms of centre type. Please see the appendix for a full sample profile.

Prior to the telephone survey commencing, letters about the research were sent to the whole sample (3,130 centres) detailing the aims and objectives of the research, along with a leaflet detailing the proposals of the "Centre Recognition Project".

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to as 'respondents' throughout the report.

<b>Centre type</b>		<b>No. of interviews</b>
College	Colleges, FE colleges, HE institutions, Independent school/colleges, Sixth-form Colleges	247
School	Schools, Special Needs Schools/Colleges	217
Employer	Employers, Hospitals/health services	95
Training Provider	Training Providers	292
Other	Adult/Community Providers, Community based providers, Council Institutions, Voluntary organisations/Charities and others that do not fit on the above four categories	149
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,000</b>

As detailed above, 1,000 interviews were achieved. This represents an unadjusted response rate of 32% and an adjusted response rate of 42%<sup>2</sup> as shown in the table below. Given the timing of the survey, during August and September, these response rates are relatively high.

<b>Response rates</b>	
Total number of leads	3,130
Successful interviews	1,000
<b>Unadjusted response rate %</b>	<b>32%</b>
Invalid sample	
Wrong number	231
Screened out/Ineligible	382
Not available during fieldwork	65
Moved	15
Reached maximum number of calls	57
Total valid sample	2,380
<b>Adjusted response rate %</b>	<b>42%</b>
Refused	189
Still contacting	618
Over quota	542
Sample not called	31

<sup>2</sup> The adjusted response rate excludes individuals whose telephone number was incorrect, who were screened out for being ineligible to participate, who were not available during the fieldwork period, who had moved and in cases where the telephone interviewers had reached the maximum number of call (10 or more) without making contact with the relevant person.

## **The questionnaire**

The questionnaire was designed in close consultation with QCA, ACCAC, CCEA and SQA and programmed into Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) format by MORI. As usual with computerised interviewing, several logic and consistency checks were included to minimise keying errors and implausible answers. Interviews lasted 12 minutes on average.

The questionnaire was divided into the following six sections:

- Screener questions
- Demographics
- Centre recognition process
- Qualification approval process
- Views on current arrangements
- Recommendations for the future.

Screening questions were asked to ensure that MORI interviewed the most appropriate person within each organisation i.e. an individual with direct contact with awarding bodies during the process of centre recognition and approval. Questions were also asked to ensure that individuals who participated in the research represented centres who provided qualifications that are accredited to the National Qualifications Framework.

## **Sampling**

QCA provided MORI with a sample of organisations from the UK Register of Learning Providers. This was supplemented by samples of schools and colleges obtained by MORI from the School Government Publishing company as well as a sample of training providers provided by Experian.

## **Interviewer briefings**

Prior to the survey, a full and detailed briefing was held with MORI Telephone Surveys (MTS) interviewers over the telephone. In addition, a comprehensive briefing pack was supplied to every interviewer involved in the project, including information on background to the study and guidelines on the recruitment and interviewing procedures.

## **Data processing and analysis**

All data entry, editing, validation and analysis was carried out by MORI Data Services (MDS) according to specifications provided by MORI. MDS also provided listings for the open-ended questions and any 'other' responses. Data

are unweighted as the sample profile of centres delivering accredited qualifications in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is unknown.

Where differences have been highlighted between subgroups (such as centre type) it means that the difference is statistically significant.

Further data investigation was carried out with the data in SPSS which included the removal of outliers for the purposes of calculations of burden on centres.

## **Presentation and interpretation of the data**

When interpreting the findings it is important to remember that the results are only based on a sample of the population (in this case centres delivering accredited qualifications), and not on the entire population. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances, and not all differences between subgroups are therefore significant. For example, we would need to see a difference of up to  $\pm 19$  percentage points to be sure that any differences in the results from the smaller sub-groups (such as comparing the results from interviews conducted in Wales and Scotland) were “real”, and had not occurred by chance. A full explanation of statistical reliability can be found in Appendix B.

Where percentages do not sum up to 100%, this is due to computer rounding, the exclusion of don't know/not stated categories or multiple answers. Throughout the report, an asterisk (\*) denotes any value less than one half of a percent but more than nought and a hyphen (-) represents nought.

## **Finding your way round the report**

The report begins with a summary of the key findings to emerge from the research, followed by a detailed discussion of the main findings. The appendices contain detailed information on the profile of participating centres. This is followed with a discussion on statistical reliability and the questionnaire marked-up with the overall results.

## **Acknowledgements**

It is clear that centres are working under ever increasing pressures from a number of different sources. Furthermore, they receive frequent requests to participate in surveys similar to this. Therefore, we wish to record our gratitude to everyone who participated.

We would also like to thank Dominic Devine and Alan Long at QCA and their colleagues at ACCAC, CCEA and SQA for their help and advice in developing this project.

