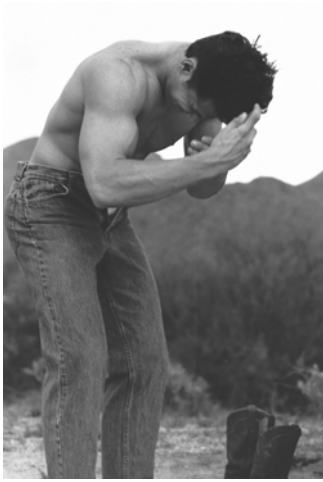




# Vocational Training Charitable Trust



# International Learners' Handbook 2006/2007

*VTCT Pathways to Success*

First Edition 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006

# VTCT International Learners' Handbook

**Website:** [www.vtct.org.uk](http://www.vtct.org.uk)

This booklet is designed to assist you as a new learner for VTCT qualifications at one of our international centres. It covers the questions we are asked most often and is to be used as a reference guide. If further clarification on any subject is required, your Tutor should be your first point of contact.

This Handbook is also accessible on our open website as above, found under the tab marked 'Students'.

*We wish you every success in your qualification with VTCT.*

## Your Questions Answered

**(1) What is VTCT?** Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) started life in 1962 providing the first high level national qualifications in Beauty Therapy. Since then it has expanded considerably and is now the market leader for vocationally related qualifications (VRQs), offering over seventy qualifications internationally in Beauty Therapy, Holistic and Complementary Therapies, Hairdressing, and Sports and Fitness.

Many of these qualifications are approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the regulatory authority for qualifications delivered in colleges and the workplace in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In addition, VTCT has three subsidiary institutes: IHBC (International Health and Beauty Council) covering qualifications in Beauty Therapy and related subjects; IIHHT (International Institute of Health and Holistic Therapies) covering qualifications in Holistic and Complementary Therapies and related subjects; and IIST (International Institute of Sports Therapy) covering qualifications in Sports and Fitness Therapies and related subjects. Registration with VTCT covers the relevant registration with these subsidiary institutes where appropriate.

At this time VTCT provides qualification services to over 500 centres in the UK and internationally, and registers over 100,000 new learners each year.

**(2) What are VRQs?** Vocationally related qualifications (VRQs) are competence based qualifications available internationally and written to agreed national occupational standards developed by UK Standards Setting Bodies or Sector Skills Councils representing industry. These are the practical performance requirements needed to be able to work as a fully competent person in the industry concerned. VRQs are divided into clearly defined units which can be taken in any order at any

time. There is a requirement for an independent assessment paper, set by VTCT and taken in your centre, in addition to practical and portfolio work.

**(3) What are competence based qualifications?** These are qualifications which confirm that the holder is fully competent to perform the stated skills to the level required by industry. It is not academic and only incorporates the theory that is essential to the application of specific skills. They are also called vocational qualifications.

**(4) What are the entrance requirements?** For a small number of VTCT qualifications you will need to have previously achieved a certain qualification, or have specific experience. Your chosen centre will advise you on this when you make initial enquiries. On contact with your chosen centre of study, they will assess your knowledge and advise on the level you will need to start at to attain your goals.

If you have a disability or need reasonable adjustments to be made so that you can access a course, your centre has procedures in place to provide advice and help. All VTCT centres also have a policy related to equal opportunities. They must make you aware of this on induction and explain if this is likely to affect you.

**(5) How much will my course cost?** Each qualification carries its own fee. You should ask your centre to find out the total costs involved for each course at that centre, which will include the VTCT fee.

**(6) How long will my course be?** Your centre will advise you on this. Your course may be a short course, full time, part time, evening, day release whilst working, or a long course.

**(7) Do I have to pay a separate registration fee additional to every qualification I take?** No, VTCT offers a lifetime registration fee. You are given a unique number and this appears on all certificates awarded to you and applies for any number of qualifications offered by VTCT. It is important to quote this number when you start every new VTCT course, even if you have moved to another centre or changed your name. This avoids duplication and the possibility of confusion in your collection of qualifications.

