
United Kingdom

VET in Europe – Country report

2013

Title: United Kingdom VET in Europe – Country Report 2013

Author: Abusland, Torjus. ReferNet UK, ECCTIS Ltd.

Introduction

This UK Country Report describes the vocational educational and training systems in the United Kingdom. It has been produced by ECCTIS Ltd's ReferNet team for the European Agency, Cedefop ⁽¹⁾ and is one of 28 such European Country Reports. It has been produced through the assistance of the UK ReferNet National Consortium Steering Group consisting of representatives from the Department for Education; Department for Business Innovation and Skills; Department for Work and Pensions; Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation; Northern Ireland's Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment and Department for Employment and Learning; Scottish Qualifications Authority; Welsh Government's Department for Education and Skills/Yr Adran Addysq a Sgiliau; CollegesWales/ColegauCymru British Council; Trade Union Congress; Ecorys; Chartered Institute of Personnel Development; National Foundation for Educational Research; National Apprenticeship Service and the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick.

This country report is part of a series of reports on vocational education and training produced for each EU Member State plus Norway and Iceland by members of ReferNet, a network established by Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training).

The opinions expressed in this report are not necessarily those of Cedefop.

Please note that ReferNet reports are based on a common structure and are available at: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>

The preparation of this report has been co-financed by the European Union.

(1) [European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)

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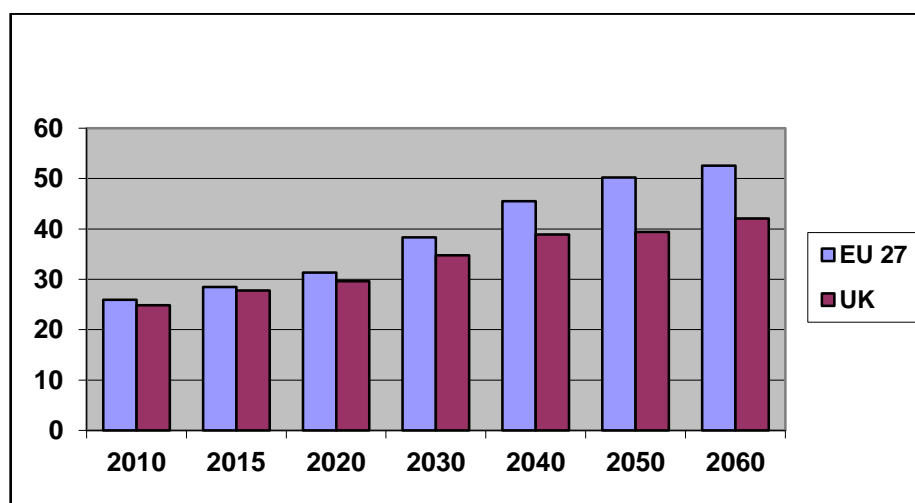
External factors influencing VET

The United Kingdom (UK) is a union of Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland. The UK Government has given responsibilities for a number of policy decisions to the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, such as governance for all levels and types of education, including VET. Whilst there are similarities between the systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Scottish system is significantly different in many ways to those of the rest of the UK.

1.1 Structure and development of the population

The population of the UK is currently 63.7 million having risen from just over 60 million in 2005 ⁽²⁾. The UK old age dependency ratio is showing a trend towards an aging population with more people reaching pension age. The old age dependency ratio for 2010 was 24.9% and the estimated ratio for 2011 is 25.2%. The ratio is expected to rise dramatically after 2020. The estimated EU average for 2010 was 25.9% ⁽³⁾.

Table 1. Projected old-age dependency ratio



⁽²⁾ Population on 1 January 2013, Eurostat.

⁽³⁾ Old-age-dependency ratio, Eurostat, 2012

Estimated immigration to the UK in the year ending September 2012 was 500 000, down from 589 000 in 2011. Emigration is estimated to have been 347 000 in 2012, a small rise from 2011 and net migration was an estimated 153 000 which is significantly lower than the previous year's 242 000. 190 000 migrants arrived in the UK to study in 2012 (down from 246 000 last year), which represents the largest group of immigrants ⁽⁴⁾.

1.2 Structure and development of the workforce

The total UK employed workforce (aged between 16 and 64) counted for 29.84 million people in July 2013, which is an employment rate of 71.6%. There has been a slight increase in the employment rate recently, and whilst the number of unemployed people has also increased since the pre-recession peak in employment in May 2008, overall employment has not risen quite as fast as the population in the same period ⁽⁵⁾. The number of migrant workers in the UK has increased in the last few years and the number of employers reporting that they employ migrant workers now account for 49% according to the CIPD's Labour Market Outlook report ⁽⁶⁾.

Unemployment rates vary on a regional basis with Northern Ireland, the South West of England and Wales being hardest hit since the recession ⁽⁷⁾. This period has also witnessed a rise in people employed on a part-time, temporary and self-employed basis. Public sector employment is shrinking and fewer people are likely to be employed in the public sector in the coming years as the Government continues to enforce austerity measures. The regions most dependent on the state sector are Northern Ireland, parts of Scotland and Wales as well as parts of Northern England. There is a trend towards more managerial, professional and associate professional/technical jobs in the UK, with business services (such as accountancy, law and consultancy) accounting for the largest amount of jobs growth. Some public service occupations in the health and care sector are also likely to see an increase. Skilled trade occupations, administrative/secretarial jobs and machine and transport operatives are, however, in decline. People with no formal qualifications or low skills have found it increasingly difficult to find employment in recent years, specifically for the age groups 15-24 and 50-64 as detailed in the table below.

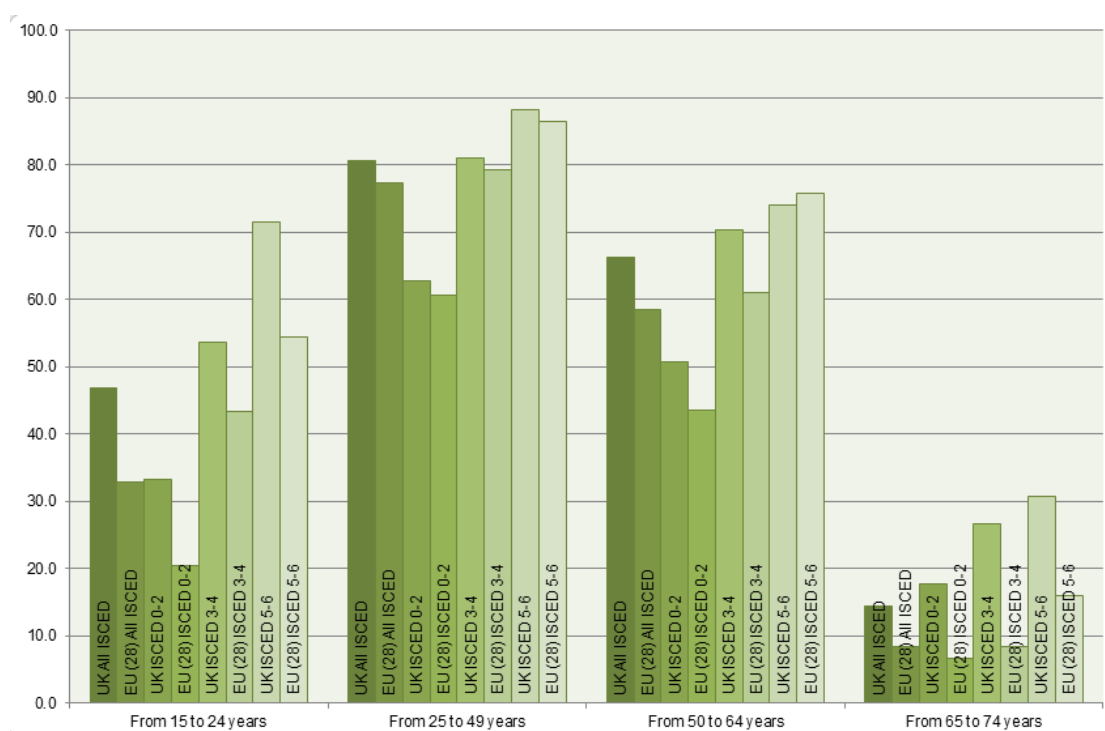
⁽⁴⁾ [Migration statistics quarterly report May 2013](#), Office for National Statistics

⁽⁵⁾ [Labour market statistics September 2013](#), Office for National Statistics

⁽⁶⁾ [Labour Market Outlook](#), CIPD, May 2013, page 26

⁽⁷⁾ [Mapping the route to growth, rebalancing employment](#), CBI, June 2011

Table 2. **Employment rates by age and highest level of education attained (%) in 2012 ⁽⁸⁾**



1.3 Economy structure

The UK has a market-based economy and is a major international trading power. Financial services as well as pharmaceutical, petroleum, automotive, aerospace, telecommunications and other technological industries play an important role in the UK's economy with the services industry being the largest contributor. The UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was the sixth largest in the world in 2012. Since the GDP fell in 2008 and 2009, a modest growth in the economy occurred in 2010 and 2011, whilst we saw a small decrease in the GDP in volume terms in 2012.

