
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

UNITED KINGDOM





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Table of contents

CHAPTER 1 External factors influencing VET.....	5
1.1 Structure and development of the population	5
1.2 Structure and development of the workforce	6
1.3 Economy structure	8
1.4 Regulation of the labour market	8
1.5 Welfare and employment policies.....	9
1.6 Value of VET in the labour market.....	9
CHAPTER 2 Providing VET in a lifelong learning perspective	10
2.1 Diagram of the national education and training system	10
2.2 Government-regulated VET provision	11
2.2.1 Access to VET and progression opportunities	12
2.2.2 VET provision.....	14
2.2.3 Apprenticeships	16
2.2.4 Learning opportunities for vulnerable groups.....	19
2.2.5 Governance of VET.....	20
2.2.6 Financing of VET.....	22
2.2.7 VET providers	23
2.2.8 Teachers and trainers	24
2.3 Other forms of training	26
2.3.1 Training providers and programmes.....	27
2.3.2 Workplace learning	27
2.3.3 Funding mechanisms	28
2.3.4 Recognition of non-formal and informal learning	28
2.3.5 Quality assurance mechanisms.....	29
CHAPTER 3 Shaping VET qualifications.....	30
3.1 Methods used to anticipate labour market needs	30
3.2 Design process and qualification designers.....	31
3.2.1 Strategic development of VET.....	34
3.3 Assessment and recognition of prior learning.....	36
3.4 Quality assurance of the processes	37
CHAPTER 4 Promoting participation in VET	39
4.1 Incentives for individuals	39
4.2 Incentives for enterprises	40
4.3 Incentives for providers	41
4.4 Guidance and counselling, structures and services.....	41
4.5.1 Careers advisors	41
4.5.2 Careers advice services	42
Bibliography	44

ANNEX 1 Overview of UK education authorities 49

List of figures and tables

Figures

Figure 1.	Projected old-age dependency ratio.....	6
Figure 2.	Unemployment rate for those aged 16 and over (%).....	7
Figure 3.	Employment rates by age and highest level of education attained (%), ISCED 2011, in 2015.....	8
Figure 4.	VET in the UK's education system.....	10

Tables

Table 1.	National qualifications frameworks in relation to the EQF.....	12
Table 2.	NQFs and Apprenticeship levels in relation to the EQF.....	16
Table 3.	Apprenticeship starts by level.....	18
Table 4.	VET policy makers and inspection agencies.....	22
Table 5.	Qualification design stakeholders.....	32
Table 6.	Policy making authorities.....	49

CHAPTER 1

External factors influencing VET

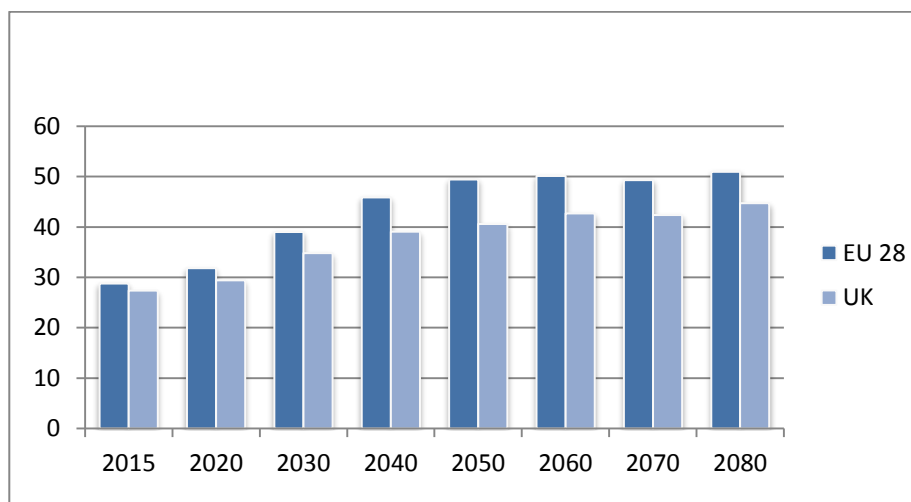
The United Kingdom (UK) is a union of Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland. The UK Government has devolved decision-making powers in a number of areas of policy responsibility to the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, such as governance for all levels and types of education, including VET. Whilst there are similarities between the systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, reforms are creating greater divergence and the Scottish system has always been significantly different in many ways to those of the rest of the UK. At the time of the update to this report, in 2016, the UK electorate as a whole has voted in a national referendum in favour of leaving the European Union; however, the government must now make a number of decisions on how to proceed given this mandate from the people of the UK. Negotiations regarding the terms of exiting, and the UK's future relationship with the EU, as of October 2016, have not yet formally begun. Moreover, the electorates in both Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain. The contrary positions of the referendum results for the UK and Scotland, in particular, has provided some additional constitutional complexity to be resolved.

1.1 Structure and development of the population

The population of the UK is currently 65.3 million, having risen from just over 60 million in 2005 ⁽¹⁾. The UK old age dependency ratio is showing a trend towards an ageing population, with more people reaching pension age. The old age dependency ratio for 2015 was 27.4%. The ratio is expected to rise dramatically after 2020. The estimated EU average for 2015 was 28.8%.

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat (2016). *Population on 1 January 2014* [accessed 22.2.2017].

Figure 1. **Projected old-age dependency ratio**



Source: Eurostat (2016). [Projected old-age-dependency ratio](#) [accessed 22.2. 2017].

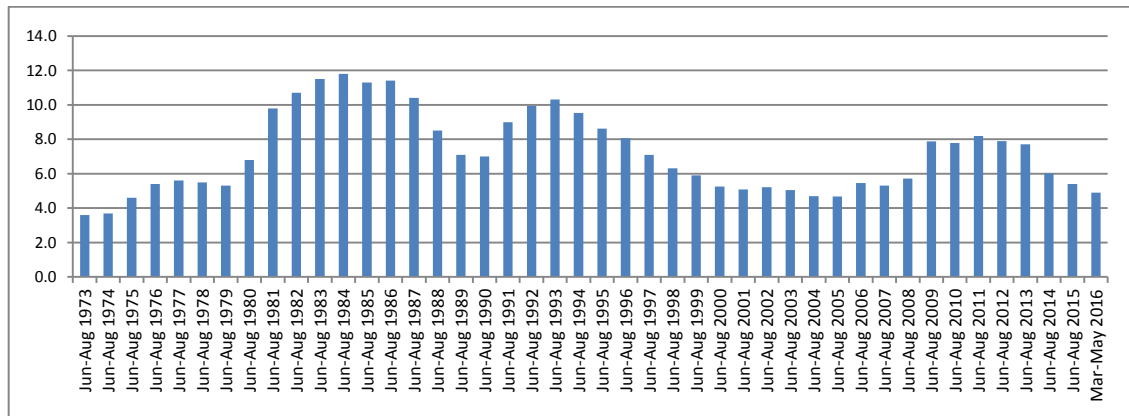
Estimated immigration to the UK in the year ending December 2015 was 630 000, down from 632 000 in the previous 12 months. Emigration is estimated to have been 297 000 in the year ending December 2015, a number which has remained relatively stable since 2010 and net migration was an estimated 333 000, slightly up after the previous year's number of 319 000. 167 000 migrants arrived in the UK to study in the year ending in December 2015, which represents the second largest group of immigrants after those who arrived with the intention of gaining work ⁽²⁾. Immigrants attend the same VET programmes as UK students. Preparatory English language courses exist. The majority of long-term immigrants classed as students also come for HE study and are welcomed by universities and not really seen as a challenge.

1.2 Structure and development of the workforce

The total UK employed workforce (aged between 16 and 64) accounted for 31.7 million people in May 2016, which is an employment rate of 74.4%. There has been a general increase in the employment rate since late 2011/early 2012, and the unemployment rate has fallen to 4.9%, which is the lowest since September 2005. The Office for National Statistics estimates that non-UK nationals made up 3.5% of all people working in the UK in 1997, which has risen to 10.6% in March 2016.

⁽²⁾ Office for National Statistics (2016). [Migration statistics quarterly report May 2016](#) [accessed 22.2.2017].

Figure 2. Unemployment rate for those aged 16 and over (%)



Source: Office for National Statistics (2016). *UK Labour Market, July 2016* [accessed 22.2.2017].

