Recognition of achievement and progress for all

This CPD resource is one of a suite of five resources for providers and practitioners working with learners with special educational needs or learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The other resources in this series are:

- Using Personal Progress qualifications to recognise the achievements of learners working at entry 1
- Developing coherent, personalised programmes for learners with special educational needs or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Destination-led planning for learners with special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Developing a partnership strategy for delivering Foundation Learning programmes to learners with special educational needs or learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
How to use this CPD resource

This resource looks at the use of qualifications to recognise achievement within Foundation Learning and includes two tasks based on examples of learner groups. The tasks can be worked through individually or with other colleagues as part of a CPD session.

Learning outcomes

This resource should help practitioners to:

- understand the principle within Foundation Learning that QCF qualifications should be used to accredit achievements relevant to the individual in their progress towards a planned destination
- implement a process which ensures that learners’ needs (and not the requirements of qualifications) drive the curriculum
- develop criteria for selecting the most appropriate QCF qualifications for their learners.

Resources

Resources include:

- Example 1: Year 10 group in an MLD school (pages 4–5)
- Example 2: a group of 16–18 year olds on an Increasing Independence programme at a general further education (FE) college (pages 6–7)
- Matching qualifications to the curriculum template (page 8)
- Tasks.

Recognising achievement in Foundation Learning

The opportunity for learners to have relevant achievements recognised is fundamental to Foundation Learning. The new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) provides a national structure in which to recognise achievements at every level, including those of learners working at what schools generally call ‘P levels’ and colleges know as ‘pre-entry’.
A key principle of Foundation Learning is that qualifications should be used to recognise achievements which are relevant to the learner. External accreditation should not drive the curriculum. This is especially important for learners with SEN/LDD, where qualifications are rarely demanded as entry requirements for the courses, jobs or other situations to which they might progress.

Individual learner needs, interests and aspirations are the basis on which the curriculum should be designed. QCF qualifications can then be used to recognise the achievements gained by learners on their journey towards their planned destination. In other words, providers should not select a qualification and then plan a curriculum around the requirements of the qualification. They should plan a curriculum based on the learners’ needs and then identify qualifications that will allow them to recognise relevant achievements.

**How to choose QCF qualifications**

You may find the following process helpful in selecting QCF qualifications.

1. Identify the knowledge, skills and understanding that you are aiming to develop for learners through your Foundation Learning personalised learning programmes.

2. Plan a curriculum that will provide opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to the group.

3. Consider the range of levels at which your learners are working (e.g. entry 1, entry 2, entry 3).

4. Explore possible qualifications using the Foundation Learning Qualifications Catalogue ([www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/5612.aspx](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/5612.aspx)), clicking on the hyperlinks within it to the National Database of Accredited Qualifications, where you can view individual units within qualifications.

5. Select the qualification(s) which best match your learners’ needs.

It may not be possible for all of a learner’s achievements to be recognised through QCF qualifications. This may be particularly true of behaviour-related targets, especially where the target relates to curbing unwanted behaviours. These additional achievements might be recognised within individual education plans (IEPs) or individual learning plans (ILPs), through reviews, in-house certificates, reward systems or other less formal means.
Example 1
Year 10 group in an MLD school

Learner group profile
There are 14 learners in the group, most of whom will be capable of achieving at entry 3 in terms of their practical skills, although their literacy and numeracy levels are generally at entry 1 or entry 2.

Achievements to be recognised
Achievements to be recognised include:

- a range of transferable employability skills, eg working as part of a team, communication skills, problem-solving, appropriate interpersonal skills (NB: not all learners will be achieving the same skills, as they have different needs)
- skills gained from preparing for and undertaking a work placement
- skills gained from planning and undertaking an enterprise activity
- knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses
- understanding of a range of possible jobs/sectors.

Qualification sought
A suitable vocational qualification to allow recognition of the range of knowledge, skills and understanding outlined above.

QCF qualification selected
Edexcel Entry Level BTEC Certificate in Work Skills (Entry 3):
- Credit value: 13
- SCAAT points: 14.