## **Publication of the data**

Our Standard Terms and Conditions apply to this, as to all studies we carry out. No press release or publication of the findings of this study shall be made without the advance approval of MORI. Such approval is normally only refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

## 2. Key Findings

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*This research looks at the actual burden that centre recognition and qualification approval brings to centres delivering accredited qualifications, and the factors that inform a centre's decision whether to seek approval from one, or more, awarding body(ies).*

*The survey was carried out by MORI Social Research Institute by telephone with 1,000 individuals who have direct contact with awarding bodies at centres delivering accredited qualifications in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Fieldwork took place between 22<sup>nd</sup> August and 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2005.*

### Applying for centre recognition

- The total time taken to apply for centre recognition, in terms of the whole process from start to finish is 41 days, on average. Completing the application form for centre recognition takes an average of five hours. Based on the fact that 2.6 applications are made each year by individual centres and involve on average 4.0 staff, the process of completing application forms for centre recognition currently takes up an average of 16 hours of staff time per year.
- Colleges make the most applications for centre recognition (or re-recognition) in the past year (4.4), with schools making the least (1.7). Indeed, more college staff are involved in making applications for recognition to work with awarding bodies, than all other centre types. Looking at the number of applications made each year and the number of staff involved the data indicates that the burden of centre recognition weighs heaviest on colleges and employers.

### Applying for qualification approval

- Applications for qualification approval take an average of 35 days from start to finish. Each application form takes an average of four hours to complete; a process that is repeated on average 4.9 times a year, involving 3.5 staff. In total the process of completing application forms for qualification approval takes up an average of 20 hours of staff time each year.
- As with centre recognition colleges make a greater number of applications than other centres and say that it involves a greater number of staff. Indeed, the findings do indicate that, as with centre recognition, colleges are placed under the heaviest strain by the current processes for qualification approval.

## Where responsibility lays for centre recognition and approval

- Typically one central team or department is involved in the decision to apply for recognition and approval with awarding bodies. Only 16% of centres say that no specific individual, team or department has overall responsibility for this decision. It is more common to find that no one has this responsibility in schools or colleges, compared with other centres.
- However, it is encouraging to find that there are high levels of awareness in regards to who is responsible for seeking recognition and approval from awarding bodies within individual centres. Nine in ten (91%) respondents say that it is widely known throughout their centre who has this role.

## Choosing an awarding body

- The most important criteria for centres when choosing an awarding body to provide a new qualification are *the content of a particular qualification/its fitness for purpose, the reputation of the awarding body's qualifications and the reputation of the awarding body itself*.

## Describing the current recognition and approval processes

- Current recognition and approval processes are most frequently described as *time consuming, bureaucratic and repetitive* – by around a third of respondents for each. Only one quarter of respondents use positive phrases, such as *effective* and *clear*, to describe the current processes. Moreover, more respondents chose only negative words to describe the current recognition and approval processes, than chose only positive words.
- Schools are more likely to characterise the current processes as *effective* and *clear*. However, employers most commonly describe the current processes as *bureaucratic*, whereas colleges and training providers are more likely to say that they are *time consuming*. Centres which deal with six or more awarding bodies are more likely to describe the current processes negatively (i.e. as *time consuming, bureaucratic and repetitive*) than centres who work with five or less awarding bodies.
- While three in ten respondents agree that current centre recognition and qualification approval processes place an unnecessary burden on the centre in which they work, half disagree. This is quite surprising given that the most common words used to describe the processes are *time consuming, bureaucratic and repetitive*. However, the fact that not all respondents see the current processes as an unnecessary burden is likely to reflect the overwhelming agreement that the current recognition and approval processes are a *necessary quality assurance activity* and the fact that they are only aware of the current processes for ensuring quality.

- Almost all respondents who have read about the proposed changes to the centre recognition and approval process agree with the overall aim to establish a common centre approval process across all awarding bodies for all centres.
- The majority of respondents (57%) spontaneously suggest at least one change to the current recognition and approval arrangements, their priorities being the *streamlining of the external verification/moderation process* and *making the recognition process and requirements more consistent*. These priorities are consistent with the recommendations already set out in the key ‘Centre Recognition’ project proposals and thereby endorse the overall project proposals.

## **Conclusions**

- The survey findings suggest that there exists a level of burden in the current arrangements for centre recognition and qualification approval which needs addressing, specifically in regards to colleges. Centres typically describe the current arrangements as *time consuming, bureaucratic* and *repetitive*. Furthermore, the current process of applying for centre recognition takes up an average of 16 hours of staff time per year, while applications for qualification approval use an average of 20 hours of staff time each year.
- Support for change is also strong: Nearly everyone who has read about the proposed changes to the current centre recognition and approval arrangement agree with the aim to establish a common centre approval process across all awarding bodies for all centres, and their priorities for change -*streamlining of the external verification/moderation process* and *making the recognition process and requirements more consistent* - match the key ‘Centre Recognition’ project proposals.

