

Top Tips for the QCF

QCF level...

The QCF Level indicates how difficult or complex achieving the learning outcomes in a unit might be. It is worth noting that:

- QCF Levels range from Entry Level to Level 8
- Each unit is assigned a single level
- The language used in learning outcomes and assessment criteria should mirror the QCF Level Descriptors for the level assigned to the unit

How to use QCF Level Descriptors

QCF Level Descriptors act as a guide to help you check that:

- the challenge of learning in the unit is appropriate to the level
- the language used is neither too simplistic or too complex for the level
- the amount of expected learner autonomy or accountability is right for the level

There are three dimensions to QCF Level Descriptors. These are:

- knowledge and understanding
- application and action
- autonomy and accountability

However the emphasis of some units may be on knowledge and understanding, whereas others may be focused on application and action. This emphasis should be reflected in the way that learning outcomes are described (see Top Tips 3 for more about this).

The details of each level descriptor can be found in Annex E of the Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework mentioned below

Do all assessment criteria in a unit need to be at the same level?

- Not always. It is often necessary for the sake of coherence to include a few assessment criteria in a unit just above or just below the assigned level
- No, but there must be a **dominant** level that is apparent overall within a unit

How to check that the language used in the unit is reflecting the level

- Compare the QCF Level Descriptors for the level above and below the level assigned
- Check the learning outcomes in the unit and decide what level they infer
- Check each assessment criterion against the level descriptors. If there is no dominant level, the assessment criteria will need to be adjusted, or the unit redesigned to provide a better fit

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- Use a quality assurance process to verify the level of the units. This could require a panel of professionals, including people with the relevant subject expertise and technical knowledge of unit writing

What are the potential pitfalls to look out for?

- Content and/or language in the unit not appropriate to the assigned level when compared to the QCF Level Descriptors
- The use of concepts or terms in learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are too complex or basic for the level assigned
- The unit is not comparable with similar units at the same level
- The assessment criteria tend to fall between levels, the dominant level being neither one or the other
- The degree of autonomy or accountability required to achieve the unit is above or below the given level
- The type of problems or situations being addressed in the unit are too narrow or too broad for the level
- There is too much, or not enough, research, analysis or evaluation for the level assigned
- The assessment criteria are so vague that the unit could be at several levels

Getting help – QCF sources of information

Guidelines for writing credit based units of assessment for the Qualifications and Credit Framework, (version 4) QCDA 2009 <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/4374.aspx>

Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework, Ofqual, DECELLS and CCEA, August 2008 http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/Regulatory_arrangements_QCF_August08.pdf

QCF Level Descriptors, Annex E of Regulatory Arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework: Ofqual/08/3726 <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/4374.aspx>

QCF interactive resources, reports and guidance supplied by QCDA
<http://www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/4374.aspx>

QCF section of OFQUAL website <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualification-and-assessment-framework/89-articles/145-explaining-the-qualifications-and-credit-framework>

Leitch Review of Skills, Prosperity for all in the global economy, world class skills, 5 December 2006
<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/other/0118404792/0118404792.pdf>

We're happy to offer you a FREE initial half hour consultation with one of our credit experts.

Contact us on 0845 226 1712, or at info@stratagia.co.uk to discuss how we can help you.