1.4 Regulation of the labour market

The UK labour market is demand led, but skill shortages exist in sectors such as medicine, health, science, secondary education teaching, IT/computing, engineering and certain other specialist, technical occupations ⁽⁹⁾. The UK job market is amongst the least regulated in the world, yet the government's Red Tape Challenge is likely to result in even fewer regulations in a bid to boost productivity. Sector Skill Councils work to identify skills shortages in the labour market and collaborate with industry

⁽⁸⁾ Employment rates by sex, age and highest level of education attained (%), Eurostat, 2012

⁽⁹⁾ [Tier 2 Shortage Occupation List – Government-approved version](#), UK Border Agency, April 2013

and employment and skills bodies to fill gaps. Immigration regulations may also be altered to allow more foreign workers from outside the EU/EEA in to the country to fill vacancies on a needs basis, although the current UK Government is committed to reducing immigration.

1.5 Welfare and employment policies

Following the Welfare Reform Act 2012, the UK Government has begun introducing changes to the benefit system in 2013 so that it pays more to work than to stay on benefits. Further initiatives include modernising the Jobcentre Plus services and creating closer links with local authorities, employers and providers. In England the Youth Contract was announced in 2011 and provides opportunities, such as apprenticeships, work experience and support to young unemployed people as well as wage incentives to employers. Moreover, in the UK the Work Programme supports benefit claimants in need of assistance with job seeking and training opportunities. The Work Programme is run by service providers under contract to the Department for Work and Pensions and allows providers to tailor support to individual needs. Providers are paid largely on finding sustainable work for the claimants.

1.6 Value of VET in the labour market

The amount of job roles requiring intermediate and higher skills and education is rising in the UK and it is expected that it will become even more important to possess specialist skills and higher education in the coming years to qualify for a more technologically advanced labour market. Whilst a number of occupations will continue to exist for unskilled and low skilled employees, more and higher paid jobs will increasingly require intermediate (upper secondary/technician) level and higher education qualifications. In fact, there were in 2012 for the first time more jobs requiring higher education degrees than jobs requiring no qualifications ⁽¹⁰⁾. There is a large variety of VET qualifications in the UK and some enjoy a higher regard in the labour market than others. Employers are generally well aware of sector specific qualifications; however, research has found evidence that frequent changes to qualifications can lead to confusion regarding their value and relevance ⁽¹¹⁾.

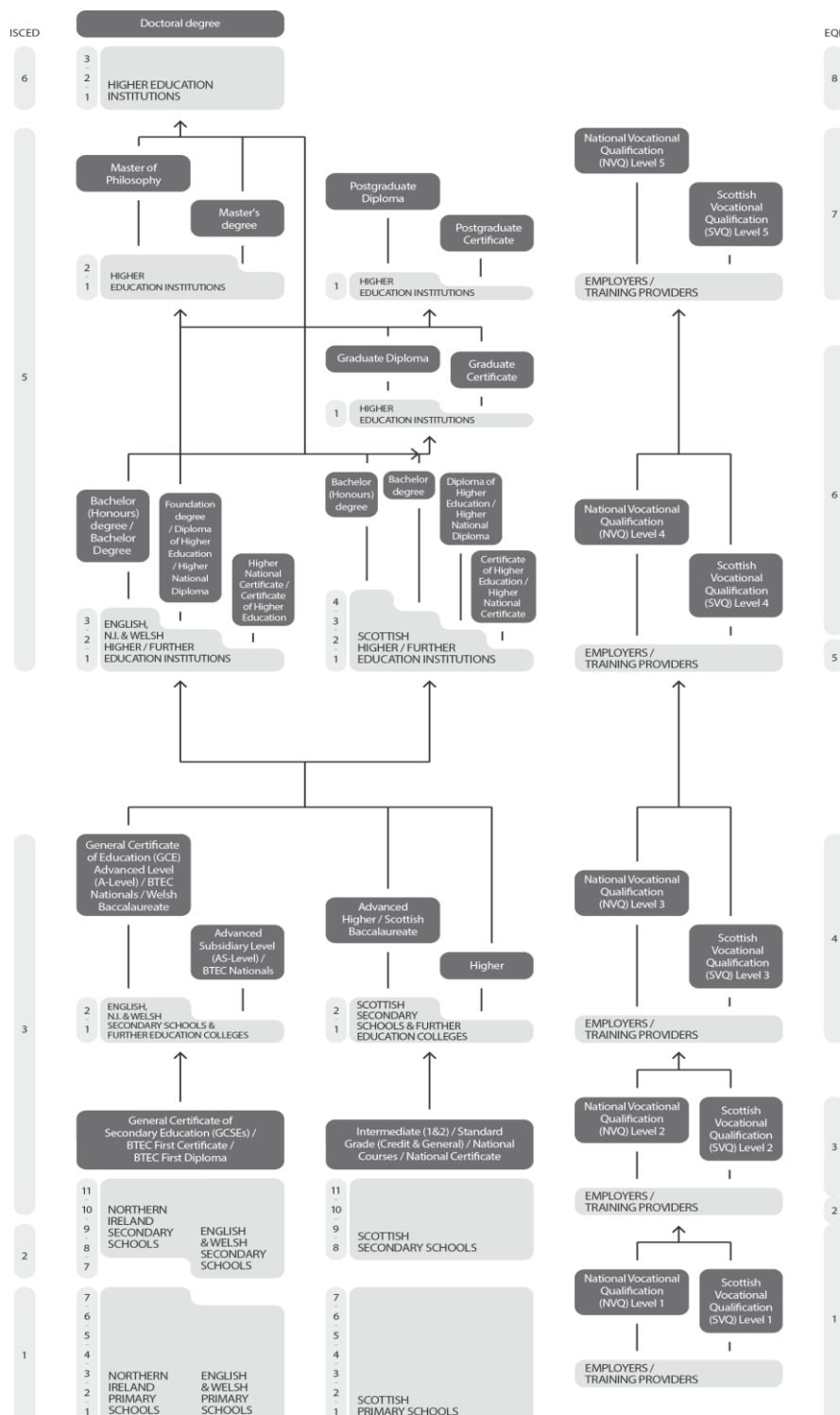
⁽¹⁰⁾ [Skills at Work in Britain, First Findings from the Skills and Employment Survey 2012](#), Felstead [et al.], page 3

⁽¹¹⁾ [Review of Vocational Education – the Wolf Report](#), Wolf, A. 2011

CHAPTER 2

Providing vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1 Diagram of the national education and training system



2.2 Government-regulated VET provision

Formal VET in the UK is organised within several national qualifications frameworks. The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) contains mainly vocational qualifications in England and Northern Ireland. Most programmes included in the QCF are vocationally related qualifications organised within eight levels in addition to an entry level. The Credit and Qualifications Framework of Wales (CQFW) also contains the QCF qualifications within the same levels as the QCF. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) comprises all formal Scottish qualifications credit rated and levelled to 12 levels.

Higher education qualifications are included in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and general academic qualifications are contained in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Formal qualifications that do not follow the rules of the QCF can be found on the NQF. The purely outcomes-based NQF was introduced before the other frameworks and does not use a credit system to quantify learning. The QCF, CQFW and SCQF describe levels, qualifications and units in terms of learning outcomes as well as credits and notional learning hours. The UK qualifications frameworks correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as described in the table below:

Table 3. **National qualifications frameworks in relation to the EQF** ⁽¹²⁾

EQF	QCF	SCQF	CQFW	FHEQ	NQF
8	8	12	8	8	8
7	7	11	7	7	7
6	6	10/9	6	6	6
5	5/4	8/7	5/4	5/4	5/4
4	3	6	3		3
3	2	5	2		2
2	1	4	1		1
1	Entry 3	3	Entry 3		
	Entry 2	2	Entry 2		
	Entry 1	1	Entry 1		

2.2.1 Access to VET and progression opportunities

Entrance requirements and further study or work pathways are mentioned within the description of qualifications within the UK qualifications registers. There is not always

⁽¹²⁾ [Qualifications can cross boundaries](#): QAA, July 2011

an automatic right to progression from one level to the next within the frameworks as education providers and awarding organisations (see section 2.2.6) retain the right to set the entry requirements to individual qualifications. However, the unit-based structure of qualifications opens up the possibilities for transfer of credit between qualifications, although credit is only accepted at education providers' discretion and in line with awarding organisations' recognition of prior learning guidelines.

