



Ofqual Consultation: Regulating academic and technical qualifications at level 3

CIMSPA Response

April 2022

The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) is the representative professional body for the whole of the UK in relation to the sport and physical activity sector, it is the guardian of all associated professional standards, and the QAA-recognised PSRB for higher education institutions. We are the representative entry for the industry in the IfATE Employer Directory. We have both a partnership and a membership model. Our partners consist of employer partners representing 161 employers, 14 awarding organisation partners (offering CIMSPA-endorsed regulated qualifications which enable progress both into direct entry/higher level employment and further or higher study, many of whom are also end-point assessment organisations for 5 apprenticeships standards), and training provider partners offering a wealth of endorsed professional CPD, and formal training leading to CIMSPA membership for industry professionals all which map to the 40 sector lead professional standards.

Question 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to the coverage of content for alternative academic and alternative technical qualifications?

Response: CIMSPA would expect that technical qualifications relating to occupational roles and related skills, knowledge and behaviours would align to the appropriate professional standards, where they exist. This would support the expectations of our partners, employers, and the wider industry, particularly in relation to the degree of consistency they require between qualifications offered both by our AO partners within a post-16 environment, and elsewhere where these might be delivered within the wider system, and where they cover similar content. For content within such qualifications which are academic, while the purpose of these is to lead onto further and higher study, we would also expect that such content is mapped to professional standards where they exist, by way of introduction to industry roles eventually requiring higher study and levels of attainment: for example, evidence of such achievement required for our Chartered Status level of membership.

Question 2

Which of the following aspects do you consider to be the most important in relation to the use of grading scales for alternative academic and alternative technical qualifications:

a) simplicity of approach for users (e.g., through the use of a common/small number of grading scales)

b) flexibility for awarding organisations to determine approaches which best suit their qualifications c) ability to compare grades for the same qualifications between years (for example through the continued use of existing approaches)

Response: Because industry professional and apprenticeship standards already exist (and in operation) within our sector, there is already a mixed economy of grading models, depending on the qualification type. All appear well understood by users of our partners' qualifications, and the predominance is Pass, Merit, Distinction or similar (and not the more academic A*-E). Partner AOs already delivering Tech levels have this model in place, and it would seem unduly burdensome to require a revised or alternative model.

Question 3

Are there any additional controls you think are necessary to secure standards in directly graded assessments?

Response: CIMSPA agrees with Ofqual's proposal and believes that any additional controls should be considered in the future, rather than at this time. There are several methods used to set and maintain technical and vocational standards, without introducing the complexity of cohort level predictions for graded models currently. CIMSPA's own involvement as subject matter experts against the industry's standards (and ongoing robust employer feedback) contributes to the discussion about when/if standards of attainment are falling below expectations, as people enter our workforce. We do this separately via ongoing quality assurance of our training provider partners, with support from our AO partners.

Question 4

Do you have any comments on the approach to ensuring that these qualifications are identifiable to users through the use of titles?

Response: CIMSPA believes that titling should be clear and unambiguous for the purposes of understanding the sector, subject, level and size through current obligations and conventions.

Question 5

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to require awarding organisations to produce and comply with an assessment strategy for these qualifications? Please provide any comments.

Response: Any additional requirement of a separate assessment strategy for each qualification will, regardless, need to still adhere to (map in full) to any associated CIMSPA standard's Learning Development Requirement (LDR) and any assessment requirements where articulated (for example where simulation is, or is not allowable), to gain or maintain CIMSPA endorsed status. So, there may be potential for conflict with any Ofqual requirements. Any new qualifications submitted by AO partners, which may include new or revised L3 Technical qualifications, should have formal support from CIMSPA. In support of our AO partners, we would not support additional requirements which appear to overlap (e.g., CASS strategies) which may introduce additional burden.

Question 6

Do you have any views on the proposed content for assessment strategies that is set out?

Response: CIMSPA would have confidence in any requirement for such assessment strategies which make reference to content mapping to professional body standards or requirements, where such exist. This promotes the validity of these technical qualifications, and further emphasises their purpose - that which leads to occupational roles and employability within the industry and sector being studied.