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## 3. Main Findings

### 3.1 Applying for centre recognition or re-recognition

#### The number of applications made in the last year

Of the 55% of centres who have made an application for centre recognition or re-recognition over the past year, the majority (80%) made between one and three applications, with the mean (average) being 2.6 applications over the past year.

Analysing the results by centre type highlights the fact that schools are least likely to have made an application for centre recognition or re-recognition with an awarding body over the past year compared with colleges, employers, training providers and other types of organisation. The findings also show that colleges make a greater number of applications than other centre types (a mean average of 4.4, compared with 2.6 overall).

Table 1

**QM3 Over the past year how many times, if any, has your centre made an application for centre recognition or re-recognition to work with an awarding body?**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
None	39	32	63	39	36	23
1-3	44	39	20	47	53	68
4-5	6	6	2	5	7	7
6-10	3	7	1	2	3	2
More than 10	2	9	0	1	0	0
Don't know	6	7	14	5	1	1
Mean <sup>3</sup>	2.6	4.4	1.7	2.0	2.2	1.8
<i>Base: All centres</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>247</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>292</i>	<i>149</i>

*Source: MORI*

The data also suggests that centres providing occupational qualifications have made more applications than those providing vocational qualifications (means of 3.3 and 2.9, respectively). And perhaps not surprisingly, more applications are made by centres who offer a large number of qualifications, compared with centres who offer between one and five qualifications (a mean of 3.5 applications

<sup>3</sup> Based on all who gave a response excluding those who said 'None', as such the base for the means differs from the base given in this table.

for centres offering 11 or more qualifications, compared with a mean 1.5 applications for centres offering between one and five qualifications). The number of applications for centre recognition or re-recognition to work with an awarding body is also higher for centres with 500 or more candidates who are currently undertaking an accredited qualification, compared with centres who have fewer than 50 candidates, and for centres who work with six or more awarding bodies.

It is important to note that two fifths (39%) of the centres interviewed had not made an application for centre recognition or re-recognition to work with an awarding body over the past year.

### The number of staff involved in the application process

In the majority of centres (53%) between two and four members of staff are involved in the application process for recognition to work with an awarding body, with the mean (average) being 4.0 members of staff.

The table below shows a breakdown of the average number of staff involved in the process by centre type. It is clear that a greater number of staff are involved with the application process in colleges, than in all other centre types (a mean of 6.7 staff in colleges, compared with 4.0 overall), which ties in with the fact that colleges are making a greater number of applications.

Table 2

**QM4 And how many members of staff at your centre are, on average, involved with an application for recognition to work with an awarding body?**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
Number of staff (mean)	4.0	6.7	3.5	2.9	3.2	2.8
<i>Base: All centres who gave an answer with outliers and implausible answers removed</i>	816	208	142	77	262	127

*Source: MORI*

The data also points towards a greater number of staff being involved in the application process for recognition to work with an awarding body in centres where a large number of qualifications are offered (11 or more), in centres with a large number of candidates (500 and above) and in centres who deal with six or more awarding bodies.

## The time taken to complete an application form for centre recognition

The majority (58%) of centres<sup>4</sup> say that it takes them on average one to two hours to complete an application form for approval to provide a qualification. The mean (average) time it takes is 5.2 hours. The reason the mean figure is so high is due to nine per cent of respondents citing that the completion of an application for centre recognition or re-recognition<sup>5</sup> takes over a day.

The data indicates that it takes ‘other’ centres<sup>6</sup> longer to complete an application form than it does colleges schools, employers and training providers. This is possibly a consequence of having fewer staff involved in the task (see Table 2 for details of the number of staff involved). The shortest time taken to complete an application form for approval to provide a qualification is in schools.

Table 3

**QM1 Thinking about centre recognition, could you tell me approximately how long the completion of an application form for centre recognition takes on average?**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
Time in hours (mean)	5.2	4.5	2.0	6.2	5.5	6.8
<i>Base: All centres who gave an answer with outliers and implausible answers removed</i>	528	138	41	58	197	94

*Source: MORI*

## The length of time taken from applying for centre recognition from start to finish

In terms of the whole process of applying for centre recognition from start to finish, a third of respondents (32%<sup>7</sup>) say it takes up to 15 days on average. A further half (53%) say it takes between 15 and 60 days and the remaining one in six (15%) of respondents say it takes longer than two months (or 60 days).

<sup>4</sup> Based on those who were able to give a time with outliers removed (528 respondents).

<sup>5</sup> 78 further outliers (accounting for 8% of the overall sample) have been left out of this mean calculation.

<sup>6</sup> By ‘other centres’ we mean Adult/Community Providers, Community based providers, Council Institutions, Voluntary organisations/Charities and others that do not fit on the above four categories.

<sup>7</sup> Based on those who were able to give a time with outliers excluded (600 respondents).

The mean (average) time taken from applying for approval to providing a qualification takes centres is 41.6 days, a figure that increases to a mean of 56.8 days for employers and 53.5 for other centres.