Most pupils take examinations for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) at age 16 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The grades achieved here play an important role in determining the future study opportunities within VET. The most common entrance qualifications to VET in Scotland are called Standard Grades and Intermediates, normally also taken at age 16. National 4 and 5 qualifications will be available in place of Standard Grades from 2013/14 and will be dual run with Intermediates during 2013/14 and 2014/15, before the latter lapse.

The age to which individuals are required to take part in education or training was raised in England to 17 in 2013, and will be raised to 18 by 2015 in a bid to improve the skill levels of the UK work force. Post-16, occupational specialisation is encouraged and recognised in performance tables through the Tech Level qualifications and associated Technical Baccalaureate measure (see section 2.2.8), introduced in April this year. All 16-17-year olds in England that wish to proceed further already had a guaranteed place in education or training. The 'September Guarantee' process helps local authorities find suitable education or training places to applicants wishing to participate. The 'Opportunities for All' pledge offers the same guarantee for 16-19-year olds in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) offers a guarantee of a training place through its Training for Success programme for all unemployed 16-17 year old school leavers with extended eligibility for those with a disability and from an in-care background.

DEL launched the Youth Employment Scheme (YES) in Northern Ireland in September 2012. The scheme is designed to help young people aged 18-24 to compete for jobs on a more equal basis with older and more experienced workers in a difficult labour market. The scheme focuses on early intervention with young people to help them gain work experience, develop additional skills and achieve recognised qualifications needed to secure jobs in sectors that have the potential for future growth.

Opportunities for permeability between VET and higher education exist within the UK. Candidates holding QCF level 3/SCQF level 6 vocational qualifications may be allowed access to selected first cycle university programmes at institutional discretion. The Curriculum for Excellence has been introduced in Scotland and

creates opportunities for students to combine a wider range of qualification types, which will mean a larger variety of secondary qualifications will be used to apply for tertiary education in the future. 15.1% of applicants accepted to higher education study in the UK in 2012 came from a further education background. This shows a downward trend from 2007 when 25.7% of applicants were accepted with a further education qualification ⁽¹³⁾. Additionally, there are good articulation options for progression from higher VET programmes at QCF levels 4 and 5 / SCQF levels 7 and 8, such as Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND), to the second or third year of a Bachelor degree in a related field in the UK. However, admission and transfer arrangements are made at the discretion of the admitting institution. In Scotland in 2013, additional funding has been allocated for an increase in the number of learners with HNCs and HNDs to second and third year of university, respectively. Universities bid for the additional funded places, work closely with partner tertiary colleges on supporting guaranteed articulation places for successful learners, and these form part of the recent Scottish Funding Council Outcome Agreements that are brokered with universities and regional college boards.

The UK has the main building blocks to support the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) in place. ECVET aims to give people greater control over their individual learning experiences and promote mobility between different countries and different learning environments. A group of ECVET experts, led by Ecorys, are involved in promoting ECVET principles to support transnational mobility and are engaging in testing ECVET through Lifelong Learning Programme funded projects.

2.2.2 VET Provision to target groups

VET is available across most levels of the qualifications frameworks in the UK, ranging from introductory initial VET courses in secondary schools and colleges through to programmes at higher education level. It can be found in the shape of school-based programmes which combine general academic study with vocational elements, broad vocational programmes and specialist occupational programmes that take place both in a school setting and the work place. VET is offered on a full-time and part-time basis and students may attend schooling on a block-release or day-release basis from employers or attend evening or weekend learning. Moreover, a large number of qualifications exist within the qualifications frameworks in the UK,

⁽¹³⁾ [Universities and Colleges Admission Service \(UCAS\)](#)

offering a broad choice of programmes. There were in excess of 20 000 regulated qualifications on the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications in 2011/12 ⁽¹⁴⁾, however, nearly half of them were not awarded in 2012. An overview of some of the main types of qualifications is provided below.

The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in vocational subjects is available at lower secondary level in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and can normally be studied along with general academic subjects.

The main BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) qualifications comprise Awards, Certificates and Diplomas at First (QCF level 2), National (level 3) and Higher National (levels 4 and 5) levels. These programmes combine theoretical and practical vocational education and can form part of an apprenticeship programme. First and National programmes are offered at secondary level whilst the Higher Nationals are higher education qualifications with a vocational orientation. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) offers HNCs (SCQF level 7) and HNDs (SCQF level 8) as higher education qualifications within the SCQF.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are competence-based, practically oriented qualifications that are often assessed in the work place and also often taken in conjunction with an apprenticeship. Many NVQs have been adapted to the credit-based QCF, but purely competence-based programmes still exist within the NQF. Many of the similar Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are also available within the SCQF and those that are not will progressively migrate into it. NVQ and SVQs are available at five NVQ/SVQ levels ranging from semi-skilled worker level to higher education level. NVQ and SVQ levels do not correspond to the QCF/NQF and SCQF levels.

National Certificates and National Progression Awards (NPAs) in Scotland are vocational qualifications that are placed at SCQF levels 2-6. These are National Qualifications Group Awards in which secondary school or tertiary college students accumulate credits towards distinctive group awards that allow entry to more advanced study and employment. National Certificates are primarily aimed at people in full-time education and NPAs are shorter programmes for employees or people returning to work, though are also taken as part of a wider curriculum of qualifications within the school or college setting.

Skills for Work courses may be studied in secondary schools in Scotland, often in partnership with a local tertiary college and employer. These programmes form part of the National Courses and provide an introduction to vocational learning

⁽¹⁴⁾ [Annual Qualifications Market Report 2013](#), Ofqual, page 26

and include experiential learning which prepares learners for further VET and employment.

Vocational subjects at upper secondary level are available in the General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A level) programme too. The GCE A levels in Applied Subjects replaced the Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) at Advanced level. These are work-related qualifications designed to combine a broad area of study with a focus on a specific industry sector.

2.2.3 Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are offered in the shape of Apprenticeship Frameworks which include a work contract, a technical and occupational qualification within the QCF/CQFW and Functional Skills/Essential Skills/Key Skills/GCSEs. Apprenticeships are available at Intermediate (corresponding to QCF level 2), Advanced (level 3) and Higher level (levels 4 and 5). Scottish Modern Apprenticeships correspond to SCQF levels 5, 6 and 7 and are generally accompanied by SVQ level 2 and 3 qualifications. Recent changes in Scotland emerging from the Post-16 Review, have introduced Technical Apprenticeships at SCQF levels 8 and 9 as well as Professional Apprenticeships at SCQF levels 10 and above in place of Modern Apprenticeships at these levels. Technical Apprenticeships will be studied alongside SVQ level 4, HNDs or other qualifications, whilst Professional Apprenticeships are available alongside SVQ 5 and degree level awards.

There were a total of 521 000 Apprenticeship starts in England in the 2011/12 academic year. Apprenticeship starts for under-19s in England were up by 11% from 2009/10 numbers, 42% for 19-24-year olds and 367% for those over 25. 63% of starts were at Intermediate level and only 1% were at Higher level. 53% of apprenticeship starters in England in 2011/12 were female ⁽¹⁵⁾. Scottish Modern Apprenticeship starts amounted to 26 000 in 2012/13 ⁽¹⁶⁾ and the total number of apprentices in training in Scotland in June 2013 was 36 000. In 2011/12, 18 000 Apprenticeships were started in Wales, of which 10 000 were Foundation Apprenticeships and just under 300 at Higher level ⁽¹⁷⁾. There were just under 8 000

⁽¹⁵⁾ [Apprenticeship statistics](#), House of Commons Library, February 2013

⁽¹⁶⁾ [Modern Apprenticeships Summary Information 2012-13](#), SDS

⁽¹⁷⁾ [Further Education, Work-based Learning and Community Learning in Wales 2011/12](#), Statistics for Wales

Apprenticeship starts in Northern Ireland in 2011/12, the majority taking Intermediate level 2 programmes ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Entrance requirements to apprenticeships vary depending on the occupational area and the level of the apprenticeship framework. Competition for some apprenticeship places is fierce and good GCSE / Standard Grade / Intermediate grades in English and mathematics are sometimes necessary.

A new Traineeship programme has been introduced in England in 2013. The programmes are designed to provide young, unemployed people who possess little work experience and low qualifications with skills and work experience in preparation for Apprenticeships and employment. The core content comprises literacy and numeracy, work preparation training and a work placement. This programme is envisaged to replace other access programmes, such as the Access to Apprenticeship scheme in the long term.

