



Scheme made under Section 19 of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015



May 2022

Version control

This is version 1 of the Scheme for the approval of non-priority qualifications. This version was published on 13 May 2022.

Feedback on this Scheme is welcomed at any time. Please send any comments to policy@qualificationswales.org.

[This Scheme is also available in Welsh.](#)

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Introduction

Statutory basis for the Scheme

In accordance with Part 4, Section 19 of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015 (“the Act”), this Scheme sets out the factors we are likely take into account in determining whether to consider applications for approval of non-priority qualifications. The Scheme also sets out our procedure for approving such qualifications.

The legislative basis for the Scheme is set out below and is made pursuant to Section 19(5) and is published pursuant to Section 19(9) of the Act.

The policy underpinning this procedure is the [Priority Qualifications List and Restricted Priority Qualifications Policy](#).

19 Approval of qualifications that are not priority qualifications

- (1) This section applies where—
 - (a) an application is made to Qualifications Wales, for approval of a form of a qualification, by an awarding body that is recognised in respect of the award of the qualification concerned, and
 - (b) Qualifications Wales is satisfied that the qualification concerned is not a priority qualification.
- (2) Qualifications Wales may at its discretion determine whether to consider the form of the qualification for approval.
- (3) If Qualifications Wales does consider the form of the qualification for approval it may approve the form of the qualification for award in Wales by the body concerned, if it considers it appropriate to do so.
- (4) But this is subject to section 21 (power to specify minimum requirements).
- (5) Qualifications Wales must prepare a scheme making provision about the making of determinations under subsection (2).
- (6) The scheme must, among other things, set out factors likely to be taken into account by Qualifications Wales in determining whether to consider a form of qualification for approval.

(7) Qualifications Wales must exercise its functions in accordance with the scheme.

(8) Qualifications Wales may revise the scheme.

(9) The scheme must be published by Qualifications Wales.

Approved qualifications and non-priority qualifications

All Approved qualifications have met specific Approval criteria which have been developed and published by us. Recognised awarding bodies must demonstrate that their design of qualification meets these criteria before we approve that form of qualification and permit them to offer the qualification. In this way, we ensure that Approved qualifications are designed to meet the needs of learners in Wales. We will approve the qualifications for a specific period, and they can only be awarded with the identified approval number in Wales.

The Act gives us the power to choose whether or not to consider, for approval qualifications that are not included on the Priority Qualifications List (“non-priority qualifications”). This establishes a difference between qualifications on the list (which Qualifications Wales **must** consider, or **must** consider in accordance with its relevant Scheme (sections 16 – 18)¹, and qualifications not on the list (which Qualifications Wales **may** consider).

Factors likely to be taken into account in determining whether to consider a non-priority qualification for approval

The factors we are likely to take into account in determining whether to consider the form of the qualification for approval include, but is not limited to the following:

- the qualification is offered by a recognised awarding body;
- the awarding body is recognised to award such qualifications or description of qualifications;
- we have developed and published approval criteria for the qualification, or description of qualification;

¹ [Scheme made under Section 15 of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015](#), and [Scheme made under Section 17 of the Qualifications Wales Act 2015](#)

- the qualification is not considered to be the same or similar to an Approved qualification (for further detail on same or similar qualifications, please see our [Designation Policy](#));
- the qualification is deemed to add value to the Approved qualification offer, and to have sufficient support from Users of qualifications;
- the qualification is not deemed to be a current priority for approval as part of our qualification reform programme of work;
- the qualification submitted for approval is not included on the Priority Qualifications List, and
- there is a greater degree of flexibility in respect of approving the qualification as eligible for publicly funded courses for learners under the age of 19 and making the qualification available for first teaching.

Procedure for approving non-priority qualifications

This section outlines the main stages of the procedure we will follow in determining whether to consider a non-priority qualification for approval.

Before commencing this procedure, we will have determined that a qualification or description of qualification is not same or similar to any Approved qualification and is not a priority qualification, and therefore not included on the List.

We will set and publish approval criteria to be applied in deciding whether to approve a form of a qualification, and recognised awarding bodies will be notified that they may subsequently submit an application for approval (see procedure below). However, we may also decide to set and publish Approval Criteria following a request from an awarding body to approve a form of qualification for award in Wales.

Procedure

1. We will set and publish Approval criteria to be applied in deciding whether to approve the qualification.
2. Recognised awarding bodies can choose to submit a form of qualification for approval.
3. In the event that an application is received, we will inform any relevant awarding bodies of the timeframe for the approval process. We will review submissions against the criteria. In some cases, we will use subject experts to help us with this stage.

4. We will produce a regulatory feedback report to the relevant awarding bodies. If required, we will engage with them for clarification on their submitted qualifications.
5. Awarding bodies can resubmit their qualification and other materials which will then be reviewed.
6. Once a qualification is approved, it will become an approved unrestricted non-priority qualification and will be given a qualification number and an approval period.

In accordance with the Act, we may also impose Conditions of Approval, which means that ongoing approval is subject to the awarding body complying with those conditions. We may also set Conditions of Recognition which specifically relate to that form of qualification or description of qualification.

Further information on how to apply for approval is available [here](#).