

# Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)

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Content aimed at those working within the education/  
training and advice and guidance sectors



CREDIT & QUALIFICATIONS  
FRAMEWORK FOR WALES  

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## Introduction

This e-brochure is designed to provide information on the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). Content is aimed at those working within the education/training and advice and guidance sectors. This is not a regulatory document. The CQFW subscribes to a set of High Level Principles and does not prescribe an approach. Regulatory requirements take precedence and compliance with such requirements will result in qualifications and credit based accredited learning being acknowledged within the CQFW. Where there are variances in requirements across pillars these are clearly outlined.

### What is the CQFW?

The CQFW is an inclusive meta-framework designed to provide greater clarity on the qualifications system in Wales. It includes three pillars of learning, namely – higher education (HE), regulated qualifications which includes vocational and general qualifications and Lifelong Learning (LL).

The CQFW was formally adopted by the Welsh Government in 2002 and was launched in 2003. The implementation phase ran from 2003 to 2014.

It encompasses a wide range of qualifications, credit based accredited training and non-accredited delivery.

This learning covers all areas of

- Higher education, including
  - Degrees
  - Masters
  - Postgraduate studies/programmes
  - Doctorates
- Regulated general qualifications including
  - GCSEs
  - GCE A/AS Levels
  - Welsh Baccalaureate (Welsh Bacc)

- Skills and knowledge based regulated vocational qualifications
- Accredited vocational training and non-accredited vendor learning packages including
  - Adult and Community lifelong learning
  - company training
  - voluntary sector training.

#### THE CQFW:

- **IS** an enabling tool in relation to Welsh Government's economic and skills policies and goals
- **OFFERS** a national qualifications framework for learners in Wales of all ages and abilities
- **PROVIDES** a common currency for learning achievement
- **SUPPORTS** the recognition of credit and qualifications across all levels, enabling learners to progress
- **FACILITATES** providers to articulate pathways of progression that are easily understood and are transferable and consistent within Europe and the wider International community.

Please see the CQFW Fan diagram on page 6 and Pillars diagram on page 7 for further information.

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### Progression

The CQFW fan diagram illustrates the levels and examples of qualifications and learning provision.

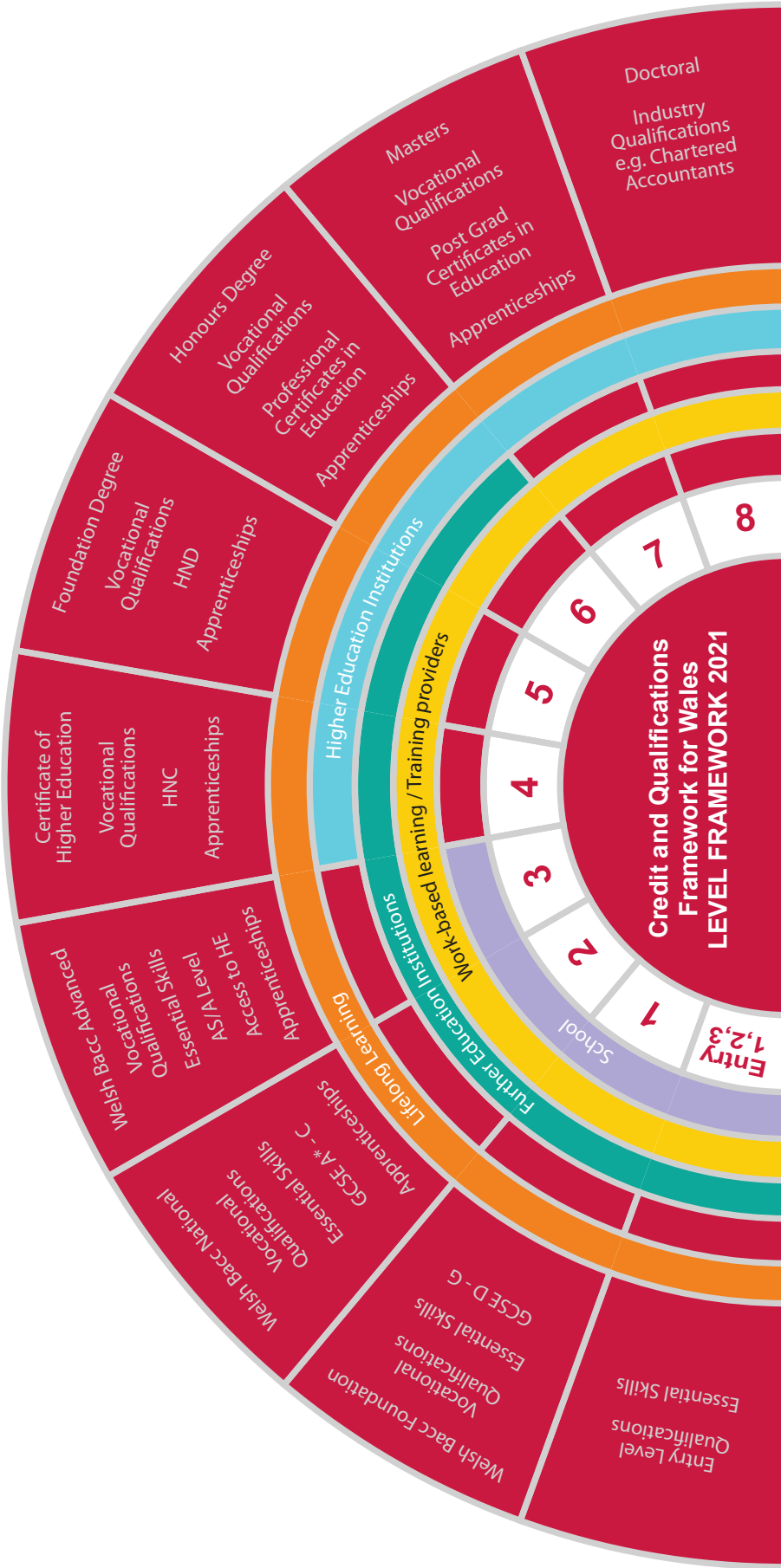
Qualification frameworks are designed to help the learner and others make informed decisions about learning and potential progression pathways from one level to the next and to different types of learning, e.g. work based learning to further education to higher education. The levels capture all the learning from the initial stages (Entry) to the most advanced (Level 8), and are mapped to levels within the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) [www.ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en](http://www.ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en).

When interpreting the CQFW it is important to note that whilst qualifications that share the same level are broadly similar in terms of the demand, complexity and learner autonomy, they can be very different in terms of content, duration and volume/size. Similarly, qualifications with different credit ratings can be of broadly similar demand.