Question 7

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to set a requirement for awarding organisations to comply with any requirements or have regard to any guidance specified by Ofqual in relation to a review of one of these qualifications? Please provide any comments.

Response: Neither agree nor disagree. CIMSPA does not have a view on this, except to highlight where any such requirement has the potential to conflict with CIMSPA's own.

Question 8

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to set requirements relating to the removal of approval for public funding for these qualifications? Please provide any comments.

Response: Any funding-related requirements should sit outside the AO, such that it should be the responsibility of the funding agency. Any subsequent withdrawal requirements in terms of managing such a withdrawal are already captured within the general conditions. Additionally, any regulator (and/or policymaker) should have regard to the endorsements and requirements of employer-led qualifications, particularly where there is good evidence of “currency” and uptake, such that to remove them (especially those mapped to professional standards) would create a systemic risk to a particular sector.

Question 9

Do you have any comments on the proposed purposes set out for alternative academic qualifications?

Response: see response to Q10.

Question 10

To what extent do you agree or disagree that, where it is not possible to fully meet all the purposes specified, an awarding organisation should prioritise them in the order (A to E) in which they are specified? Please provide any comments.

Response: Disagree to a certain extent. Who set this order and not all purposes appear to be relevant in all cases? It appears to introduce a further level of bureaucratic administration, serving only the discreet system, rather than users of the qualifications themselves.

Question 11

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to disapply General Conditions E1.1 and E1.2 in respect of these qualifications? Please provide any comments.

Response: CIMSPA does not have a view on specific Conditions of Recognition

Question 12

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal that a minimum of 40% of the contribution to the overall qualification is through Assessment by Examination? Please provide any comments.

Response: Somewhat disagree. When originally introduced as a characteristic of current Tech Levels, (currently 30%) 40% appeared to have no evidential basis other than an “about right” estimation to fit a policy requirement. It is appreciated that high control minimises risk of malpractice and promotes comparability but may conflict with the requirements of a professional body, and its own industry best practice aligned to professional standards. How is this potential conflict to be handled? If AOs develop quals which have a sound purpose, rationale for assessment approach, methods, and instruments, Ofqual can seek assurance on that basis (alongside CASS). To require specific % AbE, new grading approaches, exam windows, where they haven’t been necessary to assure high quality till now, is in danger of putting policy before purpose, and potentially risks coming into conflict with certain requirements of a professional body, where other qualifications designed against the same standard and delivered elsewhere do not require such characteristics.

Question 13

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to require that only awarding organisations will be permitted to mark Assessments by Examination? Please provide any comments.

Response: Agree. To help maintain standards within our sector, we endorse AOs and their qualifications (including assessments) where they are not only designed mapped to our standards, but that they are also assessed as stipulated, and these assessments are part of that endorsement. These days AOs have systems and processes enabling marking at scale, and this requirement also ensures consistency and minimises the potential for malpractice.

Question 14

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to require awarding organisations to provide up to two opportunities on set dates for students to take Assessment by Examination in each academic year? Please provide any comments.

Response: Mostly disagree. We understand most of our AO partners currently offering Tech Levels and AG qualifications either provide a rolling assessment opportunity for AbE, sometimes within a broad window (over specified weeks on one or more occasions across the academic year), rather than specific dates. To manifestly change their approach may introduce additional burden of cost, new processes and updating systems etc. The proposal of set dates will be restrictive and inflexible not only for AO partners but for centres and learners.

Question 15

Should Ofqual specify the dates or windows for these opportunities for Assessment by Examination to take place? If so, when should these be?

Response: No. CIMSPA has no view on this except those expressed in response to Q14.

Question 16

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to allow exemptions from the requirement for all students to sit Assessment by Examination simultaneously and the limit of two assessment series on set dates, where an alternative approach would provide for more valid approaches to assessment? Please provide any comments.

Response: CIMSPA has no view on this.

