

New rulebook confirms fee transparency requirements and clarifies others

CCEA Regulation, Ofqual and Qualifications Wales have today (20 February 2020) published the [decisions of their joint consultation](#) into changes to the rules that regulated awarding organisations must follow in each jurisdiction. These rules are known as the General Conditions of Recognition in England and Northern Ireland, and the Standard Conditions of Recognition in Wales.

The regulators have all adopted three substantive changes to their rules following a detailed analysis of the consultation responses:

1. All regulated awarding organisations must publish on their website fee information about their qualifications in a standard format that is easily accessible to potential purchasers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Ofqual will retain its existing requirement that awarding organisations must provide fee information to purchasers in markets outside England upon request.*
2. All regulated awarding organisations must publish a policy that makes clear to users of qualifications whether or not they recognise prior learning. Each awarding organisation will have the flexibility to determine its own approach to producing its policy. The proposed rule has been amended to make clear that there is no necessity for awarding organisations to recognise prior learning.
3. The introduction of an explicit new rule that the regulators can use to instruct awarding organisations not to issue results. This change will make sure the regulators can act quickly in the rare cases where it is necessary to secure a delay in the issuing of results. They do not expect or intend to intervene more often as a result of this change.

The first two changes will be introduced on 1 October 2020, to align with the need for awarding organisations to state compliance with each regulators' rules on an annual basis. The third change will take effect in early March 2020, as it does not impose any proactive requirements on awarding organisations.

A number of other changes have also been adopted that will help to improve awarding organisations' understanding of the rules and keep them up-to-date. These will also take effect from 1 October 2020, with some additional guidance coming into force immediately.

Today's decisions follow a [joint consultation](#) that ran from 2 August to 25 October 2019. We have published detailed analysis of the consultation responses along with a summary of additional feedback gathered at a series of stakeholder events and meetings held across the three countries.

Ofqual is also today launching two separate consultations. One is on [new guidance in relation to the publication of fee information](#). The guidance supports the introduction of the new rules and has been developed in

conjunction with CCEA Regulation and Qualifications Wales. The second relates to how awarding organisations may approach the process of preventing, detecting, and investigating [malpractice and maladministration](#), and deciding what action to take as a result.

Philip Blaker, Chief Executive, Qualifications Wales:

I am pleased that the three regulators for England, Northern Ireland and Wales have been able to work together so effectively to deliver the changes we are announcing today. We collectively recognise the importance to awarding organisations of having consistency in our rules where it is at all possible, and clarity where differences must apply. The changes that we have brought in ensure that there continues to be significant alignment across our rules.

Sally Collier, Chief Regulator, Ofqual:

We are convinced that the introduction of a requirement for awarding organisations to publish fee information will benefit purchasers of qualifications across Northern Ireland, Wales and England. While price is only one factor that purchasers should consider, the absence of full price transparency in the qualifications market creates the risk of unfairness and inefficiency. I believe the decisions we have announced today help to create a level playing field in our home markets, while accepting that a more flexible approach is needed in other markets around the world in order for the awarding organisations we regulate to remain competitive.

Justin Edwards, Chief Executive, CCEA Regulation:

As qualifications regulators we are committed to protecting the interests of learners, maintaining standards in qualifications and promoting confidence in the qualifications system. The feedback we received to our consultation from awarding organisations and other stakeholders was very positive, and we are pleased to be able to confirm how we have taken it on board. The rules we have amended and adopted will stand the sector in good stead over coming years.

ENDS.

Notes to Editors

*This decision was unique to Ofqual, as, unlike CCEA Regulation and Qualifications Wales, its rules apply wherever a regulated qualification is taken around the world.