The Pathways to Apprenticeship programme is in operation in Wales. This programme is a one-year full-time CQFW level 2 vocational qualification programme designed to give 16-24 year olds the foundation skills to progress onto and complete a full apprenticeship with an employer. Level 2 training includes associated essential skills and other relevant accredited vocational qualifications. In 2011/12, 1 600 learners took part in the programme. A further 2 000 pre-apprenticeship places were made available from 2011/12. Traineeships are furthermore available for 16-18-year olds in Wales and provide needs-based training to help learners progress to further learning, apprenticeships and employment. 62% of Trainees successfully progressed to an Apprenticeship, employment or further education. The Steps to Employment scheme also helps unemployed adults to access work experience and training in preparation for employment and further learning.

Scottish learning providers offer additional skills training opportunities, through the Targeted Pathways to Modern Apprenticeships scheme, that are designed to help young people gain the skills to enter apprenticeships or employment. Training is targeted towards seven key sectors and programmes include employability skills, basic occupational skills, employer experience and lead to a recognised vocational qualification or certification.

2.2.4 Governance of VET

Governance of VET in the UK rests with the UK Government and Government departments in the Devolved Administrations. Different regulatory bodies exist in

⁽¹⁸⁾ [Statistical Bulletin Apprenticeships NI](#), DEL, 2013

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Devolved Government legislation does not include detailed regulations, such as lists of approved qualifications, but the law provides for the Government Minister to issue lists of approved qualifications following advice from the relevant advisory body. There is a complex institutional framework in the UK VET sector with the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) sharing policy making responsibilities in England. The policy making authorities for VET in Northern Ireland are the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Scottish and Welsh Governments in Scotland and Wales respectively.

In England, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) holds responsibility for inspection of schools and further education colleges. Ofsted now focuses on bringing providers falling short of required standards up to a satisfactory standard and only inspecting providers with a high ranking if they are considered to drop in performance. Higher education provided at UK FE colleges is subject to quality review by the Quality Assurance Agency through their Integrated Quality Enhanced Review methodology which includes peer review, developmental engagement and summative review. The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is the regulator of all vocational qualifications within the QCF for England and Northern Ireland. The SQA, DfES and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) also regulate qualifications in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively. Schools and colleges are inspected by Education Scotland in Scotland, Estyn in Wales and the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) is one of very few bodies involved in VET to operate UK-wide. The UKCES is a social partnership of employers, trade unions and representatives from the Devolved Administrations that works towards greater investment in skills to assist enterprises and the UK economy. National Skills Academies (NSAs) are employer-led organisations developing the infrastructure and learning resources needed to deliver specialist skills to industry sectors. NSAs also strive for training programmes resources to be up-to-date and relevant in the current job market.

See annex 1 for a list of various stakeholders involved in the UK VET sector.

2.2.5 Financing of VET

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) was established in 2012 as an executive agency of the DfE in England. It carries forward the work of the Young People's

Learning Agency (YPLA), Partnerships for Schools and the maintained schools funding division of the DfE. Aside from funding learners between 3 and 19, the EFA furthermore supports the building and maintenance programmes for schools, academies, free schools and sixth-form colleges. The Skills Funding Agency's main function is to fund and promote adult further education and skills training in England. A new simplified, learner-led funding system (see section 4.3) has been introduced in 2013/14. Much of school-based VET is Government funded, but employers fund an increasing part of workplace training, such as in-company training and learning through specialist consultants and agencies. A growing number of education providers now receive funding directly from the Government rather than through local authorities. These are Academies, Free Schools, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools. Privately funded training providers also operate within the UK VET sector.

The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, commonly known as the Scottish Funding Council, is the strategic body for the funding of teaching, learning, research and other activities across all levels of tertiary education in Scotland. Public schools are funded through and accountable to local authorities, with one exception being directly funded by the Scottish Government. Funding of VET in the Northern Ireland further education sector and for providers of specific government-funded programmes is overseen by the DEL. VET funding in Wales is the responsibility of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

2.2.6 VET providers

There is a range of education and training providers within the UK VET sector. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, providers include secondary schools, school sixth forms, sixth form colleges, further education (FE) colleges and higher education institutions. FE colleges represent the largest group of VET providers offering education to learners that are 16 years old and upwards, including a large number of adult learners. FE colleges offer learning at various levels, but most of the courses are offered at QCF/CQFW level 3. Students may attend FE colleges on a full-time or part-time basis and combine the study with an apprenticeship. In Scotland, VET is mostly offered in tertiary colleges, but also in secondary schools and higher education institutions. The number of tertiary colleges in Scotland is currently being reduced from 42 to 14 regional partnerships through college mergers and partnerships being undertaken as part of a major restructuring of the landscape of Scottish colleges. 339 colleges exist in England, of which 218 are general FE

colleges, 93 are sixth form colleges and 28 are other types of colleges. The FE and skills sector in England comprises, in addition to FE colleges, some 900 independent training providers and some 2 500 training organisations with which colleges and providers subcontract. There are 16 FE colleges and institutions in Wales; the number of colleges is expected to reduce by August 2014, as mergers are pursued in the FE sector. There are 6 FE colleges in Northern Ireland.

There is a growing number of University Technical Colleges (UTCs), which are VET institutions for 14-19-year olds in England. UTCs are formed through partnerships between universities, colleges and businesses to match national curriculum requirements to local needs and include work placements. UTCs combine core skills with early subject specialisation and links to higher education. Similarly, Studio Schools have recently been introduced into the UK education system. These are small institutions offering vocational qualifications, general qualifications (such as GCSEs) as well as teaching through enterprise projects and work placements.

Lifelong Learning Partnerships consist of a variety of education providers ranging from voluntary sector providers to further and higher education institutions as well as employers and trade unions. Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) exist across the UK and work, along with the Institute for Education Business Excellence, to provide employment related learning services and work experience to young people. EBPs offer students mentoring, enterprise activity and professional development to prepare them for working life. Entrepreneurs are furthermore being brought into the classroom in schools, colleges and higher education institutions through the Enterprise Champions programme and Enterprise Societies.

Education and training programmes on offer in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are designed by independent awarding organisations that are also responsible for awarding the final qualifications and organising external moderation of student achievement. The main awarding organisation in Scotland is the SQA, which is a quasi-autonomous non-departmental public body. There are currently in excess of 170 awarding organisations recognised by Ofqual, the Welsh Government in Wales and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment in Northern Ireland. These organisations are listed in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications and are subsequently entitled to award accredited qualifications within the QCF, NQF and the CQFW. There are also a considerable number of registered awarding organisations (including all higher education institutions with degree awarding powers) offering qualifications within the SCQF and also other organisations awarding qualifications often subject to accreditation by SQA Accreditation, which is part of SQA, but run as a separate arm of the organisation.

2.2.7 Teachers and trainers

Different training and registration requirements exist at secondary education level to further and higher education level. In England teachers working in state-maintained secondary schools must meet the requirements of the National College for Teaching and Leadership (previously the Teaching Agency), which includes a degree level qualification, GCSE level subjects in English, mathematics and science in addition to completing an induction year and obtaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The same statutory requirement to hold QTS is not in place for teachers employed by academies or Free Schools. An academy may be required through its funding agreement to employ teachers with QTS, but the Department for Education may agree to relax this requirement if the academy requests this. Similar arrangements apply in Wales, where those qualifying to train to teach in maintained secondary schools are required to meet the QTS standards set by the Welsh Government.

Those teaching in the FE colleges are usually referred to as lecturers and those teaching work-based learning are normally called trainers. In England lecturers and trainers were required to obtain Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status and register with the Institute for Learning (IfL) until September 2012. The UK Government also revoked the requirement for FE teachers to complete a period of professional training, partake in continuing professional development (CPD) each year and register with the IfL in England. These regulations may be replaced with discretionary advice to employers on appropriate qualifications and CPD, although the requirement to possess recognised qualifications, such as the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) or equivalent, has been retained. The criteria to teach at FE level are being made more flexible in line with the criteria for teaching at higher education level where the education provider decides upon the suitability of the teaching staff.

Teaching qualifications are available from higher education institutions and Ofqual-recognised awarding organisations. Teacher training also takes place in-house, and in both colleges for further and higher education. Associate Teachers work with less responsibility than Full Teachers in terms of curriculum development and delivery. In the FE sector, Associate Teachers are often known as instructors or trainers and should work under the supervision of a Full Teacher. FE lecturers in Northern Ireland must possess a degree level qualification or a qualification at QCF level 5 in a subject area relevant to the subject taught, plus three years relevant industrial experience. Lecturers must also possess or enrol upon a teaching qualification, such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). In Wales, lecturers are required to hold a Certificate of Education, PGCE(FE) qualifications or

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and those employed as teachers in institutions in the FE sector in Wales are required to have, or to be working toward, these relevant teaching qualifications.

