

Qualification Alignment process.

Guidance and support documents.

Probation Workforce Programme

July 2020

**Background:**

1. In preparation for the unified model and to support the ambition for professional registration, a comprehensive audit has been undertaken of qualifications of staff working in roles that require the Probation officer (PO) qualifications. Historically there has been no consistent national mechanism for registering whether staff have the required qualifications for their role.
2. During the gathering of certificates of Probation Officer qualification and CRC data we reviewed the situation for staff operating without the qualification as outlined in statutory guidance. Owing to the successive reforms to probation over the last two decades, this is a long-standing issue and one that has a complex organisational history. Further information is available at Annex A on the chronology of probation qualification requirements.
3. This means that there are varying profiles of NPS and CRC staff who are operating without the qualification specified in statutory guidance. This includes staff who have considerable operational experience but initially joined the service into specialist roles that did not require probation qualifications or those that joined during the ‘Howard gap’. This has meant that both the NPS and CRCs have ‘inherited’ very experienced POs who have been practicing without the qualifications specified in guidance. However, we also know that recruitment practices in CRCs have led to some individuals being recruited *since* 2015 without the correct qualification, in specialist roles or utilising the additional flexibility for CRC’s in statutory guidance.
4. The current qualification framework is pursuant of the Offender Management Act 2007, which requires the Secretary of State to provide guidelines on the qualifications of an officer of probation services who supervises an offender or otherwise has direct contact with offenders. These guidelines are outlined in ‘A Competent Workforce to Transform Rehabilitation’, published in February 2015 to accompany Transforming Rehabilitation and underpinned by the ‘CJL Regulatory Framework’ refreshed in 2018 (copies available on request from NPS-qualifications@justice.gov.uk).
5. We propose using transition to the unified model as an opportunity to address any historic ambiguity regarding the qualifications required of staff. It is right that we have a proportionate route for managing and qualifying affected staff that takes account of their skills and experience.
6. The Qualification Alignment process has been designed to ensure staff within the NPS and transitioning from the CRC’s meet statutory guidance requirements. We propose making an amendment to Secretary of State guidance to include the Qualification Alignment process for staff who entered the service before 2020 who were employed in roles where probation officer qualifications are required. This includes historic decisions to move qualified others into Probation Officer roles pre-transition. This process will legally convey the right to declare they have the probation officer qualification and to pursue their career accordingly.

**Qualification Alignment process**

This process will only apply to staff legitimately employed or transferred into roles where the PO qualification is required (Probation Officer, Senior Probation Officer, Head of LDU). This document will refer to these as “qualified roles”.

If a staff member does not appear to have the required probation officer qualification for their role following the gathering of certificates, the business manager/ division will be notified by the Probation Workforce Probation and the line manager (or qualified other) will be instructed to complete the check list**.**

**The evidence gather:**

* **Line manager or qualified other to complete the evidence gathering checklist (Annex B)**
* Completed checklist to be returned to [NPS-qualifications@justice.gov.uk](about:blank)**.**
* **Notification from Probation Workforce Reform programme as to Qualification Alignment process stage outcome.**

The checklist will outline length of service, qualification and professional competency.

**The decision process:**

On receipt of the evidence gathering checklist the Probation Workforce Programme team will decide on the outcome.

There will be three outcomes from the decision

1. Sign off as professionally qualified
2. Require conversion qualification
3. Require full PQiP

If someone is in conduct or capability proceedings they will not be offered sign off through professional experience. No action will be taken until any investigations are concluded.

If an individual is in conduct or capability proceedings there should be an urgent discussion between the line manager, the Probation Workforce Programme and an HR Business Partner. Where the line manager believes there is potential for success the full PQiP may be offered as part of an individual’s capability proceedings.

If an individual completes conduct or capability proceedings and remains employed by the service in a role that requires a qualification, they shall become eligible for the Qualification Alignment process.

