

Guidance for Developing Customised Qualifications for Pearson's Self Regulated Framework

To be read alongside the Policy for qualifications on
Pearson's Self Regulated Framework

September 2012

The key role of Pearson Education Ltd. (Pearson) is to secure standards for those qualifications we certificate. As part of our commitment to quality assuring standards and therefore protecting learners, Pearson provides guidance and support to help centres and their learners achieve their learning and development goals.

This document provides guidance on qualifications that are to be submitted onto the Self Regulated Framework. Pearson’s Self Regulated Framework is designed for qualifications that have been customised to meet the needs of a particular range of learners and stakeholders. These qualifications are not accredited or regulated by Ofqual, the qualifications regulator in England.

It is important to note that a customised qualification will **not** be submitted to a nationally recognised regulated framework such as the National Qualification Framework (NQF), the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) or the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Through a network of experts in UK and overseas offices, you will receive the support required to help you design and deliver education and training programmes. If required, you will be able to call upon Pearson expertise, to facilitate the writing of a customised qualification to the required standard.

For further information please call Customer Services. Please use the contact information appropriate to your organisation or visit our website at www.edexcel.com .

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- 1. Self Regulated Framework
 - 1.1 Introduction
 - 1.2 Benefits
 - 1.3 Advice and Guidance
 - 1.4 Qualification Delivery
 - 1.5 Quality Assurance
 - 1.6 Diversity, Equality and Inclusion
- 2. Designing Customised Qualifications on the Self Regulated Framework
 - 2.1 Qualification Title
 - 2.2 Qualification Aim (Objective)
 - 2.3 Qualification Level
 - 2.4 Qualification Size
 - 2.4.1 Notional Learning Time
 - 2.4.2 Value
 - 2.5 Outcomes of Learning
 - 2.6 Assessment
 - 2.6.1 General Assessment Requirements
 - 2.6.2 Assessment Criteria
- 3. Optional Additional Requirements
 - 3.1 Branding
 - 3.2 Units
 - 3.3 Importing Units from Other Qualifications
 - 3.4 Grading
 - 3.4.1 Unit Grading
 - 3.4.2 Qualification Grading
- Appendix 1 Suggested Models
 - A.1 Awards, Certificates, Diplomas
 - A.1.1 Introduction
 - A.1.2 Qualification Title
 - A.1.3 Level
 - A.1.4 Size
 - A.1.5 Units
 - A.1.6 Assessment
 - A.1.7 Quality Assurance
 - A.2 Higher National, National, Firsts and Introductory
 - A.2.1 Introduction
 - A.2.2 Qualification Title
 - A.2.3 Level
 - A.2.4 Size
 - A.2.5 Assessment
 - A.2.6 Quality Assurance

Appendix 2 The use of units from standard Pearson qualifications

Appendix 3 Significant overlap

Appendix 4 Generic grading descriptors

I The Self Regulated Framework

1.1 Introduction

Pearson's Self Regulated Framework allows providers of education and training to work with Pearson to design quality assured customised qualifications. The qualifications can support access to education and employment, lifelong learning and the particular requirements of your learners. All new customised qualifications must meet the criteria published in the Policy for qualifications on Pearson's Self Regulated Framework which can be downloaded from this site <http://www.edexcel.com/Policies/Pages/home.aspx>. The policy should be read alongside this guidance document.

Customised qualifications on the Self Regulated Framework are not accredited by Ofqual, the qualifications regulator in England. Consequently, where required, you will have to establish your own finance or a funding source, to support the viability of your customised qualification. The customised qualifications on the Self Regulated Framework do not attract published Achievement and Attainment Tables points or UCAS points.

The Policy for qualifications on Pearson's Self Regulated Framework outlines the essential components of every qualification designed for the Self regulated Framework. If, after reading this guidance, your customised qualification proposal, does not mirror any of the qualifications outlined in Appendix I, then we will consult with you to understand your requirements. We will support you to create a coherent qualification that is fit for purpose and can be appropriately certificated and quality assured by Pearson.

Before you start to develop a customised qualification, you are advised to discuss your education and/or training needs with your Pearson contact who will be pleased to work with you and guide you through the process.

1.2 Benefits

There is an option for qualifications to be composed of Pearson devised National Qualification Framework (NQF) BTEC units, Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF) BTEC units, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) units and Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) units, if required.

Alternatively the qualification can be built from brand new units specifically designed for your customised qualification.

