

Information for Learners: Qualifications Explained

What's a 'Regulated' Qualification?

A Regulated qualification is a qualification that is recognised by a non-ministerial government body. There are 4 such bodies in the United Kingdom:

England – The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)

Wales – Qualifications Wales (QW)

Northern Ireland – Council for the Curriculum, Examination and Assessment (CCEA)

Scotland – Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA)

Qualifications recognised by these bodies are listed on the following Registers:

Ofqual and CCEA - the Register of Regulated Qualifications (<https://register.ofqual.gov.uk/>)

QW – Qualifications In Wales (<https://www.qiw.wales/>)

SQA – Accreditation Qualification Search

(https://accreditation.qualifications.gov.scot/accreditation/Qualifications/Accreditation_Qualification_Search)

Qualifications recognised by these bodies and awarded by recognised awarding organisations are considered to be of the highest level quality and are generally accepted worldwide. The certificate you receive will display the logo of at least one of these UK official Regulators.

What's the difference between Regulated, Accredited CPD and Non-Regulated Qualifications?

Non-regulated qualifications can offer valuable learning opportunities and can count towards your Continuing Professional Development (CPD). They may also be 'endorsed' by a professional body or even a recognised awarding organisation that indicates the content of the course has been checked to some degree as being fit for purpose.

Non-regulated qualifications are often short courses and focus on updating skills or knowledge and, unlike regulated qualifications, often do not involve formal assessment, and/or can lack independent scrutiny and quality standards.

Accredited CPD qualifications are similar to non-regulated qualifications but are subject to scrutiny by one of the accredited bodies listed on the CPD Register. These must be resubmitted for evaluation on a regular basis to ensure that they remain valid at all times.

It should be noted that, whilst most non-regulated qualifications can count towards CPD, unless the certificate received at the end includes the logo/seal of a CPD accreditation body, not all employers or other organisations may accept them as such.

Regulated qualifications are based on established standards for the subject being covered (often National Occupational Standards that have been agreed by the major stakeholders in a particular sector or industry). Training providers must evidence to awarding organisations that they have the expertise, people and resources necessary to deliver the qualification and related training. There are also strict requirements for how the qualification is assessed, including post assessment quality assurance. Regulated qualifications are accepted by all employers, with most being recognised worldwide due to the inclusion of one (or more) of the UK qualifications regulatory bodies' logo on the certificate.

How do I know if a course is non-regulated or leads to a regulated qualification?

Do your research before committing! Most providers will be honest and transparent about their credentials and whether the course leads to a regulated qualification or a CPD-style non-regulated certificate.

When choosing between regulated qualifications and CPD courses, you might want to consider the following:

- Your goals - Regulated qualifications are better for gaining recognised credentials, while CPD is better for sharpening skills.
- Time commitment - Regulated qualifications often require more time, often spanning months or years. CPD courses can often be completed in days or a few weeks.
- Cost - Regulated qualifications tend to be more expensive due to their length, formality and the costs of quality assurance. CPD courses are typically cheaper due to the lack of requirement for quality assurance
- Assessment - Regulated qualifications have formal assessments where you demonstrate your knowledge and competency. CPD courses may have more informal assessments or no assessment at all (e.g. 'attendance' at a course).
- Recognition - The certificate for regulated qualifications are widely recognised and bear the Regulator's name and logo, while CPD courses do not.
- Relevance - You should choose the option that provides training most relevant to their career goals and skill needs.

In summary, regulated qualifications are ideal for gaining credentials and in-depth training, while CPD courses are better for short, targeted skill development. You should weigh up your personal needs, resources, and goals when deciding. The key is choosing training and certification that supports your long-term career objectives.