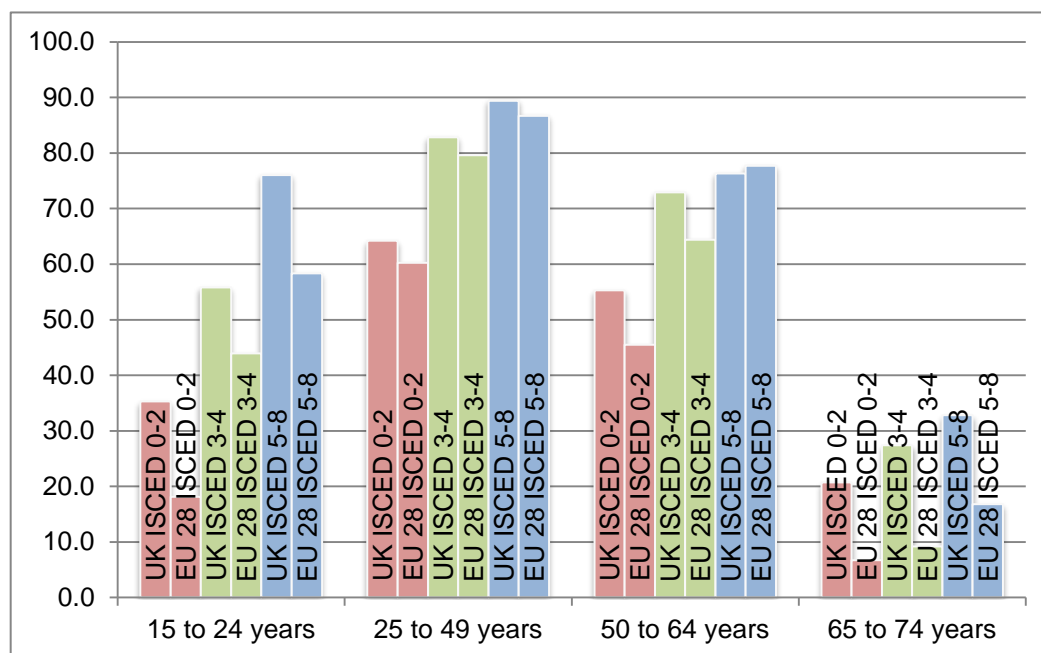
Levels of unemployment vary on a regional and national basis, with the North East of England recording a rate of 7.4% in May 2016, and the Humber, London and the West Midlands regions of England, in addition to Northern Ireland, also struggling with above-average rates ⁽³⁾. Since the 2009 recession there has been 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 UK Government continues to enforce austerity measures. The regions and nations who are most dependent on the state sector are Northern Ireland, parts of Scotland and Wales, as well as parts of Northern England ⁽⁴⁾. 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 ⁽⁵⁾. People with no formal qualifications or low skills have found it increasingly difficult to find employment in recent years, specifically for the age group 15-24 as detailed in the Figure below. See Chapter 3 for information about how labour market information influences qualification design.

⁽³⁾ Office for National Statistics (2016). *UK Labour Market, July 2016* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁴⁾ CBI (2011). *Mapping the route to growth, rebalancing employment* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁵⁾ UKCES (2014). *The Labour Market Story: Skills For the Future* [accessed 22.2.2017].

Figure 3. **Employment rates by age and highest level of education attained (%), ISCED 2011, in 2015**



Source: Eurostat (2016). Employment rates by sex, age and highest level of education attained (%) in 2015

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 fifth largest in the world in 2015. The GDP fell in 2008 and 2009, but the economy has since grown steadily.

1.4 Regulation of the labour market

The UK labour market is demand-led, but skill shortages exist in sectors such as medicine, health, social work, science, secondary education teaching, IT/computing, engineering and certain other specialist, technical and arts occupations ⁽⁶⁾. Non-EU nationals trained in these professions who wish to work in the UK are prioritised for work permits. UK NARIC works with the UK immigration authority by providing recognition of formal qualifications from abroad to the most appropriate level within the UK education system. There has been a rise in numbers of foreign workers in the UK in the last few years; however, the current UK Government is committed to reducing immigration. It is at present (10 October 2016) not clear to which extent the results of the recent EU referendum will impact on the rights of EU citizens to work in the UK.

⁽⁶⁾ UK Visas and Immigration, Home Office (2015). *Tier 2 Shortage Occupation List – Government-approved version valid from 19 November 2015* [accessed 22.2.2017].

The UK job market is amongst the least regulated in the world, yet the UK Government's Red Tape Challenge is likely to result in even fewer regulations with the stated aim of boosting productivity.

1.5 Welfare and employment policies

Following the Welfare Reform Act 2012, the UK Government began introducing changes to the benefit system in 2013 with the stated aim of ensuring that it pays more for people to work than for them to stay on benefits. Further initiatives include modernising the Jobcentre Plus services and creating closer links with local authorities, employers and providers. In England, Scotland and Wales, the Youth Contract ended as planned in March 2016. It provided opportunities (such as Apprenticeships, work experience and support) to young unemployed people, as well as wage incentives to employers. The Youth Employment Scheme in Northern Ireland fulfilled a similar role and has also ceased. Moreover, in the UK the Work Programme's stated intention is to support 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, in order 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, 2012 was the first time there were more jobs requiring higher education degrees than jobs requiring no qualifications ⁽⁷⁾. There are a large variety of VET qualifications in the UK and some enjoy a higher regard in the labour market than others. See Section 2.2.2 for an overview of available qualifications in the UK. 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 ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽⁷⁾ Felstead et al (2012). *Skills at Work in Britain, First Findings from the Skills and Employment Survey 2012*, p. 3 [accessed 22.2.2017].

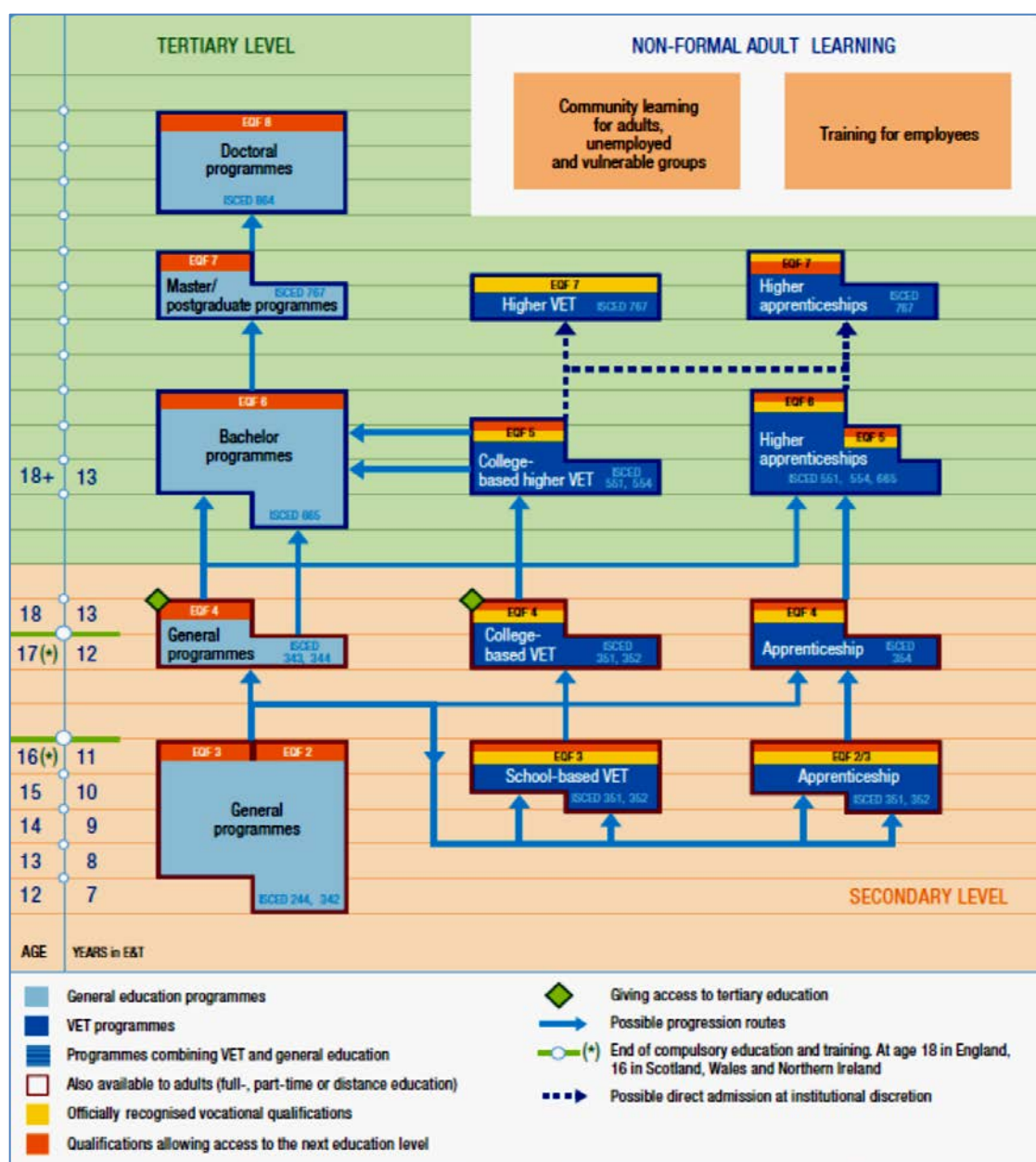
⁽⁸⁾ Wolf, A. (2011). *Review of Vocational Education – the Wolf Report* [accessed 22.2.2017].