* Those who are in the category ‘Howard gap’[[1]](#footnote-1) will all be eligible to be signed off as professionally qualified
* Those who are “Qualified others”[[2]](#footnote-2) employed in trusts or areas to work in qualified roles prior to 1 June 2014 who are currently working in Offender management[[3]](#footnote-3) roles. will be signed off as professionally qualified.
* Those who are “Qualified others” employed in trusts or areas to work in qualified roles prior to 1 June 2014 who were employed as POs but have rotated in roles outside of Offender management (including accredited programmes, approved premises and victims units) will need to complete the conversion qualification, unless they have recent (within 21 months) experience in an OM role.
* Those who were employed between 1 June 2014 – 1 April 2019 in qualified roles will need to complete the conversion qualification.
* Those who were in roles that required professional qualification prior to E3 and were given permission to stay in post at that point, will be signed off as professionally qualified as long as they have 21 months or more experience working in offender management.
* Those who were hired in specialist roles converted under E3[[4]](#footnote-4) will need to complete the conversion qualification if they have 21 months or more experience working in offender management. If they don’t have this experience they will need to complete the PQiP.
* Those who were employed after 1 April 2019 (or under 21 months at the time transition) in a qualified role will need to complete the full PQiP
* Those staff in the NPS who have never worked in offender management roles (ie. programmes staff) who were moved to generic contracts but hired to roles such as ‘programme facilitators’ not as PO’s will be required to apply for the PQiP as per standard practice to ensure they meet the entry requirements for the training.

**Outcome 1: Sign off** **as professionally qualified**

The Probation Workforce Programme will review the checklist and undertake randomised audit checks on the information returned.

Each individual will receive a letter from the Chief Probation Officer confirming their qualification and that this is included in statutory guidance.

The sign off process would extend to those legacy staff who may have been transferred to the CRCs and are returning under the unified model.

**Outcome 2: Require Conversion vocational and academic qualification**

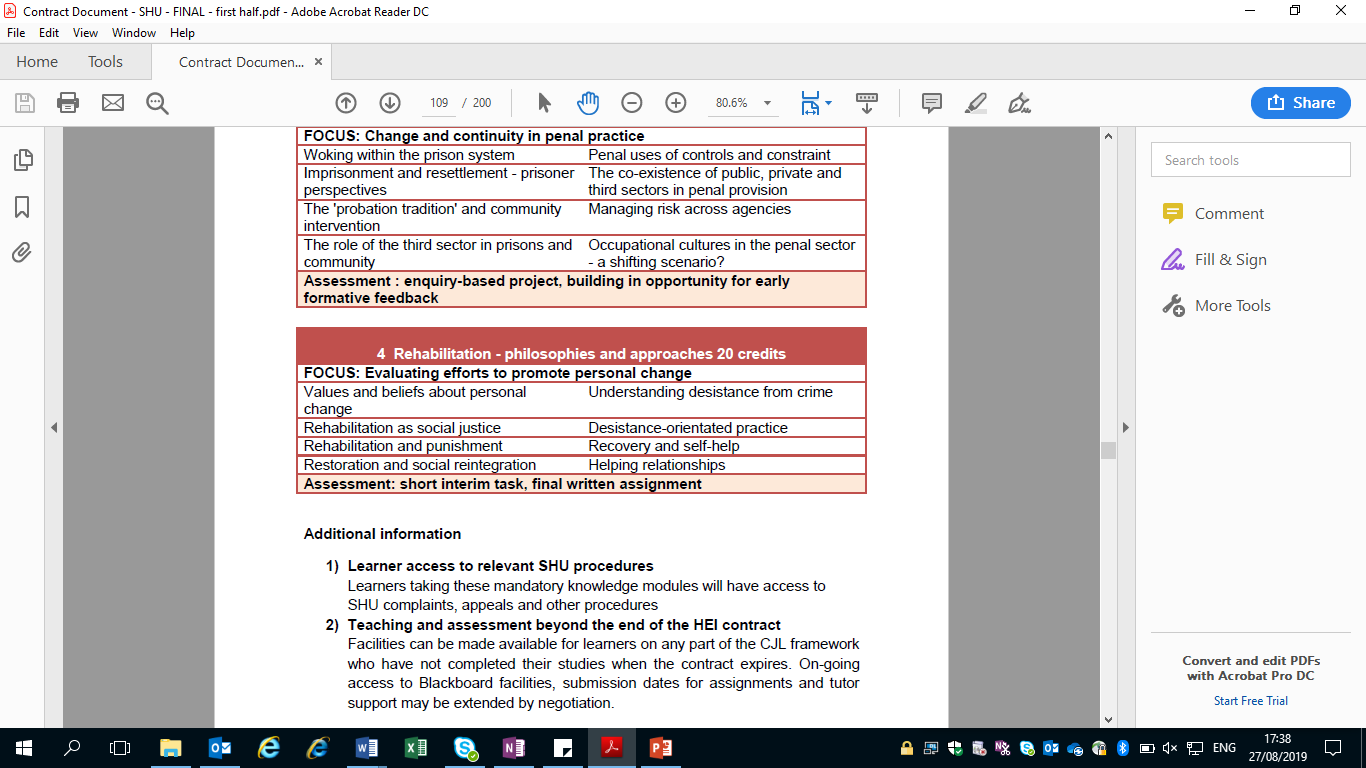
This would comprise the elements of the PQiP that cannot be gained without extensive experience.