Table 4

**QM2 And now thinking about the whole process of applying for centre recognition from start to finish. Could you tell me how long that usually takes on average?**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
Number of days (mean)	41.6	35.2	23.5	56.8	39.6	53.5
<i>Base: All centres who gave an answer with outliers and implausible answers removed</i>	<i>600</i>	<i>159</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>228</i>	<i>107</i>

*Source: MORI*

## Baseline of burden – applying for centre recognition

The amount of time centres spend each year applying for centre recognition can be calculated using the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Time taken to fill out a centre recognition application form} \\ \times \\ \text{Number of times applications are made per year} \end{array}$$

This gives a mean time of 15.8 hours, varying between a minimum of three minutes and a maximum of 1,406 hours.

The table below shows a breakdown of this by centre type. This calculation indicates that the burden of centre recognition weighs heaviest on colleges, far and above any other providers. Schools appear to be the least burdened which would be expected as they follow a different process for centre recognition for the majority of their qualifications (e.g. A levels and GCSEs).

Table 5

**Baseline of burden: applying for centre recognition**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
Average burden (hours)	15.8	27.2	5.0	13.4	12.1	11.9
<i>Base: All centres who gave an answer with outliers and implausible answers removed</i>	<i>386</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>143</i>	<i>76</i>

*Source: MORI*

### Baseline of burden – the whole process of applying for centre recognition

The amount of time centres spend each year on the whole process of applying for centre recognition can be calculated using the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Time taken for whole process from start to finish} \\ \times \\ \text{Number of times applications are made per year} \end{array}$$

This gives a mean time of 90.4 days, varying between a minimum of one day and a maximum of 800 days (two years).

The whole process of applying for centre recognition takes longer for colleges compared with schools, employers and training providers, although the differences are smaller than those found for the application form burden as calculated above. Table 6 below shows these differences.

Table 6

**Baseline of burden: whole process of applying for centre recognition**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
Average burden (days)	90.4	98.7	63.0	87.2	87.6	94.6
<i>Base: All centres who gave an answer with outliers and implausible answers removed</i>	<i>423</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>158</i>	<i>85</i>

*Source: MORI*

## 3.2 Applying for qualification approval

### The number of applications made for approval to provide a qualification in the last year

Of the 69% of centres who have applied for approval to provide a qualification over the past year, the majority (86%) have done so between one and ten times, with a mean (average) of 4.9 times.

Reflecting the findings for the number of applications made for centre recognition or re-recognition, colleges make a greater number of applications for approval to provide a qualification than other centre types (a mean average of 11.0, compared with 4.9 overall).

Table 7

#### QM7 Over the past year how many times, if any, has your centre made an application for approval to provide a qualification?

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	College	School	Employer	Training Provider	Other
	%	%	%	%	%	%
None	26	15	48	26	20	23
1-10	60	49	37	67	77	72
11-19	4	12	*	1	1	2
20-29	3	9	0	1	*	1
30-39	1	5	0	0	*	0
40-49	1	2	0	0	0	0
More than 50	2	4	*	3	1	0
Don't know	5	5	14	1	1	1
Mean <sup>8</sup>	4.9	11.0	2.4	3.6	2.7	2.5
<i>Base: All centres</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>247</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>292</i>	<i>149</i>

*Source: MORI*

A quarter (26%) of the centres interviewed had not made an application to provide a qualification in the past year, a figure that increases to 48% for schools. In comparison, just 15% of colleges had not made an application for approval to provide a qualification over the past year.

<sup>8</sup> Based on all who gave a response excluding those who said 'None', as such the base for the means differs from the base given in this table.

## The number of staff involved in an application for approval to provide a qualification

In the majority of centres (58%) between two and four members of staff are involved in the application process, with a mean (average) of 3.5<sup>9</sup> members of staff.

The table below shows a breakdown of the average number of staff involved in the process by centre type. Once again reflecting the findings for the application process for centre recognition, the data highlights that more staff from colleges are involved in making an application to provide a qualification, in comparison to all other centre types (a mean of 5.5 members of staff in colleges compared with 3.5 overall).

Table 8

### QM8 And how many members of staff at your centre, on average, are involved with an application for approval to provide a qualification?

By type of centre	Total	College	School	Employer	Training Provider	Other
Number of staff	3.5	5.5	3.0	2.7	3.0	2.5
<i>Base: All centres who gave an answer with outliers and implausible answers removed</i>	786	192	127	80	257	130

Source: MORI

## The time taken to complete an application form for approval to provide a qualification

The majority (62%) of centres<sup>10</sup> say that it takes them an average of one to two hours to complete an application form for approval to provide a qualification. The remaining two fifths (38%) say it takes three or more hours.