Tutors’ explanation of their choice of qualification
‘The rules of combination for this qualification allow us to put together any units that are relevant for our learners from a list of options. This means that we can choose those that match the achievements that arise naturally out of our curriculum; and it gives us the flexibility to have some learners focusing on some skill areas, while others concentrate on other areas. Not everyone has to do exactly the same thing.'
‘We always offer work placements (of different lengths and with different levels of support) to all learners and we wanted to be able to capture the really important learning that comes out of that experience. The same is true for enterprise skills. We spend almost a whole term focusing on an enterprise activity, which provides a brilliant context for learning, and we wanted that recognised. Occasionally we’ll have a learner who really excels when it comes to enterprise; with the Work Skills qualification we would be able to enter them for level 1 or even level 2 (rather than level 3) for this unit.

‘We don’t really have the facilities to offer a wide range of different vocational areas, so we wouldn’t be able to run four or five different vocationally specific qualifications. But we have arranged access through our local FE college to their painting and decorating workshop, motorcycle garage, hair and beauty salon and catering kitchen. Last year we ran a carousel approach, giving everyone a chance to explore each different setting. This year we plan to use these settings as a context for developing some of the employability skills we’ve identified, such as problem-solving, and use relevant units from Work Skills to recognise the learners’ achievements.’

**Units selected from the qualification**

(Credit values in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units used by all learners:</th>
<th>Units available to individual learners:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self assessment (1)</td>
<td>Working in a team (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career progression (1)</td>
<td>Conduct at work (1)</td>
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<td>Safe learning in the workplace (1)</td>
<td>Setting and meeting targets at work (1)</td>
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<td>Preparing for work placement (1)</td>
<td>Speaking confidently at work (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning from work placement (2)</td>
<td>Self management skills (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning and enterprise activity (1)</td>
<td>Solving work-related problems (2)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Example 2
A group of 16–18 year olds on an Increasing Independence programme at a general FE college

Learner group profile
There are six learners in the group, all working at the early stages of entry 1 (previously described as ‘pre-entry’). They all have profound and multiple learning difficulties and a range of complex needs. Most of them also have some level of physical disability, including sensory impairment.

Achievements to be recognised
Each learner has quite distinct targets according to their highly personalised needs, but they fall broadly under the following headings:

- self-awareness
- communication
- relating to their environment
- increasing autonomy.

Qualification sought
A personal and social development qualification with the flexibility to recognise highly individualised achievements for learners working within entry 1.

QCF qualification selected
City & Guilds Entry Level Award in Personal Progress (Entry 1):
- Credit value: 8.
Tutors’ explanation of their choice of qualification

‘We chose this award because it is specifically designed to capture learner-referenced achievement for learners who are just beginning to engage with their immediate environment and to develop some sense of agency. The very specific targets that we have already developed for each learner within their ILP can be set against the assessment criteria for the different units. Achievement of their personal targets can be used as evidence of achieving a relevant unit. There are 32 units to choose from with no mandatory units, which means that we can select those (and only those) that are meaningful for our learners.

‘The assessor (the tutor) has to complete a transcript for each unit, detailing precisely how the individual learner has met the assessment criteria. You also have to decide at what stage within entry 1 each assessment criterion has been met, using a ten-stage achievement continuum. This means that you can demonstrate very small amounts of progress.

‘Just as an example of how you can “customise” the units to fit your learner, we are using the same unit in “Engaging with the world around you: objects” to recognise one learner’s achievement in being able to touch different textures (when previously she would not unfurl her fists) and another learner’s new-found ability to grasp objects (which has allowed us to begin to work with him to develop a means of communicating preferences).

‘There are several awarding organisations offering this qualification, but we went with City & Guilds, because we already use one of their other qualifications with our more able learners and so have an established relationship with them.’

Units selected from the qualification

(Credit values in brackets)

- Developing self awareness: all about me (3)
- Encountering experiences: being a part of things (3)
- Developing communication skills (3)
- Engaging with the world around you: people (3)
- Engaging with the world around you: objects (3)
- Engaging with the world around you: events (3)

Each learner will use a different combination of three units appropriate for them.
## Matching qualifications to the curriculum template

In Task 2, use this sheet to jot down your ideas.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge, skills and understanding</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities and experiences within the curriculum</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level(s) the learners are working at</th>
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<tr>
<th>What we need in a QCF qualification</th>
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Reflecting on your learning

You may find that the following prompt questions help you to reflect on what you have learned in working through the tasks above.

- What have I learned about recognising learners’ achievements within Foundation Learning?
- How confident do I now feel about selecting the right qualifications for our learners?
- How different is our current approach to recognising achievement from what we would be expected to do for Foundation Learning?
- What actions should we be putting into our Foundation Learning implementation plan?

Use the space below to record your initial reflections.