Some of the benefits of the Self Regulated Framework are:

- its flexibility
- the level of the qualification can be mapped to one of a range of frameworks
- certification of small or large blocks of learning
- the opportunity to customise a qualification for specific employment or industry needs
- the potential to import units and elements from other qualifications
- the ability to provide the knowledge, skills and understanding to underpin the National Occupational Standards for a particular sector.

1.3 Advice and Guidance

Advice and guidance is available to you from your Pearson contact at all stages of customised qualification development - right from the first time you have a thought about a possible qualification for your organisation, through development and to the end of the journey when you receive approval for your organisation to deliver a customised qualification.

You will first need to complete a form (SRQ1) which will outline the concept of the qualification. This will be reviewed to check that your customised qualification does not duplicate an existing qualification title, that the aim of the qualification is appropriate to meet a market need and that the qualification can be assessed and quality assured.

The SRQ1 must be signed off and approved by Pearson before any further development work is done. Your Pearson contact will inform you if or when further development has been approved in principle. We will then work with you to develop a customised qualification that meets your needs. When the qualification has received final sign off, you will then be asked to apply for centre approval (if your organisation is not already an approved centre) and approval to deliver the qualification.

1.4 Qualification Delivery

Only centres that have met centre approval quality requirements can be approved to deliver and assess customised qualifications on the Self Regulated Framework. Centres must have in place appropriate physical and staff resources as well as appropriate and embedded policies and procedures.

1.5 Quality Assurance

Only customised qualifications that can be effectively quality assured by Pearson will be accepted onto the Self Regulated Framework.

When you have received centre and qualification approval, you will be able to register learners onto the programme of learning through our web-based registration and certification system, Edexcel Online (EOL) www.edexcelonline.co.uk. The registration of learners triggers the start of appropriate quality assurance. If your qualification is following the structure of a qualification in Appendix 1, this will mean the allocation of a subject expert, a Standards Verifier (SV).

Further information about this quality assurance model is published in the **Customised Qualifications on the Self Regulated Framework– Centre Handbook**.

Quality assurance will use the standards published in an approved specification document.

1.6 Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

Pearson is committed to provide qualifications with no artificial barriers and a full statement can be found on the web site www.edexcel.com.

We require all of our centres to have an Equal Opportunity Policy which should ensure that qualifications do not discriminate on the grounds of age, colour, creed, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, marital status, race or sexual orientation.

You should be aware of any legislative requirements that apply in the countries where the qualifications are to be delivered and assessed. Where necessary, these will be built into the customised qualification design.

Customised qualifications developed for the Self Regulated Framework will need to be reviewed at every stage of development to identify and to remove any barriers. This cannot be left until the end of the qualification development.

2. Designing Customised Qualifications on Pearson's Self Regulated Framework

2.1 Qualification Title

We will work with you to decide upon a title that clearly and concisely indicates the content and level of the qualification. This title should be short with a maximum of 150 characters, including spaces and punctuation.

The qualification title must:

- be unambiguous
- reflect the content of the customised qualification
- include the level
- be distinctive
- not duplicate or emulate standard Pearson qualification titles. (e.g. e-Business and e-Businesses would not be allowed)
- be distinct from other related qualifications at the same level
- be used consistently in any marketing, promotional or learning materials.

The title should **not** give the impression that the customised qualification has a regulated status.

The use of Award, Certificate or Diploma should broadly follow the same rules as Pearson qualifications and be based on the size of the qualification. (See **Section 2.4 Qualification Size**).

If the customised qualification is made up of just one unit, the qualification title must be the same as the unit title.

It is advisable that you obtain Pearson approval for the customised qualification title before you produce any marketing material. If you do promote a customised qualification prior to approval, all of your marketing material must make it clear that it is, 'subject to Pearson approval'. Pearson reserves the right to refuse applications.

2.2 Qualification Aim (Objective)

The qualification aim should develop and explain further the qualification title. It will explain the purpose of the qualification and what the learner can expect to learn or be able to do, by studying for the qualification.

The aim will summarise what type of learner will benefit from taking the qualification. It will provide clear information to a potential learner about the key objectives of the qualification and the commitment required.

The aim (objective) of the qualification will be published in a specification document that you will need to make accessible to staff, learners, Pearson officers, interested regulatory bodies and any other interested party.

The qualification aim (objective) should not refer to text books or market opportunities but it will need to justify the qualification's role in the marketplace.

2.3 Qualification Level

Each customised qualification must have a level.

A qualification level indicates the complexity and the demands that it will place on a learner for successful achievement of the qualification.