**CQFW Fan diagram 2021**

The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales is a fully inclusive learning framework. The Levels capture all learning from the very initial stages (Entry, 1, 2 & 3) to the most advanced (Level 8).

The Fan diagram below illustrates the levels and examples of qualifications and learning provision that are included in it.



- Pre-entry level accreditation is delivered in special schools, FE Institutions and within lifelong learning. This level is differentiated further to provide a progression route for those learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

- Where level 3 provision is integrated into HE provision, e.g. a degree course with an integrated foundation year, then a student is considered to be studying for a HE qualification in all years of that course.

For further details visit: [gov.wales/cqfw](http://gov.wales/cqfw) or e-mail: [CQFW.Enquiries@gov.wales](mailto:CQFW.Enquiries@gov.wales)

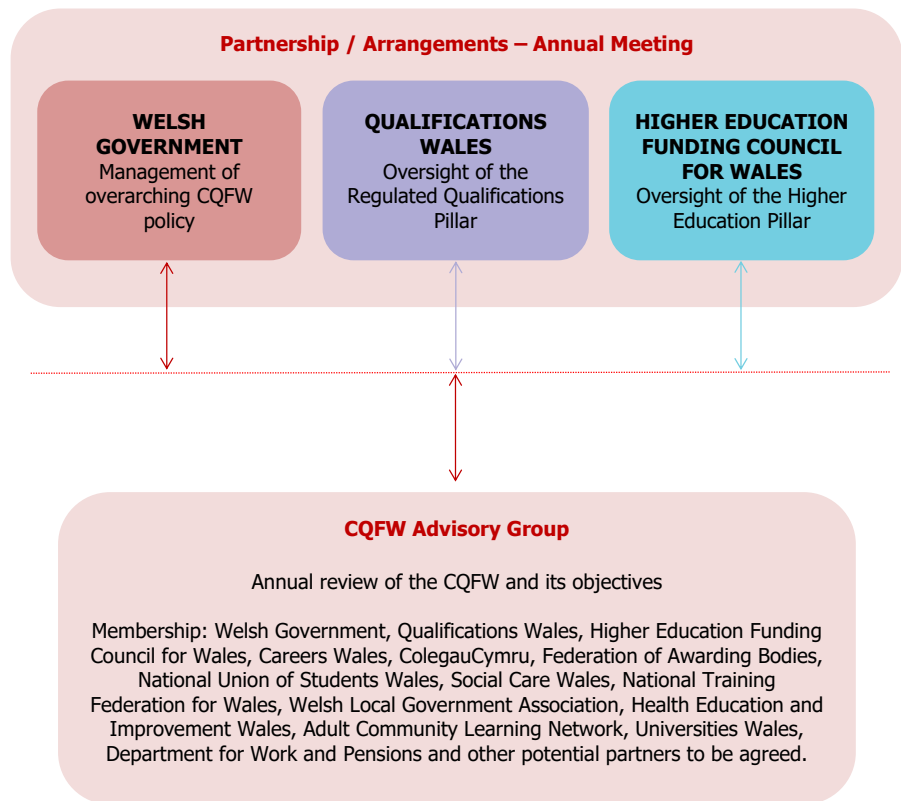
CQFW Meta-Framework diagram 2021

PILLARS			
Higher Education	Example Type of Learning	HE Certificates & Diplomas, Degrees, Post Graduate Certificates, Masters/Doctorates	
	Information Source	HEI websites, UCAS, FHEQ, Unistats	
	Delivery	HEIs, FEIs	
	Standards	European Standards and Guidelines: relevant baseline requirements (set out by HEFCW)	
	Quality Assurance	HEFCW has oversight: institutions contract with the QAA for reviews	
	Awarded by	HEIs	
	Guidance	FHEQ guidance	
	Oversight	HEFCW	
	Regulated Qualifications		Information Source
			Delivery
		Standards	
		Quality Assurance	
		Awarded by	
		Guidance	
		Oversight	
Vendor / Industry / Professional Learning			
Lifelong Learning	Example type of learning	Utilised Accredited Learning	
	Information Source	CQFW units of Credit	
	Delivery	Lifelong learning units on HEI and Awarding Body websites	
	Standards	HEIs, FEIs, Awarding Bodies, Third Sector, Training Providers, Employers	
	Quality Assurance	CQFW High Level Principles	
	Awarded by	CQFW competent bodies – HEIs and Awarding Bodies	
	Guidance	CQFW competent bodies - HEIs and Awarding Bodies	
	Oversight	CQFW High Level Principles	
	Vendor / Professional Personal and Professional Development		Information Source
			Delivery
		Standards	
		Quality Assurance	
		Awarded by	
		Guidance	
		Oversight	
Vendor / Industry / Professional Learning			
Vendor/Professional courses, Continuous Personal and Professional Development			
HEI, FEI, Vendor/Industry/Professional Body websites			
HEIs, FEIs, Training Providers, Vendor/Industry/Professional Bodies, Awarding Bodies, Employers			
NOS, Industry/Professional Standards			
Sector, Vendor, Industry or Professional Bodies			
HEI or Awarding Bodies, Vendor/Industry/Professional Bodies			
Sector, Vendor, Industry or Professional Bodies			
Sector, Vendor, Industry or Professional Bodies			

### Credit & Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) Governance

The CQFW is managed by a strategic operational partnership comprising the Welsh Government, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and Qualifications

Wales. Other external agencies, awarding bodies, HE and training providers are invited to join the Advisory Group as appropriate. All partners are supportive of the CQFW in aiding transparency and assisting learners in planning their progression pathways.



### Operational Objectives

The CQFW Advisory Group agrees operational objectives on an annual basis. [gov.wales/cqfw](http://gov.wales/cqfw)



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### Review of the CQFW

In July 2014, the Welsh Government commissioned and published a Review of the CQFW which made ten recommendations. It also identified the benefits of the CQFW as a tool for acknowledging learning outside more traditional areas, providing clarity, clearer pathways for progression and accrediting smaller volumes of learning. The review acknowledged that the CQFW supports the European Union Vocational Education and Training initiatives.

See [www.skillsforeurope.uk](http://www.skillsforeurope.uk)

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### Relationship between CQFW and Europe (Bologna, EQF)

Over recent years, CQFW partners have developed close working links with EU colleagues towards mutual recognition and transferability of achievements using the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

[www.ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en](http://www.ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en) as the shared benchmark.

The EQF outlines an overarching framework and serves to show comparisons between different qualifications systems and their levels. It aims to improve the transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications and promote geographical and labour market mobility and lifelong learning. It has eight levels described through learning outcomes. It has been confirmed that the CQFW aligns with the EQF.

