

**A FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVEMENT - RECOGNISING
QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

By the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Response by the Chartered Management Institute

Chartered Management Institute response to the QCA: *A framework for achievement - Recognising qualifications and skills in the 21st century*

Overview

The Chartered Management Institute (the Institute) very much welcomed the opportunity to respond to the consultation paper on the Framework for Achievement and to contribute to the development of a clear, inclusive and coherent qualifications framework for England.

The Institute is a chartered professional body with a charitable remit to raise the standard of management and leadership practice. With a membership of 71,000 individual managers and around 450 organisations we have a significant UK wide reach across both employers and learners. The Institute is also a QCA recognised awarding body and, through the Management Standards Centre (MSC), is appointed by Government (QCA, DfES, SSDA) as the Standards Setting Body for Management and Leadership. The Institute has a formal research programme and day-to-day contact with employers and employees, enabling it to build knowledge and understanding of the challenges managers face and to support them in their development.

In view of the Institute's broad involvement at many different interfaces in the development and provision of management and leadership standards and qualifications, we are a key stakeholder in this reform. We have participated actively in the events held by the QCA and others to listen to the proposals and discuss the issues raised with other stakeholders.

The Institute supports the broad principles and concepts behind the reform, in that there is a clear need for a framework incorporating a credit system to enable greater inclusion, progression and recognition of achievement for learners.

The Institute formally responded to the specific issues in the consultation document, and wrote separately to the QCA to emphasise the following three key points that we believe are of greatest significance in achieving a successful outcome to this consultation.

1. The framework should meet the needs of the primary customers – Employers and Learners.

- 1.1 There is a tension that still needs to be reconciled between, on the one hand, a more flexible, diverse and inclusive framework that provides recognition for the widest possible range of achievements and, on the other hand, a simpler, transparent and accessible framework that sets out clear pathways for progression and provides comparability for the benchmarking of achievement.
- 1.2 In an ideal world, both employers and learners would seek all of these qualities in the framework. The features in the proposals that most support the needs of learners are the recognition of units of achievement, the credit accumulation and transfer and the use of a common language in qualifications' titles. These features are also likely to be welcomed by employers. In addition however, employers need to see the relationship between qualifications and occupational or professional standards and to have assurance about the quality and comparability of outcomes in terms of content, size and level.
- 1.3 There is currently insufficient detail in the Part B proposals to judge the extent to which these features will be achieved. We perceive a risk, however, of the proliferation of units each with its own demand for systems support for assessment and certification and little clarity about how they could be aggregated into whole qualifications. Far from giving the user the benefit of choice and flexibility, it might present a confusing mass of options to the learner and leave the employer uncertain about the relative value of different pieces of recognised learning. The resolution of this inherent tension is dependent upon the detailed development of the structural and operational proposals, particularly those concerning the "stewardship" of the databank, the rules for combination and the arrangements for credit value and transfer. We would like to see a further iteration of the proposals in these areas with input from the end users as well as the intermediary stakeholders.

2. The framework should engage all the key stakeholders.

- 2.1 The proposals raise a number of legal, governance and commercial issues for professional bodies and awarding bodies, which are a disincentive to their participation.
 - 2.1.1 The proposal that we should relinquish Intellectual Property Rights on units submitted to the Framework is unacceptable. The Institute invests significant resources in developing its qualifications and great care in approving organisations to deliver those qualifications. It could not cede ownership of these assets, nor give up the responsibility as a Chartered Body to determine the standards for the profession.
 - 2.1.2 The requirement for a new IT system to enable credit accumulation and transfer implies considerable, but as yet unspecified, costs to be borne by awarding bodies. We could not at this stage make a positive recommendation to our Trustees that such an investment would be justified by any return in terms of additional qualifications revenue.
 - 2.1.3 Given our charitable status, there needs to be further evaluation of the non-financial risks presented by these proposals. It appears that units in the databank could be amended by another organisation and assessed using disparate assessment methodologies with resultant questions about quality assurance and comparability. We are concerned about the risk this presents to the Institute's reputation as the guardian and champion of professional management standards.

- 2.2 The Institute would be pleased to work with QCA to identify ways of resolving these issues. There are nearly 400 professional associations in the UK, most of whom provide training and many of whom offer qualifications. Collectively they are responsible for the learning of millions of adults. Few of them are included in the current NQF. If the framework is to be fully inclusive, it would help to have a model which might engage more of these.

3 Pathways for progression

- 3.1 To fulfil the ambitions of the National Skills Strategy any new framework should facilitate progression in a number of different directions:
- 3.1.1 Across educational stages – requiring alignment with the 14–19 curriculum and the Higher Education Qualifications Framework.
 - 3.1.2 Across geographical boundaries – requiring alignment with the Scottish, Wales and Northern Ireland Frameworks and eventually extending beyond the UK.
 - 3.1.3 Across occupations and sectors – requiring alignment with national occupational standards, sector skills strategies, professional body qualifications and CPD frameworks.
- 3.2 While the consultation document contains a statement of intent concerning relationships with other frameworks there is insufficient evidence of a strategy to achieve this in practice. In the light of that, and the very recent White Paper on 14-19 education, we suggest it would be appropriate to give more time to ensure that such a major reform dovetails with the education system in general. We also question whether, in the meantime, the existing NQF could not be further developed to achieve many of the objectives underpinning the current proposals, leaving the more radical aspects to a second stage of development that would also address the question of UK connectivity.

The Institute looks forward to working with the QCA and other stakeholders to achieve an agreed framework that has the support of the widest possible group of stakeholders.

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