CHAPTER 2

Providing vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective

2.1 Diagram of the national education and training system

Figure 4. VET in the UK's education system



NB: ISCED-P 2011

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet UK

2.2 Government-regulated VET provision

Vocational education and training (VET) is available at secondary and higher education levels in the UK; most VET qualifications are taken at secondary level (EQF levels 3 and 4) within the further education sector.

Formal VET in the UK is organised within several national qualifications frameworks. A new qualifications framework encompassing academic and vocational qualifications in England and Northern Ireland was introduced in October 2015. The new Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) gives awarding organisations increased freedom and flexibility to develop qualifications that meet specific labour market needs. Qualifications are now expected to be validated and supported directly by employers rather than follow prescriptive rules and structures imposed by government agencies. New level descriptors are being developed, but the same eight framework levels (plus entry levels, see Table 1) remain from the previous Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), and the existing qualifications continue to be offered until they are withdrawn by the awarding organisation. The Qualifications and Credit Framework contained mainly vocational qualifications in England and Northern Ireland. The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) also has the same levels as the QCF/RQF. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) comprises all formal, and some non-formal, Scottish qualifications credit rated and levelled to 12 levels.

The QCF, CQFW and SCQF describe levels, qualifications and units in terms of learning outcomes as well as credits and notional learning hours. RQF qualifications will, from 31 December 2017, be described in terms of total qualification time ⁽⁹⁾ as credit allocation per unit of learning is not compulsory within the RQF. The UK qualifications frameworks correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as described in the table below:

⁽⁹⁾ Ofqual (2015). *Total Qualification Time Criteria* [accessed 22.2.2017].

Table 1. National qualifications frameworks in relation to the EQF

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

Source: QAA (2014). *Qualifications can cross boundaries – a guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland* [accessed 22.2.2017].

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 and other formal qualifications. There is not always an automatic right to progression from one level to the next within the frameworks as education providers retain the right to set the entry requirements to individual qualifications based on individual awarding organisations' (see Section 3.2) recommendations. However, the unit-based structure of many 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. In Scotland, National 4 and 5 qualifications (EQF 2/3, see Table 1), normally also taken at age 16, are the most common entrance qualifications to VET.

The age to which individuals are required to take part in education or training, either part-time or full-time, was raised in England to 18 in 2015 in a bid to improve the skill levels of the work force. Post-16, occupational specialisation ('upper secondary' in broad terms) is encouraged and recognised in performance tables through the Tech Level qualifications and associated Technical Baccalaureate measure (see Section 2.2.2), introduced in April 2014. The 'Opportunities for All' pledge offers a guaranteed place in education or training for 16-19 year olds in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, the Department for the Economy offers a guarantee of training towards level 1-3 qualifications (EQF levels 2-4) 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. The Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training includes a policy commitment for the future system that all 16–24 year olds who require training at level 2 (EQF 3) will have the opportunity to participate.

Opportunities for permeability between VET and higher education exist within the UK. Candidates holding RQF level 3 or SCQF level 6 vocational qualifications may be allowed access to selected first cycle university programmes at institutional discretion. The Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland creates opportunities for students to combine a wider range of qualification types, which means that a larger variety of secondary qualifications are now used to apply for tertiary education. A reform of vocational RQF qualifications at level 3 has classified qualifications as Applied General qualifications and Tech Level qualifications in England (see Section 2.2.2 for more details). The range of qualifications used to enter higher education is likely to be reduced as only qualifications that meet certain criteria now count towards school performance tables; however, Applied General qualifications are designed to provide a clearer route from vocational education to higher education. The majority of young university entrants in England, Wales and Northern Ireland hold general academic A level qualifications, but recent years have seen a steady rise in applicants being accepted with only vocational qualifications and a mixture of academic and vocational qualifications ⁽¹⁰⁾. In Scotland, the final report of the Commission on Widening Access in 2016 recommends that the admissions processes of post-16 institutions recognise alternative pathways to higher education and do not unnecessarily disadvantage those who choose them, and that by 2018 a Framework for Fair Access should be published ⁽¹¹⁾.

Additionally, there are good articulation options for progression from higher VET programmes at RQF levels 4 and 5/SCQF levels 7 and 8 (EQF level 5), 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 was allocated for an increase in the number of learners with HNCs and HNDs to second and third year of university, respectively. Universities that 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 Scottish Funding Council Outcome Agreements that are brokered with universities and regional college boards.

The UK has the main building blocks in place to support the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). ECVET aims to give people greater control over their individual learning experiences and promote mobility between different countries and different learning environments. ECVET activities are included in the UK Erasmus+ National Agency (the British Council and Ecorys (UK)) yearly work programme. UK ECVET Experts, appointed by Ecorys UK, raise awareness of ECVET to key stakeholders and promote and encourage organisations

⁽¹⁰⁾ UCAS (2015). *End of Cycle Report 2015* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽¹¹⁾ Scottish Government (2016). *The final report of the Commission on Widening Access* [accessed 22.2.2017].

involved in mobility to use ECVET in geographical mobility linking ECVET to Erasmus+.

2.2.2 VET provision

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 or college setting and the work place. VET is offered on a full-time and part-time basis and students may attend school or college 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, offering a broad choice of programmes. There were 24 500 regulated qualifications on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (England and Northern Ireland) in 2014/15, of which 14 400 had an award made ⁽¹²⁾. In England, 16-19 year olds are expected to follow a 16-19 study programme consisting of a main vocational qualification (or general academic qualification) and including work-related learning and English and mathematics, unless the required level has already been achieved in these subjects. 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 secondary level to students aged 15-16 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and can normally be studied along with general academic subjects. GCSEs represent EQF level 3 study and are acquired through two year-long school-based education (see Figure 4).

The main BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) qualifications comprise Awards, Certificates and Diplomas at First (RQF level 2), National (level 3) and Higher National (levels 4 and 5) levels. These programmes combine theoretical and practical vocational education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and can form part of an Apprenticeship programme. First programmes (EQF level 3) are offered in secondary schools, in further education (FE) colleges and can form part of apprenticeships). BTEC Firsts vary in size and are often studied part-time and in conjunction with other qualifications. National programmes are offered at upper-secondary level (college-based or apprenticeships), also vary in size and lead to qualifications at EQF level 4. Higher Nationals are higher education qualifications with a vocational orientation (EQF 5) mainly offered in FE colleges and may be a component of a higher apprenticeship. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) awards HNCs (SCQF level 7) and HNDs (SCQF level 8) as higher education qualifications delivered in tertiary colleges.

⁽¹²⁾ Ofqual (2014). *Annual Qualifications Market Report 2014 to 2015* [accessed 22.2.2017].

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are competence-based, practically oriented qualifications offered in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that are often assessed in the work place and also often taken in conjunction with an Apprenticeship, but are also available in college settings. NVQs registered after 2008 are purely based on National Occupational Standards. The majority of the similar Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are also available within the SCQF, and those that are not will progressively migrate into it. NVQs are available at levels ranging from semi-skilled worker level to higher education level (EQF levels 2-7). SVQ levels historically did not correspond to the SCQF levels. However, since 1 September 2016 SVQ levels have been removed, with SVQs using only the SCQF level to describe the level of demand. Currently, for some SVQs, both the SVQ and SCQF level will continue to appear in the SVQ title (where the SVQ has been credit rated), but this will change to just the SCQF level.

National Certificates and National Progression Awards (NPAs) in Scotland are vocational qualifications that are placed at SCQF levels 2-6 (up to EQF level 4). 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 usually shorter, more flexible 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 at National 3-5 and Higher (EQF levels 1-4) may be studied in secondary schools in Scotland, often in partnership with a local tertiary college and employer. These programmes can be units of National Courses, provide an introduction to vocational learning and include experiential learning which prepares learners for further VET and employment.

'Early adopter' college regions in Scotland are exploring and developing vocational pathways for 15-18 year old secondary school students (at EQF levels 2-4) that aim to bridge the gap between school, college, university and employment. Results from the first year of the programme showed that it increased the sector's ability to respond to youth employment issues.

In England vocational subjects at upper secondary level are available at EQF level 4 in the General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A level) and Advanced Subsidiary programmes too. These are college-based, work-related qualifications designed to combine a broad area of study with a focus on a specific industry sector.

The new Welsh Baccalaureate was launched in 2015 and is based on academic and vocational qualifications alongside an individual project and three challenges that enable young people to develop critical skills including problem solving and creativity. The Welsh Baccalaureate is available at qualifications framework levels 1-3 (EQF 2-4) and comprises literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving, planning and organisation, creativity and innovation and personal effectiveness, as well as general academic and/or vocational qualifications in addition to the skills

challenges that require learners to demonstrate research skills, entrepreneurship and participate in community activities.

From September 2014, qualifications taught in England at RQF level 3 may be categorised as either technical level or applied general qualifications. Qualifications receiving sufficient endorsements from employers and trade and professional associations are categorised as Tech levels (Technical level qualifications) as a mark of quality and relevance to the labour market. Applied general qualifications provide a broader study of a vocational area, and need the public backing of three universities to achieve the quality mark. Students completing a study programme started in 2014 or later that includes one of the Tech levels, a level 3 core mathematics qualification and an extended project will achieve the Technical Baccalaureate.