Links to the Bologna Process are via the HE sector. The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) aligns with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). First mapped against the EQF as part of the Bologna Process, the FHEQ was most recently referenced to the EQF in 2019.

Resources on the Bologna Process:

- EHEA  
[www.ehea.info/page-how-does-the-bologna-process-work](http://www.ehea.info/page-how-does-the-bologna-process-work)
- UK HE Europe Unit  
[www.unl.pt/data/qualidade/bolonha/guide-to-the-bologna-process.pdf](http://www.unl.pt/data/qualidade/bolonha/guide-to-the-bologna-process.pdf)

### Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for learning through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning. It is one method of enabling individuals to claim credit where learning has taken place in the past. The terms recognition of prior learning (RPL), accreditation of prior learning (APL) and accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) are often used interchangeably.

Recognition of prior learning:

- is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for learning irrespective of how their learning took place
- policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable and fair and accessible to all learners
- is a learner-centred voluntary process. The learner should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support credit through RPL
- the process of assessment is subject to the same quality assurance and monitoring standards as any other form of assessment

- assessment methods must be of equal rigour as other assessment methods, fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning
- helps to avoid the duplication and repetition of learning.

RPL is a benefit to:

Learners	Employers
Recognises skills and/or knowledge already gained	Fills skills gaps and shortages
Avoids duplicating learning	Validates on the job learning
Boosts self esteem	Shows commitment to workforce development
Checks if skills are up-to-date	Checks knowledge, skills and competence of employees

Whilst the CQFW recognises the importance and benefits of RPL, there is currently no formal RPL policy in Wales. CQFW Competent Bodies (see page 25 for further information) should have established policies and practices in place in relation to RPL.



### CQFW common values

The CQFW embraces the following concepts.

- Expression of achievement as learning outcomes.
- The demands made by that learning on the learner (level).
- Credit values can be applied.

Together, they create a model which can embrace and underpin all styles/types of learning in all sections of education and training.

### High Level Principles

In order to be acknowledged within the CQFW, learning provision must be developed in accordance with its eight High Level Principles.

The application of the High Level Principles permits a degree of flexibility, to allow agencies across the three pillars to apply them within their own context. For example:

- Qualifications include “learning outcomes”, although agencies can deviate from this term by calling them something else.
- Vocational learning provision will normally be developed using recognised standards, for example, National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Vocational Qualifications and Specification of Apprenticeships Standards for Wales (SASW) Apprenticeship Frameworks where they exist. Where they do not, industry and professional or other standards may be used as an alternative.

### High Level Principle 1: Credit

Credit is a measure of the notional\* learning time which may be assigned to a set of learning outcomes.

\* Notional learning time is the estimated number of hours which a typical learner (at a particular level) will spend on all of the learning activities required to achieve the specified learning outcomes at that level. It includes teaching contact time (lectures, workshops etc.), time spent on preparing and carrying out assessments (exams, coursework etc.) and time spent on private study.

Credit may be awarded to a learner in recognition of the achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified credit level. The amount of credit attributed is based upon an estimation of the learning time it would take the average learner to achieve the learning outcomes specified.

1 credit is awarded for every 10 hours of learning time at a specified level

In particular circumstances credit can be combined or utilised as RPL over a period of time to build into qualifications.

Gaining credit is dependent upon the learner completing assessment based learning outcomes, such as practical work, essays, presentations, reports, portfolios, project work, examinations or other relevant pieces of work.

### Credit value

Learning may identify a credit value which specifies the number of credits that will be awarded to a learner who has achieved the specified learning outcomes of the unit.

Credit value must be based on:

- one credit for those learning outcomes achievable in 10 hours of learning time
- learning time being defined as the time taken by learners at the level of the unit, on average, to complete the learning outcome of the unit to the standard determined by the assessment criteria
- the credit value remaining constant, regardless of the method of assessment used.

The minimum credit value that may be determined by a unit is one, and credits must be awarded in whole numbers.

#### Credit Value Definition

Credit value is equal to:

$$\frac{\text{Learning time (hours) @ credit Level}}{10}$$

#### For example:

$$\frac{40 \text{ hours learning @ credit Level 2}}{10}$$

10

Credit level = 4 credits @ Level 2

### The award of credit

Credit can be awarded for the achievement of learning outcomes that have been verified through the appropriate rules, regulations and assessment for each of the pillars. This is done through the achievement of units certificated through a regulated recognised body.

### High Level Principle 2: Learning time

Learning time is defined as the time taken by the learners at the level of the learning, on average, to complete the learning outcomes to the standard determined by the assessment criteria. It takes account of all learning not just contact time and/or guided learning.

For regulated qualifications learning time is expressed as 'Total Qualification Time' which includes 'guided learning hours'.

### High Level Principle 3: Recognised Standards

All learning must be based on recognised standards or criteria. This will ensure that the resulting assessment focuses on the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding which, applied together, form the competence required by employers for certain roles and functions.

Learning that assesses the knowledge and skills specified for Vocational Qualifications and SASW apprenticeship frameworks must be developed using National Occupational Standards (NOS) where they exist, or industry or professional standards where they do not. Any learning that does not have such standards must be developed in association with experts from the relevant sector.

Underpinning vocational learning and apprenticeships via UK-wide standards provides portability and mobility for employers and learners across sectors, regions and nations. NOS can be accessed using the following link:

[www.ukstandards.org.uk](http://www.ukstandards.org.uk)

### High Level Principle 4: Levels/Level Descriptors

Level is an indicator of the relative demand, complexity and depth of learning. Learning autonomy and accountability is also a component part of learning within the HE pillar and Unitised Accredited Learning area of the LL pillar.

The CQFW incorporates nine levels:

- Entry level, which is banded into three sub-levels
- Levels 1-8

The levels are differentiated by sets of level descriptors and are aligned to the European Qualifications Frameworks (EQF) levels.

Level descriptors are the agreed generic descriptions of the relative demand, complexity and depth of learning at each level. The CQFW maps to the level descriptors of the EQF and embraces the level descriptors used within other UK qualification frameworks. Assigning a level to learning is undertaken by referencing the learning outcomes and assessment criteria against the level descriptors.

For the regulated pillar, awarding bodies may reference the CQFW level descriptors linked to autonomy and accountability. Such reference must be in addition to, and not instead of the level descriptors outlined in Qualifications Wales 'Qualifications and Component Levels'

[www.qualificationswales.org/english/publications/qualification-and-component-levels/](http://www.qualificationswales.org/english/publications/qualification-and-component-levels/)

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### High Level Principle 5: Title

The title must be clear, concise and reflect the content of the learning and be meaningful in its own right. Useful, precise titles are important and easier to find.

