

HiQual UK

QUALIFICATION DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL & REVIEW POLICY

HQUK-POL-QDAR-001

Document Control Item	Details
Organisation	HiQual UK
Policy Title	Qualification Development, Approval & Review Policy
Policy Reference	HQUK-POL-QDAR-001
Version	1.0
Policy Status	Approved
Effective Date	1 June 2026
Next Review Date	1 June 2027
Policy Owner	Sarah Williams, Head of Quality Assurance
Approved By	HiQual UK Academic and Standards Committee
Review Cycle	Annual, or earlier where regulatory, sector, qualification or organisational changes require review
Classification	Public Policy
Applies To	Qualification Developers, Subject Specialists, Assessors, IQAs, Approved Centres, Governance Committees, HiQual UK Personnel and Relevant Stakeholders

Framework for developing, approving, maintaining and reviewing fit-for-purpose qualifications

1. Purpose

HiQual UK is committed to developing qualifications that have clear objectives, provide meaningful benefit to learners, are fit for purpose and can be delivered, assessed and quality assured effectively.

This policy establishes the controlled lifecycle for identifying qualification needs, designing qualifications, consulting stakeholders, approving specifications, implementing qualifications, monitoring performance, reviewing qualifications and, where appropriate, amending or withdrawing them.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all HiQual UK qualifications that are developed, approved, substantially revised, reviewed or withdrawn.

It applies to qualification developers, subject experts, assessment designers, quality assurance personnel, Approved Centres, governance committees and other persons involved in qualification development or approval.

3. Regulatory and Quality Framework

Where HiQual UK develops or seeks to offer regulated qualifications, the qualification lifecycle will be designed to meet applicable regulatory conditions and requirements. Ofqual's current General Conditions include requirements concerning qualification objectives, specifications, fit-for-purpose assessment, review and assurance before submission or accreditation. ¹

HiQual UK will check current regulatory requirements before submitting or materially changing a regulated qualification. Ofqual states that recognised awarding organisations must comply with current conditions on an ongoing basis. ²

4. Qualification Lifecycle

The standard lifecycle is: needs identification; concept and rationale; stakeholder consultation; qualification design; assessment strategy; internal quality assurance; independent review; formal approval; regulatory submission where applicable; controlled launch; annual monitoring; comprehensive periodic review; amendment, replacement or withdrawal where required.

5. Qualification Need and Rationale

Before a new qualification is developed, HiQual UK will document the need and expected learner benefit.

The rationale should consider the intended learner group, sector or employer need, progression or employment benefit, existing qualifications, potential duplication, stakeholder demand, delivery feasibility and risks.

Evidence may include employer input, professional body views, centre and learner feedback, progression information, skills needs or other credible evidence.

6. Qualification Objectives

Each qualification must have a clear objective describing the benefit and intended outcome for learners.

The objective must guide the specification, learning outcomes, assessment strategy and review process.

Claims about progression, employment or professional recognition must be evidence-based and appropriately described.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

HiQual UK will seek relevant views during development and, where appropriate, review. Stakeholders may include learners, centres, tutors, employers, professional bodies, further and higher education providers, subject experts and other users.

Feedback will be recorded and considered. Significant decisions not to adopt material feedback should have a documented rationale.

8. Qualification Design Requirements

Qualifications should be fit for purpose, aligned to their objective, clear about required knowledge and skills, appropriate to the intended level and demand, assessable through valid methods, accessible, deliverable with realistic resources, capable of consistent assessment and quality assurance, and transparent to users.

9. Qualification Structure and Specification

Each qualification will have an approved controlled specification. As applicable, it should state the title, objective, level, size or learning expectations, entry requirements, units/components, learning outcomes, assessment requirements, grading or achievement rules, progression information, reasonable adjustment arrangements and certification requirements.

Controlled specifications must be versioned and released through an approved route.

10. Level and Qualification Size

Where applicable, HiQual UK will assign and maintain an appropriate level using relevant regulatory or framework requirements.

Qualification size, learning expectations and assessment requirements must be coherent and proportionate to the objective.

Where a regulator prescribes requirements for levels, Total Qualification Time or other measures, these must be incorporated into design and approval.

