

Rules of combination

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4.1

Expertise

The procedures for ensuring there is appropriate expertise for development of rules of combination submitted to the RQF/CQFW are as follows:

- The procedure starts with the Governing Body ensuring that the Chief Assessor has appropriate relevant expertise in qualification design in the target sector. (See job specification in Annexe 1)
- The Chief Assessor has access to appropriate expertise in subject sector areas through membership of professional associations and networks
- Informal and day to day dialogue with the regulators, sector skills councils, learning and skills councils, (eg as a member of the Awarding Body Forum of e-skills and a member of the employers group developing the National Occupational Standards) active membership of professional organisations such as NAACE, OSC, CAS, SALTIS. Meetings with BECTA and OFSTED ensure that the Chief Assessor is kept up to date with expertise relevant to the subject matter on which rules of combination are based. Any delegation is limited to drafting so that final review and sign off always rests with the Chief Assessor. This ensures that the Chief Assessor's expertise is brought to bear on every rule of combination designed and submitted to the QCF.
- The Chief Assessor will normally develop rules of combination but can delegate initial drafting to suitably experienced personnel either in-house or consultants with suitable experience and qualifications, for example the Principal Moderator is a Chartered Assessor and Fellow of the Institute of Educational Assessors, the Account Managers at TLM are all being trained in qualification design. The Governing Body has a mandate to recruit similar personnel through its constitution and job descriptions. These procedures can be used to bring in specific subject experts as required.
- Any draft rules of combination are checked independently by at least two people, judged to have appropriate expertise by the Chief Assessor, before being submitted to the RITS/QiW.
- Rules of combination will be checked by The Chief Assessor and The Principal Moderator (see job specifications in annexe 2 that ensure these are both suitably qualified and competent people).
- Any guidance on rules of combination provided by The Learning Machine Ltd will be reviewed by the Chief Assessor or Principal Moderator before publication.
- The requirements for expertise will be part of the job specification of the relevant personnel and will be required aspects of candidates during recruitment procedures based on the specifications of the job descriptions.
- The Chief Assessor will keep up to date with professional matters associated with the RQF/CQFW by attending meetings, briefings and training provided by the regulators, sector skills councils and similar organisations.
- The Learning Machine Ltd will provide training of relevant personnel, led by the Chief Assessor, to ensure drafts of rules of combination are made with appropriate expertise.
- The procedures for checking units during the moderation and verification processes will provide a focus for feedback to ensure that all are appropriately up to date.
- The Chief Assessor will meet with Account Managers at least once per month to discuss qualification design and assessment and update their skills and knowledge.

4.2 - 4.3

Development

The procedure for determining the need for rules of combination and their development is as follows:

- Chief Assessor identifies the need for the rule of combination eg in order to enable schools to fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum while offering IT user qualifications pre-16.
- (As a specific example, in moving the current TLM qualifications from the NDAQ to the QCF it will be possible to use mostly the new e-skills ITQ units based on NOS 3. The design of a sector specific unit for schools will enable full compatibility with the National Curriculum if a suitable rule of combination is designed. The OFSTED publication "The Importance of IT" (March 2009) highlighted that many schools offering vocational IT user qualifications pre-16 are failing to meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and are not catering properly for the higher attaining learners. The IT Diploma is targeted on future IT practitioners rather than IT users. Consultation in establishing a solution includes being a member of the e-skills Awarding Body Forum and the employers panel developing NOS, meeting with HMI responsible for "The Importance of ICT", meeting with BECTA's Director of Workforce Development, membership of the Computing at School group and BECTA's Schools Open Source Project, dialogue with representatives of the business community, members of NAACE, teachers and governors and learners in schools. In order to make a rule of combination that will resolve this issue we need a sector specific unit that covers the requirements of the National Curriculum not present in the National Occupational Standards and ITQ units and we need to take into account the e-skills developed rules of combination for ITQ. In doing so we will enable learners to achieve the ITQ (National Vocational Qualification for IT users) while meeting the full requirements of the National Curriculum, achieving additional learning units for the Diplomas (TLM is a CAB for Diplomas). Further we will provide unit progression in support of the Foundation Learning Tier from Entry 1 to Level 2 again with full National Curriculum compatibility and culminating in the ITQ and Diploma Units. This then provides some detail about the approach to identifying a rationale for developing rules of combination.)
- Chief assessor uses the evidence from wide consultation with relevant groups and individuals to ensure that the quality of the rationale for, and the rule of combination for, the qualification is high.
- Chief Assessor gains approval from the Governing Body to develop the rules of combination in accordance with the proposed rationale.
- Chief Assessor interrogates the RQF/CQFW to ensure that an existing rule of combination does not meet the targeted needs. In the case of the example above, the solution is dependent on a new sector specific unit for schools. Since no such unit exists it is impossible to develop a rule of combination to solve the problem until such a unit is developed.
- Draft materials originated by the Chief Assessor or delegated to a competent person by the Chief Assessor and published on the INGOT community web site which can record versioning history. This draft will address each point in Paragraph 1.24 a-j explicitly.
- Chief Assessor takes part in informal dialogue with Sector Skills Council to check that any proposed rule of combination is compatible with the sector qualifications strategy and discusses any sector specific unit(s) that will make up the rule of combination.
- Chief Assessor obtains formal support from the Sector Skills Council for any new rule of combination and qualifications supported by the rules of combination.
- Review drafts against the requirements set out in the Regulatory Arrangements including the need to document progression routes and a clear rationale for the qualifications based on the rule of combination. Repeat the check against 1.24 a-j explicitly.
- Review drafts to ensure they maximise the possible rewards for learners through credit transfer and accumulation. This involves feedback from the QCF searches for existing relevant units and the constraints of other rules of combination established to support sector strategies eg from the sector skills councils. Linkage between National Curriculum, National Occupational Standards, Diplomas and Foundation Tier learning maximises the value of credit transfer for learners and minimises bureaucratic overhead and costs to schools and other centres.