N.B. additional requirements are asked of awarding bodies in relation to the titles of regulated qualifications.

- For every learning outcome, assessment criteria is usually specified either as an integral part of the outcome statement or separately.
- Learning outcomes will usually specify the minimum achievement required at the point of assessment.

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### High Level Principle 6: Purpose

The purpose of all learning should be articulated and must contain one of the purposes stated below.

- Recognise personal growth and engagement in learning
- Prepare for further learning or training and/or develop knowledge and/or skills in the same or another subject area
- Prepare for employment
- Confirm occupational competence and/or 'licence to practise' (to perform a supporting role in the workplace)
- Updating and continuing professional development (CPD).

N.B. Additional requirements are asked of awarding bodies in relation to the purpose of regulated qualifications.

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### High Level Principle 8: Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria are descriptions of what the learner is expected to achieve in order to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been met. It is the responsibility of the competent body to have established policies and practices in place in relation to assessment and standards.

Assessment criteria would ordinarily:

- specify the standard a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that the learning outcomes have been achieved
- relate to an individual learning outcome in language consistent with it
- be sufficiently detailed to support reliable, valid and consistent judgments that a learning outcome has been achieved, without creating an undue burden for learners or assessors
- not include any explicit references to the methods or instruments of assessment to be used.

For some learning, assessor requirements should also be in place, for example, in order to protect vulnerable learners.

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### High Level Principle 7: Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements of the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of a learning experience. Learning outcomes are supported by assessment criteria. These are used for judging whether the outcome has been achieved.

### Higher Education Pillar

Higher Education	Example Type of Learning	HE Certificates & Diplomas, Degrees, Post Graduate Certificates, Masters/Doctorates
	Information Source	HEI websites, UCAS, FHEQ, Unistats
	Delivery	HEIs, FEIs
	Standards	European Standards and Guidelines: relevant baseline requirements (set out by HEFCW)
	Quality Assurance	HEFCW has oversight: institutions contract with the QAA for reviews
	Awarded by	HEIs
	Guidance	FHEQ guidance
	Oversight	HEFCW

### Universities in Wales



Higher education in Wales is offered mainly through Wales’ eight universities – HEIs, and the Open University in Wales.

[www.open.ac.uk/wales/en](http://www.open.ac.uk/wales/en)

HE provision is also offered in a number of further education colleges.

Visit [www.hefcw.ac.uk](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk)

1. Aberystwyth University  
[www.studyinwales.ac.uk/our-universities/aberystwyth-university](http://www.studyinwales.ac.uk/our-universities/aberystwyth-university)

2. Bangor University  
[www.studyinwales.ac.uk/our-universities/bangor-university](http://www.studyinwales.ac.uk/our-universities/bangor-university)

3. Cardiff University and University of South Wales (Cardiff campus)

[www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/cardiff-university/](http://www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/cardiff-university/)

[www.southwales.ac.uk/](http://www.southwales.ac.uk/)

4. Glyndwr University

[www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/glyndwr-university/](http://www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/glyndwr-university/)

5. Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama

[www.wales.com/study/universities-wales/royal-welsh-college-music-drama-rwcmd](http://www.wales.com/study/universities-wales/royal-welsh-college-music-drama-rwcmd)

6. University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Swansea campus)

[www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/university-of-wales-trinity-saint-david/](http://www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/university-of-wales-trinity-saint-david/)

7. Swansea University

[www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/swansea-university/](http://www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/swansea-university/)

8. University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Carmarthen campus)

[www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/university-of-wales-trinity-saint-david/](http://www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/university-of-wales-trinity-saint-david/)

9. University of South Wales (Treforest/Pontypridd/Merthyr Tydfil campus)

[www.southwales.ac.uk/](http://www.southwales.ac.uk/)

10. Cardiff Metropolitan University  
[www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/  
 cardiff-metropolitan-university/](http://www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/cardiff-metropolitan-university/)

11. University of Wales Trinity Saint  
 David (Lampeter campus)  
[www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/  
 university-of-wales-trinity-saint-david/](http://www.studyinwales.ac.uk/university/university-of-wales-trinity-saint-david/)

12. University of South Wales  
 (Newport campus)  
[www.southwales.ac.uk/](http://www.southwales.ac.uk/)

N.B. The Royal Welsh College of Music  
 and Drama is part of the University of  
 South Wales.

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### Outline of HE system in Wales

Higher education is a devolved area,  
 which means that most decisions about  
 HE policy in Wales are taken by the  
 Welsh Government.

HEIs are private bodies/charities  
 which are independent of government.  
 They can receive their funding from  
 a number of sources – from student  
 fees, through research projects, and  
 business generation. They also receive  
 a portion of their income from public  
 funds. HEFCW distributes these funds  
 from Welsh Government and acts as  
 an intermediary between HE and the  
 Government.

The Higher Education Funding  
 Council for Wales (HEFCW) is  
 a Welsh Government Sponsored  
 Body, and regulates fee levels at  
 universities, ensures a framework  
 is in place for assessing the quality  
 of higher education and scrutinises  
 the performance of universities and  
 other designated providers.

QAA: Description of Higher Education  
 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

[www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/  
 qualifications-frameworks.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf)

CQFW  
[gov.wales/cqfw](http://gov.wales/cqfw)

UCAS [www.ucas.com/](http://www.ucas.com/)

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### Types of learning available in HE

HE in Wales provides learning  
 programmes (including research  
 opportunities) in a wide range  
 of academic and vocationally  
 oriented subject areas which lead to  
 qualifications such as HNCs, HNDs,  
 Certificates of HE, Foundation Degrees,  
 Bachelor Degrees, Masters,  
 Postgraduate Certificates/Diplomas,  
 Doctorates.

All higher education institutions in  
 Wales are signed up to the CQFW.  
 This allows learners/students to gain  
 credit and accumulate credits.





### The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) guidance

This guidance is about the implementation of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). The FHEQ acknowledges that it is a constituent part of The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). See [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/the-existing-uk-quality-code/part-a-setting-and-maintaining-academic-standards](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/the-existing-uk-quality-code/part-a-setting-and-maintaining-academic-standards).

It applies to Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates and other academic awards (other than Honorary Degrees and Higher Doctorates) granted by a higher education provider in the exercise of its degree awarding powers. The framework is an important reference point for providers of HE.

The FHEQ identifies the purposes and benefits of credit and credit frameworks, pointing out their potential roles in supporting progression into and within higher education, and transfer between programmes, by indicating the volume and intellectual demand of learning.