The demand of assessment and the learning outcomes of the component parts (which can be units) of a qualification will need to be aligned to level descriptors and will inform the qualification level. We will work

with you during the development stage of the qualification to check that the level is set correctly at a single level using descriptors from a recognised framework e.g. :

- National Qualifications Framework (NQF);
- Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF)
- Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS)
- European Qualifications Framework (EQF). **NB.** A qualification must not solely reference the EQF
- Non-UK level frameworks. **NB** The framework will need to be approved by Pearson as fit for purpose.

Whilst qualifications must be set as equivalent to a single level on a recognised framework, they may be mapped to one or more framework.

It is important to note that your customised qualification will **not** be submitted to a nationally recognised and regulated framework such as the National Qualification Framework (NQF), the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) or the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

It will not be a nationally regulated qualification. It will sit on Pearson's Self Regulated Framework and is designed to be meaningful to your learners.

Qualifications can have component parts at different levels but there should be a clear rationale for designing the qualification in this way. The resulting single level of the qualification needs to be appropriate to the levels of the component parts. See Tables 2 and 3 in Appendix 1 for examples of how this could work.

2.4 Qualification Size

Qualification size provides an indication of the time necessary to complete a qualification. All customised qualifications on Pearson's Self Regulated Framework will specify the Notional Learning Time (NLT) expressed in Notional Learning Hours (NLH).

The qualification will also have size represented in terms of the 'Value' (see Section 2.4.2 Value).

2.4.1 Notional Learning Time (NLT) and Notional Learning Hours (NLH)

Notional Learning Time is defined as "The length of learning time, measured in hours, which it is estimated will be taken on average, to achieve the specified learning outcomes"

Notional Learning Hours time must include the hours spent on ALL of the activities relating to the programme and should be calculated by those who are best qualified through experience and knowledge of the discipline, field of study, profession, trade or area of skill.

Examples of the constituent parts of NLT could include hours spent:

- preparing for the programme e.g. reading materials provided to the learner prior to delivery of the qualification;
- planning a personal programme of learning;
- using libraries or learning resource centres for reading and research.
- attending and participating in formal teaching sessions;
- performing practical work in laboratories and other locations;
- on relevant Information Communication Technology (ICT) activities;
- in self directed study using online or text-based open learning materials;
- involved in informal learning such as community groups, youth groups, outdoor activities.
- private study and revision;
- reflecting on what has been learned;
- assessing learning;
- applying knowledge, understanding and skills within the workplace.

It should be noted that this list of suggestions is not exhaustive nor are the activities mutually exclusive.

The use of notional learning hours confers a number of benefits. These are:

- clarity of the expectations of a learner's input
- thresholds to describe a learner's anticipated personal commitment of time to learning activities and the achievement of the specified learning outcomes, including both formal opportunities (e.g. through structured learning in lectures, laboratory sessions etc) and independent self guided study.

2.4.2 Value

Value is the Notional Learning Time divided by 10 and should always be rounded to the nearest whole number.

2.5 Outcomes of Learning

Please note The term 'Outcomes of Learning' has been used instead of 'Learning Outcomes'. Learning Outcomes relates specifically to use within one framework. The terms are therefore interchangeable. Outcomes of Learning may also be called descriptors; assessment objectives or any other appropriate term.

The Outcomes of Learning must state all and no more than, what a learner can be expected to know, understand or be able to do, as a result of completing the programme of study.

Outcomes of Learning must be capable of being assessed and should be linked to a set of statements against which assessment decisions can be made. These statements can be known as assessment criteria. The assessment criteria should describe the evidence needed for a learner to achieve the Outcome of Learning. (See **Section 2.6.2 Assessment Criteria**).

2.6 Assessment

2.6.1 General Assessment Requirements

Assessment is a process of reliably measuring learner work against criteria, to produce results that are a valid interpretation of learner knowledge or performance.

The chosen method of assessment must be appropriate to the Outcomes of Learning, assessment criteria and the type of learner who the qualification is aimed at. The assessment could be:

- objective assessment where questions have a single correct answer. Objective question types include true/false answers, multiple choice, multiple-response and matching questions. This type of assessment can use an IT platform
- subjective assessment where the questioning may have more than one correct answer (or more than one way of expressing the correct answer). Subjective questions include extended-response questions and essays. This type of assessment can be based on a range of assessment methods and will require the assessment to be carried out by an assessor
- criterion-referenced assessment, where learners are measured against defined (and objective) criteria. Criterion-referenced assessment is often, but not always, used to establish a person's competence (whether s/he can do something)
- norm-referenced assessment where the learners' work or responses are not measured against defined criteria. This type of assessment is relative to the student body undertaking the assessment. It is effectively a way of comparing learners with each other.

