The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy

Qualification Development and Review Policy

Contents

Purpose

This document outlines CIPFA's approach to both the development of new qualifications and the annual review of existing qualifications. These processes ensure that CIPFA continues to design and deliver high-quality qualifications, assessments, and apprenticeship assessments (previously EPA).

To support the delivery of accurate, relevant, and up-to-date learning materials by Approved Training Providers (ATPs), this policy should be read in conjunction with CIPFA's Quality Assurance Process for the Course of Theoretical Instruction (COTI).

CIPFA recognises that the performance, demand, and validity of qualifications evolve over time. We are committed to ensuring our qualifications remain fit for purpose, valid, reliable, and responsive to the changing needs of the profession and regulatory landscape.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff within CIPFA's Awarding Organisation (AO) and Assessment Organisation functions. It provides guidance, reference points, and best practice examples to ensure adherence to Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition and other relevant regulatory requirements.

It also supports CIPFA's obligation to meet the statutory requirements of the Local Audit (Professional Qualifications and Major Local Audit) Regulations 2014, particularly in relation to the Course of Theoretical Instruction (COTI).

CIPFA defines the COTI as comprising the following elements:

- Syllabi and module specifications
- Learning materials
- Practice question banks
- Specimen and mock exams
- The Professional Accountancy Qualification (PAQ) Programme Specifications

This policy also applies to CIPFA's regulated Apprenticeship Assessments (previously EPA), ensuring alignment with Ofqual's Qualification Level Conditions for Apprenticeship Assessment and Skills England's evolving framework for high-quality apprenticeship assessment.

Policies to be considered in alignment

This policy should be read alongside other policies as outlined below:

- Review and development of the qualification in its entirety - Withdrawal of Qualifications Policy
  Annual Qualification Review – Annual Monitoring Report; Annual Monitoring Review Report

Methods of Review

CIPFA undertakes two distinct but complementary types of review to ensure qualifications and assessments remain valid, current, and fit for purpose:

Full Qualification Review and Development

This is a comprehensive review and redevelopment of a qualification's structure, content, and assessment methodology. Reviews of this type may be triggered when transitioning between qualification suites (e.g. from the Professional Qualification (PQ) to the Professional Accountancy Qualification (PAQ)), or in response to regulatory, strategic, or professional change.

This process also applies when mandatory standard reviews or apprenticeship reforms are initiated by Skills England, particularly where CIPFA delivers the associated Apprenticeship Assessment (previously EPA). In such cases, assessment specifications, methods, and supporting materials may require redevelopment to ensure continued regulatory compliance, employer relevance, and synoptic assessment integrity.

Triggers for a full review may include:

- Significant regulatory or policy reform
- Evolving sector or employer requirements
- Advances in assessment methodology
- Strategic quality improvement initiatives
- Evidence of declining performance or engagement

The process involves:

- Internal scoping
- Engagement with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
- Governance approvals
- Stakeholder consultation
- Project and launch planning

Typical full qualification review stages include:

Stage	Activity
Review of qualification performance	✓
Project initiation and scoping	✓
Market and regulatory research	✓
Stakeholder and regulator consultation	✓
Cost, benefit and risk analysis	✓
Resource and SME planning	✓
SME training and development	✓
Assessment and learning material development	✓
Regulatory compliance and governance sign-off	✓
Launch and communication	✓
Post-launch monitoring	✓

Where qualifications are withdrawn completely, CIPFA implements a phased approach with clear timelines, ensuring providers and learners can transition appropriately.

Please refer to Appendix A.

Annual Qualification Review

The Annual Qualification Review is a structured, annual process that ensures each CIPFA qualification and Apprenticeship Assessment remains current, compliant, and aligned with professional standards and regulatory requirements.

Triggers may be based on maintaining:

- Technical accuracy (e.g. updates to Finance Acts, IFRS, ISA, IPSAS)
- Content relevance to current practice, including public finance, sustainability and AI
- Alignment with the Course of Theoretical Instruction (COTI) to ensure it is consistently updated to The Local Audit (Professional Qualifications and Major Local Audit) Regulations 2014.
  - Ensuring that the COTI remains current, relevant, and of the highest quality, meeting both academic standards and professional requirements.

  (See appendix A: The Local Audit (Professional Qualifications and Major Local Audit) Regulations 2014 for module content)
- The impact of net zero and sustainability issues which may impact aspects of the qualification but do not give rise to a full overhaul of the qualification
- Validity and reliability of associated assessments
- Compliance with apprenticeship and assessment reforms introduced by Skills England

CIPFA convenes collaborative review teams comprising SMEs including authors, examiners, tutors, and moderators to evaluate all modules and assessments.

Key activities include:

- Gathering sector updates and legislative changes
- Reviewing stakeholder feedback (e.g. surveys, evaluations, ATP insights)
- Updating apprenticeship assessment specifications to reflect changes in assessment plans, synoptic design, delivery models, and duration rules
- Maintaining consistent version control and clear communication with delivery partners

Typical annual review stages include:

Stage	Activity
Regulatory and technical update gathering	✓
Internal and SME resource planning	✓
Collaborative SME module review	✓
Review of assessment methodology and compliance	✓
COTI and apprenticeship assessment alignment checks	✓
Revision and QA of materials	✓
Approval of significant amendments via governance	✓
Communication and publication of changes	✓
Monitoring of post-review outcomes	✓

Qualification Review Audit Trails

CIPFA maintains robust documentation and version control for all reviews.