2.2.3 Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships in the UK are offered from basic training at secondary level to advanced courses at higher education level (see also Section 2.2.2). The Table below shows which levels training is available at. It should be noted that, apart from the new Apprenticeship Standards in England, it is the qualifications within the Apprenticeship Frameworks that are benchmarked to the NQFs, not the Apprenticeship Frameworks as a whole.

Table 2. **NQFs and Apprenticeship levels in relation to the EQF**

RQF / CQF W	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	EQF	Scotland	SCQF
8				8	Professional Apprenticeships	12
7	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships		7	Professional Apprenticeships	11
6	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	6	Professional Apprenticeships	10
					Technical Apprenticeships	9
5	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	5	Technical Apprenticeships	8
4	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships		Modern Apprenticeships	7
3	Advanced Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships	Level 3 Apprenticeships	4	Modern Apprenticeships	6
2	Intermediate Apprenticeships	Foundation Apprenticeships	Level 2 Apprenticeships	3	Modern Apprenticeships	5
	Traineeships	Traineeships				

Source: ReferNet UK.

Apprenticeships in England are changing. 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 RQF/CQFW and Functional Skills/Essential Skills/Key Skills/GCSEs. In England most Apprenticeship Frameworks will be replaced by new Apprenticeship Standards developed by groups of employers by 2017/18. The new Standards are currently run in parallel with the Frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations and apprentices are assessed by an independent assessor at the end of the training. Scottish Modern Apprenticeships include a work contract and are required to include as mandatory components Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) or alternative competence based qualifications and Work Place Core Skills. The Work Place Core Skills comprise ICT, Problem Solving, Numeracy, Communication and Working with Others. Sectors may decide to include other qualifications, such as HNCs/HNDs or other vocational qualifications either as a mandatory or optional enhancement. Technical and Professional Apprenticeships do not include Work Place Core Skills; rather they include a range of SVQ units designated as Career Skills. Technical and Professional Apprenticeships may include work-based qualifications other than SVQs (or alternative competence based qualifications) such as HNDs or professional qualifications as the mandatory qualification.

Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland are being reformed. Apprenticeships will be available from level 3 to level 8. New Traineeships will be available from level 2 and will allow progression to level 3 Apprenticeships. New Apprenticeships will last at least two years and training is being increased in terms of occupational range and introduced at higher education level.

In Wales, Welsh Apprenticeship qualifications will continue to be underpinned and supported by employer-led UK-wide national occupational standards. However, a review of Apprenticeships in Wales is considering issues such as design and accreditation of Apprenticeships; to move more apprenticeship training above level 2 (EQF level 3); to make all Apprenticeships occupationally-specific; and how to include key competences and Welsh language in Apprenticeships.

There were a total of 499 900 Apprenticeship starts in England in the 2014/15 academic year. Numbers peaked in 2011/12 and have remained around the 500 000 mark since, which is a significant rise from the 2009/10 academic year. 53% of Apprenticeship starters in England in 2014/15 were female⁽¹³⁾. The number of Scottish Modern Apprenticeship starts has remained steady in the last few years and amounted to 25 800 in 2015/16. 59% of starters in Scotland were male. In 2014/15, 48 300 Apprenticeships were started in Wales – a number which continues to grow. 57% of Apprentices starting in Wales in 2014/15 were female. There were 5 500 Apprenticeship starts in Northern Ireland in 2014/15, which is a similar number as the in the previous year. 60% of starters were male. Numbers from 2014/15 have

⁽¹³⁾ Skills Funding Agency (2016). *FE data library: apprenticeships* [accessed 22.2.2017].

furthermore shown a positive rise in starts at higher apprenticeship level across the UK.

Table 3. Apprenticeship starts by level

England (2014/15) ⁽¹⁴⁾	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher
	298 280 (59.7%)	181 760 (36.4%)	19 700 (3.9%)
Scotland (2015/16) ⁽¹⁵⁾	Level 2 (SCQF 5)	Level 3 (SCQF 6)	Level 4 (SCQF 7) +
	9 000 (34.9%)	15 800 (61.2%)	960 (3.7%)
Wales (2014/15) ⁽¹⁶⁾	Foundation	Apprenticeships	Higher
	21 800 (45%)	18 600 (38.5%)	7 900 (16.4%)
Northern Ireland (2014/15) ⁽¹⁷⁾	Level 2	Level 2/3 and 3	Higher
	2 800 (50.9%)	2 600 (47.3%)	100 (1.8%)

Source: ReferNet UK.

Entrance requirements to Apprenticeships vary depending on the occupational area and the level of the Apprenticeship framework/standard. Competition for some apprenticeship places is fierce and good secondary qualifications at EQF level 3 in English and mathematics are sometimes necessary.

The Traineeships programme was introduced in England in 2013. Traineeships 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. There were a total of 29 800 Traineeship starts in 2013/14 and 2014/15 ⁽¹⁸⁾. 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. 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. 12 100 Traineeship starts were recorded in 2014/15 and 72% of Trainees completed the

⁽¹⁴⁾ Skills Funding Agency (2016). *FE data library: apprenticeships* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽¹⁵⁾ SDS (2016). *Modern Apprenticeship statistics – Full Year Report 2015/16* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽¹⁶⁾ Welsh Government, Statistics for Wales (2016). *Further Education, Work-based Learning and Community Learning in Wales Statistics 2014/15* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽¹⁷⁾ DELNI (2016). *Statistical Bulletin Apprenticeships NI* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽¹⁸⁾ Skills Funding Agency (2016). *FE data library: traineeships* [accessed 22.2.2017].

programme. 63% successfully progressed to an Apprenticeship, employment of other types of education.

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.

Aligned with the Scottish Government's policy agenda of Developing the Young Workforce, pilot Foundation Apprenticeships (called Pathfinders) have been created to offer school pupils (at EQF levels 2 and 3) the chance to undertake some components of a Modern Apprenticeship in Scotland whilst still in school studying other subjects like National 5s and Highers. These Apprenticeships are linked to key sectors of the Scottish economy, so young people are getting industry experience which will help them kick-start a successful career in their chosen field.

2.2.4 Learning opportunities for vulnerable groups

Formal VET targeted at vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as people with disabilities and learning difficulties, are mostly offered in the same providers as other students; however, additional funding is available. Lifelong Learning Partnerships (LLPs) 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. LLPs often reach out to disadvantaged communities and assist disadvantaged learners to engage with education and training again.

The UK government has made funding available to support disadvantaged young people between the ages of 14 and 17 in England to succeed in education and training through the Youth Engagement Fund. The Fair Chance Fund was established to support specialist and voluntary organisations to run projects aimed at helping homeless young people who are NEET in England with housing, education and work.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) launched its Equalities Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland and the Equality Challenge Fund in 2015 ⁽¹⁹⁾ for projects aimed at widening access to Modern Apprenticeships. Organisations including charities, colleges and training providers have received funding to help boost Modern Apprenticeship numbers among under-represented groups such as individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled people and care leavers as well as tackling gender imbalance in certain sectors.

The educational attainment of children and young people in care is improving slowly in Wales, but the Wales Audit Office found in 2012 that there is too much variation in attainment, inconsistent support and a lack of clearly defined outcomes

⁽¹⁹⁾ SDS (2015). *Equalities action plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland* [accessed 22.2.2017].

against which progress can be assessed. The Welsh Government subsequently published 'Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales' strategy and action plan in 2016 ⁽²⁰⁾ which recommends improvements in the areas of effective teaching, use of data, funding arrangements and partnerships and collaboration between the Welsh Government, regional education consortia, local authorities, schools, educational settings, foster carers and looked after children. Uniquely in Wales, the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) recognises lifelong learning such as vendor/industry/professional qualifications and smaller 'bite size' units of accredited learning. Such achievements can be highly positive and help to raise the aspirations of disadvantaged learners.

The new Northern Ireland Strategy for Further Education, 'Further Education Means Success', recommends that colleges, in partnership with organisations in the voluntary, community, public and private sectors, support diversity and social inclusion through widening access to provision for those with low or no skills or who experience other barriers to learning. Colleges will be asked to adopt international best practice in the use of technology enhanced learning to support and improve teaching and learning, and adopt flexible approaches to learning to meet the needs of learners and employers.

2.2.5 Governance of VET

Governance of VET in the UK rests with the UK Government and Government departments in the Devolved Administrations. Devolved Government legislation does not include detailed regulations, such as lists of approved qualifications, but the law provides for the respective Government Ministers to issue the lists following advice from the relevant advisory body. There is a complex institutional framework in the UK VET sector with the Department for Education (DfE) having policy-making responsibilities in England; the policy-making authorities for VET in Northern Ireland are the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for the Economy, in Wales the body is the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Public Services and Department for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure, and, in Scotland, the Department of Learning and the Department of Lifelong Learning of the Scottish Government are responsible.