We will be happy to advise about appropriate assessment methods and work with you to establish an appropriate assessment methodology.

Assessment must be:

- a valid opportunity for the learner to provide evidence for assessment to the assessment criteria
- a reliable method for confirming that a learner has achieved Outcomes of Learning
- manageable in relation to level and complexity
- fit for purpose and relevant
- able to produce consistent results when repeated under the same conditions.

You will also need to ensure that the design of the qualification's assessment is not:

- impractical
- too expensive
- over burdensome
- lacking in rigour
- inappropriate
- lacking in adequate security.

A form of independent assessment must make up a proportion of a customised qualification's overall assessment. Independent assessment requires an element of 3rd party scrutiny of a qualification to ensure that there is no conflict of interest between teaching and assessment. This could include, but is not limited to:

- internally devised and externally verified activities
- externally written and marked tests.

2.6.2 Assessment Criteria

A customised qualification must have a reliable assessment method for measuring learner achievement. Assessment criteria can describe the evidence needed to show that an Outcome of Learning has been met.

Assessment criteria must be accurately written and linked to a specific Outcome of Learning. They should cover the learning in the Outcome of Learning and no more.

Assessment criteria should be sufficient in number for the assessor to make a valid and reliable decision on learner understanding or performance.

3. Optional Additional Requirements

You may require the customised qualification to include features in this section. These are not compulsory.

3.1 Branding

Within Pearson's Self Regulated Framework there are possibilities for the branding of specifications, titles and certificates.

Where qualifications have BTEC in the title, the qualification structure must follow existing guidelines for BTEC qualifications.

A customised qualification may include reference to your organisation in the title with agreement from Pearson.

The qualification should not be branded in any way that is misleading or could lead learners to believe it is regulated by Ofqual or other government regulators.

3.2 Units

This section gives information if a qualification is built from units.

A unit is a coherent body of learning that can be taught and assessed individually or as part of a wider programme. Qualifications can be built from one or more units. (See **Section 2.4 Qualification Size**).

Units must have titles that reflect their Outcomes of Learning. (See **2.1 Qualification Title**).

A unit must have an aim and, like the qualification aim (See **Section 2.2 Qualification Aim**) it must summarise who the unit is aimed at and what learners can expect to cover during the programme of unit study.

Units must be set at a single level, by profiling the assessment and Outcomes of Learning using level descriptors. Examples of one type of level descriptors are the NICATS descriptors. The descriptors can be accessed at the NICATS web site, <http://www.nicats.ac.uk/about/index.htm> or on the Edexcel web site at, <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/cust/hnnatfirst/Pages/default.aspx>.

Units should be described as mandatory or optional to the achievement of the qualification. If the customised qualification is made of more than one unit, with an option to choose some units, you will be asked to identify a valid combination of units to enable certification of the qualification. This will be known as the **Qualification Structure**. You will be asked to identify the **Qualification Structure** on the SRQI form.

Subject to approval, units from regulated frameworks can be used to develop customised qualifications. (See **Section 3.3 Importing Units from Other Qualifications into Customised Qualifications**).

Customised qualifications can be built from:

- customised units
- recognised national units for public use such as shared units on the QCF
- NQF units
- a unique mix of the above.

A document to be called **The Specification** will list the units and give the detail of unit assessment and (if required) the grading criteria. Copies of the Specification will be kept securely and in an accessible location, by Pearson and the approved centre.

3.3 Importing Units from Other Qualifications into Customised Qualifications

Units from standard Pearson devised qualifications can be incorporated into a customised qualification. However you must show that their use supports the coherence of your qualification. Their use is also subject to the rules set out in;

- Appendix 2: The use of units from standard Pearson qualifications and
- Appendix 3: Significant overlap.

If you plan to use standard Pearson devised units in your customised qualification please note that:

- where applicable the Register of Regulated Qualifications must be consulted to identify the correct number of Notional Learning Hours for a unit. The NLH will be the credit value multiplied by 10. The register can be viewed at this site: <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk/Unit>
- the correct number of NLH must be listed on form SRQ1. The process to determine NLH will apply for any unit derived from a regulated framework. The source framework must be stipulated on the SRQ1.
- the adopted standard unit's requirements must not be altered
- Pearson permits you to make use of its standard accredited units when devising qualifications within Pearson's Self Regulated Framework. You must ensure that you do not breach Intellectual Property Rights when using units obtained from other sources, by asking permission to use such units
- if you wish to use an NQF unit, which is expressed in Guided Learning Hours (GLH), then Pearson will work with you to calculate the appropriate number of NLH
- a customised qualification on the Self Regulated Framework can be composed entirely of standard Pearson devised units provided the resultant qualification is meaningful, fulfils your aims and does not duplicate or significantly overlap any standard qualification. (See **Appendix 3: Significant Overlap**)
- a standard externally assessed unit cannot be used in a customised qualification on the Self Regulated Framework
- if the standard Pearson devised unit defines a specified assessment method, an alternative assessment can only be used if it provides a valid, reliable and manageable assessment and is approved by Pearson.

