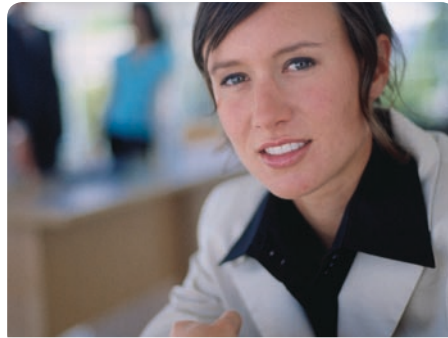


Employers' guide to qualifications

produced in partnership with the British Chambers of Commerce



Employers' guide to qualifications



Introduction

Arming the workforce with the right skills and making sure that employers know how those skills can really benefit their businesses is one of the most important challenges facing industry today.

It's so important to invest in education and training to ensure that staff are motivated, increase their skills and so encourage retention/progress in their chosen job.

It isn't always easy to understand the way education works and the skills that qualifications can give to employers, and most importantly how this will benefit your business. In order to make this easier for you OCR and The British Chambers of Commerce have worked together to provide this easy to understand guide to education and qualifications.

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Chief Executive
OCR

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Director General
British Chambers of Commerce

What is an awarding body?

Awarding bodies are responsible for developing, writing and assessing qualifications. They used to be known as exam boards. After a series of mergers and takeovers, there are only four main awarding bodies in England – OCR, Edexcel, AQA and City & Guilds.

What types of qualifications are there?

Qualifications fall broadly into two categories – General and Vocational and come in different levels.

General qualifications are usually taken between the ages of 14 and 19 and include GCSEs, ASs and A Levels – they always include tests/exams as part of their assessment and are broad in nature rather than focused on any particular work-related area.

Vocational qualifications are usually taken from the age of 14 and over and include NVQs and Key Skills – they are designed to have a much greater focus on learning practical skills.

You may hear people saying that they have a "City and Guilds". What they mean is they have an NVQ that was taken with the awarding body City & Guilds. NVQs are also offered by OCR and Edexcel.

Similarly you may hear people refer to a "BTEC". This is a qualification offered by Edexcel. Equivalents to it are also offered by OCR and are called OCR Nationals.

What is a Sector Skills Council?

A Sector Skills Council works with employers to determine the Occupational Standards. Awarding Bodies then produce qualifications that meet those Occupational Standards.

How vocational qualifications compare

This table shows some qualifications which are at the same level as GCSEs and A Levels. These are broad comparisons and show qualifications which might be offered as an alternative to GCSEs, A Levels and Degrees.

Entry Level	GCSEs D–G	GCSEs A*–C	A Levels	Further Education
<p>Skills gained at Entry Level</p> <p>Will gain basic knowledge and skills</p> <p>Can apply learning with guidance or supervision in everyday situations</p>	<p>Skills gained at Level 1</p> <p>Will gain basic knowledge and skills</p> <p>Can apply learning in everyday situations</p> <p>May be linked to job competence</p>	<p>Skills gained at Level 2</p> <p>Will gain good knowledge and understanding of a subject</p> <p>Can perform a variety of tasks with some guidance or supervision</p> <p>Appropriate for many job roles</p>	<p>Skills gained at Level 3</p> <p>Can apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding, at a detailed level</p> <p>Appropriate if you plan to go to university, work independently, or (in some cases) supervise and train others in their field of work</p>	<p>Skills gained at Level 4</p> <p>Can do specialist learning, involving detailed analysis of a high level of information and knowledge in an area of work or study</p>
<p>Examples of qualifications at Entry Level</p> <p>OCR Entry Level Certificate in Science</p> <p>OCR Entry Level Certificate in Mathematics</p> <p>OCR Entry Level Certificate in English</p>	<p>Examples of qualifications at Level 1</p> <p>OCR Diploma for IT Users (New CLAiT) is an alternative to one GCSE D–G</p> <p>OCR Level 1 National Certificate is an alternative to four GCSEs D–G</p> <p>BTEC Level 1 National Certificate is an alternative to four GCSEs D–G</p>	<p>Examples of qualifications at Level 2</p> <p>OCR Certificate for IT Users (CLAiT Plus) is an alternative to one GCSE A*–C</p> <p>OCR Level 2 National Certificate is an alternative to four GCSEs A*–C</p> <p>BTEC Level 2 National Certificate is an alternative to four GCSEs A*–C</p>	<p>Examples of qualifications at Level 3</p> <p>OCR Level 3 National Diploma is an alternative to two A Levels</p> <p>OCR Level 3 National Certificate is an alternative to one A Level</p> <p>BTEC Level 3 National Certificate is an alternative to one A Level</p> <p>Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Computing</p>	<p>Examples of qualifications at Level 4</p> <p>OCR Level 4 Certificate for IT Professionals</p> <p>City & Guilds Level 4 Registered Managers (Adults)</p> <p>City & Guilds Level 4 Higher Professional Diploma in Counselling</p> <p>Higher National Diploma (HND) in Computing</p>
<p>Other types of qualifications at Entry Level</p> <p>Basic Skills</p> <p>Entry Level Certificates</p>	<p>Other types of qualifications at Level 1</p> <p>Key Skills Level 1</p> <p>NVQ Level 1</p>	<p>Other types of qualifications at Level 2</p> <p>Key Skills Level 2</p> <p>NVQ Level 2</p>	<p>Other types of qualifications at Level 3</p> <p>Level 3 Nationals</p> <p>Key Skills Level 3</p> <p>NVQ Level 3</p> <p>Advanced Extension Awards</p>	<p>Other types of qualifications at Level 4</p> <p>Key Skills Level 4</p> <p>NVQ Level 4</p> <p>Professional Diploma</p>

More information on different qualifications

NVQ stands for 'National Vocational Qualification'. It's a work-related qualification, designed to recognise your abilities at your job. There are NVQs in all sorts of subjects, and each one reflects the skills and knowledge you need to do a particular job effectively.

