

Analysis of responses to our consultation on proposed changes to Ofqual's statistical releases: Vocational Quarterly and Annual Qualifications Market Report



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Executive summary

Our consultation on the proposed changes to our statistical releases *Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly* and *Annual Qualifications Market Report* ran from 23 February to 24 March 2017. A copy of the consultation is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-ofquals-statistical-releases>

This consultation sought feedback on our proposal to merge these two statistical bulletins into a single, consolidated report of qualifications for both general and vocational qualifications.

There were four responses to the consultation. Two were from awarding organisations, and two from other representative or interest groups.

Respondents were generally in favour of the proposed changes, and made some comments on how Ofqual can maximise the usefulness of the statistical releases to users.

Introduction

This report is a summary of the views expressed by those who responded to our consultation on *the proposed changes to the Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly and Annual Qualifications Market Report*, which took place between 23 February and 24 March 2017.

Background

The *Vocational and Other Qualifications Quarterly* (VQ quarterly) presents information on the number of qualifications and certificates issued for regulated qualifications, excluding GCSEs and A levels, during a given quarter in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each quarter, we have been publishing:

- I. a report containing commentary on data; and
- II. accompanying VQ datasets (number of certificates awarded for each qualification).

The release is classed as [National Statistics](#)¹.

The *Annual Qualifications Market Report* (AQMR) provides information on vocational qualifications (VQ) and general qualifications (GQ): GCSE, AS and A levels. It presents information on the number of regulated qualifications and certificates issued for the qualifications at subject level during an academic year, as well as market share of awarding organisations providing these qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For each academic year we publish:

- (i) a report containing commentary on data; and
- (ii) an accompanying GQ dataset (number of certificates awarded for each qualification).

The release is classed as Official Statistics. Thus, a part of the information provided in the VQ quarterly is also published in the AQMR.

As presented currently, the number of certificates awarded according to qualification level, type, sector subject area and most popular qualifications and awarding organisations (in terms of number of certificates awarded) is currently duplicated in the AQMR and VQ quarterly. The content unique only to the VQ quarterly report includes an additional breakdown by second-tier subject area as

¹ National Statistics are a subset of official statistics which have been certified by the UK Statistics Authority as compliant with its Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

well as certification volumes by awarding organisations by country (England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

The format of these publications have not changed for several years. The publications need to be more relevant and accessible to different user styles, given the fast-changing developments in the qualifications landscape and data visualisation options.

The proposed changes will also give us an opportunity to make the resulting publication clearer as well as more engaging, and informative.

We proposed to:

- merge VQ quarterly report with AQMR;
- publish the new report annually;
- continue publishing GQ datasets annually; and
- continue publishing VQ datasets quarterly (and introduce supporting headline statistics).

We proposed that the resulting statistical release would be published annually.

Who responded?

We received four responses to our consultation. Two of these were from awarding organisations and two were from other representative or interest groups.

Table 1: Breakdown of consultation responses

Personal / organisation response	Respondent type	Number
Organisation response	Awarding organisation	2
Organisation response	Other representative or interest group	2

Table 2: Location of respondents

All the respondents were based in England.

Approach to analysis

We published the consultation on our website. Respondents could respond using an online form.

While we made every effort to ensure that as many respondents as possible had the opportunity to respond, it cannot be considered as a representative sample of the general public or any specific group.

Data presentation

We present the responses to the consultation questions in the order in which we asked them.

The consultation asked 14 questions. Six questions invited respondents to select topics from the existing publications that were of particular interest to them. In five questions, respondents could indicate the extent to which they found our proposals useful, using a 5-point scale where 1 is *Not useful at all*, and 5 is *Very useful*. Three questions invited comments on our proposals.

Consultation response outcomes

In this section, we report the views in broad terms of those who responded to the consultation. We have structured this around the questions covered in the consultation document.

A consultation is not the same as a survey and the responses only reflect the views of those who chose to respond. Typically, these will be those with strong views and/or particular experience or interest in a topic. What follows is a fair reflection of the views expressed by respondents to the consultation.

Appendix A lists the organisations that responded.

Question 1: Are you aware of the VQ quarterly statistical release?

All four respondents indicated they were aware of the VQ quarterly statistical release.

Question 2: Are you aware of the Annual Qualifications Market Report?

Three out of four respondents said they were aware of the Annual Qualifications Market Report.

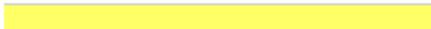
Question 3 – What sections of the VQ quarterly report are of particular interest to you? (Please tick all that apply)

The breakdown of the sections that respondents found of particular interest is as follows:

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Key points	100.00%	4
2	External influences	50.00%	2
3	Key statistics	75.00%	3
4	Analysis	75.00%	3
5	Appendix tables given in the report	75.00%	3
6	Appendix tables published as spreadsheets	50.00%	2
7	Accompanying datasets split by country published as spreadsheets	50.00%	2
8	Other (please specify):	0.00%	0

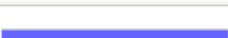
Question 4 – What statistics included in the VQ quarterly report are of particular interest to you? (Please tick all that apply)

The breakdown of the statistics that respondents found of particular interest is as follows:

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Number of available qualifications by type		50.00%	2
2	Number of available qualifications by level		50.00%	2
3	Number of available qualifications by sector subject area		75.00%	3
4	Number of certificates by type of qualification		50.00%	2
5	Number of certificates by qualification level		25.00%	1
6	Number of certificates by sector subject area		75.00%	3
7	Number of certificates by country (England, Wales, Northern Ireland)		50.00%	2
8	Qualifications with the highest number of certificates awarded		100.00%	4
9	Awarding organisations with the highest number of certificates awarded		100.00%	4
10	Awarding organisations with the highest number of certificates awarded split by country		50.00%	2
11	Other (please specify):		0.00%	0