Question 17

To what extent do you agree or disagree that awarding organisations should set non-exam assessments? Please provide any comments.

Response: Agree. As the professional body and guardian of our sector's standards, CIMSPA has strict requirements on how the KSB are interpreted, delivered, and assessed. Where an AO strays from these requirements, they run the risk of having their regulated qualifications removed from endorsement and thus – graduates of such unendorsed qualifications not being able to progress into work or further study as they would not be able to access the appropriate level of CIMSPA membership. The potential risk here is that there might be a tension between what design requirements Ofqual puts upon an AO, and what CIMSPA expects to see.

Question 18

To what extent do you agree or disagree that awarding organisations should limit centres' submission of non-exam assessment outcomes to two windows in each academic year? Please provide any comments.

Response: Somewhat disagree. This places additional administrative burden on centres, and it is unclear why this would need to be a requirement or an improvement in what currently happens. Additionally, it will compare unfavourably to similar qualifications delivered against the same standards which would not have such a requirement. The benefit of this proposal is unclear.

Question 19

Do you think that Ofqual should require windows for the submission of non-exam assessment marks to align with the availability of Assessment by Examination?

Response: No. The benefit of this to users of these qualifications is unclear, whilst the potential for additional administrative burden is clear. CIMSPA has nothing further to add.

Question 20

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to retaking non-exam assessments? Please provide any comments.

Response: CIMSPA has no view on this proposal.

Question 21

To what extent do you agree or disagree that non-exam assessments should be marked or assessed by one of: the awarding organisation, a Centre, or a combination of these approaches? Please provide any comments.

Response: Agree to some extent. As long as the requirement of the endorsed qualification are met and mapped to the appropriate professional standard, CIMSPA's view is that flexibility is important. Therefore, a combination, where appropriate should be allowable.

Question 22

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to setting standards in these qualifications? Please provide any comments.

Response: Somewhat disagree. Please see response to Q12 for CIMSPA's views.

Question 23

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to nested qualifications? Please provide any comments.

Response: CIMSPA believes flexibility and the opportunity to achieve are both important. Where titling indicates size, and the content maps to a standard with a clear purpose and opportunity to progress, the nested qualifications appear appropriate. Important also to remember is that a scaffolded approach to learning and attainment is an element of such qualifications, which may have exit routes at the end of one year, as well as the opportunity to complete a second, each of which may enjoy the opportunity for professional membership at an appropriate level, and therefore employability within the industry in a role appropriate to the level achieved.

Question 24

Do you have any comments on Ofqual's proposals in relation to its approach to regulating alternative technical qualifications?

Response: Nothing further to add.

Question 25

Are there any other potential impacts (positive or negative) on learners who share protected characteristics that have not been identified?

Response: Nothing further to add.

Question 26

Are there any additional steps that could be taken to mitigate any negative impact, resulting from the proposals, on learners who share a protected characteristic?

Response: Nothing further to add.

Question 27

Do you have any other comments on the impacts of the proposals on learners who share a protected characteristic?

Response: Nothing further to add.

Question 28

Are there any regulatory impacts that have not been identified arising from the proposals? If yes, what are the impacts and are there any additional steps that could be taken to minimise the regulatory impact of the proposals?

Response: CIMSPA has not been made aware of any further impacts arising from these proposals.

Question 29

Are there any costs, savings or other benefits associated with the proposals which have not been identified? Please provide estimated figures where possible.

Response: Nothing further to add.

Question 30

Is there any additional information that should be considered when evaluating the costs and benefits of the proposals?

Response: Nothing further to add.

Question 31

Do you have any comments on the impact of the proposals on innovation by awarding organisations?

Response: Innovation in assessment is now, more than at any other time, at the forefront for AOs due to the changes and flexibilities/adaptations they have had to

put in place. Maintaining valid outcomes appears to have been the case, regardless, so placing potential restrictions such as specific windows for exams, requiring exams as a mandatory form of assessment and specifying proportions of specific methods etc (where these may not have been in place prior) seems to have the potential to restrict innovation conceptually.



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