

Using the QCF to improve success rates and increase efficiency



Case Study

This case study is one of a series that provides examples of emerging practice as colleges begin to exploit the flexibilities of the QCF to develop, within current funding constraints, a curriculum more responsive to the needs of learners, employers and the local community.

The colleges featured in the case studies have been selected by LSIS as QCF lead providers and are committed to driving the effective implementation of QCF in their local area. It is important to note that the sector is still in the early stages of QCF implementation; some of the models are still at the planning stage, ready for implementation in 2011/12. The case studies aim to spark ideas and prompt debate; all include contact details so that, if a particular example interests you, you can get in touch with the provider to find out how the model is working out in practice.

York College has used the flexibility of the QCF to develop a unit based approach to the delivery of full cost recovery Chartered Management Institute (CMI) programmes for 2011/12. The college anticipates that this will increase learner numbers and success rates by giving learners the opportunity to select units specific to the requirements of their current or future job role, fit learning around their commitments and pay for their learning in affordable instalments. The modularised, blended¹ delivery model will also make efficient use of staffing.

¹ Blended learning is a flexible approach that combines face-to-face teaching/learning with remote (usually internet-based) learning.

York College has offered CMI programmes for adult learners for over 5 years. This is an established programme that has a good average success rate for individual units (90%), but a poor success rate (40%) for the whole qualification. This is because learners on these programmes are typically in full employment with family commitments making it difficult for them to commit to the work required to pass all four units.

By introducing a unit based programme of delivery for the new QCF accredited CMI qualification, the team hopes to:

- empower learners by enabling them to:
 - complete the course in bite sized chunks, opting for as little as a single unit (in which case they would gain an Award) or working towards a Certificate or Diploma
 - select the specific units they need to meet a particular skills gap or need
- improve success rates
- provide learners with high quality learning at an affordable price

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The course has been set up so that learners can pay for a unit at a time or pay up front for a Certificate or Diploma and make a saving. The pricing has been set so that groups totalling between eight and ten learners work out as economically viable.

The team has worked hard to timetable the courses on the same two evenings each week and the units are delivered in three lots of ten week delivery blocks.



This type of delivery allows for flexible roll on/roll off recruitment options while maintaining a sense of sustained delivery. The three entry points also mean that appropriate learners on active benefits referred by Jobcentre Plus can quickly access a short qualification valued

by employers and fully funded by the Skills Funding Agency that will support them to quickly get back into the job market. A learner in this situation might be a manager with lots of experience but no formal management qualification who has been made redundant. As well as working towards one or more units to build their skills, they could potentially gain credit for their experience through a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessment.

The blended delivery model means that each unit can be delivered to learners at different levels at the same time allowing for delivery to mixed groups of learners. Learners at lower levels will get sustained contact with tutors while at higher levels a far greater degree of autonomy is expected.

The blended delivery model includes approximately 25% remote learning supported by online tutorials and materials which the team has been developing. Elements selected for remote delivery focus on developing knowledge rather than building understanding. Because of the reduced class contact time, the college has been able to charge a lower fee giving them an advantage over their local competitors.

Learners can opt to not pay the exam fee; some learners and/or employers are interested in the qualification whereas others are not and want training at minimum cost. Based on his experiences of setting up a full cost unit offer, Mike Saunders, Head of Studies, Lifelong Learning and Higher Education at York College suggests the following practical tips for developing a unit based offer:

- Review current success rates and analyse the causes of poor performance. Could this be due to the delivery model? Would a unit based approach be more 'fit for purpose'?
- Identify which units are currently the most/least popular. Does this tie in with success rates? What are the reasons for any less successful/ popular units?

- Establish a meaningful 'learner voice' process that learners and lecturers value and believe in; establish focus groups with a specific eye on industry and business beneficiaries
- Look for and capitalise on the flexibility of the QCF
- Develop tailored marketing for employers and adult learners
- Ensure that the IAG and Business Development teams fully understand the Rules of Combination for the qualifications, and that they have been trained in guiding learners through the fees structure so that potential learners always get accurate, consistent information
- Ensure that, where possible, the tutors on the specific course team give a confirmatory interview, where specifics of unit choice, level and availability can be clarified where needed

A thorough evaluation of the unit based CMI programme will inform further expansion of full cost unit delivery within the college.

If you want to find out how York College's delivery model is working out in practice, contact :

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Qualifications and Credits Framework (QCF) Support (Sept 2010 – August 2011)

This sector led programme aimed to support managers and practitioners as they began to deliver the new qualifications from the QCF and use the distinctive features of the QCF to develop more flexible and responsive provision to meet the needs of learners and employers. Support was provided by regional QCF lead providers, with specific support for colleges, independent training providers and ACL/VCS providers.