11. Assessment Strategy

Every qualification must have an assessment strategy appropriate to its objective and intended outcomes.

The strategy should explain how required knowledge, skills and understanding will be validly assessed, how decisions will be made consistently and how assessment quality will be assured.

12. Assessment Design

Assessment content must be fit for purpose, appropriate to the method and consistent with the qualification specification.

Where applicable, assessment design should support reasonable adjustments, authentication of learner evidence, reliable differentiation between attainment levels and efficient delivery. These are reflected in Ofqual's assessment design expectations. [?cite?turn0search0?turn0search5?](#)

13. Equality, Diversity and Accessibility

Qualification design will consider equality, diversity and inclusion and seek to minimise unnecessary barriers.

Where appropriate, assessments will permit reasonable adjustments while preserving the competence or standard being assessed. This policy should be read with HiQual UK's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy.

14. Recognition of Prior Learning

Where HiQual UK permits Recognition of Prior Learning, arrangements must be transparent, applied by competent personnel and capable of producing valid and reliable outcomes.

Where an Ofqual-regulated qualification permits RPL, the awarding organisation must maintain and comply with a published RPL policy. [?cite?turn0search0?](#)

15. Qualification Risk Assessment

New and substantially revised qualifications will undergo proportionate risk assessment covering assessment validity and security, malpractice, accessibility, centre capability, assessor competence, resources, progression claims, conflicts of interest, regulatory compliance and reputational risk.

Significant risks require documented controls, owners and escalation routes.

16. Development Team and Competence

Qualification development will use personnel with appropriate subject, assessment and quality expertise.

Depending on complexity, the team may include a Qualification Developer, Subject Matter Expert, Assessment Specialist, Quality Assurance representative and independent reviewer. Roles must be documented.

17. Conflicts of Interest

All persons involved in development, review or approval must declare actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

Where a conflict could compromise objectivity, appropriate mitigation or alternative personnel must be used.

18. Internal Quality Assurance

Before formal approval, the qualification must undergo structured quality assurance covering the objective, learning outcomes, level, structure, assessment strategy, grading or achievement rules, accessibility, delivery feasibility, quality assurance arrangements and supporting claims.

19. Independent Review

An independent element should provide challenge and objectivity. The reviewer should be appropriately competent and, where practicable, not responsible for the original design.

Independent review may involve a subject expert, employer, professional body representative, education specialist, centre representative or suitably independent HiQual UK staff member.

20. Formal Approval

No new or substantially revised qualification may be released until formal approval is granted through the authorised governance route.

The approval record must confirm that review has occurred, material issues have been resolved or accepted with rationale, resources and delivery are feasible and the qualification is ready for implementation.

Where regulatory submission or accreditation is required, approval must precede submission.

21. Approval Authority

The Academic and Standards Committee is the normal approval authority for HiQual UK qualifications unless another formally approved governance arrangement applies.

Approval may include conditions or actions; these must be recorded, assigned and tracked.

22. Pre-Launch Readiness

Before release, HiQual UK will confirm that the qualification specification, assessment materials, guidance, centre information, assessor requirements, quality assurance arrangements, certification rules and systems are ready.

Relevant centres and assessment personnel must receive sufficient information and training before delivery begins.

23. Publication and Change Control

Approved specifications and associated documents must be controlled to prevent use of superseded versions.

Published information must be accurate and consistent with the approved qualification.

Material amendments must follow formal change control and approval before publication.

24. Implementation Monitoring

Following launch, HiQual UK will monitor performance and emerging risks using learner and centre feedback, assessment performance, appeals, complaints, reasonable adjustment information, malpractice incidents, certification patterns, assessor/IQA feedback and external feedback.

25. Annual Monitoring

Each qualification should undergo annual monitoring or an equivalent periodic review. The process should consider performance, feedback, assessment and quality assurance issues, risks, regulatory or sector changes and required corrective action.

26. Comprehensive Periodic Review

HiQual UK will conduct a more comprehensive review at an appropriate interval, normally every three to five years unless risk, regulation, sector change or performance requires an earlier review.