### The FHEQ:

- comprises a table of the credit values typically associated with the design of programmes leading to the main HE qualifications in England; these are expressed, for each qualification, both as the minimum total credits and the minimum credits at the level of the award
- includes the England, Wales and Northern Ireland generic credit level descriptors which may be used as a reference point.

The document refers to national contexts within the UK and also international aspects, describing the relationship between UK credit and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.

The relationships between credit and qualifications frameworks and the setting and assuring of academic standards are also discussed.

The CQFW may be described as a national qualifications framework which facilitates links with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

## Regulated Qualifications Pillar

Regulated Qualifications	Example Type of Learning	Learning Programmes for 14-19 learners (such as GCSE, A/AS level, VQs, Welsh Bacc) regulated qualifications within apprenticeship programmes
	Information Source	QIW (for publicly funded qualifications), Awarding Body websites
	Delivery	Schools, FEIs, HEIs, Training Providers
	Standards	NOS, Qualifications Wales' Standard Conditions of Recognition, Designation and Approval Criteria (where applicable) and regulatory documents
	Quality Assurance	Qualifications Wales, QAA (Access to HE)
	Awarded by	Awarding Bodies (recognised by regulators)
	Guidance	Specifications/Design Principles, NOS for VQs
	Oversight	Qualifications Wales, QAA (Access to HE)

### Overview of the system

The regulated pillar identifies general and vocational education and training leading to regulated qualifications:

- Entry level qualifications
- Essential Skills qualifications
- General qualifications (GCSEs, AS/A levels)
- Vocational qualifications
- Welsh Bacc.

Vocational qualifications are classified as IVET and CVET (initial and continuing vocational education and training).

Qualifications Wales is the independent regulator of non-degree qualifications and the regulated qualifications system in Wales. For further information see Qualifications Wales.

[www.qualificationswales.org](http://www.qualificationswales.org)

Regulated qualifications are categorised as approved, designated or other regulated.

**Approved Qualifications are defined as:**

Regulated qualifications eligible for use on publicly funded programmes of learning that are approved under Part 4 of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015, awarded in Wales and that have met approval criteria. Approved qualifications will have been allocated an identified approval number.

**Designated Qualifications are defined as:**

Regulated qualifications that are designated as eligible for use on publicly funded programmes of learning for learners under the age of 19, as defined under section 29 of the Qualifications Wales Act.

**Other regulated qualifications**

Are those qualifications awarded in Wales by recognised awarding bodies, which have not been designated or

approved by Qualifications Wales, and which awarding bodies have not surrendered from the scope of their recognition.

The regulatory system in Wales operates on an opt-out basis. All qualifications offered by a recognised awarding body are therefore regulated unless they have been exempted from regulation, or because recognition for a qualification or qualification type has subsequently been surrendered by the awarding body.

In practice this means that all qualifications offered by recognised awarding bodies are regulated and therefore subject to the Standard Conditions of Recognition unless Qualifications Wales has been informed by awarding bodies that specific qualifications should be excluded. For further information [www.qualificationswales.org/english/our-work/](http://www.qualificationswales.org/english/our-work/)



The provision covered in the regulatory pillar is available for full-time and part-time learners, work based learners and apprentices.

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### Awarding bodies

Awarding bodies develop and award qualifications to meet the needs of learners, employers and other stakeholders. They can be:

- registered charities
- chartered institutes
- commercial businesses
- employers who have established their own awarding body
- small sector specific bodies or large cross-sectoral bodies.

Awarding bodies focus on:

- developing qualifications that meet the needs of employers and learners
- approving centres and working with them to ensure high-quality assessment of qualifications.

And for unitised accredited learning (UAL):

- carrying out activity designed to assure the quality of the UAL qualifications awarded
- developing innovative products and services to support their centres and learners.



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### Recognition, Approval and Designation

Many awarding bodies are 'recognised' by the UK regulatory organisations in Wales, Scotland, England and/or Northern Ireland. In order to offer regulated qualifications in Wales an awarding body must be recognised by Qualifications Wales. Before an awarding body can be recognised, it must meet Qualifications Wales' statutory recognition criteria, and, once recognised, must demonstrate ongoing compliance with the Standard Conditions of Recognition.

Qualifications Wales approves and designates qualifications that awarding bodies wish to be eligible for funding for learners under the age of 19 in Wales, against specified criteria.

Approved qualifications are only awarded in Wales once they have met approval criteria specified by Qualifications Wales. Designated qualifications are not necessarily unique to Wales and are usually available to learners in other countries of the UK.

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### Related organisations

The Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) is a trade association, representing organisations that award vocational qualifications in the United Kingdom. It represents the interests of awarding bodies by liaising with key stakeholders including the regulators, government departments and funding agencies. It provides information, advice and guidance to its members to support them in providing high-quality and valued vocational qualifications. See the FAB website [www.awarding.org.uk/](http://www.awarding.org.uk/) for more information.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is a membership organisation representing the seven largest awarding bodies offering qualifications in the UK, including GCSEs, A levels as well as vocational qualifications. See the JCQ website [www.jcq.org.uk/](http://www.jcq.org.uk/)

## Lifelong Learning Pillar



### Lifelong Learning Pillar

The focus of the lifelong learning pillar is to acknowledge learning provision from outside of the HE and regulated qualifications pillars of the CQFW, for example, courses resulting in certification of attendance.

Lifelong learning courses that do not result in regulated qualifications should not display the logos of regulated awarding bodies, to avoid confusion for the learner.

Informal learning is outside of the scope of the CQFW, as by its nature it does not comply with the high level principles. It is generally referred to as learning by experience, e.g. through social interaction – learning by ‘pitching in’, getting involved in a task/activity. Frequently, it occurs ‘accidentally’ and is unplanned. It has no set objectives in terms of learning outcomes.

**Vendor/Industry/Professional (VIP) learning** includes provision such as vendor/professional courses, continuing personal and professional development.

Such provision tends to be stipulated by employers who require the workforce to undertake sector/industry specific training as part of ongoing professional development.

**Unitised accredited learning (UAL)** comprises bespoke/tailored bite-sized units. It is generally undertaken by learners on short introductory or refresher courses who require continual professional development (CPD) for the purposes of either personal development or to improve their occupational competencies and enables organisations to respond quickly to learner demands for training.

### Quality assurance

It is important to note that there is no regulatory process in place for UAL or VIP learning. See pages 26 and 29 for further information on quality assurance arrangements.

Quality assurance is not overseen centrally; it is assumed that sectors will utilise their own internal existing quality assurance practices and processes to comply with the CQFW’s High Level Principles.