3.4 Grading

3.4.1 Unit grading

As a minimum, each unit must be assessed as either Pass or Not Achieved. You may choose to grade each unit at Merit or Distinction, thus differentiating the learner's performance. It is for you to decide whether it is appropriate to offer this differentiation to your learners.

Merit and Distinction grades are awarded for higher level achievement not for completing more work. A document explaining the unit grading process should be given to learners prior to assessment.

Generic grading descriptors level for each qualification can be found in **Appendix 4**.

Because of the specific requirements of Levels 6 and 7 you can devise your own grading criteria for Merit and Distinction grades that are relevant to the sector or qualification.

If you are importing units from other qualifications, you must use the Outcomes of Learning and assessment and grading requirements of the adopted unit. It is then advisable to use this model of assessment and grading consistently for all units of the customised qualification.

Summary of unit grading methodology

In order to achieve a Pass in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• all pass requirements achieved
In order to achieve a Merit in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• all pass requirements achieved• all merit descriptors achieved
In order to achieve a Distinction in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• all pass requirements achieved• all merit descriptors achieved• all distinction descriptors achieved

3.4.2 Qualification grading

All qualifications are graded by a minimum of two grades (i.e. pass/not achieved). However, it is sometimes desirable to have additional grades to discriminate learner performance.

If the qualification follows either of the suggested models in Appendix I, there will be no overall qualification grade. If you wish to grade a customised qualification please talk to your Pearson contact.

Information on how achievement of the components of a qualification is aggregated to a single qualification grade must be provided in the specification document.

Appendix I: Suggested Models

The table below indicates the range of some of the qualifications that can be approved as customised qualifications on the Self Regulated Framework.

Qualification Level	Self Regulated Framework	
	Qualification titles	
7	Level 7 Advanced Professional Award/Certificate/Diploma	
6	Level 6 Professional Award/Certificate/Diploma	
5	Level 5 Professional Award/Certificate/Diploma	Higher National Diploma
4	Level 4 Professional Award/Certificate/Diploma	Higher National Certificate
3	Level 3 Advanced Award/Certificate/Diploma	National Award/Certificate/Diploma
2	Level 2 Intermediate Award/Certificate/Diploma	First Certificate/Diploma
1	Level 1 Foundation Award/Certificate/Diploma	Introductory Certificate/Diploma
Entry	Entry Award/Certificate/Diploma	

Table I Self Regulated Framework

Appendix I of this guidance describes these two key aspects of the Self Regulated Framework:

- Awards, Certificates and Diplomas
- Higher Nationals, Nationals, Firsts and Introductory qualifications.

This will help you decide whether any of these customised qualifications suit your needs. Support to select the qualification structure that can meet the needs of your learners is also available from your Pearson contact.

If the qualification you wish to develop does not conform to either of these two models, your application will be considered for special development work. Your Pearson contact will be able to give you further guidance.

A.1 Awards, Certificates and Diplomas (ACD)

A.1.1 Introduction

These customised qualifications are flexible qualifications that offer a choice of levels and size. Please see Table 2 below. Qualifications can be packaged to provide blocks of learning at the same level or at different levels. The qualification can be designed using NQF BTEC units, QCF BTEC units or customised units. (See Section 3.3 Importing Units from Other Qualifications into Customised Qualifications).

A.1.2 Qualification Title

Table 2 shows the customised qualification title that relates to the size and level of a qualification. The Notional Learning Hours indicate the size of the qualification.