Overall, the mean (average) time taken to complete an application form for approval to provide a qualification is 4.4 hours<sup>11</sup>, which is higher than the one to two hours given above as 20 respondents (excluding outliers) say it takes at least a day. The data indicates that it takes ‘other’<sup>12</sup> centres longer to complete an application form for approval to provide a qualification, than it does colleges schools, employers and training providers. This mirrors the findings for the time taken to complete an application for centre recognition and, once again, may be

<sup>9</sup> Based on those who were able to give a figure with outliers excluded (786 respondents).

<sup>10</sup> Based on those who gave a time (682 respondents).

<sup>11</sup> Outliers have been left out of this mean calculation.

<sup>12</sup> By ‘other centres’ we mean Adult/Community Providers, Community based providers, Council Institutions, Voluntary organisations/Charities and others that do not fit on the above four categories.

partly explained by the fact that fewer staff are involved in the process (see Table 8).

Table 9

**QM5 Now thinking about approval to provide a qualification. Could you tell me approximately how long the completion of an application form for approval to provide a qualification takes on average?**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
Time in hours (mean)	4.4	4.9	3.5	3.2	4.1	5.6
<i>Base: All centres who gave an answer with outliers and implausible answers removed</i>	597	163	52	66	210	106

*Source: MORI*

### **The length of time taken to apply for approval to provide a qualification from start to finish**

In terms of the whole process of applying for approval to provide a qualification from start to finish, two fifths of respondents who gave a time (39%) say it takes up to 15 days on average. A further half (48%) say it takes between 15 and 60 days and the remaining one in eight (12%) say it takes longer than two months (or 60 days).

The mean (average) length of time the whole process of applying for approval to provide a qualification takes is over a month; 35.4 days<sup>13</sup>. As with the whole process of centre recognition, employers and other centres report that the process takes longer, than do colleges, schools and training providers (a mean of 49.2 and 46.3 days respectively, compared with 35.4 days overall).

<sup>13</sup> Based on those who were able to give a time with outliers removed (673 respondents).

Table 10

**QM6 And now thinking about the whole process of applying for approval to provide a qualification from start to finish. Could you tell me how long that usually takes on average?**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
Number of days (mean)	35.4	33.2	29.5	49.2	29.1	46.3
<i>Base: All centres who gave an answer with outliers and implausible answers removed</i>	673	183	56	70	243	121

Source: MORI

### Baseline of burden – applying for qualification approval

The amount of time centres spend each year applying for qualification approval can be calculated using the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Time taken to fill out a qualification approval application form} \\ \times \\ \text{Number of times applications are made per year} \end{array}$$

This gives a mean time of 20.5 hours spent on applying for qualification approval, varying between a minimum of two minutes and a maximum of 20.8 days (or 500 minutes).

Table 11 below shows a breakdown of this calculation by centre type. The data indicates that the burden of qualification approval is felt most by colleges; for whom it takes over five working days<sup>14</sup> each year to complete an application form for qualification approval (mean of 43.8 hours). All other centre types indicate the process takes less than two working days.

<sup>14</sup> Based on a working day of eight hours.

Table 11

**Baseline of burden: applying for qualification approval**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
Average burden (hours)	20.5	43.8	12.9	13.9	10.9	11.7
<i>Base: All centres who gave an answer with outliers and implausible answers removed</i>	468	127	36	52	173	80

*Source: MORI*

### Baseline of burden – the whole process of qualification approval

The amount of time centres spend each year on the whole process of applying for qualification approval can be calculated using the following formula:

Time taken for whole process from start to finish
x
Number of times applications are made per year

This gives a mean time of 120.6 days, varying between a minimum of 14 hours and maximum of 1,050 days (or 2.9 years).

The table below shows a breakdown of this calculation by centre type. In terms of qualification approval the whole process takes longer for colleges than other centres, at 226.1 days i.e. three fifths of a year (62%) in total. The time taken for the whole process, from start to finish, is quickest for schools (a mean of 88.1 days) and training providers (a mean of 70.1 days).

Table 12

**Baseline of burden: whole process of applying for qualifications approval**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
Average burden (days)	120.6	226.1	88.1	119.2	70.1	94.8
<i>Base: All centres who gave an answer with outliers and implausible answers removed</i>	515	131	39	54	200	91

*Source: MORI*

### 3.3 Whose responsibility is it to apply for recognition and approval?

In the majority of centres (82%) one central team or department is involved in the decision to apply for recognition and approval with awarding bodies, rather than no specific individual, team or department having overall responsibility.

That said this propensity to have one central team /department involved in the application for recognition and approval is more common in companies (i.e. employers), training providers and other types of centres, than in colleges or schools as Table 13 below shows. In around a quarter of colleges and schools it would appear that different people apply as and when necessary with no specific individual, team or department having responsibility for this.