### Unitised Accredited Learning

Unitised Accredited Learning	
Example type of learning	CQFW units of Credit
Information Source	Lifelong learning units on HEI and Awarding Body websites
Delivery	HEIs, FEIs, Awarding Bodies, Third Sector, Training Providers, Employers
Standards	CQFW High Level Principles
Quality Assurance	CQFW competent bodies – HEIs and Awarding Bodies
Awarded by	CQFW competent bodies – HEIs and Awarding Bodies
Guidance	CQFW High Level Principles
Oversight	CQFW competent bodies – HEIs and Awarding Bodies

### Unitised Accredited Learning

Unitised accredited learning (UAL) is unit-based provision which is based upon assessment evidence and has a credit value. This can be applied to many learning environments, such as:

- in-house company training
- adult and community learning, including learning to assist adults to return to learning
- Refresher or additional learning undertaken by all types of learners that might help them to progress in the same or another subject
- learning which is additional to qualifications
- training the individual might do as part of a job which is not formally recognised currently
- specialist, hobby-based learning provided by a variety of organisations, such as libraries, museums, unions and voluntary organisations.

### Units

A unit (sometimes called module) of learning is a coherent combination of learning outcomes and assessment criteria, which may be assigned a credit value based on the notional learning time and a specified credit value. A unit must contain at least one learning outcome and at least one assessment criterion, and be equivalent to a minimum of 10 notional hours of learning. The CQFW makes no determination of the maxima, though curriculum designers and recognised bodies must bear in mind the practicalities of delivery, assessment and quality assurance arrangements.

Each unit or module of learning can only be assigned to one credit level. Units can be delivered and assessed independently, or brought together through structures to create a rational programme of study or qualification.

#### CQFW UAL unit specification:

- Unit title and Unit level
- Credit value
- Recognised body unique unit reference number
- Regulated qualification/unit reference number (where applicable)
- Review date
- Last registration date (where appropriate)
- Purpose/aim
- Unit content:
  - learning outcomes
  - assessment criteria
- List of qualification(s)/programmes (where appropriate) and whether the unit forms part of one or more regulated qualification
  - Sector
  - Sub-sector
- Sector subject code explanation
- Any age restriction applicable to the unit achievement
- Mapping to NOS or other professional standards (where applicable).

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#### Delivery

UAL programmes may be delivered by HEIs, FEIs, awarding bodies (regulated and non-regulated\*), third sector organisations, training providers and employers.

\*The full suite of qualifications an awarding body offers may be broader than the regulated qualifications it offers and these would be outside the scope of the qualifications regulated by Qualifications Wales.

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#### Design

The UAL area of the lifelong learning pillar is about free-standing units of achievement which have been assigned a notional credit value. Organisations wishing to design full qualifications should apply for recognition within either the regulated qualifications or higher education pillar through Qualifications Wales or HEFCW.

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#### LL Curriculum planning benefits

- A way of reducing duplication of training/repetition of learning by using accredited units to acknowledge the learning and skills acquired through the award of credit.
- Providers quality assure the content and level of the unit and its delivery and assessment through assigning total guided learning hours and notional credit values.
- Allows employers with specific learning needs, but who do not require a qualification, to develop/ create bespoke training courses.
- Enables providers to develop innovative and quality assured curriculum offers for non-traditional groups, e.g. those not in employment, education or training group (NEETs).
- Core units which are relevant to more than one sector may be transferable across different learning pathways and/or programmes.





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### CQFW recognition of UAL learning

UAL will only be recognised within the lifelong learning pillar of the CQFW if it has been developed by a CQFW 'competent body'.

Within the bounds of the UAL area of the lifelong learning pillar, a competent body is deemed to be any UK regulated awarding body (that is recognised by a UK qualifications regulator) or a Higher Education Institution in Wales. Organisations that are not CQFW 'competent bodies' but wish to provide UAL are advised to build relationships with existing CQFW competent bodies.

The UAL area of the lifelong learning pillar facilitates development of direct relationships between HEIs/awarding bodies and employers, learners and FEIs. Any UAL provision that is available should be accessed via the relevant Awarding Body or HE provider.

See the flowchart on page 27 for further information.

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### Quality Assurance

There is no regulatory process for UAL. It is acknowledged that CQFW competent bodies may utilise component parts of their regulated/higher education qualifications to design courses for different purposes and markets. The quality assurance of such courses will be in line with their own internal quality assurance processes.

Lifelong learning units are not regulated qualifications. Component parts or units which are used from regulated qualifications continue to fall within the parameters of the regulated qualifications pillar.

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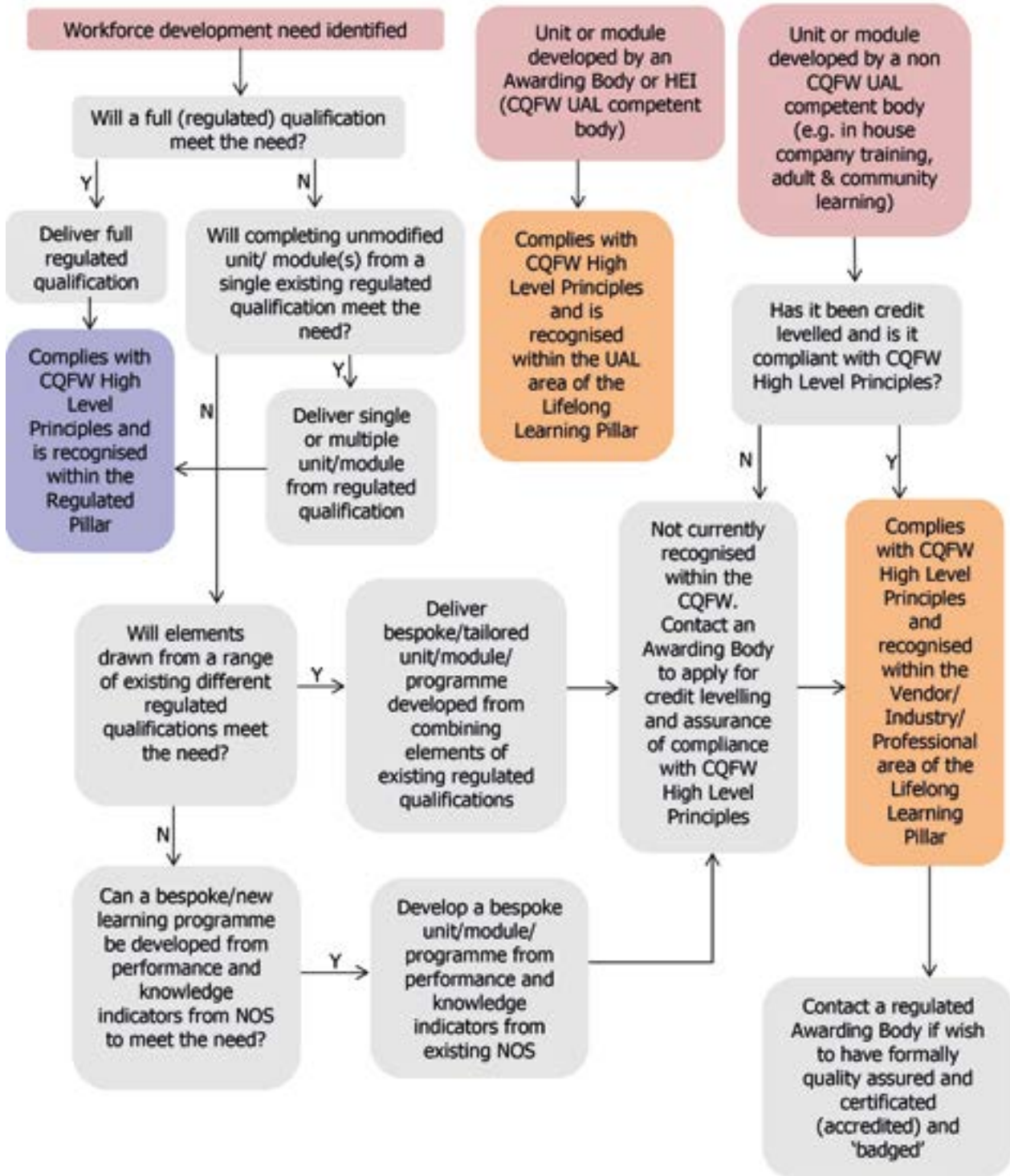
### Case studies and examples