Self Regulated Framework			
Qualification level	Award	Certificate	Diploma
	10 – 120 Notional Learning Hours	130 – 360 Notional Learning Hours	370+ Notional Learning Hours
Level 7	Advanced Professional Award	Advanced Professional Certificate	Advanced Professional Diploma
Level 6	Professional Award	Professional Certificate	Professional Diploma
Level 5	Professional Award	Professional Certificate	Professional Diploma
Level 4	Professional Award	Professional Certificate	Professional Diploma
Level 3	Advanced Award	Advanced Certificate	Advanced Diploma
Level 2	Intermediate Award	Intermediate Certificate	Intermediate Diploma
Level 1	Foundation Award	Foundation Certificate	Foundation Diploma
Entry Level	Entry Award	Entry Certificate	Entry Diploma

Table 2 Award, Certificate Diploma qualification titles and levels

A.1.3 Level

At least 75% of the total Notional Learning Hours must be composed of units at the same level as the overall qualification. This permits 25% of the total qualification size to be composed of units at different levels to the overall qualification level. For example in a level 3 qualification composed of a total of 120 NLH, at least 90 NLH of the qualification must be at level 3. The use of different level units may be useful when practical or theoretical skills are required at a different level to the vocational skills.

All units must be assigned a level.

For some sectors other key factors, used alongside the NICATS descriptors, will inform the level of your unit.

For example:

- National Occupational Standards (NOS)
- sector/professional benchmarks
- professional judgement.

A.1.4 Size

The size of your customised qualification is calculated in Notional Learning Hours (NLH). Depending on the number of NLH, your customised qualification will be an Award, a Certificate or a Diploma; for instance if the qualification size totals 90 NLH then it will be classified as an Award.

The smallest unit size consists of 10 NLH. Other unit sizes can be any multiple of 10 to a maximum unit size of 400 NLH.

A customised qualification can consist of just one unit if this fits the purpose of your learners.

A.1.5 Units

ACD qualifications are composed of either one or more units.

Each unit must be defined as either:

- a mandatory or
- an optional unit.

A number of mandatory units and (where required) a specified number of optional units must be identified as a valid combination to make up the qualification. This will be known as the **Qualification Structure**. You will be asked to identify the Qualification Structure on the SRQI form.

See also:

- Section 3.2 Units
- Section 3.3 Importing Units from Other Qualifications into Customised Qualifications
- Section 3.4.1 Unit Grading.

A customised qualification can consist of mandatory units only or the qualification can be composed of mandatory units and a group of optional units. You must make clear:

- the mandatory units
- the optional units
- how many optional units must be completed to be awarded the full qualification.
(The Qualification Structure).

Mandatory units are taken by all learners and the features of these units may include:

- a broad-based introduction to the qualification
- the underpinning learning for the subject area
- a springboard for further specialised study.

The features of optional units may include:

- a greater focus on a specialised area
- development of the fundamentals introduced in the core
- a greater breadth of learning
- a greater depth of learning
- providing learners with a choice, specialism or pathway.

All units must be expressed in Outcomes of Learning and must contain assessment criteria. See:

- 2.5 Outcomes of Learning
- 2.6.2 Assessment Criteria.

A.1.6 Assessment

- The assessment of an ACD qualification is at unit level
- You can select to assess and grade ACD qualification units as Pass, Merit or Distinction. (The generic grading descriptors are in Appendix 4)
- Alternatively you can choose not to grade your units but assess each unit as Pass or Not Achieved. It is your decision to grade or not to grade your units
- The notification of performance which is issued with the qualification certificate, will record all of the units achieved by the learners. If the units are graded, it will also show the unit grade
- There will be no overall qualification grade.

The most straightforward approach model of unit assessment is Pass or Not Achieved.

A Pass is awarded for the achievement of all Outcomes of Learning against the specified Pass requirements. Learners need to achieve all the Pass requirements to achieve the unit.

Some units are best assessed using this approach, for example a qualification:

- containing units that are competence based
- containing units that are based on personal skills development (confidence, assertiveness, etc.)
- at Entry Level/Level 1, where pass/not achieved is often the most suitable method to assess the learner's achievement.

A.1.7 Quality Assurance

Internal Verification

You will be required to have in place a documented and auditable process of **internal verification**. This process is compulsory and the importance of internal verification cannot be over-stated. Internal verification requires the centre to check and confirm that assessment tools/instruments are fit for purpose and all assessors' assessment decisions are accurate and consistent. Further information on internal verification can be found here;

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/BTEC/quality/Pages/Internal-Verification.aspx>

External Verification

Pearson will also quality assure the qualification by a process of **external verification**. Pearson will appoint a subject expert known as a Standards verifier (SV) to visit your centre and sample the assessment tools and the assessment decisions. The printing and release of learners' certificates is dependent upon a successful outcome of external verification which is recorded on a report written by the SV.

For further information please see 'Pearson's Self Regulated Framework - Customised Qualifications – Centre Handbook'.