The qualification would comprise:

Academic component:

This should be completed at the earliest possible stage including pre-transition or alongside the vocational modules. Those working in CRCs will need agreement from their employer if they wish to complete this qualification pre-transition.

Completion of the 20 credit “Rehabilitation – philosophies and approaches” knowledge module. **However, individuals with a criminology degree or masters would not be required to complete this aspect of the conversion qualification.**



\*Example of academic unit, may be subject to regional variation.

Vocational qualification.

Completion of 2 of the vocational units of the PQiP including:

Level 6: Assess the risk, needs and responsivity of offenders.

Level 6: Manage risk of serious harm to the public.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

To complete this the individual would need to be able to evidence managing cases who pose a high risk of harm to the public.

Sign off and completion providing a recognised formal qualification and certification.

**Outcome 3: Completion of the PQiP**

Where staff have ended up in roles that are governed by the statutory guidance but they won’t have 21 months experience in offender management roles by the time the service is unified, they will be automatically eligible for the PQiP and will not have to go through the external selection process. The decision on whether they ought to complete the extended 21 month PQiP route or 15 month PQiP route will be guided by the same principles as the external recruitment process.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Qualification Alignment process | Diagnostic conversation & checklist | Sign off | Conversion qualification | PQiP |
| Howard gap staff with social work qualification | Yes | Yes (unless capability/conduct proceedings) | No | No |
| Legacy staff hired as PO’s pre-2014  (including those signed off under E3) | Yes | Yes (unless capability/conduct proceedings, or less than 21 months experience in OM roles) | Yes (if less than 21 months experience in OM roles) | No |
| Staff hired post 2014 (transforming rehabilitation) as PO’s | Yes | No | Yes (with 21 months experience) | Yes (if less than 21 months experience in OM roles) |
| Staff hired in specialist roles converted under E3 | Yes | No | Yes (if they meet the criteria ie. working in OM roles post 2014 with 21 months experience). | Yes if they were not employed into a PO role/ have not worked in an OM role. |

**Appeal**

If an individual is unhappy with the outcome of this decision they have a right to appeal. The appeal form is located in Annex C and should be returned to [NPS-qualifications@justice.gov.uk](about:blank)

**Protected characteristics:**

The Qualification Alignment process is designed to be completed alongside an individual’s current role, with workload relief to ensure completion within working hours. Completion is costed based on the numbers of hours, but this can be extended over a flexible timeframe to allow for part time workers and those who require additional time due to protected characteristics. The conversion qualification utilises existing components of the PQiP qualification and the equalities framework on which this is built. This will include support, potential for extension and repeated submissions for individuals who face challenges completing the process via the progression board panel.

An equalities analysis for the Qualification Alignment process is available on request.

**Annex A**

Further Background: Timeline of Probation Officer Qualifications

* **Pre-1996** The required qualification for Probation Officers was a social work degree. This was introduced in the 1980s. **Qualification/certification expected is CQSW or DIPsw.**
* **1996-1998** In 1996 Michael Howard removed the social work degree as the required qualification, but an alternative qualification was not in place until 1998 with the ‘Diploma in Probation Studies’, outlined in the Secretary of State’s guidance, ‘Regulatory Framework for Diploma in Probation Studies (DIPs)’. Between 1996-98, POs continued to complete a social work degree with a probation component but essentially had no recourse to qualification. **‘Howard gap’** **Qualification/certification expected in statutory guidance: Social Work qualification with Probation component qualification.**
* **1998-2001** The first qualifiers under the DIPs were not until 2001, meaning between 1998-2001 there was a gap in qualification in which we know some Probation Trusts continued to hire social workers to meet staffing demands. ‘**Howard gap’ Trusts continued to hire people with Social Work qualification despite it not being expressly provided for in statutory guidance.**
* **2001-09** Qualification via Diploma in Probation Studies. **Qualification/certification expected in statutory guidance: Diploma in Probation Studies. Academic and vocational certification required or home office certificate of qualification.**
* **2010-2016** TheProbation Qualification Framework (PQF) replaces the DIPs. Under the Offender Management Act 2007 Section 10 (which came into force in 2010), the requirement for Secretary of State guidance is now in law. **Qualification/certification expected in statutory guidance: Probation Qualification framework. Academic and vocational certification required.**
* **2016- present** Professional Qualification in Probation (PQiP), as mandated by the 2015 statutory guidance, ‘A Competent Workforce to Transform Rehabilitation’, pursuant to the Offender Management Act 2007. **Qualification/certification expected in statutory guidance: PQiP. Academic and vocational certification required.**