Examples of case studies relating to the use of UAL may be found in the report of the CQFW Review (2014) available to view here:

Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQFW) | GOV.WALES: [www.gov.wales/credit-and-qualifications-framework-cqfw](http://www.gov.wales/credit-and-qualifications-framework-cqfw):

- Case Study: Driver Certificate of Professional Competence, Skills for Logistics 2013.
- Case Study: Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board: using CQFW project in NHS Wales (Mental Health and Learning Disabilities), 2013.
- Case Study: Clwyd Alyn Association, 2013.

Process for recognition of Unitised Accredited Learning within the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)



## Vendor/Industry/Professional learning

Vendor/Industry/Professional Learning		
Lifelong Learning	Example type of learning	Vendor/Professional courses, Continuous Personal and Professional Development
	Information Source	HEI, FEI, Vendor/Industry/Professional Body websites
	Delivery	HEIs, FEIs, Training Providers, Vendor/Industry/Professional Bodies, Awarding Bodies, Employers
	Standards	NOS, Industry/Professional Standards
	Quality Assurance	Sector, Vendor, Industry or Professional Bodies
	Awarded by	HEI or Awarding Bodies, Vendor/Industry/Professional Bodies
	Guidance	Sector, Vendor, Industry or Professional Bodies
	Oversight	Sector, Vendor, Industry or Professional Bodies

### Vendor/Industry/Professional learning

Vendor/Industry/Professional (VIP) learning tends to be sector/industry specific training and/or workforce development programmes.

Audiences interested in VIP learning may include

- employees undertaking continuous professional development either in-house or externally led, to enhance their workplace skills and knowledge
- those returning to learning in preparation for re-entering employment
- adult and community learners
- those who may take up programmes of special personal interest.

### Delivery

VIP learning programmes may be delivered by employers, HEIs, awarding bodies, FEIs, private training providers, vendor, industry and professional bodies and third sector organisations.

### Design

Training providers can design bespoke/tailored programmes to meet individual needs by selecting units from VIP and UAL.

N.B. The Intellectual Property rights of assessments and related materials will remain the property of Awarding Bodies/HEIs.

The VIP learning area of the lifelong learning pillar facilitates the relationship of any organisation with employers and learners providing a structured course of learning experience.

See the flowchart on page 31 for further information.

## Quality Assurance

There is no regulatory process for the approval/assurance of VIP learning. Sector, industry and professional bodies oversee quality assurance in line with their internal quality assurance processes.

The learning outcomes of a regulated qualification may not be achieved when the qualification is broken down into component parts. Similarly the quality of a previously regulated qualification, which has since been withdrawn or surrendered from regulation, cannot be assured. Oversight by quality assurance processes in line with the CQFW high level principles is therefore recommended.

If desirable, training providers can contact an awarding body to design learning programmes to determine comparability of the level assigned to the training with similar provision elsewhere and to seek reassurance of compliance with the CQFW high level principles. Awarding bodies can also formally accredit, quality assure, certificate and, if required, 'badge' learning, thus endorsing that it meets the eight CQFW high level principles.

## Sector Representative Bodies

Sector representative bodies are independent, employer-led UK wide organisations. They aim to develop high quality skills standards with employers which support productivity, profitability, growth and enhance competitiveness in the UK and overseas markets.

Sector representative bodies work with employers of all sizes from across the UK to define:

- Occupational standards and job competencies. These are used in many different ways by employers.
- The qualifications which make up an apprenticeship framework. This framework is then used by employers to enable them to select the qualification structure most appropriate for each individual apprentice.
- Skills needs and skills standards in their industry.

## Wales/UK industry and professional bodies and trade associations

There are many trade associations and professional bodies operating in Wales.

A trade association, also known as an industry trade group, is an organisation founded and funded by businesses that operate in a specific industry.

A professional association (also called a professional body, professional organisation, or professional society) is a non-profit organisation seeking to further a particular profession, the interests of individuals engaged in that profession, and the public interest.

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are organisations which are authorised to accredit, approve or recognise specific programmes, some of which have a statutory or regulatory responsibility, and/or can determine the academic standards and professional or vocational components of such programmes.