Scottish secondary teachers must hold a first degree, a teaching qualification such as the Postgraduate Diploma in Education in addition to an English language qualification at Higher (SCQF level 6) level and mathematics at Standard Grade/Intermediate (SCQF level 5) level and register with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). However, teachers, trainers and lecturers in tertiary colleges do not need to register with the GTCS, although it is desirable and strongly suggested by the HM Inspectorate of Education. It is moreover considered preferential to hold a GTCS recognised further education teaching qualification or be working towards one. The General Teaching Council for Wales registers secondary teachers, who must possess a university degree, GCSE subjects and a teaching qualification as in England. FE teacher qualifications available in England and Wales include the PGCE for FE, which is a postgraduate programme leading to Full Teacher status, and in England the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS), which is a short introduction to FE teaching, the Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS), and the DTLLS which is the minimum qualification needed to obtain Full Teacher status.

In England the IfL will continue to operate as a practitioner-led professional body, but with voluntary membership only. The Education and Training Foundation has been established this year to improve professionalism and standards in the FE and skills sector. Ofsted is the inspection agency for the quality of teacher education in England.

2.2.8 Challenges, difficulties, success stories

The UK Government has in the last few years worked towards increasing the number of apprentices. There is a general political consensus in the UK that apprenticeships are important in dealing with the country's intermediate skills deficit. The number of employers currently taking on apprentices has risen in recent years. Incentives are in place to further enhance employer engagement in apprenticeships with particular emphasis on small and medium enterprises. Cost factors to employers, such as administration, apprentices' time away from the workplace and employees' time spent to train apprentices has been found to be a reason for not participating, particularly by smaller employers. Despite this, research has shown that apprentices provide good value for money for employers in the long-term in terms of increased, specialised skills, employee loyalty, new innovative ideas and as future management

material ⁽¹⁹⁾. The government is working towards removing regulations and bureaucracy that may discourage employers, SMEs in particular, to take on Apprentices.

The last few years have witnessed a rise in adult (over 25 year old) apprentices who now outnumber under 19-apprentices. In England, the Young Apprenticeship programme that offered 14-16-year old pupils the opportunity to undertake industry specific VET alongside the GCSE programme was closed for the last pupils in 2012/13 as the costs of running the programme was considered too high in the current economic climate. 9 400 pupils started on the Young Apprenticeship programme in 2010. From this year; however, Apprentices over 24 must take out a loan, usually of about £4 000, to pay for on-the-job training if their employer is not covering it. The number of adult apprentices is consequently expected to drop. Scottish Modern Apprenticeship starts have increased in recent years as a result of a successful partnership between employers, training providers and the public sector.

The *Wolf Review* ⁽²⁰⁾ identified that too many vocational qualifications at lower secondary level in England were considered equivalent to GCSE subjects and that some of these vocational equivalent qualifications were easier to complete and obtain good grades in. Consequently, the report describes a situation in which students may be guided into completing qualifications that are less well regarded in the labour market to gain good grades, which in turn reflects well on the school's ranking. The *Wolf Review* recommended that only good quality vocational qualifications were to be considered equivalent to GCSE subjects in terms of the school ranking exercise, which the Government has acted upon. Measures have been put in place to reduce the number of vocational alternatives to GCSEs as part of a general aim to simplify the education system. Reforms of 14-19 vocational qualifications in England mean that students aged 14 -16 are expected to follow a broad-based curriculum with vocational specialisation normally comprising 20% of the timetable.

As part of the process of simplifying the education system in England and clarifying to prospective VET students which are the best, most relevant qualifications on offer, employers as well as trade and professional associations will be asked to endorse the best occupational upper secondary qualifications from 2014.

⁽¹⁹⁾ [Review of Apprenticeships Research](#), Institute for Employability Research, University of Warwick, 2012

⁽²⁰⁾ [Review of Vocational Education – the Wolf Report](#), Wolf, A. 2011

Qualifications taught from September 2014 will be categorised as either technical level or applied general qualifications. Qualifications receiving sufficient endorsements will be categorised as Tech levels (Technical level qualifications) as a mark of quality and relevance to the labour market. Applied general qualifications will provide a broader study of a vocational area, and will need the public backing of three universities. Students completing one of the Tech levels, a level 3 core mathematics qualification and an extended project will from 2014/15 be awarded a Technical Baccalaureate.

The Scottish education system is changing with the introduction of the new Curriculum for Excellence for learners between ages 3 and 18 that is designed to give learners a broad and individual choice of subjects, as well as support and extend the development of reflective practice, employability skills and citizenship awareness. Several mergers have taken place and more are planned amongst Scottish colleges in the coming years in a bid to create larger and more efficient entities tailored to regional needs. The Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council collaborated with Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs) on Outcome Agreements, for some of which more formalised articulation arrangements between vocational higher education (such as HNCs and HNDs) and Bachelor degrees will be a benchmark upon which they are measured and funded. Outcome agreements are specific to regions and, for colleges, match their provision to regional needs.

The Wales Review of Qualifications 14-19 outlines how the Welsh Government will ensure that qualifications for 14- to 19-year-olds are understood and valued and meet the needs of young people and the Welsh economy. It will also consider issues related to assessment and measurement of performance. The Review furthermore concluded that a single body – Qualifications Wales – should be created to regulate, approve and quality assure all non-degree level qualifications in order to strengthen regulation. The Welsh Government has also completed a consultation on requiring FE and work-based learning staff including support staff to become registered in the same way as there remains a requirement for teachers who have gained QTS to register. It is likely that these proposals will be in the Education (Wales) Bill which will be submitted to the National Assembly for Wales in 2013.

In Northern Ireland, a review of apprenticeships and vocational training is currently on-going. The apprenticeship review has a strong focus on apprenticeships at level 3 and on higher level apprenticeships (at QCF level 4 and above) while the review of vocational training is focused on level 2, in particular progression into employment and into apprenticeships. An expert group and a wider stakeholder

group were formed to inform the reviews. The reviews are due to be completed in 2014.

Furthermore, the Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning is working with higher education institutions and further education colleges and other key stakeholders to implement its Widening Participation Strategy – “Access to Success” - to increase the participation of under-represented groups, such as people from disadvantaged backgrounds and learners with disabilities or learning difficulties, in higher and further education.

2.3 Other forms of training

Continuing professional development and non-formal training is generally conducted on a voluntary basis unless there are specific requirements for training in professionally licensed trades. Despite this, the UK has a high participation rate in adult education and continuing training of the workforce. 59% of UK workplaces that responded to the UKCES' *Employer Skills Survey 2011* ⁽²¹⁾ had arranged on-the-job or off-the-job training for employees in the preceding 12 months, with on-the-job training slightly more popular. More employers in Scotland and Northern Ireland provided training than in England and Wales. Larger companies were also more likely to arrange formal training than smaller companies. Only 38% of businesses reported operating with a yearly training plan, ergo workplace training was often arranged on an ad-hoc basis. The type of training provided varies greatly from induction training and health and safety to technical, job-specific skills training.

2.3.1 Training providers and programmes

A diverse range of organisations provide non-formal and informal training in the UK, including public and private enterprises, voluntary organisations, uniformed services, health and care services, professional education and registration bodies as well as trade unions. Unionlearn is the TUC's learning and skills organisation that supports unions' learning and skills work.

E-learning is growing in use in the UK. NEN – the Education Network – works throughout the UK towards improving standards and access to ICT and e-learning by providing learning resources via broadband internet connections. Community learning comprises non-formal and informal adult learning, mostly unaccredited, delivered in places such as adult education centres, libraries, museums, community centres, union learning centres, schools, children's centres, colleges and workplaces.

⁽²¹⁾ [UKCES Employer Skills Survey](#), 2011

It could be a taster, a weekend, a short course or a year-long programme. Learning can be undertaken online, in self-organised study groups and through professionally qualified teachers.

The Learner Access and Engagement programme allows FE Colleges in Northern Ireland to offer learner support in collaboration with non-statutory providers, such as voluntary, community and private organisations. This local type of training is aiming to provide unemployed adults, disengaged learners and other disadvantaged groups with employment related education that can lead to progression to formal further education.

The UKCES' *Employer Skills Survey 2011* ⁽²²⁾ shows that the sectors in which employers provided the most on- and off-the-job training to employees were health and social work, and education and public administration. Provision was also high in the electricity, gas and water, financial services and mining and quarrying sectors.

2.3.2 Workplace learning

The *Learning and Talent Development Survey 2013* ⁽²³⁾ from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) shows that the institute's members believe in-house development programmes, coaching by line managers and on-the-job-training to be the most effective employee development practices. This type of training is perceived to be more closely tailored to specific job roles than qualifications that form part of the formal education system, in addition to being more cost effective. E-learning is gaining popularity as a form of employee development, but is not considered by managers as equally suitable for all types of learning.

The Workforce Development Programme advises Welsh employers on priorities and skills needs and assists them in accessing local training opportunities. The programme is flexible and includes advice on formal and non-formal training.