For annual reviews, this includes:
- Formal SME meeting records
- Commissioning of authors/moderators to implement updates
- QA review and sign-off of revised content
- Controlled distribution to tutors, assessors, and ATPs
- Presentation of significant amendments to the Student and Members Board (SMB) for final approval

All revisions and reviews are stored securely within CIPFA's Quality and Compliance SharePoint and subject to regular audit checks.

CIPFA considers the following core materials as part of its regulated offer:
- Programme and module specifications
- Digital and printed learning content
- Practice and mock assessments
- Specification documents for Apprenticeship Assessments

Continuous Improvement and Withdrawal

In addition to formal review cycles, CIPFA operates an evidence-led continuous improvement process that considers:
- Qualification uptake and achievement rates
- External and internal stakeholder feedback
- Emerging sector requirements and policy reform
- Regulatory feedback and thematic review findings

Where necessary, CIPFA may initiate the withdrawal of a qualification or Apprenticeship Assessment. This follows formal consultation and is managed through:
- Governance and regulatory approval
- Communication to affected stakeholders
- A phased operational and certification timeline

Regulatory Alignment

CIPFA's approach to qualification review and development is underpinned by full alignment with:
- Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition
- Ofqual's Qualification Level Conditions (relevant to Apprenticeship Assessments)
- Skills England's Framework for High-Quality Apprenticeship Assessment
- and expectations for apprenticeship standards and assessment plans
- The statutory requirements of the *Local Audit (Professional Qualifications and Major Local Audit) Regulations 2014*

All reviews and developments are carried out in accordance with the principles of:
- Validity and reliability
- Fitness for purpose
- Comparability over time

- Responsiveness to stakeholder and regulatory needs

CIPFA remains committed to delivering qualifications and Apprenticeship Assessments that are trusted, future-focused, and aligned with the highest professional and technical standards.

Policy version and owner

Policy owner	Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development
Version	6
Update	September 2025
Approval	September 2025 SMB
Policy review date	September 2026