### Apprenticeships

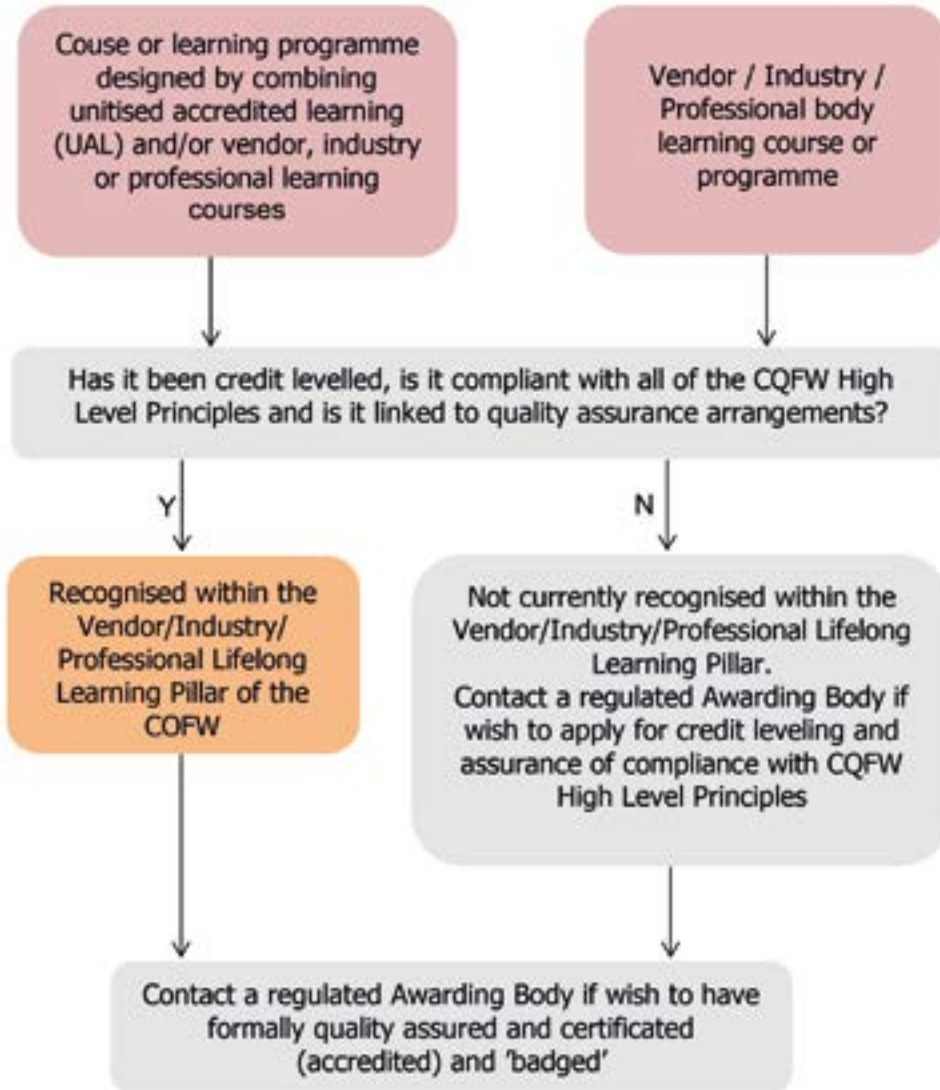
Sector representative bodies advise employers about the qualifications that are best suited for apprenticeships, and may have available a list of training providers that can deliver

those qualifications. In addition to, and in accordance with the Welsh Government’s Apprenticeships Policy, Higher Education Institutions also develop higher level and degree apprenticeships

### Standards

<b>National Occupational Standards (NOS)</b>	<b>Industry standards</b>	<b>Professional standards</b>
<p>Specify UK standards of competent performance that people are expected to achieve in their work, and the knowledge and skills they need to perform. For further information see <a href="http://www.ukstandards.org.uk">www.ukstandards.org.uk</a></p>	<p>May be defined as the technical and procedural rules that are generally followed by members of an industry. They govern the way an industry operates. They also refer to the body of knowledge and skills required by employees to operate effectively in a particular area of work.</p>	<p>May be defined as statements of employees’ professional values and ethics, skills, knowledge and understanding required for an occupation. They set out clear expectations about effective practice at each stage of an employee’s career and how the employee should fulfil his/her role effectively.</p>

Process for recognition of Vendor/Industry/Professional Learning within the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)



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### Relevant contacts and links

Relevant national organisations and documentation may be accessed via the following links.

- Higher Education Funding Council in Wales (HEFCW)  
[www.hefcw.ac.uk](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk)
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)  
[www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)
- Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)  
[www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk)
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)  
[www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)
- Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulation (OFQUAL)  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual)
- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) – Department of Education  
[www.qqi.ie](http://www.qqi.ie)
- England: Education and Skills Funding Agency  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency)
- Qualifications Wales  
[www.qualificationswales.org/](http://www.qualificationswales.org/)

- Credit & Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)  
[gov.wales/cqfw](http://gov.wales/cqfw)
- Welsh Government  
[www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)
- UK ENIC  
[www.enic.org.uk](http://www.enic.org.uk)
- EQF  
[www.ec.europa.eu/ploteus/](http://www.ec.europa.eu/ploteus/)

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### Contact

For further information contact:  
[cqfw.enquiries@gov.wales](mailto:cqfw.enquiries@gov.wales)



## Glossary of Terms

Access to HE – Qualification which prepares people without traditional qualifications for study at university

Bologna process – Intergovernmental cooperation of European countries in the field of higher education

CCEA – Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment – regulator of qualifications in Northern Ireland

Education and Skills Funding Agency – Executive agency sponsored by the UK Government accountable for funding, education and skills

EQF – European Qualifications Framework – a reference framework used to compare qualifications across Europe

European Union Vocational Education and Training initiatives – Initiatives to encourage cooperation in vocational education and training across Europe

EHEA – European Higher Education Area – group of 48 countries that cooperate to achieve comparable and compatible higher education systems throughout Europe

FEIs – Further Education Institutions

FHEQ – Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

HEFCW – Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

HEIs – Higher Education Institutions

HNC – Higher National Certificate

HND – Higher National Diploma

Ofqual – Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulation – regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England

QAA – Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in England Wales and Northern Ireland – safeguards standards and improves the quality of UK higher education

QAA – Quality Enhancement Review – Method by which the Quality Assurance Agency reviews Welsh higher education providers as part of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales

QIW – Qualifications in Wales – a database of qualifications approved or designated for teaching in Wales for learners aged under 19 (excluding higher education)

QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland – promotes quality and accountability in education and training services in Ireland

QW – Qualifications Wales

SASW – Specification of Apprenticeships Standards for Wales

SCQF – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SQA – Scottish Qualifications Authority – regulator of qualifications in Scotland

UAL – Unitesed accredited learning – bespoke/tailored bite-sized units

UCAS – Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

UK ENIC – National Agency responsible for information, advice and data on qualifications from outside the UK

Unistats – Website for comparing UK higher education course data

VIP – Vendor, industry, professional learning

Welsh Bacalaureate – Brings together qualifications that prepare students between 14-19 for employability, further study and life