2.3.3 Funding mechanisms

The majority of non-formal training in workplaces is employer funded. The Growth and Innovation Fund administered by the UKCES and the Skills Funding Agency helps enterprises in England develop innovative skills solutions including staff training and encourages partnerships between businesses and their industry and sector bodies. The UK Government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) funds community learning in England (see section 2.3.1).

⁽²²⁾ [UKCES Employer Skills Survey](#), 2011

⁽²³⁾ [Learning and Talent Development Annual Survey Report 2013](#), CIPD

Trade unions in the UK have statutory status for Union Learning Representatives and assist workers' training through the Union Learning Fund. The Wales Union Learning Fund for example helps workers in the up-skilling process and to gain essential skills to enter onto formal qualifications. The Welsh Government provides funding to people who have recently been made redundant or are at risk of being made redundant through the Redundancy Action Scheme II. This funding gives access to vocational training and training support.

2.3.4 Transfer possibilities

There are generally less transfer opportunities to further and higher education for qualifications obtained outside a formal qualifications framework in the UK. However, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) guidelines are incorporated into the QCF in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, whilst the Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning form part of the SCQF in Scotland. There is also a RPL network connected to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Partnership which published a RPL toolkit ⁽²⁴⁾ in 2010 and which aims to increase and improve recognition of non-formal and informal learning as well as formal learning. In England, RARPA (Recognising And Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning) ⁽²⁵⁾ was furthermore devised by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and the former Learning and Skills Development Agency to aid recognition and validation of learning that does not lead to a formal award. RARPA includes a staged process in assessing individual learners' achievement by taking into consideration their starting point, identification of learning objectives, recording of progress and end of programme assessment.

FE colleges in Scotland offer higher education access programmes organised through the Scottish Wide Access Programme. These programmes, which are designed to widen access and participation in higher education, last a year and may occasionally combine specific vocational elements with general academic subjects. Completion of this type of access programme will usually guarantee a place in an appropriate HNC / HND or degree programme. The Quality Assurance Agency offers a service called Employer Based Training Accreditation ⁽²⁶⁾ which connects employers to higher education institutions, verifies the quality and standard of in-company training and in some cases matches this to national qualification standards.

⁽²⁴⁾ [Facilitating the recognition of prior learning: toolkit](#), SCQF, 2010

⁽²⁵⁾ [RARPA](#), NIACE

⁽²⁶⁾ [EBTA](#), QAA

This process promotes recognition of non-formal training and assists progression to formal education programmes.

Quality Assured Lifelong Learning (QALL) mechanisms have been developed to allow non-formal education and training, such as community learning, in-company training and continuing professional development, to be recognised within the Credit and Qualifications Framework of Wales ⁽²⁷⁾.

2.3.5 Quality assurance mechanisms

Training organisations offering non-formal qualifications may register with the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education. Investors in People (IiP) is a nationally recognised business standard encouraging enterprises to invest in training. IiP certification gives an indication that an employer is committed to the development of workers.

2.3.6 Challenges, difficulties, success stories

According to the CIPD Learning and Talent Development Survey 2012 ⁽²⁸⁾, the continuing difficult economic situation which many businesses find themselves in has had a negative impact on the employee training budget of companies across the UK which saw an overall reduction during the past year, and may face further reductions.

The Community Learning budget in England funds flexible, mostly unaccredited, courses for adults wishing to learn new skills, pursue interests or prepare for progression to formal learning. Community learning is an important part of the wider learning and skills landscape because it can reach the people who are most disadvantaged and furthest from learning. Following a comprehensive review, a national consultation, and the introduction of new community learning objectives, the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills piloted 15 local Community Learning Trusts ⁽²⁹⁾ in the 2012/13 academic year. These pilots developed innovative operating and delivery approaches for adult community learning, tailored to meet local needs.

Since August 2013, these Community Learning Trust approaches are being implemented across England, supporting closer partnership-working between government-funded learning providers, local people, local services, local businesses and voluntary sector organisations to meet the learning needs of their communities. Each learning provider is also required to develop a robust financial strategy to

⁽²⁷⁾ [Quality Assured Lifelong Learning](#), Welsh Government

⁽²⁸⁾ [Learning and Talent Development Annual Survey Report 2012](#), CIPD

⁽²⁹⁾ [Evaluation of Community Learning Trust Pilots](#), BIS, September 2013

maximise the value of public funding through sponsorship, volunteer activity, match funding, pooling resources and more locally responsive fee strategies.

Shaping VET qualifications

Skills development is the responsibility of the Devolved Administrations of the UK. Increasing skill levels of the current and future workforce is a priority of all four countries.

3.1 Methods used to anticipate labour market needs

The qualifications market in the UK is jointly driven by Government policies and private interests. This has led to a large choice of qualifications and awarding organisations. The *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) ⁽³⁰⁾ results are published regularly by the Office for National Statistics and contain labour market statistics. The LFS is used along with other national, regional and sectoral surveys and audits to determine labour market needs and gaps. Skills audits and surveys of employers' opinions are also important for this.

The creation of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) and Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) was aimed at involving employers more closely in the skills development process. These agencies function as strategic partnerships of stakeholders in education, business and industry and work towards increasing employers' influence on vocational qualifications by linking them more closely to labour market demands. SSCs are Government licensed through the UKCES. The UKCES provides labour market intelligence through the *Employer Skills Survey* ⁽³¹⁾ and *Working Futures* ⁽³²⁾ in addition to other work, whilst the SSCs identify skills needs and shape the supply of training and education by creating Sector Skills Agreements. National Occupational Standards are developed by SSCs working with national and regional organisations in regard to funding and training provision. UKCES' *National Strategic Skills Audit 2010* ⁽³³⁾ (England) and 2011 (Wales) provide analysis of national and global employment and training. UKCES also issues an *Employment and Skills Almanac* ⁽³⁴⁾, which is a comprehensive labour market

⁽³⁰⁾ [Labour Force Survey](#), Office for National Statistics, August 2013

⁽³¹⁾ [Employer Skills Survey 2011: England Results](#), UKCES, July 2012

⁽³²⁾ [Working Futures 2010-2020](#), UKCES, August 2012

⁽³³⁾ [National Strategic Skills Audit](#), UKCES, 2010 and 2011

⁽³⁴⁾ [Employment and Skills Almanac 2010](#), UKCES, April 2011.

resource. The last publication from 2011 identified productivity, employment, skills and inequality issues. Other stakeholders involved in providing information and recommendations for skills provision include the Confederation of British Industry, whose research suggests that employers believe increased apprenticeship funding and investment in training and skills development are vital to create business opportunities and economic growth ⁽³⁵⁾.

In England, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) work towards improving local needs and bring together local and regional stakeholders in business and local authorities. LEPs and the new powers to English cities in the Localism Act are designed to give more freedom and a greater voice to local enterprises, which can influence vocational qualification design.

The Employability, Skills and Lifelong Learning Analytical Services Unit forms part of the Scottish Government and conducts research that supports policy developments in VET, higher education and lifelong learning. Topics for research include skills shortages and gaps and training opportunities. In Wales these functions are carried out by Knowledge and Analytical Services and the Labour Market Information Unit within the Welsh Government.

3.2 Design process and qualification designers

Strategic development of skills and lifelong learning in England is a shared remit between the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Department for Education (DfE) with the latter responsible for students up to 19 years of age and BIS responsible for 19+ learners. Design of future VET will be influenced by the Wolf Review of pre-19 vocational education. Key recommendations of the Wolf Review regarding VET provision for 14-19-year olds are to include only a selection of good quality VET qualifications that are considered equivalent to the GCSE qualification to encourage students to choose qualifications with labour market value and also to support apprenticeships. BIS has published the *Skills for Sustainable Growth* strategy ⁽³⁶⁾ in response to the Wolf Review with details of a planned skills reform. The *Plan for Growth* ⁽³⁷⁾ strategy mentions that "the creation of a more educated workforce that is the most flexible in Europe" is one of the key skills actions and measures to be achieved.