Table 13

**QM9 Who at your centre is involved in the decision to apply for recognition and approval with awarding bodies?**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
One central team/department across the whole centre	82	73	71	88	90	91
No specific individual/team department, different people apply as and when necessary	16	24	23	11	9	7
Other	2	2	2	1	1	1
Don't know	1	*	4	-	-	-
<i>Base: All centres</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>247</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>292</i>	<i>149</i>

Source: MORI

The data also indicates that large centres (those with more than 500 candidates undertaking courses) are less likely to have a dedicated individual or team involved in the decision to apply for recognition and approval with awarding bodies, than small centres (73% of centres with 500 or more candidates, compares with 82% overall). A finding that is probably linked to the fact that only 73% of colleges say they have a specific individual or team who is given responsibility for this. Moreover, centres who deal with six or more awarding bodies are also less likely to have a dedicated team than centres who deal with five or less awarding bodies.

It is encouraging to find that there is relatively high levels of awareness throughout centres of who is responsible for seeking recognition and approval from awarding bodies. Nine in ten (91%) respondents say that it is widely known throughout their centre who has this role.

While less than one in ten (7%) suggest that awareness of who has this role is low it is worth noting that awareness is significantly lower in schools: One in five respondents surveyed from schools (18%) stated that it is not widely known within their school who is responsible for seeking recognition and approval.

### **3.4 Choosing an awarding body**

As shown in Table 14 below, the most important factor affecting centres' decision when choosing an awarding body to provide a new qualification is *the content of a particular qualification/fitness for purpose*. Nearly all (96%) respondents rate this as important (with 87% rating it as **very** important) and it is also the most common response from centres when asked to pick just two factors.

*The reputation of an awarding body's qualifications* and *the reputation of the awarding body* are also considered to be important factors. Again, nearly all respondents (96% and 95% respectively) think these are important (with 80% and 72% respectively saying it is **very** important) and they are the second and third most frequently mentioned factors when asked to pick just two factors that are important in the decision about which awarding body to work with.

*The paperwork and process involved* and *the fees an awarding body charges* are also considered to be important factors in the decision of which awarding bodies to work with, but less so than the three factors already discussed, as the table below shows.

Table 14

**QM11 I would like you to think about the factors that affect your decision when choosing an awarding body to provide a new qualification. How important, if at all, are each of the following factors?**

**QM12 And which two would you say are the most important when choosing an awarding body?**

	M11			M12
	Important	Very Important	Fairly Important	Two Most Important
	%	%	%	%
The content of a particular qualification/fitness for purpose	96	87	9	52
The reputation of their qualifications	96	80	16	23
The reputation of the awarding body	95	72	23	24
The paperwork and process involved	73	40	33	8
The fees an awarding body charges	66	22	44	7

Base: All centres (1,000)

Source: MORI

When asked which two factors are the most important when choosing an awarding body, the response from different centre types vary (as shown in Table 15 below). Schools and colleges are more likely to say that *the content of a particular qualification / its fitness for purpose* is more important, compared with employers and training providers. Colleges are also more likely than other centre types to cite *the reputation of the awarding body's qualifications*. On the other hand training providers and employers are more likely to say that *all factors are equally important*, than schools or colleges.

Table 15

**QM12 Which two would you say are the most important when choosing an awarding body?**

	Colleges	Schools	Employers	Training Providers	Other
	%	%	%	%	%
The content of a particular qualification/fitness for purpose	61	67	32	39	50
The reputation of the awarding body	23	18	25	27	26
The reputation of their qualifications	32	23	19	18	22
They are all equally important	18	15	38	30	19
The paperwork and process involved	5	6	11	9	10
The fees an awarding body charges	8	3	6	9	10
<i>Base: All centres who said three or more factors were very/ fairly important</i>	<i>237</i>	<i>199</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>290</i>	<i>148</i>

Source: MORI

Two thirds (66%) of respondents say that factors other than the ones discussed above also affect their decision when choosing an awarding body to provide a new qualification. These factors include the overall or ongoing support and guidance offered by an awarding body (14%), which appears to be a particular issue for training providers (19%). Good communication from the awarding body (10%) is also mentioned, specifically by schools (14%). Previous experience of an awarding body is mentioned by just under one in ten centres (8%), with colleges and employers more likely to cite this as a factor than ‘other’ centres .

### 3.5 Describing the current recognition and approval processes

The words most frequently used to describe current recognition and approval arrangements are *time consuming* (36%), *bureaucratic* (33%) and *repetitive* (31%). Only one quarter of respondents use positive phrases to describe the current processes; notably *effective* (26%) and *clear* (25%).

These aggregated findings do, however, hide differences by centre type. As shown in Table 16a, schools are more likely to characterise the current processes as *effective* (28%) and *clear* (22%), than as *time consuming*, *bureaucratic* or *repetitive*. However, it should be noted that 30% of schools say they don’t know how to describe the current recognition and approval arrangements, which is

understandable given that schools have little interaction with the current arrangements, compared to other centre types, due to the types of qualifications they offer. Employers most commonly describe the current processes as *bureaucratic*, whereas colleges and training providers are more likely to say that they are *time consuming* than anything else.