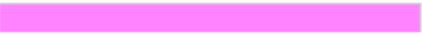
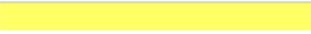
Question 5 – What sections of the existing Annual Qualifications Market Report are of particular interest to you? (Please tick all that apply)

The breakdown of the sections that respondents found of particular interest is as follows:

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Key points		100.00%	4
2	Key statistics		100.00%	4
3	External drivers		50.00%	2
4	Awarding organisations		75.00%	3
5	Regulated qualifications		75.00%	3
6	Certificates awarded for all qualifications		75.00%	3
7	Certificates awarded in GCSE, AS and A level qualifications and subjects		25.00%	1
8	Distribution of GCSE, AS and A level qualifications across awarding organisations		25.00%	1
9	Certificates awarded in qualifications other than GCSE, AS and A level		50.00%	2
10	Appendix tables given in the report		75.00%	3
11	Appendix tables published as spreadsheets		50.00%	2
12	Accompanying dataset published as a spreadsheet		50.00%	2
13	Other (please specify):		0.00%	0

Question 6 – What statistics included in the existing Annual Qualifications Market Report are of particular interest to you? (Please tick all that apply)

The breakdown of the statistics that respondents found of particular interest is as follows:

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Trends and statistics about available regulated qualifications		75.00%	3
2	Trends in the number of qualifications by qualification type		75.00%	3
3	Trends in the number of certificates – qualifications with low take-up		50.00%	2
4	Number of certificates awarded broken down by GCSE, AS, A level and other qualifications		50.00%	2
5	Market share of awarding organisations according to the number of certificates awarded for GCSE, AS and A level		25.00%	1
6	Number of certificates awarded by awarding organisation broken down by subject for GCSE, AS and A level		25.00%	1
7	Number of certificates awarded in qualifications other than GCSE, AS and A level broken down by sector subject area		100.00%	4
8	Number of awarding organisations with qualifications and with certificates awarded in each sector subject area for qualifications other than GCSE, AS and A level		75.00%	3
9	Number of certificates awarded in each sector subject area for qualifications other than GCSE, AS and A level broken down by level, qualification type		75.00%	3
10	Other (please specify):		0.00%	0

Question 7 – To what extent will you find the proposed single, consolidated Annual Qualifications Market Report useful?

	1	2	3	4	5		Response Total
Not useful at all	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	25.0% (1)	25.0% (1)	50.0% (2)	Very useful	4

In general, respondents rated the proposed consolidated report as useful.

Question 8 – To what extent will you find the timing of the proposed Annual Qualifications Market Report useful?

	1	2	3	4	5		Response Total
Not useful at all	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	50.0% (2)	25.0% (1)	25.0% (1)	Very useful	4

Respondents gave mixed views on the extent to which they will find the timing of the consolidated report useful.

Question 9 – To what extent will you find the continued quarterly release of VQ datasets useful?

	1	2	3	4	5		Response Total
Not useful at all	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	25.0% (1)	75.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	Very useful	4

In general, respondents said that they would find the continued release of VQ data useful.

Question 10 – To what extent will you find the proposed introduction of headline VQ trends every quarter useful?

	1	2	3	4	5		Response Total
Not useful at all	0.0% (0)	25.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	75.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	Very useful	4

In general, respondents mentioned they would find the introduction of headline VQ trends useful.

Question 11 – To what extent will you find the continued annual release of GQ data useful?

	1	2	3	4	5		Response Total
Not useful at all	33.3% (1)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	Very useful	3

Respondents generally did not find that the continued annual release of GQ data would be very useful.

Question 12 – Please specify any additional content (apart from the content already covered in the VQ quarterly and the AQMR) which you think should be introduced in the proposed merged report.

Two respondents made suggestions for this question. One respondent wanted to see the “Vocational qualifications” and the “Other qualifications” separated.

The second respondent expressed caution against burdening awarding organisations with any new data requests needed to implement this proposal. The respondent made some suggestions around using other data which might be available or that Ofqual might hold.

Question 13 – Please specify any content in the existing VQ quarterly report and AQMR which you think should be removed from the proposed merged report.

No respondents identified any content which should be removed. One respondent commented that they found all the current information useful.

Question 14 - Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the consultation?

This question received one response. One respondent supported the consolidated report, but indicated a need to review the notion of “qualification type”.

Other issues

In addition to the comments on the individual questions, one respondent also provided some general comments. The main comments made by this respondent included:

- that they consider the VQ quarterly and AQMR to be extremely interesting and useful publications;
- that VQ and GQ reporting should be balanced and the same importance should be given to VQs as is currently given to GQs;
- the suggestion that, since the VQ landscape will undergo significant change following the implementation of the government’s Post-16 Skills Plan, it would be useful to track these changes and their impact on a regular basis;
- that it will be useful to have more clarity on what arrangements will be put in place by Qualifications Wales and CCEA Regulation in relation to data and that the regulatory burden on awarding organisations could increase unless the regulators continue to have an open dialogue on data collection and reporting;
- that the VQ quarterly report is very useful and awarding organisations welcome Ofqual’s ongoing commitment to producing information on VQs on a quarterly basis; and
- comments on the style of the consultation and a request that future consultations be made available in a Word version as well to make sharing the draft responses between members easier and less time consuming.

Appendix A: list of organisational consultation respondents

When completing the questionnaire, we asked respondents to indicate whether they were responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. No personal responses were received.

Below we list those organisations that submitted a response to the consultation:

Association of School and College Leaders

Federation of Awarding Bodies

Qualsafe Awards

Royal Academy of Dance

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