

New qualifications for school support staff

Background

All qualifications currently accredited to the National Qualification Framework will expire at the end of 2010, although candidates already registered will be able to complete their qualifications. Public funding for NQF qualifications will end in the summer of 2010 and will switch to qualifications accredited to the new Qualification and Credit Framework, subject to eligibility criteria. The TDA has been working in partnership with awarding organisations to develop qualifications for school support staff that will replace the existing NVQs in Supporting Teaching and Learning, the Support Work in Schools qualifications and a range of vocationally related qualifications. The TDA has also been working with the LSC to ensure the new qualifications are eligible for funding. These qualifications will be ready for delivery in September 2010.

The approach

Following considerable consultation with schools, local authorities and training providers, the TDA set out its proposals for Framework qualifications in its Sector Qualification Strategy, supported by awarding organisations and approved by UKCES. The proposals set out a progressive framework for qualifications that:

- Allows candidates to work incrementally towards larger qualifications as their role grows and develops, through the achievement of smaller qualifications that can be added to over time;
- Includes units that develop knowledge and understanding as well as those that attest to competence in the work place;
- Includes units shared with other qualifications, especially those intended for the children's workforce, to support workforce mobility and offer opportunities for shared training;
- Reflect the Government's Common Core of skills and knowledge for the children's workforce in a way that is appropriate for the roles covered by the qualification concerned.

The qualifications

The following qualifications are being developed:

- *Level 2 Award in Support Work in Schools*. This is a knowledge based qualification suitable for all roles in schools, including site staff, administrators etc. as well as those who work directly with children and young people. It seeks to develop the knowledge and understanding that all those working in a school setting will need and covers areas such as safeguarding, communication and understanding the school context. As it is a knowledge based qualification, it can be taken by candidates not yet employed in a school, as well as providing initial training/induction for those new in post. The award covers the knowledge and understanding in the current mandatory units of the Support Work in Schools qualifications, supplemented with additional

material drawn from the induction modules developed by the TDA for local authorities.

- *Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in schools.* This qualification incorporates the units in the award and adds competency based units to reflect the role of those supporting pupils' learning. The certificate covers the skills and knowledge of the current level 2 NVQ in Supporting Teaching and Learning in schools.
- *Level 2 Certificate in Supporting the Wider Curriculum in schools.* This qualification has been developed to meet the needs of those working as midday assistants/supervisors or who support the wider activities of the school such as before and after school clubs. It incorporates the units in the level 2 award and shares units with the Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning, recognising that many in teaching assistant roles also undertake midday duties. This qualification has fewer credits than the Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning (STL) and candidates who later progress to a teaching assistant role will be able to gain the STL certificate through the achievement of credit from specified additional units.
- *Level 3 Award in Supporting Teaching and Learning in schools.* This is a knowledge based qualification that will provide candidates with a secure understanding from which to progress to a level 3 role. It is suitable for candidates not yet in a school role but who have the capability to achieve at level 3; candidates in a level 2 role wishing to demonstrate that they are ready for progression to level 3, and as initial training for those newly in post at this level. This is a qualification intended to provide the underpinning knowledge and understanding for those with a role in directly working with children or young people in schools.
- *Level 3 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in schools.* This qualification incorporates the units in the Level 3 Award. Additional units cover the generic knowledge and skills required to work in a teaching assistant or similar role at level 3. It is broadly equivalent to the mandatory units of the current level 3 NVQ in Supporting Teaching and Learning.
- *Level 3 Certificate in Cover Supervision.* This qualification incorporates the units of the level 3 Award, if not previously achieved. While this qualification includes some units that are also in the Level 3 STL Certificate, it omits those that are about actively advancing pupils' learning and includes a unit on providing cover to reflect the differences between the cover supervisor and teaching assistant roles. Candidates moving from one role to the other will be able to demonstrate competence in the new role through the achievement of credit from specified additional units.
- *Level 3 Diploma in Specialist Support for Teaching and Learning.* This qualification incorporates the units from the Level 3 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in schools and requires candidates to supplement these with credits achieved from a range of specialist units. This qualification is broadly equivalent to the current Level 3 NVQ in Supporting Teaching and Learning.

Recognition for Prior Achievement

In partnership with awarding organisations, the TDA will develop a list of units from NQF provision that will provide exemption from the need to achieve equivalent Framework units.

Assessment

Awarding Organisations will develop instruments of assessment for the qualifications. However, the TDA will develop – in collaboration with awarding organisations – principles of assessment, including assessor competence, for those assessment criteria that are required to be demonstrated in the work place. It is likely that those assessors who meet the assessor requirements for the current STL NVQs are also likely to be suitable to assess TDA developed Framework units. Please note, however, that units included within these qualifications that have been developed by other organisations might have additional assessment requirements.

Entry Requirements

There are no formal entry requirements for the qualifications, although candidates registering for the certificates or the diploma will need to be in a role in which they can demonstrate the work based assessment criteria in school. However, those units that assess knowledge and understanding (which are included in all of the qualifications) will place demands on candidates' language and literacy skills. It will be important, therefore, that centres have in place processes for assessing literacy levels in candidates and for supporting candidates to improve these skills where necessary. For those candidates whose role involves supporting pupils' learning, it will also be important to ensure that they have secure standards of numeracy.

Continuing development

Many candidates will have achieved NQF qualifications but gone on to work in new areas of specialism eg supporting pupils with English as an Additional Language, or have pastoral responsibilities. Such candidates would not want to take new, large qualifications, but they may be interested in any opportunities for accredited provision offered by the Framework. Centres may wish to work with local authorities and schools in their area to determine whether there is a local market for offering individual units, or combinations of units, to upskill school staff in areas that meet local priorities.

Over time, it is likely that awarding organisations will offer small qualifications combining Framework units as CPD awards.

The NQF Support Work in Schools Qualifications

The Framework Level 2 Award in Support Work in Schools will meet the needs of all those new to working in schools in whatever role in terms of candidates' understanding of their responsibilities with regard to working in a children's

setting and in knowing how schools operate. Those in roles not directly concerned with supporting teaching and learning will have, or want to achieve, role-specific qualifications which will be developed by a range of sector bodies and sector skills councils. The current SWiS qualifications allow candidates to take individual units from a wide range of NVQs as a stepping stone to full occupational competence in roles such as catering, administration, premises management etc. As the Framework itself allows providers to offer individual units, there is no longer a need for this type of qualification. The TDA will, however, be offering guidance on possible units and qualifications for the wide range of support staff roles once other sector bodies have completed their Framework development work.

The only endorsed pathway within the current SWiS is that for Parent Support Advisers. The TDA is working in partnership with LLUK and the Children's Workforce Development Council to develop a qualification pathway within the Working With Parents qualification to meet the future needs of this group. This qualification is intended to be available from September 2010 at the latest.