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**Probation Qualifications Review
Key Principles and Rationale**.

Section 10 of the Offender Management Act places a duty upon the Secretary of State to publish guidelines about any qualifications, experience or training required in relation to work involving the supervision of offenders and other work requiring direct contact with offenders.

These guidelines are due for review by 31st March 2016. It is proposed that the qualifications, experience and training included in these guidelines will be entitled “Community Justice Learning” and will be introduced in two phases. Phase One will be completed by end of March 2016 and will introduce learning pathways and additional access routes to eligibility to apply for Probation Officer posts. Phase Two will be completed by the end of March 2017 and will include development of learning for staff qualifying for additional roles in Community Justice.

1. be **relevant for and accessible to all providers of probation services**.

*Rationale
A common, relevant and accessible qualification framework that is flexible to meet different needs is desirable to support the interface between NPS and CRCs and enable career progression across the sector. It would deliver the SoS duty under the Offender Management Act and facilitate contract monitoring processes.*
2. offer learning programmes that are **cost and time efficient to deliver and that represent** **a good return on investment for employers.***Rationale
NOMS is accountable to the government and the public for its expenditure and return on investment. Every opportunity will be taken to explore potential savings while maintaining the quality of the outcome.*
3. include a **national curriculum setting out the knowledge, skills and values** that are essential pre-requisites for effective probation practice;
*Rationale
A national curriculum is required for a national, consistent service in which staff can transfer between employers. The curriculum will reflect Ministerial priorities and be contemporary to reflect best practice.*
4. include assessment of practice which is **congruent with National Occupational Standards** in community justice.
*Rationale
National Occupational Standards define the requirements of practice within the field of offender management and are regularly updated by the Sector Skills Council. They form the building blocks for qualifications across the sector and can be used flexibly by different employers, according to need. Up to date NOS will ensure that the new qualifications are fit for purpose.
The competencies in the contract specification are based on NOS and will.*
5. refer to a range of qualifications including an **honours degree level qualification***Rationale
This will ensure that practice with high risk of harm offenders is informed* *by analytical skills and evidence based effective practice*. *Downgrading the qualification for staff in this category would be politically sensitive and likely to attract criticism during the sensitive period of embedding the TR model.*
6. include a national curriculum which is **regularly reviewed and updated** to ensure it is fit for purpose.
*Rationale
Changes in the requirements in the knowledge and skills base of Probation practitioners will occur in light of effective practice research, legislation, and political, social, economic and technological change. The curriculum will be updated accordingly.*
7. comprise **flexible, modular learning programmes,** as far as is practicable,that are accessible to learners.
*Rationale
In order to be cost effective and responsive to diverse training needs across the sector, the programme will need to be flexible and modular*. *This will enable learners to transfer* *between organisations and progress their development according to their career ambitions and the needs of their employer.*
8. comprise **learning programmes that** **integrate applied academic and practice learning.***Rationale
Integrated, applied academic and practice learning ensures that learning is relevant and integrated into practice, which is informed by research evidence rather than trial and error or individual, preferred approaches. The risk of separating the two is that practitioners would not be reflective, increasing the risk of serious further offences. There is evidence that programmes which integrate academic and practical learning have higher retention rates and meet the needs of the organisation more effectively than academic programmes or vocational qualifications alone.*
9. make use of **assessments** that efficiently and effectively test the application of knowledge, skills and understanding in practice settings.
Rationale
*NOMS is accountable to the government and the public for its expenditure and return on investment. Every opportunity will be taken to explore potential savings while maintaining the quality of the outcome.*
10. incorporate a rigorous and transparent approach to the **accreditation of experiential and certificated prior learning**
*Rationale
Accreditation of prior learning ensures that learning is not repeated and is therefore both cost and time effective and motivational for the learner.*
11. contribute to the **recruitment and retention** **of staff** working with offenders in the community, by offering clear pathways for career progression.
*Rationale
Recruitment and retention of staff will continue to be essential to service delivery in the future, learning and qualifications for staff are key factors in achieving this*.
12. **set a standard for effective practice** across the community justice sector.
Rationale
*Practice will be informed by research and evidence of what works to be effective in reducing reoffending and protecting the public. It will also be continuously updated in light of new evidence.*
13. allow **the interchange of staff** amongst all providers of probation services.
*Rationale*

S*upport of the interface between NPS and CRCs, and between CRCs will enable career progression across the sector.*

1. **be accessible to all employers and administered** and **quality assured by NOMS with representation from key stakeholders.***Rationale
The quality assurance of the qualification will need to be managed by NOMS in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure it meets ministerial and public requirements and remains fit for purpose*
2. **be developed in consultation and engagement with key-stakeholders.**

**Rationale***Buy in to Community Justice Learning will be dependent upon the learning meeting the requirements of key stakeholders including NPS and CRCs*.