NVQs are based on national occupational standards, which describe what you're expected to be able to do at work. They can be taken by working people, or by school or college students with a work placement or part-time job. There are no age limits or special entry requirements - and, within reason, you don't have to complete an NVQ in a set time period.

Some of you may ask what's the difference between an NVQ and a VRQ (vocationally related qualification)? The NVQ is a competence based qualification and the VRQ is a knowledge based qualification. NVQs can only be taken whilst at work, but VRQs can be taken at school or college.

Foundation Degrees are particular types of degrees that are designed to equip you with the skills and knowledge that businesses are looking for. They can offer a route into higher education for a wide range of students from many different backgrounds.

The qualification is broadly equivalent to the first two years of a bachelors degree. It can lead straight to a job, or prepare you for developing your professional skills in the future.

Foundation Degrees can often lead straight to a job, as they are designed in collaboration with businesses. You can also use your Foundation Degree to progress to a bachelors degree with further study (this normally takes about a year).

Diplomas are new, composite qualifications that have been designed to help students progress either to Higher Education or directly into employment. They are intended to deliver the skills that employers would most like to see in young people as well as giving them some background knowledge of relevant industries.

A substantial proportion of the content has been developed by groups of Sector Skills Councils who have undertaken extensive consultations with employers in their sectors. The qualifications will address a range of personal, thinking, learning skills and functional skills in maths, English and ICT as well as ensuring that every learner has access to work experience.

Basic/Key Skills underpin everyday activities. They include literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Each qualification is based on national standards for adults and is available at Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3 Levels. Adult Literacy and Adult Numeracy qualifications are also available at Level 1 and Level 2.

Functional Skills are new qualifications that will be piloted from September 2007. They are available in maths, English and ICT and are aimed at both young people and adults. Functional Skills are practical skills that enable people to perform in a range of contexts including the workplace. Employers and sector skills councils have been involved in developing the standards upon which the qualifications will be based. Someone with Functional English at Level 2 should for example be able to write effectively, structure sentences and punctuate appropriately. Someone with Functional maths at Level 2 should be able to use a range of data types and techniques to solve practical problems as well as check the accuracy of their solutions. A learner who has achieved ICT Functional Skills at Level 2 will be able to manage and retrieve information, use a variety of applications and apply safety and security practices. Functional Skills will eventually replace Key Skills qualifications.

Funding

To find your local Learning and Skills Council or for more information visit www.lsc.gov.uk

Need further information?

Please call the OCR customer contact centre on **024 76 851509** or email your query to: vocational.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

You can also visit our website www.ocr.org.uk

The British Chambers of Commerce

To find your local Chamber of Commerce or for more information visit www.chamberonline.co.uk

Case studies

CreateCity

CreateCity Limited is dedicated to driving their business forward and continuously improving the way they do business through effective training and development.

The County Durham based carpet wholesaler and retailer, having only previously provided carpet and flooring training for employees, now encourage their workforce to develop their skills further through National Vocational Qualification's (NVQ).

With the support of the North East Chamber of Commerce, CreateCity team members study NVQ Level 2 and 3 in warehousing, customer service and business administration. In addition, David Stubbs, Finance Director of CreateCity took an NVQ Level 5 in management to support his staff.

An effective appraisal system evaluates all training needs on an individual employee basis, and the resultant business benefits are clear with excellent staff retention levels, quality partnerships and a growing customer base.

David comments: *"Moving forward, we are reviewing our training needs to further improve communication and gain continued commitment from our staff so we can remain competitive and be the best in the business. In return, our workforce is flexible, motivated and rewarded through regular personal development".*



Christ Church Nursery School

Christ Church Nursery School Limited, a member of the Channel Chamber of Commerce, run by Jill Harding has grown from strength to strength with a total of 28 staff and 400 children. This success, Jill attributes to operating high training standards.

All Christ Church staff must be qualified above the National Standards, holding or working towards an NVQ Level 3 for full time staff and an NVQ Level 2 for part time staff. The vocational study enables flexible learning for all employees - mature staff, those with families, or with little or no formal academic qualifications.

Jill is also a workplace Assessor and a peripatetic Assessor for local Higher Education providers after gaining the D32 D33 Assessors Award for NVQ's and an A1 award in 2004.

"I believe in supporting my team who feel valued and worthy, and providing a professional and quality service beyond our competitors" explains Jill.

The training policy has generated considerable results for the business. Since 1999, business turnover has quadrupled and due to demand, Christ Church nursery has expanded four times and a sister nursery opened.

Jill comments: *"We have an excellent reputation in the community and our business ethos will never change."*



www.ocr.org.uk

OCR customer contact centre

Vocational qualifications

Telephone 024 76 851509

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Email vocational.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

General qualifications

Telephone 01223 553998

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