Different inspection and review bodies exist in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. 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 considers the overall effectiveness of the outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, in addition to the effectiveness of leadership and management. Schools and colleges are inspected by Education Scotland in Scotland, Estyn in Wales and the Education and Training

⁽²⁰⁾ Welsh Government (2016). *Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales Strategy / Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales Action Plan* [accessed 22.2.2017].

Inspectorate (ETI) in Northern Ireland. Education Scotland evaluates the outcomes and impact of education provision, the service delivery, as well as the vision and leadership of providers. Estyn reports on the quality of education and training provided, the standards achieved by students, and whether colleges provide value for money. ETI Northern Ireland focuses on the learners' achievements, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the quality and effectiveness of the leadership and management of the curriculum.

Higher education provided at UK further education (FE) colleges is subject to quality review by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) through their Higher Education Review that involves peer review, student involvement, as well as analysis of core and thematic elements. In Scotland, HE in the form of HNC and HND in tertiary colleges is subject to inspection and review by Education Scotland, not QAA Scotland. However, for those colleges which are constituent parts of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) or Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), their HNC and HND provision is subject to inspection and review by Education Scotland and review by QAA Scotland. The Integrated Quality Enhancement Review methodology in Northern Ireland includes peer review, developmental engagement and summative review.

The Hazelkorn report ⁽²¹⁾ recommends creating a Tertiary Education Authority as the single body for regulation, oversight and co-ordination for the entire post-compulsory education and training sector in Wales. Its functions would include allocating resources, assuring and assessing quality, monitoring and managing performance and risk, regulation of the system and accreditation of institutions as well as strategic planning, co-ordinating, steering and providing advice of policy which is envisaged to form a more coherent and integrated post-compulsory system. Professor Hazelkorn's proposals are currently being considered by Welsh Ministers.

⁽²¹⁾ Welsh Government (2016). *A framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales* [accessed 22.2.2017].

Table 4. VET policy makers and inspection agencies

England	Department for Education - school, further education and higher education
	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) – schools and further education colleges
Scotland	Department of Learning and the Department of Lifelong Learning - school, further education and higher education
	Education Scotland - schools and further education colleges
Wales	Department for Education and Public Services – school education and Department for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure - further and higher education
	Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn) - schools and further education colleges
Northern Ireland	Department of Education – school education and Department for the Economy – further and higher education
	Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) – schools, further education colleges and other providers delivering publicly-funded training programmes

Source: ReferNet UK.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) is one of very few bodies with an involvement in VET to operate UK-wide. The UKCES is a social partnership of employers, trade unions and representatives from the public sector that works towards greater investment in skills to assist enterprises and the UK economy. However, funding for UKCES operations is due to cease from at the end of 2016. National Skills Academies (NSAs) are employer-led organisations developing the infrastructure and learning resources needed to deliver specialist skills to industry sectors in England. 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.

2.2.6 Financing of VET

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) is an executive agency sponsored by the DfE in England. Aside from funding learners aged between 3 and 19, the EFA supports the building and maintenance programmes for schools, academies, free schools and sixth-form colleges. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) is also an executive agency sponsored by the DfE and its main function is to fund and promote adult further education and skills training in England. A simplified, learner-led funding system (see Section 4.3) was 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. An Apprenticeship levy is scheduled to be introduced in 2017 where large employers will be required to contribute to a fund for the training of Apprentices, which will be distributed to all employers that wish to train Apprentices. In England 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. Skills Development Scotland funds Modern Apprenticeship programmes and other government funded programmes of learning. Funding of VET in the Northern Ireland further education sector and for providers of specific Government-funded programmes is the responsibility of the Department for the Economy. VET funding in Wales is traditionally the responsibility of the Welsh Government and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (also sponsored by the Welsh Government). In January 2014 the Welsh Government published its Policy statement on skills which set out its long term vision for employment and skills policy in Wales. This work was supplemented by the development of the Framework for co-investment in skills, also introduced in 2014, which sets out the principles for government and employer investment in skills ⁽²²⁾. The framework aims to provide a foundation for shifting the emphasis from a government-led approach to skills investment to a system influenced and led by employers. The investment made by employers, supported by the co-investment framework, will place them in a stronger position to challenge the skills system in Wales.

2.2.7 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 in addition to private training organisations. 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 RQF/CQFW level 3 (EQF 4). 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 and by private training providers, but also in secondary schools and higher education institutions.

Three hundred and twenty five colleges exist in England, of which 209 are general FE colleges, 90 are sixth form colleges and 26 are other types of colleges; however, college mergers are expected in the coming years following on-going area reviews. The FE and skills sector in England comprises, in addition to FE colleges, independent training providers and training organisations with which colleges and

⁽²²⁾ Welsh Government (2014). *Framework for co-investment in skills* [accessed 22.2.2017].

providers subcontract. The Register of Training Organisations, in August 2016, included a total of 3 878 organisations that are eligible to deliver education and training services under the adult skills budget. There are plans to set up a separate Register of Apprenticeship Training Organisations by 2017. The number of tertiary colleges in Scotland has been reduced through college mergers down to 13 regional partnerships. There are 14 FE colleges and institutions in Wales, and 6 FE colleges (and the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise) 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 in England. These are small institutions offering vocational qualifications, general qualifications (such as GCSEs) as well as teaching through enterprise projects and work placements.

To meet labour market demand for higher technical skills, in 2015 the government pledged to create a network of Institutes of Technology in England focussed on skills development at qualifications framework levels 3-5 (EQF 4-5). These institutes will be sponsored by employers, registered with professional bodies and aligned with Apprenticeship standards, and be empowered to - and expected to - design clear routes to employment in cooperation with employers and professional organisations. Moreover, funding from the government and employers was confirmed for five National Colleges in 2016. These National Colleges will focus on delivering technical skills at levels 4 to 6 (EQF levels 5-6) in the areas of digital skills, high speed rail, nuclear, creative and cultural, and onshore oil and gas.

Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) exist across England 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 Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), which is a quasi-autonomous non-departmental public body and fulfils the roles of both an awarding body and an accreditation body (see more on awarding organisations in Section 3.2).

2.2.8 Teachers and trainers

Different training and registration requirements exist at secondary education level to further and higher education level across the UK. In England teachers working in maintained secondary schools must meet the requirements of the National College for

Teaching and Leadership, which includes a degree level qualification, GCSE level subjects in English, mathematics and science in addition to obtaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and completing an induction year. The same statutory requirement to hold QTS is not in place for teachers employed by publicly-funded Free Schools and some academies. In Wales, those qualifying to train to teach in maintained secondary schools are required to meet similar QTS standards set by the Welsh Government and complete an induction year.

Those teaching in FE colleges are usually referred to as lecturers and those teaching work-based learning are normally called trainers. In England the criteria to teach at FE level are flexible in line with the criteria for teaching at higher education level, where the education provider decides upon the suitability of the teaching staff. Only voluntary professional registration exists (with the Society for Education and Training). Advice about professional standards for teachers and trainers in education and training in England is provided by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF)⁽²³⁾. In England it is not mandatory to obtain Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status to teach in FE colleges, but it can be beneficial for teachers that also wish to teach at secondary level in maintained schools.

Teaching qualifications for the FE sector in England 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/Lecturers 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 RQF level 5 in a subject area relevant to the subject taught, plus three years relevant industrial experience. Lecturers must also possess or be enrolled in a teaching qualification, such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (FE). 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.

In Scotland, teachers must be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), which sets the standards and qualifications required by teachers for professional practice. Scottish secondary teachers must hold a first degree, a teaching qualification such as the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), or an undergraduate equivalent, such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd) or a concurrent degree, where a Teaching Qualification is studied alongside another specialism, e.g. a science or English. Additionally, English or English as a Second or Other Language at Higher (SCQF level 6) and mathematics or Lifeskills Mathematics at National 5 (SCQF level 5) level is a mandatory requirement. More recently, Scotland has introduced the

⁽²³⁾ ETF (2014). *Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training – England* [accessed 22.2.2017].

Scottish College for Educational Leadership which will provide programmes of learning for teachers after they have qualified; most notably the new *Into Headship* programme at SCQF level 11 will be mandatory for all new head teachers from 2018/19. However, trainers and lecturers in tertiary colleges do not need to register with the GTCS, although it is desirable and strongly suggested by the Inspectorate of Education – Education Scotland. It is moreover considered preferential to hold a GTCS recognised further education teaching qualification or be working towards one.

The Education Workforce Council (EWC) is the independent regulator in Wales for teachers in maintained schools, further education (FE) teachers and learning support staff in both school and FE settings. From April 2015, the requirement for professional registration was extended to FE teachers, and from April 2016 registration is also compulsory for school/FE learning support workers. Secondary teachers must possess a university degree, GCSE subjects and a teaching qualification. 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 Level 3 Award in Education and Training, which is a short introduction to FE teaching, the Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training, and the Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training, which is the minimum qualification needed to obtain Full Teacher status.

The Education and Training Foundation operates in England to improve professionalism and standards in the FE and skills sector. Ofsted is the inspection agency for the quality of teacher education in England.