A.2 Higher Nationals; Nationals: Firsts; Introductory Qualifications (HNNFI)

A.2.1 Introduction

The qualification structure of customised Higher Nationals; Nationals: Firsts; Introductory Qualifications is the same as the corresponding standard National Qualification Framework (NQF) qualifications. The customised qualifications are externally verified to ensure all assessment and quality assurance processes are compliant with Pearson requirements.

A.2.2 Qualification Title

Title and Level	Qualification structure		
Level 5	Higher National Diploma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification size 2240 notional learning hours 16 units 140 notional learning hours each 75% of the notional learning hours must be at level 5.		
Level 4	Higher National Certificate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification size 1360 notional learning hours 10 units 136 notional learning hours each 75% of the notional learning hours must be at level 4.		
Level 3	National Award <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification size 560 notional learning hours 	National Certificate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification size 1120 notional learning hours 	National Diploma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification size 1680 notional learning hours
	The permitted unit sizes are 50, 100, 150 and / or 200 notional learning hours. 75% of the notional learning hours must be at level 3.		
Level 2	First Certificate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification size 250 notional learning hours 	First Diploma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification size 500 notional learning hours 	
	The permitted unit sizes are 40, 80, 120 and / or 160 notional learning hours. 75% of the notional learning hours must be at level 2.		
Level 1 INTRODUCTORY	Certificate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification size 200 notional learning hours 75% of the notional learning hours must be at Level 1	Diploma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualification size 400 notional learning hours 75% of the notional learning hours must be at Level 1	

Table 3 Higher Nationals; Nationals: Firsts; Level 1 - Qualifications titles and levels

A.2.3 Level

Customised Higher, National and First qualifications can be designed so that at least 75 per cent of the total qualification size will be at the level of the qualification. A maximum 25 per cent of the total qualification size may be made up of units at a level above or below the overall qualification level.

A.2.4 Size

Selecting the size of your qualification will depend on:

- the needs of your learners
- the number of Notional Learning Hours.

A.2.5 Assessment

The assessment of these qualifications is at unit level. Each unit (except the personal skills units in the Introductory qualifications which are assessed as Pass or Not Achieved) is awarded a grade of Pass, Merit or Distinction. (See **Appendix 4 Generic Grading Descriptors** and **Section 3.4.1 Unit Grading**).

The notification of performance that is issued alongside the qualification certificate will record all the unit grades achieved by the learners.

There is **no** overall qualification grade.

A.2.6 Quality Assurance

You will be required to have in place a process of **internal verification**. This will require you to check that assessment tools are fit for purpose and assessment decisions are accurate. Further information can be found here;

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/BTEC/quality/Pages/Internal-Verification.aspx>

Pearson will also quality assure the qualification by a process of **external verification**. Pearson will appoint a subject expert known as a Standards verifier (SV) to visit your centre and sample the assessment tools and assessment decisions. The SV will also check that your centre has effective and appropriate internal verification personnel and procedures in place. The printing and release of learners' certificates is dependent upon a successful outcome of external verification which is recorded on a report written by the SV.

For further information please see the **Customised Qualifications on the Self Regulated Framework – Centre Handbook**.

Appendix 2: The use of units from standard Pearson qualifications

If you import units from;	Requirement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NVQ/SVQ QCF/NQF/ BTEC Higher Nationals, Nationals Firsts, Introductory and Specialist or Professional qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The adopted unit's Outcomes of Learning and assessment requirements must not be altered A customised qualification can be composed entirely of standard units, provided the resultant qualification is meaningful, fulfils your aims and does not duplicate or significantly overlap any standard Pearson qualification Any unit that is externally assessed cannot be inserted into a customised qualification NVQ units cannot be included in self regulated Higher Nationals, Nationals, Firsts and Introductory qualifications.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self Regulated Framework qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Units from the other Self Regulated Framework qualifications can be included, provided written authorisation has been granted by the units' owners. The period of approval for the customised qualification will be dependent on the age of the oldest imported unit Customised qualifications must not significantly overlap standard BTEC qualifications, see Appendix 3 Significant Overlap
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NVQ / SVQ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only NVQ/SVQ units for which Pearson has been accredited can be used Imported NVQ/SVQ units will not be graded Units from NVQ/SVQs can be considered provided they do not require external assessment. If the assessment strategy for a NVQ/SVQ requires additional independent assessment for certain units, these units cannot be used in Self Regulated qualifications The period of approval for the customised qualification will be dependent on the age of the oldest NVQ unit Normally, a customised qualification will be composed of NVQ/SVQ units from two different NVQ/SVQ qualifications

Appendix 3: Significant overlap

Customised qualifications must not duplicate standard NQF or QCF BTEC qualifications. Significant overlap relates to the number of mandatory units from the standard BTEC qualification that can be used in a Self Regulated qualification. The grid below defines the number of mandatory units that can be imported from a single standard BTEC qualification.