Table 16a

**QM13 In your opinion, which of the following words best describe the current recognition and approval arrangements? Please pick up to three.**

<i>By type of centre</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Training Provider</b>	<b>Other</b>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Time consuming	36	41	21	34	43	35
Bureaucratic	33	40	19	44	34	32
Repetitive	31	37	14	37	39	27
Effective	26	22	28	33	23	32
Clear	25	17	22	24	35	27
Flexible	23	15	18	21	24	41
Confusing	17	18	16	15	17	19
Transparent	12	11	6	15	13	19
Streamlined	12	13	11	13	11	13
Inflexible	11	12	4	9	15	13
Don't know	10	11	30	-	2	2
<i>Base: All centres</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>247</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>292</i>	<i>149</i>

Source: MORI

Looking at the results by the number of awarding bodies centres work with, those respondents working in centres which deal with six or more awarding bodies are more likely to describe the current processes negatively (i.e. as *time consuming*, *bureaucratic* and *repetitive*) than centres who work with five or less awarding bodies as the table below shows. It is important to bear in mind that 22% of centres say they have approval to work with more than six awarding bodies and clearly this small, but significant, proportion of centres perceive the current processes negatively.

Table 16b

**QM13 In your opinion, which of the following words best describe the current recognition and approval arrangements? Please pick up to three.**

	All centres	Working with 1-5 awarding bodies	Working with 6 or more awarding bodies
	%	%	%
Time consuming	36	31	50
Bureaucratic	33	30	43
Repetitive	31	28	41
<i>Base: All centres</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>780</i>	<i>217</i>

*Source: MORI*

Through further analysis of the data it is possible to identify what proportion of respondents feel negatively or positively towards the current arrangements for centre recognition and approval. As shown in the table below, out of the three words they were asked to select, more respondents chose all negative words (22%) to describe the current recognition and approval processes, than chose only positive words (14%).

Table 17

**QM13 In your opinion, which of the following words best describe the current recognition and approval arrangements? Please pick up to three.**

	No negative words	1 negative word	2 negative words	3 negative words	<b>Total</b>
	%	%	%	%	%
No positive words	11	4	9	22	46
1 positive word	5	5	13	-	23
2 positive words	7	10	-	-	16
3 positive words	14	-	-	-	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: MORI*

Colleges are less likely to use a positive word to describe the current arrangements for centre recognition and approval than all other centre types and instead are far more likely to use three or more negative words. This is not

surprising given the fact that colleges are far more likely to be identified as being burdened by the current processes than other centres types.

### **3.6 Views of the current processes in regard to quality assurance**

There is overwhelming agreement that the current recognition and approval processes are a *necessary quality assurance activity* (84%).

Looking across the different centre types, schools are less likely to agree (71%) that current recognition and approval processes are a necessary quality assurance activity than all other centre types. However, that is partly explained by the fact that 14% of respondents working in schools say they do not know whether current recognition and approval processes are a necessary quality assurance.

When asked whether they feel that current *centre recognition* and *qualification approval* processes place an unnecessary burden on the centre in which they work half (50% and 49% respectively) of respondents disagree. Only three in ten respondents (29% and 30% respectively) say that current *centre recognition* and *qualification approval* processes place an unnecessary burden on the centre in which they work. This appears to contradict the earlier finding that the current processes are regarded as *time consuming*, *bureaucratic* and *repetitive*. However, this belief among half of the sample that the current processes are not an unnecessary burden can be partly explained by their strong commitment to the need for quality assurance in regard to centre recognition and qualification approval and the fact that they see the current processes as the only way to ensure that.

Looking across the centre types, those working in schools are least likely to say that current *centre recognition* and *qualification approval* processes place an unnecessary burden on the centre in which they work (16%). However, this finding is partly explained by the fact that schools follow a different process for centre recognition and approval for the majority of their qualifications (e.g. A levels and GCSEs).

### **3.7 Suggested changes to current processes**

All centres who were invited to participate in the research were sent a leaflet detailing the Centre Recognition Project in advance of the survey taking place. A fifth (20%) of those who took part read the leaflet in advance of being interviewed. Of these, nearly all (98%) said that they agree with the overall project aim of establishing a common centre approval process across all awarding bodies for all centres. This finding is consistent across schools, colleges, employers and training providers.

Centres were then asked whether any specific changes need to be made to the current arrangements for centre recognition and approval. The majority (57%) of respondents interviewed spontaneously suggest at least one change to current recognition and approval arrangements. However, one in eight respondents

(13%) went as far as proposing two changes and a further 13% felt there were three or more specific changes to be made.

The most frequently mentioned changes which centres feel need to be made to current recognition and approval arrangements match those recommendations already set out in the key ‘Centre Recognition’ project proposals. The most common requests being to *streamline the external verification/moderation process*, to provide *more consistency in the recognition process across all awarding bodies* and to provide *more consistency in requirements across all awarding bodies*<sup>15</sup>. Table 18 below shows the list of recommendations.

