

Probation Qualifications Regulatory Framework 2010 (England and Wales)

1. Introduction

This document sets out the regulations covering the provision of the qualifications, described in the **Probation Qualifications Framework (2010)**, available to those who practise professionally in the provision of probation services in England and Wales.

These regulations apply to the Higher Education and Vocational Qualifications, established under the authority of the Secretary of State for Justice as per Section 10 of The Offender Management Act 2007, Part 1. They supersede the Regulatory Framework for the arrangements for the Diploma in Probation Studies issued in April 1999, and apply to the qualifications in the Probation Qualifications Framework which come into effect from 1 April 2010.

2. Probation Qualifications Framework (PQF)

The PQF sets out the learning and occupational competence that needs to be demonstrated to qualify as a Probation Services' Officer (PSO) and the learning and qualifications necessary to enable PSOs to become eligible to apply to work in the substantive role of Probation Officer (PO) in England and Wales. It also outlines the pathways by which individuals with a variety of previous qualifications may achieve these qualifications and eligibility. All the qualifications in the PQF are recognised and fully transferable across England and Wales.

2.1 Qualification Pathways

The PQF comprises three discrete learner pathways which individuals can pursue to become qualified probation practitioners. There is one pathway to become qualified as a Probation Services' Officer. There are two pathways to become eligible to apply for the Probation Officer role. All pathways have two possible routes of entry:

- **Pathway to qualified Probation Services Officer** (the 'VQ3 Pathway') for existing, and for new entrant, unqualified PSOs.

- **Pathway to Probation Officer eligibility** (the 'Honours Degree Pathway') for existing, and for new entrant, qualified PSOs.

- **Pathway to Probation Officer eligibility** (the 'Graduate Diploma Pathway') for existing, and for new entrant PSOs with a relevant degree.

2.1.1 Pathway to qualified Probation Services Officer (the 'VQ3 Pathway')

All newly recruited probation practitioners will be provided with the Gateway to Practice induction programme. This is a mandatory induction to their work place, their role, and to the purpose, vision and values of NOMS in the context of delivering probation services. It also outlines how risk of serious harm is assessed and managed, and how the importance of working as a member of a public protection agency is central to this.

The Gateway to Practice will normally be completed within the first ten working days of an individuals' initial appointment, and before they undertake any work on further qualifications or work with offenders on their own. The maximum time scale for completion can be extended to twenty working days, where the employer feels this is justified. Further details and guidance on the Gateway to Practice programme is provided in the Appendix to 2.1.1a.

Existing, unqualified PSOs will normally not need to undertake the Gateway to Practice. They may, prior to 2015, move directly onto the learning pathway necessary to complete the PSO formal qualification. This is a Vocational Qualification Diploma in Probation Practice at level 3.

The Vocational Qualification level 3 Diploma in Probation Practice is designed to enable unqualified PSOs to demonstrate occupational competence in the delivery of appropriate probation outcomes when working with lower risk offenders. It also provides them with a potential career pathway towards becoming qualified to be eligible for the role of Probation Officer. It is mandatory for all newly recruited unqualified PSOs, who are not on the Graduate Diploma route, to work towards this award on completion of the Gateway to Practice.

From April 2010, new PSOs should complete the Vocational Qualification level 3 within 12 months of appointment. Existing PSOs will be expected to complete in an equivalent timeframe. In exceptional circumstances the maximum time to achieve the qualification can be extended to 18 months. Pro rata arrangements can be made for part time staff. Further details and guidance on the level 3 Vocational Qualification is provided in the Appendix to 2.1.1b.

The level 3 Vocational Qualification integrates with an appropriate programme of directed, work-based learning and development, together with supervised and assessed practice. Individuals completing this Vocational Qualification successfully become qualified Probation Services' Officers.