**Annex B: Diagnostic Conversation Checklist**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Probation Workforce Programme: Conversion checklist** | | | | |
| **This checklist will be used by the Workforce Reform Programme to assess which stage on the Qualification Alignment process an individual is eligible for. The checklist should be completed by the individual’s line manager or business manager and returned to NPS-qualification@justice.gov.uk** | | | | |
|  |  |  |  | **For completion by WRP.** |
| **Name:** | |  | |  |
|  | | | | |
| **Employee number.** | |  | |  |
| **Job role/ grade** | |  |  |  |
| **Job role on appointment** | |  |  |  |
| **Employment start date:** | |  | |  |
| **Qualification and capability** | | | | |
|
|
| **Qualifications held:** | |  |  |  |
| **Vocational qualifications:** | |  |  |  |
| **Academic qualification degree +** | |  | |  |
| **Subject to conduct proceedings:** | | Y/N |  |  |
| **Detail/ outcome date:** | |  |  |  |
| **Subject to capability proceedings:** | | Y/N | |  |
| **Detail/ outcome date:** | |  |  |  |
| **Subject to current action plan** | | Y/N |  |  |
| **Was this person given a “must improve” rating in their last SDPR?:** | | Y/N | |  |
| **Authorisation** | | | | |
|
|
| **Line Manager:** | |  | | |
| **Employee number.** | |  |  |  |
| **Contact number** | |  |  |  |
| **Date** | |  |  |  |

**Annex C: Conversion qualification to Probation Officer Qualification one to one template. Qualification Alignment process should be attached as an annex for manager and HRBP conducting meeting.**

**Briefing note:**

There have been staff appointed to roles that require a Probation Officer qualification who do not have this as outlined in statutory guidance ‘A Competent workforce to transform rehabilitation’.

It is acknowledged that affected staff included in this process were appointed in full knowledge of their qualifications and are at no fault.

To ensure compliance with statutory guidance and to allow affected staff to continue their career progression unimpeded a Qualification Alignment process has been developed.

This process will be included in statutory guidance for use with staff affected by historic decisions and changes to job descriptions. This will ensure that on completion staff will be officially recognised as a qualified Probation Officer and can work in and pursue any opportunities afforded to those with the qualification.

The Qualification Alignment process is outlined in the annex and is staged based on the circumstances, length of service and qualification held by each individual. The guidance on this is available in the annex.

Many affected staff will be required to complete the course component, this includes the completion of one academic module and two vocational qualifications at level 6. This will be completed alongside their current role with workload relief of 1 day per fortnight for 6 months. This will require the management of a minimum of one current case to meet the competencies required. Cases will be selected with support of a Practice Tutor Assessor to ensure they cover all the requirements.

For staff in positions that do not involve the direct management of cases, such as SPOs, cases will be allocated and can be worked in a location and manner agreed with your line manager. The number of cases will be based on the evidence gained, but the aim would be to complete this with one to two cases.

For staff who are unable to or do not wish to engage with the Qualification Alignment process, there are other options. Where posts are available, individuals will be job matched to roles at the same grade that do not require the Probation Officer qualification. This would include roles where there is no direct management, assessment or oversight of high-risk cases (outside of offender management and court roles). If there are no jobs available, then other redeployment options will be considered and discussed with the individual. There are no plans for redundancy in this process and our aim is to maintain our valuable staff in their Probation officer roles.

