

## 5-day accreditation process policy

2 August 2006

### Introduction

1. During autumn 2004 the regulatory authorities in England (QCA), Wales (ACCAC) and Northern Ireland (CCEA) consulted with and received widespread support from stakeholders with regard to the introduction of a new accreditation process that guarantees accreditation of some new qualifications within five days. The process was piloted in the second half of 2004/5 and has been fully operational since May 2005. The regulatory authorities have kept the 5-day access policy under review and judge that it is now appropriate to revise and update the policy to ensure the application process is transparent and accessible.

### The 5-day process

2. The regulatory authorities are committed to ensuring that only qualifications that meet an identified need are accredited and admitted into the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Industry and sector/subject bodies, such as Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), play an essential role in ensuring the development of qualifications that meet such needs. The regulatory authorities will continue to work closely with these organisations and other key stakeholders to develop coherent strategies for qualifications in identified sectors.

Following the launch of the web-based accreditation system, the regulatory authorities will continue to operate two accreditation processes:

- the standard accreditation process, to which all recognised awarding bodies have access;
- the 5-day accreditation process, to which recognised and eligible awarding bodies may apply to the regulatory authorities for access.

Awarding bodies that demonstrate they have robust arrangements for developing qualifications and ensuring that these arrangements are compliant with the relevant criteria will be subject to less regulatory intervention using the 5-day accreditation process; this in turn means they accept extra responsibility for ensuring that the qualification meets all the relevant criteria.

Awarding bodies will not be required to seek accreditation using the 5-day process. Recognised awarding bodies that do not wish to use the 5-day accreditation process, or whose arrangements do not meet the requirements, may continue to seek accreditation under the standard accreditation process.

### Qualifications covered by the 5-day process

3. The 5 day accreditation process currently covers the following qualification types: Higher Levels, National Vocational Qualifications, Vocationally-Related Qualifications, Occupational Qualifications and Other General Qualifications.

GCEs, GCE Advanced Subsidiary, VCEs, VCE Advanced Subsidiary, Advanced Extension Awards, GCSEs, ESOL, Free Standing Maths Units, the International and the Welsh Baccalaureates, Basic Skills, Key Skills, and Entry Level Qualifications are not covered.

The regulatory authorities will consider the appropriateness of extending the 5-day accreditation process to other qualification types. It is possible, however, for an awarding body's track record in accreditation of one of these other qualification types to impact on the decision to allow it access to the 5-day process.

Procedures for developing qualifications vary from one awarding body to another. There may also be significant differences in procedures within an awarding body if it offers a range of qualifications of different types and in different subject/sector areas. Awarding bodies are encouraged to submit a single application covering the eligible qualification types in their recognised plan of provision, with their application and supporting documentation providing evidence of the different qualification development and assessment arrangements they operate in relation to each type.

## **Eligibility**

4. a) Awarding bodies granted Part A status (recognised) by the regulatory authorities prior to 1 December 2004 must have completed the awarding body recognition update procedure (ABRU) before submitting an application.

b) Awarding bodies granted Part A status (recognised) by the regulatory authorities on or after 1 December 2004 who are not required to complete the ABRU process must have undergone a post-recognition monitoring visit by the regulatory authorities before submitting an application.

c) An eligible awarding body may apply for access to the 5-day process for eligible qualification types and 2nd tier subject and sector areas (Annex 1) already listed in its recognised plan of provision.

The regulatory authorities, when approving access, may extend approval to 2nd tier subject/sector areas not listed in the awarding body's plan of provision, if they are satisfied that the awarding has provided evidence that it is operating sector dialogue, qualification development and assessment arrangements, conforming to the regulatory authorities' criteria, in related 2nd tier subject/sector areas (those within the same 1st tier area) that are sufficiently robust to support such an extension.

## **The application process**

5. An eligible awarding body will be required to complete an application form (available from the regulatory authorities' websites).

The introductory pages (pages 1-2) of the application form ask for basic administrative data together with details of the eligible qualification types and the 2nd tier sector/subject categories covered by the application. The awarding body is also asked to describe how it works with relevant sector bodies and how it operates its early dialogue procedures. The form should then be sent to the regulatory authorities, who will advise the awarding body when it should proceed to the next stage of the application process (Sections 1-4 of the form).

Sections 1-4 require the awarding body to describe how it identifies the demand for a qualification, how it develops qualification content and assessment arrangements, how it quality assures the qualification development process, and the name of the person within the awarding body who is the single point of accountability for the relevant qualification type and/or subject/sector area.

The completed application must be endorsed by the awarding body's chief executive (or a person named by the chief executive) as confirmation that the information provided is accurate.

The review of an awarding body's application for access to the 5-day accreditation process will primarily be desk-based. However, the regulatory authorities may visit the awarding body to confirm the accuracy of the information supplied. The overriding consideration will be whether the awarding body demonstrates that allowing it access to the 5-day accreditation process will not jeopardise the quality and integrity of the National Qualifications Framework.

In addition to reviewing the information submitted by an awarding body, the regulatory authorities will also take the following factors relating to the awarding body into account when making the decision whether to allow the awarding body access to the 5-day accreditation process:

- regulatory assessment data including the findings of monitoring visits carried out by the regulatory authorities;
- the quality of previous accreditation submissions (including requests for extension or amendments) including the type and number of issues identified by the regulatory authorities requiring action/further clarification by the awarding body before recognition/re-recognition was approved, or accreditation granted/withheld;
- the length of time taken successfully to respond to requests from the regulatory authorities for further information/clarification;
- the number, type, severity and re-occurrence of any conditions of accreditation placed on recognition decisions or accreditation of any of the awarding body's qualifications;
- the awarding body's track record in complying with conditions of accreditation.

