

Top Tips for the QCF

Assigning credit value to a unit

- Credit is used to identify “how much” learning it takes to achieve a unit
- Each unit must have a value of at least one credit, and credits can only be awarded in whole numbers
- One credit is defined as “*those learning outcomes achievable in 10 hours of learning*”. This is known as “learning time”.
- There is no specific formula for calculating credit value, although some organisations have a standard process that they use to help them to reach their decision
- In any event, the decision about credit value is one of professional judgement. It is usually made by a panel of people who have the relevant knowledge and expertise of the sector in which the unit is being developed

What may be included in learning time?

- Learning time is an approximate amount of time a learner on average might take to achieve the unit. It is a best estimate and defines the size of the unit
- Learning time will depend on the content of the unit; it may include formal input by a tutor/trainer and practical activities undertaken by the learner. Private study and assessment time are also part of the learning process and therefore may also be counted
- It is worth noting that the elements that go into learning time may be different for learners in different contexts. For example, the unit might be achieved through learning in the classroom, by distance learning or through work based learning
- It is important to remember that learning time assumes that the learner is capable of working at the given level of the unit

How does learning time relate to credit value?

- Learning time (in hours) is equivalent to ten times the credit value (one credit = 10 hours of learning)
- So if a unit has a credit value of 5, it would take the learner, on average, 50 hours to complete the unit
- If learning time cannot be divided exactly by 10, it may be rounded up or down to decide the credit value. For example, if the learning time is estimated to be 26 hours, it could be assigned a credit value of 3

Is there a minimum and maximum credit value for a unit?

- No. The unit can be assigned one or more credits and there is no upper limit
- BUT, the higher the credit value assigned, the more difficult the unit will be for the learner to achieve. This makes it less accessible to learners and potentially at odds with QCF objectives

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How can I check that the unit has the correct credit value?

- Assigning credit is a process that entails several stages. Typically, the unit writer assigns an initial credit value that best fits the content and level of the unit. The units may then be reviewed by other experts (usually by a panel or similar consultation process). Taking all that into account, the units are agreed and “signed off”
- When thinking about credit value, it may be helpful to compare the unit to those similar in the QCF databank
- Many organisations have a formula to help them calculate the time it might take the learner to achieve each learning outcome. This becomes the starting point for calculating the credit value of a unit
- The process for approving units is a professional one. Therefore it should involve people with the relevant subject expertise, knowledge of the target groups for whom the units are being designed, and technical knowledge of unit writing for the QCF

What are the potential pitfalls to look out for?

- The credit value is set too low to reflect the number or range of learning outcomes and assessment criteria in the unit
- There is insufficient detail in the assessment criteria to warrant the credit value assigned
- The credit value is so high that the unit is equivalent to a Certificate qualification in its own right (13 or more credits). Although no upper limit is imposed by Ofqual, a unit with a high credit value has limited flexibility to be used in different qualifications. This in turn limits opportunities for learners to achieve and transfer their credit and goes against the spirit of the QCF
- Where the credit value is very high, consider whether the unit could be redesigned and split into two or more smaller units

Getting help

Visit the QCDA website to access

- Guidance materials <http://www.qcda.org.uk/19657.aspx>
- An interactive guide <http://www.qcda.org.uk/22678.aspx>
- The Ofqual website <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/51.aspx> will give you the latest on the regulatory arrangements for units and qualifications within the QCF
- The Federation of Awarding Bodies (<http://www.awarding.org.uk/public/qcf-capacity-building>) also provides information and contact details of people who can help

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

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