2.3 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. 66% of UK workplaces that responded to the UKCES' *Employer Skills Survey 2015* ⁽²⁴⁾ 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 provided training than in the rest of the UK. Larger companies were also more likely to arrange formal training than smaller companies. The type of training provided varies greatly from induction training and health and safety to technical, job-specific skills training in addition to learning new technologies and management training. Around 17.4 million employees received training in the last 12 months before the survey, which is an increase from the 2013 survey. The average time spent training per person has risen slightly from 6.7 days to 6.8 days.

⁽²⁴⁾ UKCES (2016). *UKCES Employer Skills Survey 2015* [accessed 22.2.2017].

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 Trades Union Congress' (TUC) learning and skills organisation that supports unions' learning and skills work. In Scotland, the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) support Scottish Union Learning, which helps trade unions support lifelong learning in Scottish workplaces.

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. It could be a taster, a weekend, a short course or a year-long programme in order to learn new skills, pursue interests or prepare for progression to formal learning. Learning can be undertaken online, in self-organised study groups and through professionally qualified teachers. 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 the 2013/14 reforms across England, Community Learning is 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.

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 the opportunity to undertake suitable further education to help prepare them for further learning and/or employment.

The UKCES' *Employer Skills Survey 2015* shows that the sectors in which employers provided the most on- and off-the-job training to employees were education, health and social work, and public administration. Provision was also high in the electricity, gas and water, business services and financial services sectors.

2.3.2 Workplace learning

The *Learning and Talent Development Survey 2015* ⁽²⁵⁾ from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) shows that the institute's members believe in-house development programmes, coaching by line managers or peers and on-the-job-training to be the most effective employee development practices. This type of training

⁽²⁵⁾ CIPD (2015). *Learning and Talent Development Annual Survey Report 2015* [accessed 22.2.2017].

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. Learning technologies are now used by three-quarters of organisations, but face-to-face delivery remains dominant. Many respondents to the survey report a lack of confidence in using learning technologies. Also, according to the survey the learning and development strategy is 'extremely aligned' with business strategy in a quarter of organisations and 'broadly aligned' in a further two-fifths of organisations.

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 Skills Funding Agency contributes to the overall cost of delivering community learning in England (see Section 2.3.1). Each Community Learning provider is also required to develop a robust financial strategy to maximise the value of public funding through sponsorship, volunteer activity, match funding, pooling resources and more locally responsive fee strategies.

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. This funding gives access to vocational training and training support.

The CIPD Talent and Development Survey from 2015 reports a decrease in public sector budgets for learning and development and that further reductions are expected. The funding situation in private organisations are more mixed and related to their general economic circumstances.

2.3.4 Recognition of non-formal and informal learning

There are generally less transfer opportunities to further and higher education for qualifications obtained outside a formal qualifications framework in the UK. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is granted at institutional discretion based on the RPL policy of individual awarding organisations in England. Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning form part of the SCQF in Scotland. There was previously a RPL network connected to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership which published a RPL toolkit⁽²⁶⁾ and an online guide that aims to increase and improve recognition of non-formal and informal learning as well as formal learning. While the RPL Network is no longer in operation, the tools and supporting workshops continue to be available. In England, RARPA (Recognising And

⁽²⁶⁾ SCQF (2010). *Facilitating the recognition of prior learning: toolkit* [accessed 22.2.2017].

Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning) was furthermore devised by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (now: the Learning and Work Institute) 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.

The Quality Assurance Agency offers a service called Employer Based Training Accreditation ⁽²⁷⁾ 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. 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 in accordance with the high level principles of the Credit and Qualifications Framework of Wales ⁽²⁸⁾.

The Department for the Economy (formerly the Department for Employment and Learning) in Northern Ireland is committed to the principle that higher education, and Foundation Degrees in particular, are open to all those who have the ability to benefit from higher education. It aims to encourage more people, who may have less in the way of formal qualifications, to consider applying for places in higher education on the basis of accredited prior experiential learning (APEL). To this end, the Department convened a working group with membership comprised of representatives from all key stakeholders. The group produced the *“Northern Ireland University and College Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) Guidelines”* which were endorsed by the whole sector and which draw upon good practice within the sector and across the UK.

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. See further information regarding quality assurance processes in Section 3.4.

⁽²⁷⁾ QAA (2013). [EBTA](#) [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽²⁸⁾ Welsh Government (2012). [Quality Assured Lifelong Learning](#) [accessed 22.2.2017].

CHAPTER 3

Shaping VET qualifications

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

3.1 Methods used to anticipate labour market needs

The *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) 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, such as the *Employer Skills Survey* ⁽²⁹⁾ and *Working Futures* ⁽³⁰⁾, to determine labour market needs and gaps. Skills audits and surveys of employers' opinions are also important for this. UKCES' *National Strategic Skills Audit 2010* (England) and 2012 (Wales) provide analysis of national and global employment and training. UKCES also issued an *Employment and Skills Almanac* ⁽³¹⁾, which is a comprehensive labour market 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 anticipates a growing skills gap with a particular need for higher level skills ⁽³²⁾.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are independent, employer-led organisations working towards defining skills needs and skills standards in their industries. SSCs are supported by the Federation of Industry Sector Skills and Standards. National Occupational Standards (NOS) have been developed by SSCs and Standards Setting Organisations working with employers and national and regional organisations to specify competences required in the workplace. See Section 3.2 for more information about NOS.

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

⁽²⁹⁾ UKCES (2016). *Employer Skills Survey 2015* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽³⁰⁾ UKCES (2016). *Working Futures 2014 to 2024* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽³¹⁾ UKCES (2011). *Employment and Skills Almanac 2010* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽³²⁾ CBI/Pearson (2016). *The Right Combination* [accessed 22.2.2017].

designed to give more freedom and a greater voice to local enterprises, .in order to create a more demand-led qualification and skills system with a local focus.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has developed Skills Investment Plans for key sectors in collaboration with Industry Leadership Groups and other key industry players by analysing labour market and skills supply research. Regional Skills Assessment Plans take into consideration regional challenges and opportunities. The Employability, Skills and Lifelong Learning Analytical Services Unit is 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.

The Department for the Economy 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 and Funded Learning Unit models regarding finances in relation to strategic priorities. This skills barometer project commenced in Northern Ireland in 2015 to build a model to estimate future skill needs and gaps by level, sector and subject area across a range of economic outcomes. The project is being undertaken as part of a three-year sponsorship arrangement between the Department for the Economy and the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre.

3.2 Design process and qualification designers

The recently introduced Regulated Qualifications Framework has removed the requirements to structure qualifications in terms of units and learning outcomes (see 2.2.); however, qualifications currently available are largely unit- and outcomes-based and allow for flexibility in delivery of training. The qualification frameworks in Scotland and Wales continue to be learning outcomes and unit based. 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.

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. There were 163 awarding organisations recognised by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) - which is the regulator of vocational qualifications within the RQF for England and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (Northern Ireland) in 2014/15 (see more in Table 5). These organisations are listed in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications and are subsequently entitled to award accredited qualifications within

the RQF. Awarding organisations with approved qualifications registered on the CQFW must be recognised by Qualifications Wales and are listed on the Qualifications in Wales database.

The main awarding organisation in Scotland is the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), which is a quasi-autonomous non-departmental public body and fulfils the roles of both an awarding body and an accreditation body. There are mechanisms in place to manage the potential conflict of interest between both parts of SQA; the Awarding Body is directly accountable to Scottish Government Ministers and the Accreditation function (SQA Accreditation) is accountable to a statutory Accreditation Committee and thence the Scottish Government. There are also a considerable number of other 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.

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.

Table 5. **Qualification design stakeholders**

National Occupational Standards describe the competences needed in the workplace	Developed and managed by: Skills Development Scotland	Including: Employers / employment advisers / trade union representatives / education providers / voluntary sector
	Sector Skills Councils (SSC) and other standard setting bodies	Employers / employer organisations / trade unions / education providers / voluntary sector organisation in specific occupational sectors
Qualifications frameworks set guidelines for how qualifications are developed	Including: Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)	QFs owned by: Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) / Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership
	Credit and Qualifications Framework Wales (CQFW)	Welsh Government
Awarding organisations develop	Including: Pearson, City & Guilds, OCR and organisations with	Regulated by: Ofqual, CCEA

qualifications for inclusion on qualifications frameworks	qualifications registered on the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications	
	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and other organisations	SQA Accreditation
	Organisations with qualifications registered on the Qualifications in Wales Database	Qualifications Wales
Education providers create curricula and deliver qualifications created by awarding organisations	Including:	Inspected by:
	Further education colleges / sixth form colleges / work-based learning / adult and community learning / University Technical Colleges / Studio Schools	Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted)
	Tertiary colleges / secondary schools / independent schools / private further education schools	Education Scotland
	Further education colleges / secondary schools / independent schools / work-based learning / adult community learning	Estyn
	Further education colleges / work-based learning / secondary schools / adult and community learning providers/ independent schools	Education Training Inspectorate Northern Ireland

Source: ReferNet UK.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and other standard setting organisations, in association with employers, develop, maintain and update National Occupational Standards (NOS) to specify competences required to perform occupations and professions. 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 entirely or largely based on NOS or, if relevant, learning outcomes that need to be met for certification. NOS are reviewed on a priority basis to ensure programmes and qualifications include new technologies, innovations and working methods used in the labour market. The Government in England is no longer mandating the use of NOS within their vocational qualifications system,

however, employers in England can continue to use NOS if they wish. When the UKCES closes in December 2016, the programme for the development and review of NOS will be managed by the three Devolved Administrations, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. SSCs previously developed Sector Qualification Priority lists for Wales and Northern Ireland in relation to relevant employment and identifying skills gaps. In future NOS and Apprenticeship frameworks activity in Wales will be prioritised with input/intelligence/advice gathered from a variety of sources including Welsh Regional Skills Partnerships.