Number of mandatory units (including externally assessed units) in the standard, NQF or QCF BTEC qualification*	Number of mandatory NQF or QCF BTEC units that can be used in a Self Regulated qualification
3	2
4	2
5	3
6	3
7	4
8	4
Above 8	If you want to develop a qualification in a sector that has a standard NQF or QCF BTEC qualification with more than 8 mandatory units, you must discuss this with your Pearson contact.

*For customised Introductory qualifications, you must follow the structure of the standard qualification but you cannot use any of the core units. You may make use of the personal skills units and the optional units, if these units are relevant to your learners.

Appendix 4 Generic Grading Descriptors

A Pass is awarded for achievement of the Pass requirements. If grading units, Merit and Distinction grades can be awarded for higher level achievement. The following guidance gives the generic grading descriptors to be applied at the different levels.

Generic grading descriptors for levels 1 and 2

To achieve a Merit the learner must:	To achieve a Distinction the learner must:
1. Demonstrate the ability to complete work to given deadlines	1. Demonstrate the ability to review planned working procedures
2. Select and use relevant information	2. Collect, select and use relevant information from a variety of sources
3. Show understanding and be able to apply knowledge and/or skills	3. Demonstrate knowledge, skill and/or understanding by analysing, drawing conclusions and/or applying knowledge
4. Choose an appropriate format to present work, using vocational language accurately	4. Present and structure work coherently, using vocational language fluently

Generic grading descriptors for level 3

To achieve a Merit the learner must:	To achieve a Distinction the learner must:
1. Demonstrate the ability to plan and complete work to given deadlines	1. Demonstrate the ability to review and improve planned working procedures*
2. Collect and use information that is relevant and valid**	2. Show clear reworking and application of relevant and valid information gathered
3. Demonstrate understanding and be able to apply knowledge and/or skills	3. Demonstrate application and evaluation of knowledge, skills and/or understanding
4. Produce work in a coherent and appropriate format to present work, using vocational language accurately	4. Produce work in a coherent format and which shows an individual approach, using vocational language fluently

*working procedures – does not imply that the learner should be concentrating solely on an action plan but should be reflecting and assessing the manner in which the assessment was achieved while explaining how encountered problems were solved.

** valid – information that is current, reliable and, for practical work, within acceptable errors

Generic grading descriptors for levels 4 and 5

Merit grade

Merit descriptors	Exemplar indicative characteristics
In order to achieve a Merit the learner must:	The learner's evidence shows, for example:
identify and apply strategies to find appropriate solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective judgements have been made • complex problems with more than one variable have been explored • an effective approach to study and research has been applied
select/design and apply appropriate methods/techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant theories and techniques have been applied • a range of methods and techniques have been applied • a range of sources of information has been used • the selection of methods and techniques/sources has been justified • the design of methods/techniques has been justified • complex information/data has been synthesised and processed • appropriate learning methods/techniques have been applied
present and communicate appropriate findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the appropriate structure and approach has been used • coherent, logical development of principles/concepts for the intended audience • a range of methods of presentation have been used and technical language has been accurately used • communication has taken place in familiar and unfamiliar contexts • the communication is appropriate for familiar and unfamiliar audiences and appropriate media have been used.

Distinction grade

Distinction descriptors	Exemplar indicative characteristics
In order to achieve a Distinction the learner must:	The learner's evidence shows, for example:
use critical reflection to evaluate own work and justify valid conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conclusions have been arrived at through synthesis of ideas and have been justified • the validity of results has been evaluated using defined criteria • self-criticism of approach has taken place • realistic improvements have been proposed against defined characteristics for success
take responsibility for managing and organising activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • autonomy/independence has been demonstrated • substantial activities, projects or investigations have been planned, managed and organised • activities have been managed • the unforeseen has been accommodated • the importance of interdependence has been recognised and achieved
Demonstrate convergent/lateral/ creative thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ideas have been generated and decisions taken • self-evaluation has taken place • convergent and lateral thinking have been applied • problems have been solved • innovation and creative thought have been applied • receptiveness to new ideas is evident • effective thinking has taken place in unfamiliar contexts.