If the regulatory authorities approve an awarding body access to the 5-day accreditation process, the awarding body's chief executive will be asked to sign an agreement that stipulates that:

- the awarding body agrees to develop its qualifications in accordance with the arrangements submitted to the regulatory authorities;
- any changes to arrangements it supplied details about, to gain access to the 5-day accreditation process, will be communicated immediately to the regulatory authorities for scrutiny and agreement;
- failure to develop qualifications in accordance with the agreed arrangements will mean that the awarding body may lose access to the 5-day process and/or be subject to sanctions.

If the regulatory authorities decide not to allow an awarding body access to the 5-day accreditation process, the awarding body will be informed of the reasons for the decision and advised that, until the identified issues have been addressed, it will be required to seek accreditation under the standard accreditation process.

### **Ensuring a transparent process**

6. As part of the regulatory authorities' commitment to provide learners and the public with information about regulated qualifications and making the process for regulating qualifications more transparent, the names of awarding bodies granted access to the 5-day accreditation process will be made available on the regulatory authorities' websites.

The regulatory authorities will ensure that the names are accompanied by a clear description of the 5-day accreditation process explaining that:

- seeking accreditation under the process is voluntary;
- there are certain restrictions, some of which are out of an awarding body's control, before an awarding body can apply for access to the 5-day accreditation process;
- all accredited qualifications are of equal quality regardless of the process under which they were accredited.

## Review and monitoring mechanisms

7. The regulatory authorities will keep under review an awarding body's continued ability to develop qualifications in accordance with the relevant criteria, through ongoing monitoring activities, and scrutiny of individual 5-day qualification submissions. The regulatory authorities reserve the right to request full proposals at any time if they have concerns regarding the quality of an awarding body's qualifications, or if a government or national initiative for the relevant qualification or sector/subject area requires such an approach.

If the regulatory authorities identify significant issues that indicate that an awarding body's arrangements for developing and submitting 5-day qualifications do not meet regulatory criteria, the awarding body will lose access to the 5-day accreditation process in line with the arrangements set out in the 5-day Accreditation Operations Guide, and confirmation of this decision will be placed on the regulatory authorities' websites. Removing an awarding body's access to the 5-day accreditation process does not constitute a sanction, as the awarding body is still allowed to seek accreditation under the standard accreditation process. However, in some instances, depending on the severity of the non-compliance, the regulatory authorities may decide to apply sanctions as well as removing an awarding body's access to the 5-day accreditation process.

### More Information

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the 5-day process, please contact Nicola Tarrier at QCA ([tarriern@qca.org.uk](mailto:tarriern@qca.org.uk) or 020 7509 5646), Diane Dearden of the Welsh Assembly Government's new Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, formerly ACCAC ([accreditation@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK](mailto:accreditation@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK) or 02920 375 452) or Cathy Heathwood at CCEA ([cheathwood@ccea.org.uk](mailto:cheathwood@ccea.org.uk) or 028 9026 1200 ext: 2219).

## ANNEX 1 – SUBJECT AND SECTOR AREAS

<b>1<sup>st</sup> tier</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> tier</b>	<b>Area</b>
1.	Health, public services and care	1.1	Medicine and dentistry
		1.2	Nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine
		1.3	Health and social care
		1.4	Public services
		1.5	Child development and well-being
2.	Science and mathematics	2.1	Science
		2.2	Mathematics and statistics
3.	Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	3.1	Agriculture
		3.2	Horticulture and forestry
		3.3	Animal care and veterinary science
		3.4	Environmental conservation
4.	Engineering and manufacturing technologies	4.1	Engineering
		4.2	Manufacturing technologies
		4.3	Transportation operations and maintenance
5.	Construction, planning and the built environment	5.1	Architecture
		5.2	Building and construction
		5.3	Urban, rural and regional planning
6.	Information and communication technology	6.1	ICT practitioners
		6.2	ICT for users
7.	Retail and commercial enterprise	7.1	Retailing and wholesaling
		7.2	Warehousing and distribution
		7.3	Service enterprises
		7.4	Hospitality and catering
8.	Leisure, travel and tourism	8.1	Sport, leisure and recreation
		8.2	Travel and tourism
9.	Arts, media and publishing	9.1	Performing arts
		9.2	Crafts, creative arts and design
		9.3	Media and communication
		9.4	Publishing and information services
10.	History, philosophy and theology	10.1	History
		10.2	Archaeology and archaeological sciences
		10.3	Philosophy
		10.4	Theology and religious studies
11.	Social sciences	11.1	Geography
		11.2	Sociology and social policy
		11.3	Politics
		11.4	Economics
		11.5	Anthropology
12.	Languages, literature and culture	12.1	Languages, literature and culture of the British Isles
		12.2	Other languages, literature and culture
		12.3	Linguistics
13.	Education and training	13.1	Teaching and lecturing
		13.2	Direct learning support
14.	Preparation for life and work	14.1	Foundations for learning and life
		14.2	Preparation for work
15.	Business, administration and law	15.1	Accounting and finance
		15.2	Administration
		15.3	Business management
		15.4	Marketing and sales
		15.5	Law and legal services