The Strategic Partnership strategy provides the background for UK Government 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 Apprenticeship Trailblazers and the Employer Ownership of Skills pilots are encouraging and part-funding employers in England to develop VET and Apprenticeship Standards that are specific to industry needs (see Section 4.2).

Industrial partnerships in England bring together employers, trade and professional bodies and trade unions from their industry sectors in an effort to tackle skills shortages and develop innovative training solutions. There are at present eight partnerships covering the aerospace, automotive, creative, nuclear, digital, energy & efficiency, science and tunnelling (construction) sectors ⁽³³⁾.

3.2.1 Strategic development of VET

Strategic development of skills and lifelong learning in England is the remit of the Department for Education (DfE). Design of future VET in England is influenced by reviews such as the *Wolf Review of pre-19 vocational education*, the *Whitehead Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications* ⁽³⁴⁾ and the *Richard Review of Apprenticeships* ⁽³⁵⁾ (see Section 2.2.3. for further information regarding new apprenticeship standards). The former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) 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. *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* sets out how Apprenticeship reforms, and funding only good quality VET in England, will be accelerated ⁽³⁸⁾ (see Section 2.2.2 for information about Tech Levels and the Technical Baccalaureate). *Fixing the foundations* – the UK

⁽³³⁾ UKCES (2015). *Industrial partnerships* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽³⁴⁾ Whitehead, N, UKCES (2013). *Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications in England* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽³⁵⁾ Richard, D. (2012). *The Richard Review of Apprenticeships* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽³⁶⁾ BIS (2010). *Skills for Sustainable Growth* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽³⁷⁾ HM Treasury and BIS (2011). *The Plan for Growth* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽³⁸⁾ BIS/DfE (2013). *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* [accessed 22.2.2017].

Government's productivity plan from 2015 – puts focus on the need to develop a highly skilled workforce to increase productivity ⁽³⁹⁾. Most recently the *Post-16 Skills Plan* sets out to streamline VET in England into 15 clear routes leading to skilled employment, either through two-year college courses or Apprenticeships ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

The Scottish Government provides details of skills support in the *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth* ⁽⁴¹⁾, the *Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland* ⁽⁴²⁾, the *National Youth Work Strategy* ⁽⁴³⁾ and *Adult Learning in Scotland: Statement of Ambition* ⁽⁴⁴⁾. The Government 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 (see Section 2.2.7. in regard to college mergers). A further aim is to simplify the skills system so it is easier to understand for both individuals and employers. The Curriculum for Excellence includes more skills-for-work options for young people in addition to a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship ⁽⁴⁵⁾. 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 the Scottish Qualifications Authority in addition to business interest groups, teacher unions and parent organisations. The *Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce's final report* ⁽⁴⁶⁾ from June 2014 includes recommendations on preparing school leavers for work, college education focused on employment and progression in learning, Apprenticeships focused on higher level skills and industry needs, and engaging employers with education and recruiting young people.

The Welsh Government's *Programme for Government* emphasises the importance of skills development in relation to economic growth and sustainable jobs. Qualifications are developed according to the CQFW high level principles. Future VET will be shaped by the *Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales* ⁽⁴⁷⁾ (see Section 2.2.2 regarding the new Welsh Baccalaureate), *the policy statement on skills* ⁽⁴⁸⁾ and the Welsh Government's *Skills implementation plan* ⁽⁴⁹⁾. The latter

⁽³⁹⁾ BIS (2015). *Fixing the foundations* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁴⁰⁾ DfE/BIS (2016). *Post-16 Skills Plan* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁴¹⁾ Scottish Government (2010). *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁴²⁾ Scottish Government (2011). *Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁴³⁾ Scottish Government (2014). *National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Scottish Government (2014). *Adult Learning in Scotland, Statement of Ambition* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Scottish Government (2009). *Innovation for Scotland* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (2014). *Education Working For All! Final Report* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Welsh Government (2012). *Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Welsh Government (2014). *Policy statement on skills* [accessed 22.2.2017].

emphasises the importance of aligning skills provision with the current and future jobs market, local needs and employer engagement. Welsh Government published *Towards 2030: a Framework for Building a World-Class Post-Compulsory Education System for Wales* in March 2016 ⁽⁵⁰⁾. The report's recommendations include the aim to develop clear and flexible learner-centred learning and career pathways and to introduce more state regulation into the current market-demand driven education system.

The Department for Employment and Learning's (now: Department for the Economy) vision for skills development is articulated within the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures* ⁽⁵¹⁾, which sets the overarching strategy for the development of skills (including vocational education and training) in Northern Ireland. This strategy will be realised by focusing on those entering the labour force for the first time; up-skilling the existing workforce; and ensuring that those currently excluded from the labour force are provided with the skills to compete for jobs, retain jobs and progress up the skills ladder. To help achieve these ambitions, the Department works closely with the Department of Education to ensure there is a strong collaboration between schools, further education colleges, universities and employers.

Other reviews in Northern Ireland aiming to enhance and shape future VET policy include the new Northern Ireland Strategy for Apprenticeships ⁽⁵²⁾ which recommends that Apprenticeships should be at least two years long and start from level 3 (EQF level 4) (see Section 2.2.3). The Strategy for youth training from 2015 describes plans to create a baccalaureate-style curriculum that includes work-based learning that also replaces Apprenticeship provision at level 2 ⁽⁵³⁾. The 2016 Further Education (FE) Strategy gives colleges in Northern Ireland a major role in delivering Apprenticeships and youth training as well as featuring prominently in strategic advisory forums and sectoral partnerships tasked with matching skills demand and delivery ⁽⁵⁴⁾.

3.3 Assessment and recognition of prior learning

Study programmes leading to formal qualifications at secondary and post-secondary, non-university level (see also Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.7) are internally assessed within education providers and workplaces if appropriate, but are not awarded until they

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Welsh Government (2014). *Skills implementation plan* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Welsh Government (2016). *A framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁵¹⁾ DEL (2011). *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁵²⁾ DELNI (2014). *Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁵³⁾ Department for the Economy (2015). *Generating our Success* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Department for the Economy (2016). *Further Education Means Success* [accessed 22.2.2017].

have been externally assessed by awarding organisations (also called examination boards) in the UK. Education providers that are registered as examination centres by one or more awarding organisations can conduct examinations for qualifications awarded by these awarding organisations.

Work-based learning is also assessed in workplaces by qualified assessors. Assessors are usually trained staff with industry experience and knowledge of assessment approaches. In order to assess some qualifications, the assessors are required to possess relevant assessor qualifications as well. Apprentices completing the new Apprenticeship Standards in England are assessed at the end of the programme of training by an Independent End Assessor who is required to have up-to-date and thorough knowledge and experience of the specific occupation and ideally possess a Level 3 (EQF 4) assessor qualification.

See Section 2.3.4. for information about recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes.

3.4 Quality assurance of the processes

Awarding organisations set question papers or other assessments for their qualifications and examine candidates as well as reviewing examination centres' assessment of candidates and reviewing and verifying the work and standards of the centres. The processes of external review of assessment in examination centres are often referred to as verification. Verification is conducted by qualified individuals with quality assurance of assessment qualifications at level 4 (EQF level 5).

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is the regulator of all vocational qualifications within the RQF for England. During the review leading to the withdrawal of the regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework, Ofqual found that the accreditation process of qualifications was not as effective as desired, and consequently removed the requirement for awarding organisations to submit new vocational qualifications for accreditation before they are registered within the qualifications framework. The responsibility for quality assurance and relevance of qualifications will now rest with the awarding organisations, although periodic Ofqual audits will continue. In 2016 the CCEA took over the regulation responsibility of vocational qualifications, within the RQF, that are exclusively provided in Northern Ireland. The work includes the recognition and monitoring of awarding organisations and evaluating their qualifications against published criteria and conditions.

Non-university qualifications registered within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) can elect to be credit-rated and accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority Accreditation in accordance with the SQA Regulatory Principles ⁽⁵⁵⁾, but this is not mandatory.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ SQA Accreditation (2014). *Regulatory Principles* [accessed 22.2.2017].