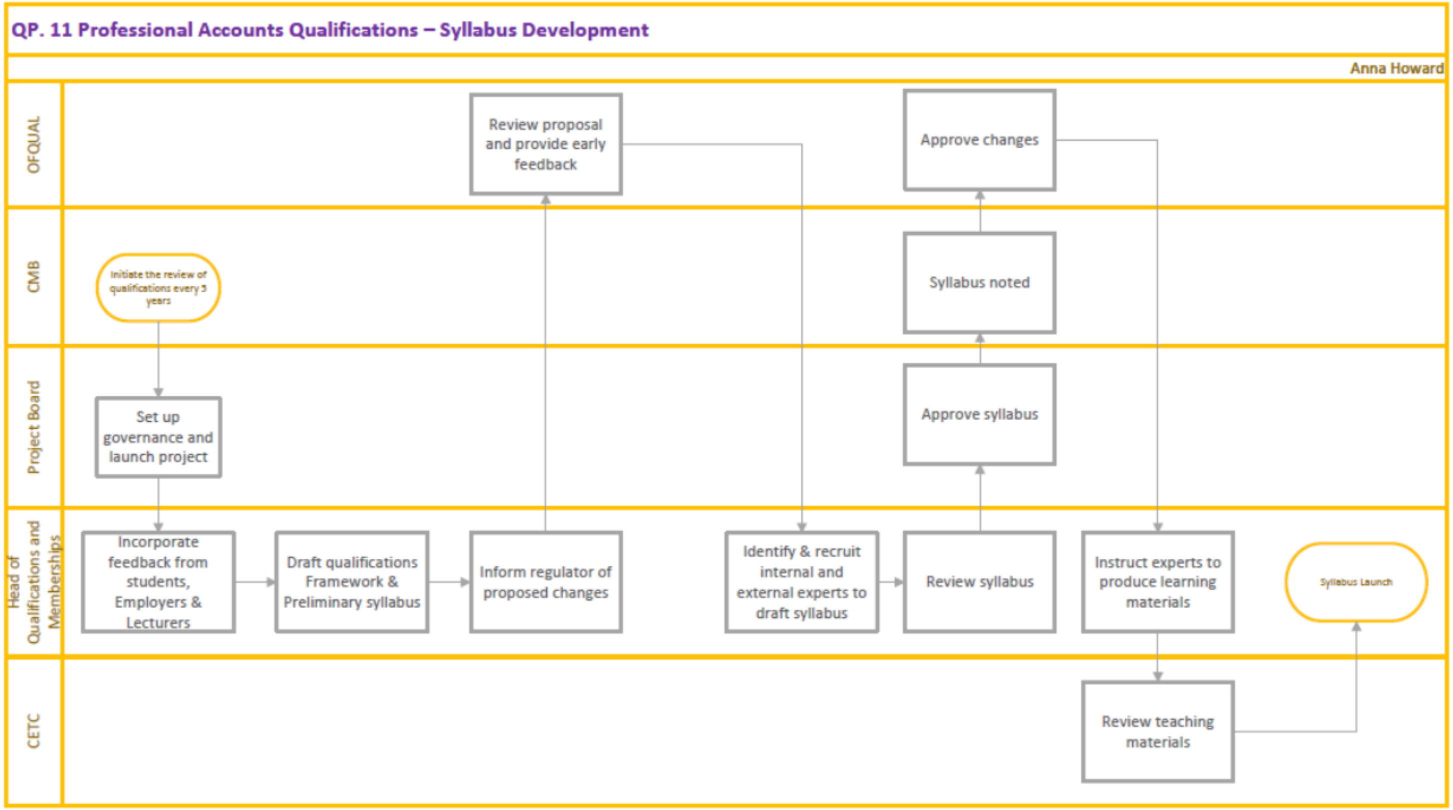
Regulatory references

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition D3: Reviewing approach Condition E1: Qualifications having an objective and support Condition E4: Ensuring an assessment is fit for purpose and can be delivered

Appendix A - The process for the review of the qualification in its entirety

The below diagram illustrates the process for syllabus development and reviewal stages, covering the Professional Accountancy Qualification and its content from our Quality Management System which is compliant with ISO 9001:2015.

- Professional Accounts Qualification – Syllabus Development



Appendix B - The Local Audit (Professional Qualifications and Major Local Audit) Regulations 2014

Local Audit and Accountability Act prescribed subjects	L4 FA	L4 MA	L5 AA	L5 BPFM	L5 DSDA	L6 GRM	L6 BR	L6 T&L	L7 SPFM	L7 SCS	L7 PSFR	L7 Adv. A
1. General accounting theory and principles	x		x				x				x	
2. Legal requirements and standards relating to the preparation of financial statements for relevant authorities as defined by legislation from time to time			x				x			x	x	x
3. International accounting standards	x						x				x	
4. Financial analysis				x			x			x	x	x
5. Cost and management accounting		x		x					x	x		
6. Risk management and internal control			x	x	x	x			x	x		

Local Audit and Accountability Act prescribed subjects	L4 FA	L4 MA	L5 AA	L5 BPFM	L5 DSDA	L6 GRM	L6 BR	L6 T&L	L7 SPFM	L7 SCS	L7 PSFR	L7 Adv. A
7. Auditing and professional skills relevant to local audit.			x			x				x		x
8. Legal requirements and professional standards relating to local audit and local auditors			x									x
9. International auditing standards			x									x
10. Professional ethics and independence	x		x			x		x	x	x	x	x
11. Those aspects of the following which are relevant to auditing –												
(a) legislation (primary and secondary) relating to relevant authorities			x				x	x			x	
(b) corporate governance			x			x			x	x		x

Local Audit and Accountability Act prescribed subjects	L4 FA	L4 MA	L5 AA	L5 BPFM	L5 DSDA	L6 GRM	L6 BR	L6 T&L	L7 SPFM	L7 SCS	L7 PSFR	L7 Adv. A
(c) tax law								x	x			
(d) public finance, including law and regulations relating to local taxation and revenue raising in the public sector								x	x	x	x	
(e) civil and commercial law								x				
(f) social security law; employment law								x				
(g) information technology and computer systems			x	x	x	x						x
(h) general and financial economics				x				x	x			
(i) relevant statistical and sampling techniques		x	x	x						x		x
(j) basic principles of financial management		x		x	x				x	x		

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Appendix C - Learning material update process

The learning material update process is a bi-annual activity. There are two points during the academic calendar - 31 May and 30 November, in which learning material is updated.

- **31 May** update is typically a combination of reported errors from students and tutoring colleagues.
- **30 November** update **follows the annual qualification review** and is the major updating iteration for the learning materials.

A referencing process has been implemented as follows. A SharePoint folder CIPFA Futures Workbooks has been created. The folders are referenced as follows: June 2024 to March 2025; June 2025 to March 2026 and annually thereafter following the same date period, which is in line with our examination timetable.

There are two main folders:

Master Version - The most up to date versions of workbooks will be saved in this folder and archive versions of workbooks relating to that examination year will be retained within each module folder.

Working version - There is a second folder referenced ‘working version - PDF – CETC EDIT HERE’. An identical set of workbooks are retained here. They are editable. This is the domain for tutors to record their amendments – typos, errors, etc. These will then be captured bi-annually (See above).

External associates can access the identical versions and folders via an externally facing SharePoint folder – **Assessment Associates.** However, external associates only have access to the **Master version** (archive versions) and cannot edit the learning materials. Instead, any errors must be reported via qualitycompliance@cipfa.org.

The SharePoint folders can be viewed alphabetically/numerically. The owner of the SharePoint folder is the Professional Qualifications team. The Professional Qualifications team will inform of any amendments via email and emails will be sequentially numbered for completeness.