⁽³⁵⁾ [Building for Growth](#), Confederation of British Industry (CBI)

⁽³⁶⁾ [Skills for Sustainable Growth](#), BIS, 2010

⁽³⁷⁾ [BIS and HM Treasury March 2011](#) – The Plan for Growth

More recently, a new skills strategy was released relating to VET. *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* sets out how the reforms to the VET system in England would be accelerated. This focuses on ⁽³⁸⁾:

- Raising standards of delivery of VET
- Reforming Apprenticeships according to the Richard Review of Apprenticeships
- Creating Traineeships, which are being introduced in 2013
- Ensuring only meaningful, relevant, rigorous and recognised qualifications are offered to students
- Making funding available only to good quality VET provision
- Improving information and data availability

The Scottish Government provides details of skills support in the *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth* ⁽³⁹⁾ and the *Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland* ⁽⁴⁰⁾ and started a reform of the post-16 education which aims to increase efficiency and flexibility in learner provision and value for money as well as better meet regional needs. A further aim is to simplify the skills system so it is easier to understand for both individuals and employers. The new Curriculum for Excellence includes more skills-for-work options for young people in addition to greater emphasis on entrepreneurship ⁽⁴¹⁾. The group responsible for the review of the curriculum comprised representatives from national and local Government, Education Scotland, higher and further education institutions, schools and SQA in addition to business interest, teacher unions and parent organisations.

The Welsh Government's Programme for Government programme emphasises the importance of skills development in relation to economic growth and sustainable jobs. Qualifications are developed according to the CQFW Common Accord design specifications, terminology, principles and systems required to ensure that the currency of assigned and awarded credit is fully quality assured.

In Northern Ireland, the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) are working on implementation of DEL's Skills Strategy "*Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*", which aims to increase

⁽³⁸⁾ [Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills](#), BIS/DfE, April 2013

⁽³⁹⁾ [Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth](#), Scottish Government, 2010

⁽⁴⁰⁾ [Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland](#), Scottish Government, August 2011

⁽⁴¹⁾ [Innovation for Scotland](#)

skill levels and collaboration between schools and FE colleges. The *Further Education Means Business* strategy emphasises further education's importance "to strengthen economic development, enhance social cohesion and advance the individual's skills and learning" ⁽⁴²⁾. The Entitlement Framework (EF) has come into force building on the Vocational Enhancement Programme which encouraged collaboration between post-14 school provision and vocational FE college provision. From September 2013, the EF guarantees in law that all learners in Northern Ireland have access to a broad and balanced curriculum with a minimum number of courses at lower and upper secondary level (18 and 21 respectively from September 2013, rising to 24 and 27 by September 2015), a third of which must be applied and a third, general. Qualifications under the new Entitlement Framework will contain a range of courses that can be individually tailored to enhance students' employment chances and meet Government priority skills areas. The EF is a result of the recommendations from the *Further Education Strategy Review* and the *Post-primary Review* which emphasised the need for collaboration among schools and FE colleges as well as raising the profile of VET in general.

DEL requires Further Education Colleges in Northern Ireland to submit annual development plans in line with the Government's priorities and adhere to Public Service Agreements (PSA) and Funded Learning Unit models regarding finances in relation to strategic priorities. One of the PSA aims is that 95% of all publicly funded college education and training ought to result in a qualification accredited within the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications ⁽⁴³⁾.

In the UK, Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) and other standard setting organisations in association with employers develop, maintain and update National Occupational Standards (NOS) for training and qualification development purposes. SSCs also develop Sector Qualification Priority lists in relation to relevant employment and identifying skills gaps. NOS consist of units describing what individuals must be able to do, know and understand to perform specific jobs. NVQs / SVQs and many other vocationally related qualifications are largely based on NOS or, if relevant, learning outcomes that need to be met for certification. NOS are reviewed on a priority basis via Universal Services commissioning funded by the UKCES, to ensure programmes and qualifications include new technologies, innovations and working methods used in the labour market.

⁽⁴²⁾ [FE Means Business](#), DEL, 2007

⁽⁴³⁾ [PSA Delivery Agreement 2](#), Department for Employment and Learning, 2008

The Strategic Partnership strategy provides the background for BIS financed projects in which enterprises, employer federations, trade unions, trade associations, public bodies and other stakeholders collaborate to solve sectoral and regional issues including learning and skills. The Employer Ownership of Skills pilot is encouraging and part-funding employers to develop VET that is specific to industry needs (see section 4.2).

The largely unit- and outcomes-based VET system in the UK allows for flexibility in delivery of training. Adult learning in particular is often centred on individual learners' needs both in terms of content and delivery method. Training programmes aimed at young people, including apprenticeships, usually follow a more standardised structure. Qualifications and their broad content, unit and credit structure, learning outcomes and assessment standards are developed by awarding organisations in line with regulators' guidelines and industry experts' and other stakeholders' input.

Qualifications are developed by awarding organisations which operate independently from Government, but are regulated by competent authorities within the four nations. Most education and training programmes for young people that are publicly funded lead to a formally recognised qualification. This is part of the quality control process of VET.

Promoting participation in vocational education and training

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland set individual budgets regarding education and skills funding. Across the UK, however, austerity measures have seen many cuts in state funding in recent years. Whilst the schools budget, including 16-19 learning has remained largely protected, reductions have occurred in the 19+ further education and skills budget. Despite this reduction, Apprenticeship funding has been steadily on the rise. Numbers of participants in IVET in the UK reduced in the period 2006-10 ⁽⁴⁴⁾. Various initiatives to raise numbers and the status of VET are in place in the UK.

4.1 Incentives for individuals

The Right to Request Time to Train initiative is a legal right in England to allow workers in businesses with more than 250 employees to request time to take up work-related training. Training can be both formal and non-formal and take place in-house, at an external training organisation or be delivered through e-learning.

The Trade Union Learning Fund is administered by Unionlearn and provides funding to develop the capacity of trade unions and Union Learning Representatives to work with employees, employers and learning providers, to encourage workplace learning. The Scottish Union Learning Fund, the Wales Union Learning Fund and the Union Learning Fund for Northern Ireland fulfil similar roles.

The Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan is the Welsh Government's plan to help young people move back into education, training and employment. Measures taken to achieve this include the Jobs Growth Wales that supports training and work experience. Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) are payments for unemployed 16+ year olds not currently in education in Scotland who wish to learn a new skill or develop their skills further within recognised training programmes. The review of ILAs in 2010/11 resulted in an enhanced focus on vocational and credited courses. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) organises the Training for Work (TFW) scheme in Scotland which funds unemployed people looking

⁽⁴⁴⁾ [On the way to 2020: data for vocational education and training policies](#), Cedefop, 2013

for work. TfW training must be tailored to local needs although a formal qualification outcome is not a mandatory element of the programme.

An Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is available to Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland students between the ages of 16 and 18 depending on the students' and their families' financial situation. The EMA is no longer available in England, but has been replaced with Bursary Funds available from schools and colleges for 16-19-year olds who struggle to afford the cost of their studies. Bursary Funds are specifically targeted towards vulnerable young people, such as those in care, on income support or those with disabilities, but also to other students struggling to afford transport, food or equipment costs.

4.2 Incentives for enterprises

The UK Government has made available an Apprenticeship Grant for Employers incentive (AGE 16 to 24) in England, providing financial assistance for businesses employing less than 1000 people to take on 16 to 24-year old apprentices within a formal apprenticeship programme. From April 2012, the Small Employer Incentive to Employ an Apprentice has also become available in England in the shape of payments to small enterprises that currently do not employ any apprentices, but wish to do so. The UKCES and the Skills Funding Agency furthermore administer the Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF) (England only) ⁽⁴⁵⁾ which currently helps employers in England develop their own innovative skills solutions, which include increasing and updating the skill level of employees. The GIF has been aligned with the Employer Ownership of Skills pilot ⁽⁴⁶⁾, which is encouraging and part-funding employers to develop VET that is specific to industry needs. Two rounds of funding have been made available and have proven to be an incentive for employers to invest in VET that will raise the skill levels of their future work force.

Flexible Training Opportunities funding, delivered by SDS, helps Scottish businesses with up to 100 employees with up to half the costs towards individual employee training, which includes formal qualifications and units, other industry recognised awards and Masterclasses.

The Young Recruits Programme is a Welsh Government initiative that provides financial support to employers to take on additional apprentices in the 16-24 age bracket onto high quality apprenticeship programmes.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ [GIF](#), SFA

⁽⁴⁶⁾ [Employer Ownership of Skills pilot](#), UKCES

Under the Youth Employment Scheme (YES) which was introduced in Northern Ireland in September 2013, employers offering full-time jobs to young people in jobs growth areas can avail of an employer subsidy of up to £5 750 in the first year, subject to providing training to allow young people to develop their skills and gain relevant qualifications whilst in employment. In addition, the Department for Employment and Learning provides a Skills Solutions Service that advises on training for companies. The service now has advisers operating throughout all of Northern Ireland to provide advice regarding Departmental provision and funding available to up-skill staff.

4.3 Incentives for providers

The Skills Funding Agency allocates funding to colleges and other providers of qualifications registered within the QCF that operate within the adult and skills sector in England. A new simplified set of funding rates for 16-18 and adult learners has been introduced from August 2013. This is envisaged to free up providers to enable them to be more accountable, innovative and responsive to students and employers. Funding is linked to retention and achievement and job outcome payments may be earned by providers whose learners gain relevant long-term employment⁽⁴⁷⁾.