Ofqual guidance gives annual monitoring and more in-depth reviews every three to five years as an example of a systematic approach. [?cite?turn0search1?](#)

27. Review Evidence

A comprehensive review should consider whether the qualification still meets its objective; learner benefit; assessment validity, reliability and demand; certification performance; centre, learner and assessor feedback; employer/professional input; complaints, appeals and malpractice; equality and accessibility; industry and technology changes; progression pathways; regulatory changes; resources; and previous review actions.

28. Review Outcomes

A review may conclude that a qualification should continue unchanged; continue with minor amendments; undergo substantial revision and re-approval; be replaced; be suspended from new registrations; or be withdrawn with appropriate learner and centre arrangements.

29. Qualification Amendments

All amendments must be assessed for their effect on the objective, learning outcomes, assessment validity, level, certification, existing learners, centres and regulatory requirements.

Material changes require approval before implementation. Changes affecting existing learners must include fair transition arrangements.

30. Transition and Teach-Out

Where a qualification is replaced or withdrawn, HiQual UK will establish a proportionate teach-out or transition plan covering existing registrations, assessment opportunities, certification, adjustments, centre communications, deadlines, records and replacement arrangements where relevant.

31. Qualification Withdrawal

A qualification may be withdrawn where it is no longer fit for purpose, demand is insufficient, requirements have materially changed, risks cannot be controlled or a replacement provides a more appropriate solution.

Withdrawal decisions must consider learner protection, certification, records, contractual commitments and applicable regulatory requirements.

32. Regulatory and External Feedback

HiQual UK will consider relevant feedback and findings from regulators, external reviewers, employers, professional bodies, centres and other credible stakeholders.

Where evidence indicates that qualification development, delivery or award arrangements are no longer appropriate, HiQual UK will review and revise them as necessary. Ofqual Condition D3 requires systematic review and response to credible evidence and adverse effects. [Ofqual Condition D3](#)

33. Records and Evidence

HiQual UK will retain appropriate evidence of development, consultation, design, assessment rationale, risk assessment, independent review, approval, monitoring, review, change control and withdrawal decisions.

Records must be controlled and retained in accordance with HiQual UK's records management requirements.

34. Governance Reporting

Significant qualification risks, development decisions, review findings, overdue actions and proposed withdrawals or major changes will be reported to the appropriate governance body.

35. Quality Improvement

Lessons learned from qualification development, assessment, monitoring, review, complaints, appeals, malpractice and external feedback will inform continual improvement.

Systemic issues require corrective and preventive action with effectiveness monitoring.

36. Responsibilities

The Board provides overall governance oversight.

The Academic and Standards Committee approves qualifications and oversees academic standards.

The Head of Quality Assurance coordinates quality assurance and review activities.

Qualification Developers and Subject Matter Experts develop content and structure.

Assessment Specialists develop assessment strategies and arrangements.

Independent Reviewers provide objective challenge.

Approved Centres provide delivery feedback and comply with approved qualification requirements.

37. Policy Exceptions

Any exception must be justified, documented and approved by the appropriate authority.

No exception may bypass mandatory regulatory requirements, compromise assessment validity or permit release of an inadequately reviewed qualification.

38. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where required by regulatory changes, qualification experience, audit findings, external feedback or organisational change.

39. Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read alongside:

- Academic Governance Policy
- Quality Assurance Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy
- Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
- Appeals Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Data Protection & UK GDPR Policy
- Centre Recognition Policy
- Centre Monitoring Policy
- Certification Policy
- Records Management and Retention Policy
- Risk Management Policy

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41. Version Control

Version	Date	Description of Change	Author	Approval
1.0	1 June 2026	Initial publication of HiQual UK Qualification Development, Approval & Review Policy	Sarah Williams, Head of Quality Assurance	Academic and Standards Committee

42. Policy Statement

HiQual UK will develop and maintain qualifications through a controlled, evidence-based and transparent lifecycle. Each qualification must have a clear objective, an appropriate assessment approach, adequate quality assurance and formal approval before implementation.

HiQual UK will keep qualifications under systematic review and use learner, centre, employer, professional, assessment, quality and regulatory evidence to determine whether qualifications remain fit for purpose.

Where a qualification requires amendment, replacement or withdrawal, HiQual UK will apply proportionate change control and protect learners while maintaining qualification standards and integrity.

END OF POLICY