Table 18

**QM17 In your opinion what specific changes, if any, need to be made to the current arrangements for centre recognition and approval?**

	%
Streamline the external verification/moderation process	17
More consistency in the recognition process across all awarding bodies	15
More consistency in requirements across all awarding bodies.	14
Less need to resubmit the same information	13
Ensure consistency in quality standards across all awarding bodies	12
Develop a central database of recognised centres and the qualifications they offer	10
More consistency in approval visits across all awarding bodies	8
Develop a common sanctions policy across all the awarding bodies	8
Provide learners with access to a single source of information on all recognised centres in the UK	6
Clearer information about awarding bodies’ fees	6
No need for re-recognition or re-approval	6
None	25
Don't know	18

Base: All centres (1,000)

Only answers mentioned by 5% or more of all centres shown

Source: MORI

A quarter (25%) of respondents feel that no changes are needed to current arrangements, with respondents from training providers and schools more likely to say this than those working in colleges (30% and 28% vs. 19%).

Looking in more detail at the breakdown by centre type the data shows that colleges are more likely to request *more consistency in the recognition process across all*

*awarding bodies* (23%). This is perhaps not surprising given that colleges work with more awarding bodies than any other centre type. The most frequent change requested by schools and employers is to stop having to *re-submit the same information* (9% and 20%, respectively), whereas the most common request from training providers and other centres is for the *streamlining of the external verification/moderation process* (18% and 17%, respectively).

The number of awarding bodies which a centre works with also appears to determine which, if any, changes they would like to see made to the current arrangements for centre recognition and approval. Centres who work with six or more awarding bodies are more likely to call for *more consistency in the recognition process across all awarding bodies, more consistency in requirements across all awarding bodies, and for the development of a central database of recognised centres and the qualifications they offer*, than their counterparts who deal with between one and five awarding bodies.



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# Appendices

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# Appendix A: Sample Profile

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The table below shows the profile of the respondents by key characteristics:

<b>Sample profile of centres</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Total	1,000	100
<b>Country</b>		
England	849	85
Northern Ireland	47	5
Scotland	51	5
Wales	53	5
<b>Number of awarding bodies working with</b>		
1-5	780	78
6-15	135	14
16-25	39	4
26-35	13	1
36-50	18	2
50+	12	1
<b>Types of qualifications offered</b>		
Vocational	707	71
Occupational	506	51
General	575	58
Other	51	5
<b>Number of qualifications offered</b>		
1-5	245	25
6-10	212	21
11-20	159	16
21-40	148	15
41-70	93	9
71-100	31	3
100+	91	9

<b>Sample profile of centres (cont'd)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Total	1,000	100
<b>Number of candidates undertaking an accredited qualification</b>		
Less than 50	179	18
50-99	124	12
100-199	124	12
200-299	90	9
300-399	59	6
400-499	44	4
500-599	44	4
600-699	37	4
700-799	32	3
800-899	16	2
900-999	13	1
1000 or more	225	23

# Appendix B: Statistical Reliability

The table below shows the statistical reliability, at the 95% confidence level for different sample sizes at the aggregate level.

<b>Sampling tolerance applicable to results at or near these percentages bases (based on 95% confidence level)</b>			
	<b>10/90%</b>	<b>30/70%</b>	<b>50%</b>
	<b>±%</b>	<b>±%</b>	<b>±%</b>
<b>Sample Size:</b>			
1,000 individuals from centres delivering accredited qualifications	2	3	3
292 interviews with training providers	3	5	6
47 interviews in Northern Ireland	9	13	14

*Source: MORI*

If the results of the survey of 1,000 individuals show that around 52% would say that the content of a particular qualification is the most important factor when choosing an awarding body - the range within which the true figure would lie (if all centres delivering accredited qualifications had been interviewed) is  $\pm 3$  percentage points, i.e. between 49% and 55%. In fact the true figure is likely to lie at the mid-point of the range (i.e. 52%), rather than at either extremes. As you can see from the table above the range within which the true figure would lie increases as the sample decreases in size.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be “real”, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one - i.e. if it is “statistically significant” - we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume the “95% confidence interval”, the differences between the two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below. For example, 39% of training providers say that the content of a particular qualification is the most important factor when choosing an awarding body, whereas only 32% of employers say the same. However, we cannot be confident that this difference is ‘real’ because it is not greater than  $\pm 11$  percentage points.

<b>Differences required for significance at or near these levels</b>			
	<b>10/90%</b>	<b>30/70%</b>	<b>50%</b>
	<b>±%</b>	<b>±%</b>	<b>±%</b>
<b>Sample Size:</b>			
292 interviews with training providers vs. 95 interviews with employers	7	11	12
47 interviews in Northern Ireland vs. 849 interviews in England	9	14	15

*Source: MORI*

# Appendix C: Marked-up Questionnaire

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