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- Review final drafts against the design specification including that they conform to the format and purpose of the qualification ensuring it adds to or innovates compared to existing provision.
- Independent competent person reviews finalised work feeding back to the Chief Assessor.
- Chief Assessor final review and signs off rule/rules of combination for inclusion in the RQF/CQFW.
- Rules of combination are submitted to conform to the format requirements of the qualifications regulators.

4.4

On-going review

There will be an annual review of all TLM RQF/CQFW rules of combination led by the Chief Assessor

- Evidence will include
 - Feedback from Centres
 - The evolving Sector Skills Qualifications Strategy
 - Changes in legislation and DFE circulars
 - The take up of different combinations of units by learners
 - EU priorities for lifelong learning and actions
 - Reports from OFSTED related to raising standards in schools
 - Information gleaned from dialogue with BECTA, NAACE, OSC, SALTIS, CAS and similar organisations

Review will be based on the following criteria:

- level of customer demand for the qualification(s) which depend on the rule(s)
- needs identified by the relevant Sector Skills Council and similar stakeholders
- support for innovation and change
- compliance with the Regulatory Arrangements

The procedures for review are:

Review the continued need for a rule of combination

- This review will be part of the annual review.
- The Chief Assessor will review continued need against the stated criteria.
- The Chief Assessor will make a recommendation for continuing or discontinuing a rule stating reasons
- Recommendations will be presented to the Governing Body
- The Governing Body will approve or reject recommendations giving reasons if it is a rejection
- The Chief Assessor will contact the Regulators to inform them of any proposed withdrawal of a unit to ensure there is no damage to the interests of learners.

Review the combinations of units and opportunities for credit accumulation and transfer and exemption

- This review will be part of the annual review.
- The Chief Assessor will review consistency by comparing units and combinations with needs indicated by the sector qualifications strategy, industry, centres and other stakeholders at the time and in the context of the stated assessment criteria.
- The Chief Assessor will make a recommendation for any adjustments to the Governing Body

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- The Governing Body will approve or reject recommendations giving reasons if it is a rejection
- The Chief Assessor will contact the Regulators to inform them of any proposed changes to a unit to ensure there is no damage to the interests of learners.

Review the combinations of units and opportunities for credit accumulation and transfer and exemption

- This review will be part of the annual review.
- The Chief Assessor will review consistency by comparing units and combinations with needs indicated by the sector qualifications strategy, industry, centres and other stakeholders at the time and in the context of the stated assessment criteria.
- The Chief Assessor will make a recommendation for any adjustments to the Governing Body
- The Governing Body will approve or reject recommendations giving reasons if it is a rejection
- The Chief Assessor will contact the Regulators to inform them of any proposed changes to a unit to ensure there is no damage to the interests of learners.

Use evidence from delivery, of rules of combination as part of qualifications at appropriate times as part of the review process

- The Chief Assessor will make use of evidence from delivery at the time of the annual review. For example the relative popularity of particular unit combinations.
- The Chief Assessor will receive evidence from the Senior Account Manager two weeks prior to the review that will include customer feedback, evidence from moderation and verification and evidence from centre visits to inform review recommendations.
- The Chief Assessor will make available supporting evidence to the Governing Body on request
- In developing new qualifications the Chief Assessor will draw on the evidence of review for units, rules of combination and qualification assessment methods to ensure that new qualifications have a specific and original aspect and that opportunities for learners are maximised through credit accumulation and transfer while costs of delivery are minimised. An example might be that if a particular combination of units proved especially popular and another strategically important unit was unpopular (or was missing) making that unit a mandatory inclusion (or designing a new unit to fit) with the popular combination could increase take up in an important but relatively unpopular field. This is just a possible example and outcomes will depend on real data at the time of review.
- Strategy is informed by review but it is also informed by wider reform and demands of new technologies. Change can arise in new fields that requires action at short notice or that was not anticipated in formalised review procedures. TLM might implement more frequent or interim reviews if a particular need arises where waiting for the annual review could be contrary to the interests of learners. In all cases the Governing Body will authorise outcomes that result from review or external factors that were not foreseeable.

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Links

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