Qualifications Wales was established in 2015 to take over the responsibility of approving and reviewing qualifications, in addition to developing the design of new qualification requirements and commissioning awarding organisations to develop new qualifications, in Wales. Qualifications Wales has started a long term approach to reviewing and reforming vocational qualifications based on reviewing the qualification provision in each major sector of employment. The review aims to find out whether current qualifications are effective in meeting the needs of learners as well as addressing the needs of employers, learning providers, professional bodies, care providers and those who are being cared for.

An Institute for Apprenticeships is scheduled to start operations in England in 2017 as an independent statutory body with a remit to support employer-led reforms and regulate the quality of Apprenticeships, including both approval functions for Apprenticeship Standards and quality assurance of assessment ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

Employer-led Sectoral Partnerships will be set up in Northern Ireland as part of the Apprenticeship reform to inform the approach for ongoing assessment and testing at the end of Apprenticeships.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ BIS (2016). *Enterprise Bill: Institute for Apprenticeships* [accessed 22.2.2017].

CHAPTER 4

Promoting participation in VET

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 budgets. Despite this reduction, Apprenticeship funding has been steadily on the rise. Numbers of participants in IVET in the UK reduced in the period 2006-12 ⁽⁵⁷⁾. However, 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 initiative that supports training and work experience. An evaluation of the action plan based on 2015 data found indications of a reduction in the rates of young people who are NEET, but that it was too early to determine the overall success of the plan ⁽⁵⁸⁾. 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 credit-rated courses. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) organises the Training for Work (TfW) scheme in Scotland which funds unemployed people looking for work. TfW training must be tailored to local needs although a formal qualification outcome is not a mandatory element of the programme.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Eurostat (2001-2012). *Percentage of pupils in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational stream* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Welsh Government (2016). *Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Formative evaluation follow-up study* [accessed 22.2.2017].

An Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is available to Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish students between the ages of 16 and 18 depending on the students' and their families' financial situation. Bursary Funds are available from schools and colleges for 16-19 year olds who struggle to afford the cost of their studies in England. 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.

Free lunches for disadvantaged students were extended to 16-18 year old learners at further education colleges (that offer predominantly vocational courses) in England from the autumn of 2014. These free meals were previously only available for disadvantaged students in general academic secondary schools.

The Entitlement Framework (EF) has come into force in Northern Ireland, building on the Vocational Enhancement Programme which encouraged collaboration between post-14 school provision and vocational FE college provision. From September 2015, the EF guaranteed 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 (24 and 27 respectively), a third of which must be applied and a third, general. Qualifications under the EF contain a range of courses that can be individually tailored to enhance students' employment chances and meet Government priority skills areas. Post-primary schools work together in local Area Learning Communities alongside further education colleges to plan and provide the full range of general and applied course choices for the young people in an area.

4.2 Incentives for enterprises

The UK Government's Apprenticeship Grant for Employers incentive (AGE 16 to 24) in England initially provided financial assistance for businesses employing less than 1000 people to take on 16 to 24 year old apprentices within a formal Apprenticeship programme. The AGE 16 to 24 has focused on small businesses with less than 50 employees from 2015. The Employer Ownership of Skills pilot⁽⁵⁹⁾ provided part-funding employers to develop VET that is specific to industry needs. Two rounds of funding were made available in 2012-14 and proved to be an incentive for employers to invest in VET that will raise the skill levels of their future work force. Groups of employers are receiving funding through the Apprenticeship Trailblazer (see Section 3.2) pilots to develop new Apprenticeship standards that suit their specific needs⁽⁶⁰⁾. A number of Standards have been published and approved for delivery and more are under development.

An Apprenticeship Delivery Board has been formed in England and will start operations in 2016. The Board, consisting of representatives from Barclays Banks,

⁽⁵⁹⁾ UKCES (2011). *Employer Ownership of Skills pilot* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁶⁰⁾ BIS / DfE (2014). *The future of apprenticeships in England: guidance for trailblazers* [accessed 22.2.2017].

Fujitsu UK, the TV company Channel 4 and the City of London amongst others, will meet and advise the government on how best to expand Apprenticeships ⁽⁶¹⁾.

Flexible Training Opportunities funding, delivered by Skills Development Scotland (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 Scottish Government announced its intention in the 2014 'Developing the Young Workforce' strategy to develop voluntary levy schemes to recruit and train young people in skills shortage areas and that groups of employers should be supported to work in collaboration, with the Scottish Government in providing co-funding.

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.

The previous Department for Employment and Learning's Skills Solutions Service that advises on training for companies was transferred to FE colleges in 2015. The service provides advice regarding 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 RQF qualifications who 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 ⁽⁶²⁾. From 2017 the adult skills budget will be transferred to local government areas to enable VET providers to use the budget more freely and flexibly in response to local needs.

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

4.4.1 Careers advisors

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

⁽⁶¹⁾ BIS (2016). *Apprenticeship delivery board* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁶²⁾ SFA (2013). *A new streamlined funding system for adult skills* [accessed 22.2.2017].

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* ⁽⁶³⁾ 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.

Qualifications in Career Development, such as those developed by the former sector skills council Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), are available at RQF levels 4, 5 and 6, but the Careers Profession Alliance'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.

4.4.2 Careers advice 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 (Not in Education, Employment and Training). SDS has also set up the My World of Work website containing CIAG resources. The Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce recommends incorporating careers advice before subject specialisation in secondary schools, to involve employers more closely with schools, educate teachers to provide comprehensive advice, and include career management skills in the curriculum.

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. 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 and a Traineeship Vacancy Service, which includes an online search function and mobile app.

Careers Wales offers an all age careers guidance service. The Welsh strategy for further development of careers services is outlined in *Future ambitions: Developing*

⁽⁶³⁾ Careers Profession Task Force (2012). *Towards a strong careers profession* [accessed 22.2.2017].

careers services in Wales ⁽⁶⁴⁾. Careers Wales also maintains an Apprenticeship Matching Service available for employers and individual applicants.

The Northern Ireland Careers Service provides an all age, impartial careers education and guidance service to promote employment, education and training opportunities. Careers advisers operate throughout Northern Ireland from Job Centres, Jobs and Benefits Offices and stand-alone careers offices. Advisers also work with careers teachers in schools and further education colleges to provide impartial advice and guidance to pupils from 14-19. In Northern Ireland, careers education is a statutory area of learning in the common curriculum for all grant-aided post-primary schools. In addition, further education colleges and higher education institutions offer careers guidance to their students. A refreshed strategy for careers education and guidance in Northern Ireland from 2016 furthermore includes a commitment to improve e-delivery channels and the use of labour market information ⁽⁶⁵⁾.

Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (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 have a duty to provide access to independent careers guidance for pupils in school years 8 to 13 (ages 12-18). Careers education and guidance is also provided by schools and colleges in Wales for students aged 14-19. The Careers and the World of Work Framework also forms part of the curriculum for 11-16 year-olds in maintained schools in Wales. In England, FE colleges and higher education institutions 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.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) has added information about vocational courses and general careers advice to their website under the name UCAS Progress.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Welsh Government (2010). *Future ambitions: Developing Careers services in Wales* [accessed 22.2.2017].

⁽⁶⁵⁾ DEL (2016). *Preparing for Success 2015-20* [accessed 22. 2.2017].

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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
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)
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
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IfL	Institute for Learning
IiP	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
RQF	Regulated Qualifications Framework
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

ANNEX 1

Overview of UK education authorities

Table 6. Policy making authorities

England	Department for Education (DfE) – all levels of education
Scotland	Scottish Government – all levels of education
Wales	Welsh Government / Department for Education and Public Services - school education
	Welsh Government / Department for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure – further education colleges and higher education
Northern Ireland	Department of Education (DE) – schools and teacher training
	Department for the Economy – further education colleges and higher education

Source: ReferNet UK.

Table 7. VET regulators and inspection/accreditation agencies

England	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
Scotland	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) - school, further education and higher education qualifications not awarded by HEIs
	Education Scotland - schools and further education colleges
Wales	Qualifications Wales - 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
Northern Ireland	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications
	Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) – schools, further education colleges and other providers delivering publicly-funded training programmes

Source: ReferNet UK.

Table 8. **Education providers**

England	Schools/academies – general academic and vocational secondary education
	Further education colleges – secondary and post-secondary VET
	Independent training providers – secondary and post-secondary VET
	Higher education institutions – higher vocational education
Scotland	Schools – general academic and vocational secondary education
	Tertiary colleges – secondary and post-secondary VET
	Private training providers – secondary and post-secondary VET
	Higher education institutions – higher vocational education
Wales	Schools – general academic and vocational secondary education
	Further education institutions – secondary and post-secondary VET
	Colleges – secondary and post-secondary VET
	Higher education institutions – higher vocational education
Northern Ireland	Schools – general academic and vocational secondary education
	Further education colleges – secondary and post-secondary VET
	Private, community and voluntary sector providers – secondary and post-secondary VET
	Training organisations – secondary and post-secondary VET
	Higher education institutions – higher vocational education

Source: ReferNet UK.

Table 9. **Qualification frameworks owners**

RQF	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)
	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership
CQFW	Welsh Government
FHEQ	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Source: ReferNet UK.