The Scottish Funding Council bases funding of VET providers on Outcome Agreements with colleges and universities. These Agreements include learner retention, articulation and progression into further and higher education and other positive destinations, such as employment.

4.4 Guidance and counselling, structures and services

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) provides a Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) service across Scotland. SDS works in partnership with education providers and job centres. Targets specified in the *More Choices, More Chances* strategy include young people at risk of becoming NEET. SDS has also set up the My World of Work website containing CIAG resources.

The National Careers Service (NCS) was launched in England in April 2012 to provide advice on learning, training and employment for young people and adults in one place. An increasing amount of information is available online, but is also offered face-to face (for those aged over 19) and by phone (also for those under 19). The National Apprenticeship Service in England runs an Apprenticeship Vacancy Service, which includes an online search function and mobile app.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ [A New Streamlined Funding System for Adult Skills](#), SFA, 2013

Careers Wales also offers an all age careers guidance service. The Welsh strategy for further development of careers services is outlined in *Future ambitions: Developing careers services in Wales* ⁽⁴⁸⁾. Careers Wales has also introduced an Apprenticeship Matching Service available for employers and individual applicants.

The Careers Service Northern Ireland provides an all age Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) service regarding employment, education and training opportunities. Careers Service advisers in Northern Ireland operate in schools and job centres through a Service Level Agreement. The Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning are jointly implementing a CEIAG Strategy; “Preparing for Success” was launched in 2009. The aim of the strategy is to develop effective career decision-makers leading to increased and appropriate participation in education, training and employment.

CIAG is also offered in schools, colleges, higher education institutions and third sector bodies across the UK. Careers advice is available from trade unions as well and Unionlearn has developed their Strategy for Supporting Learners through their Union Learning Representatives, specifically targeting those who are disadvantaged in the workplace. Schools in England now have a duty to provide access to independent careers guidance for pupils in school years 9 to 11 (ages 14-16). Careers education and guidance is also provided by schools and colleges in Wales for students aged 13-19. In Northern Ireland, career management skills are included in the Learning for Life and Work area of learning at secondary education level. In England, FE colleges and higher education institutions also have advice centres and careers programmes on offer. Government funding for CIAG provision in schools forms part of the overall school budget and it is left up to the discretion of the education provider how much is spent. Local authorities no longer have an obligation to provide CIAG, but still have a duty to encourage, enable and assist young people to take part in education and training.

Ofsted’s Learner View website allows FE college students in England to rate their college. The results are available for users to search and view to gather an indication of the performance of a college.

4.5 Challenges, difficulties, success stories

Career guidance and counselling

⁽⁴⁸⁾ [Future ambitions: Developing Careers services in Wales](#), Welsh Government, 2010

Careers advice is offered by a range of professionals, including teachers and careers advisers employed in the education, social work and youth work sectors as well as job centre personnel. Their training varies from in-service training to formal and professional careers guidance qualifications. The Careers Profession Task Force's report *Towards a strong careers profession* ⁽⁴⁹⁾ made detailed recommendations on raising the professional nature of the workforce. One area of concern identified was that careers advisers were too often under-qualified. Following on from this, the Institute of Employability Professionals has introduced qualifications in employability services along with Education Development International. A unified professional body for the careers profession, the Careers Development Institute, maintains a register that was launched in May 2012 of Career Development Professionals, and has developed a framework for professional development of careers advisors in the UK.

There are concerns that the switch in England from the Connexions service to the system which includes the NCS has resulted in a service that is not yet fully operational especially in relation to face-to-face careers guidance for young people. A recent report into CIAG in England furthermore found that the new flexible model introduced has resulted in a number of schools failing to provide students with guidance about the full range of career pathways ⁽⁵⁰⁾. Research suggests that Scottish pupils rely too heavily on internet advice and don't receive sufficient face-to-face guidance ⁽⁵¹⁾. An evaluation concluded that schools in Wales generally give pupils good careers advice, but improvements can be made in terms of tracking students' progress and making use of labour market information to better inform students ⁽⁵²⁾.

Qualifications in Career Development, such as those developed by the former sector skills council, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), are available at QCF levels 4, 5 and 6, but the CPA's current voluntary registration requires a level 6 qualification for full registration. Qualifications at postgraduate level are also being developed. Scottish Careers Advisors are required to hold a postgraduate qualification in career guidance and development in addition to an SDS training plan. Advisers in the Northern Ireland Careers Service similarly should possess a relevant postgraduate level qualification as well as a work-based qualification.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ [Towards a strong careers profession](#), Careers Profession Task Force, October 2012

⁽⁵⁰⁾ [Going in the right direction? Careers guidance in schools from September 2012](#), Ofsted, 2013

⁽⁵¹⁾ [CES Briefing, What's the evidence? Comparing the impact of career websites and other career support](#), University of Edinburgh, 2013

⁽⁵²⁾ [Informed decisions: The implementation of the Careers and the World of Work framework](#), Estyn, October 2012, page 8

Learning loans and funding for adult apprentices

24+ Advanced Learning Loans have been introduced for learners in England wishing to study formal FE qualifications registered at QCF level 3 and above. These loans have been available from the 2013/14 academic year and it is hoped will increase participation in further education, although VET providers have expressed some concern over the impact on those wanting to learn who now have to take on the debt of a loan. After a slow start, more students have now begun to apply for the loans.

Previous increased funding for adult apprentices has seen a commensurate rise in the number of new apprenticeships; however, transfer of direct funding to loans is likely to result in less adult Apprenticeship starts.

Promoting basic skills

To combat the high level of young people leaving education with low basic skills, measures are being introduced to force students to also continue studying English language and mathematics as part of upper secondary education courses as these subjects are considered particularly important in the labour market.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AGE 16-24	Apprenticeship Grant for Employers
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CEIAG	Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence
CIAG	Careers Information, Advice and Guidance
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CPA	Careers Profession Alliance
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework of Wales
DE	Department of Education (Northern Ireland)
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland)
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (Wales)
DTLLS	Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector
EBP	Education Business Partnership
ECVET	European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training
EF	Entitlement Framework
EFA	Education Funding Agency
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
Estyn	Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
FE	Further Education
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland
GCE A level	General Certificate of Education Advanced level
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GTCS	General Teaching Council for Scotland
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IfL	Institute for Learning
liP	Investors in People
ILA	Individual Learning Accounts
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
NCS	National Careers Service
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NPA	National Progression Award

NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSA	National Skills Academy
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
Ofqual	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PSA	Public Service Agreement
QALL	Quality Assured Lifelong Learning
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
QTLS	Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RARPA	Recognising And Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning
ReferNet	European network of reference and expertise in Vocational Education and Training
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSC	Sector Skill Council
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
TfW	Training for Work
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UKCES	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
UTC	University Technical College
VCE A level	Vocational Certificate of Education at Advanced level
VET	Vocational Education and Training
YES	Youth Employment Scheme
YPLA	Young People's Learning Agency

Annex 1: Overview of UK education authorities

	Policy making authorities	Standards and qualification development	Regulators and inspection agencies	Education providers
England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for Education (DfE) – school education • Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) - further education college and higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) for National Occupational Standards (NOS) • UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) • Awarding bodies – curricula • National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) - apprenticeships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications • Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) – schools and further education colleges • Professional bodies – regulated professions, programmes • Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) – higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • Academies • Further education colleges • Independent training providers • Higher education institutions

	Policy making authorities	Standards and qualification development	Regulators and inspection agencies	Education providers
Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government – all levels of education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) for National Occupational Standards (NOS) • UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) • Awarding bodies – curricula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Scotland - schools and further education colleges • Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) - school, further education and higher education qualifications not awarded by HEIs • Professional bodies -regulated professions, programmes • Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) – higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • Tertiary colleges • Private training providers • Higher education institutions

	Policy making authorities	Standards and qualification development	Regulators and inspection agencies	Education providers
Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government / Department for Education and Skills (DfES) - all levels of education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) for National Occupational Standards (NOS) • UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) • Awarding bodies – curricula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for Education and Skills (DfES) - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications • Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) - schools and further education colleges • Professional bodies -regulated professions, programmes • Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) – higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • Further education institutions • Colleges • Higher education institutions

	Policy making authorities	Standards and qualification development	Regulators and inspection agencies	Education providers
Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education (DE) – schools and teacher training • Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) – further education colleges and higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) for National Occupational Standards (NOS) • UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) • Awarding Organisations - curricula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) - non vocational qualifications • Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) - vocational qualifications • Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) – schools, further education colleges and other providers delivering publicly-funded training programmes • Professional bodies -regulated professions, programmes • Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) – higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • Further education colleges • Private, community and voluntary sector providers • Training organisations • Higher education institutions