**ate**

**Expression of Interest Template**

**Appeal Template**

|  |
| --- |
| National Probation Service |

Staff 1:1 Meeting Pro-forma – Completion of the Probation officer conversion qualification.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Employee Name |  |
| Employee Number |  |
| Pay Band & Job Role: |  |
| Current workplace location ‘office base’ |  |
| Key notes from discussion following the briefing. |  |
| Consent to completion of conversion course. | **Yes/ No** |
| If yes:  Any barriers to completion of the conversion course.  What would be required to manage these. |  |
| If no:  Outline the options including redeployment. This could include job matching to 70%. |  |
| Are there any compassionate grounds which you think we need to consider if redeploying you? |  |
| Are there any health/disability issues that you think should be considered or you would like to make us aware of? |  |
| Are there any domestic or work life balance issues that you think we need to consider? |  |
| Any other comments/questions that have not been answered |  |
| Name of manager/ HRBP / date |  |
| Employee signature  (to confirm accuracy of note) |  |

(To be completed by the person conducting the meeting. Please take a photocopy of this form and give a copy to the member of staff)

This form should be completed during 1-2-1 meetings wherever possible. If this is not possible it should be completed within one week of the meeting and returned to [nps-qualifications@justice.gov.uk](about:blank) Staff who are away from the office must have a follow up date set within two weeks of their return to work.

**Appeal Template**

This form should be used if you wish to appeal against the result of the Qualification Alignment process decision

* Appeals regarding the Qualification Alignment process must state the full reasons why the member of staff disagrees with the result.
* All appeals should be submitted within the standard timescale of 7 days and must be submitted on this template to NPS-qualifications@justice.gov.uk

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name |  |
| Employee No |  |
| Current Role & Location |  |
| Appealing against which role / location |  |

|  |
| --- |
| I wish to submit an appeal regarding the Qualification Alignment process outcome:  (delete as appropriate)  The grounds of my appeal are: |

Annex D

Business managers gather staff certificates. Do they meet the requirements set in statutory guidance?

Notify mailbox will be assigned to a programme and informed of the details.

Notify mailbox, the individual will be signed to the programme, allocated a PTA and informed of the details.

Notify mailbox, HRBP and business manager to explore options including redeployment or retention in non-OM role

Does not agree to complete PQiP

Agrees to complete PQiP

Does not agree to complete conversion qualification.

Agrees to conversion qualification

Eligible for sign-off as professionally qualified

Not eligible for conversion requires PQiP

Notification from PWP as to conversion process eligibility and next steps

Yes

No

Submit to NPS-qualifications@justice mailbox heading Checklist complete.

No further action

Business manager / PWP notify line manager

PWP to assess stage of conversion process as per conversion process guidance

Line manager discusses with individual to complete checklist (Annex B)

Eligible for conversion process qualification route

Conversation with individual, HRBP, Probation Workforce Programme, Line manager to agree PQiP offer

Line manager and HRBP to complete 1-1 template (annex C)

The individual and LDU will receive a letter confirming qualification status as now included in statutory guidance.

Annex E : **Glossary and background:**

**Howard Gap:** Someone is considered to be within the Howard Gap if they started employment between 1996 and 2001 and has a social work qualification.

**Qualified others:** This includes staff who have relevant other qualifications. These relevant other qualifications would be degree level qualifications in psychology, mental health, criminology or social work and international probation officer qualifications.

**Offender Management:** In line with PI31/2014 ‘Authorisation as ‘officer of a provider of probation services’ the responsible officer or as referred to in this document Offender Management roles refer to those where the individual has direct responsibility for the management of community orders, suspended sentences or licences and post sentence supervisions. This also refers to officers responsible for pre-sentence reports and enforcement in court.

**Accredited Programmes:** Accredited Programmes staff in the NPS are largely Band 4 and from 2014 the job description included a requirement to be a PO. The JD pre-2014 had not included this requirement as such there are PSO’s and qualified others who are now in roles that require the PO qualification. Most of these staff will not be eligible for the conversion as they were not hired as PO’s and have never worked in offender management, thus not meeting the qualified through experience. It has been agreed by the Probation Workforce Board that these staff will continue to practice in these roles as they are not in breach of statutory guidance.

**E3**: This was the operating model for the National Probation Service published in July 2016. Under this operating model, certain roles that had historically not required a qualification now did however, some staff were allowed to continue without the qualification the operating model required.

1. Defined in glossary [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Defined in glossary [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Defined in glossary [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Defined in glossary [↑](#footnote-ref-4)