**(8) What books do I need to buy for the course?** VTCT makes no specification regarding books; this is an individual matter for each centre. You will receive a VTCT Record of Assessments Book for each qualification you are taking, which states in detail all the areas in which you must achieve competence, and the essential knowledge and understanding you need. You may find that a general textbook covering the subject is useful for reference and your centre will recommend what they think is appropriate. VTCT does offer endorsement to some books and details of these are advertised on the VTCT website.

**(9) What is a portfolio?** This is a record of supporting information to confirm that you have the skills necessary to complete a qualification. A full explanation is included in the front page of the Record of Assessments Book detailing all that you have to do and know to obtain the qualification concerned. Your centre may wish to keep your portfolio until it has been seen by the VTCT External Verifier. At the end of your course, it will become your property.

**(10) Are there age limits for VTCT qualifications?** Some VTCT qualifications have lower age limits. The centre will clarify these when you enquire about qualifications.

**(11) What does “Assessed and Verified” mean?** Because VTCT qualifications are based primarily upon practical performance, they use a system in which you are *assessed* (judged) continuously against the requirements as laid down in the Record of Assessments Book for that qualification (rather than having an exam at the end of your course). These requirements include essential knowledge and understanding linked to the practical performance requirements. You can see in your Record of Assessments book how far you have achieved the competence requirements and what still remains to be done.

If you take a formal assessment and the Assessor believes you are not yet competent, you will be told what it is you have to do and advised how to do it before re-assessment. You must achieve 100% competence in a particular skill and at a particular level. With experience you will become more highly skilled, so your qualification will provide a good base for your career.

Verification is the process used by VTCT to check that the assessments have been undertaken properly and in accordance with our requirements. Internal verification takes place within your centre, then VTCT sends an External Verifier in to each centre. It is only when the VTCT External Verifier is satisfied that all the proper procedures have been undertaken that a certificate can be issued.

Additionally, there may be independent assessment set by VTCT. This will be explained to you by your training centre.

**(12) What is independent assessment?** Independent assessment is a set of questions set by VTCT, taken in your centre at an appropriate time under exam conditions and marked by your centre. At least 70% must be achieved in order to pass. This then forms part of your portfolio to be verified by the VTCT External Verifier.

**(13) How many assessments do I have to do?** This is a matter for your Assessor to decide. You can have as many assessments as necessary until the Assessor is sure that you are fully competent. After any assessment where you have not fully demonstrated your competence, the Assessor will tell you why, so that you know what it is that you have to do differently, and you can be re-assessed shortly afterwards.

**(14) What happens if I don't agree with the assessment and I want to complain?** Every centre has an appeals procedure in place so that you can appeal against an assessment decision or what you consider to be unfair treatment. This will be explained to you at the start of your course. If you are unable to resolve your problem through the centre procedures, then you can appeal to VTCT. The procedure is detailed at the end of this booklet.

**(15) What is the pass mark for VTCT qualifications?** All VTCT qualifications are competence based and to obtain one it is necessary to achieve 100% competence in practical performance. This gives clients and employers the confidence that you can safely and effectively apply the skills covered by your qualifications. There may also

be independent assessment as required by the regulatory authorities for which the pass mark is 70%.

**(16) I am expected to take part in a commercial salon/clinic session as part of my course. Why is this?** You cannot be signed off for any qualification until each unit has been completed, and this includes sufficient practical performance in a Realistic Working Environment (RWE) to show you are fully competent. It is also vital to keep practising your skills or you may not be ready to go out to work.

**(17) I have been told I have to practise on real clients and I am worried whether it is safe for me to do this.** You can be assured that in your training centre they will not want you to do anything which is dangerous. However, if you are practising on real clients in the workplace then adequate treatment liability insurance is strongly recommended. As a learner and when you go on to practise, you should have appropriate treatment liability insurance to cover you whilst working on clients.

**(18) What does it mean to be qualified?** To be qualified means that you have achieved full competence in particular skill areas. When you have done this for a full qualification, VTCT will issue you with a certificate which also bears the stamp of QCA if the qualification is approved by them. Your certificate may also carry the logo of IHBC, IIHHT or IIST. If you have not completed a full qualification, you will be issued with a Certificate of Unit Credit covering each full unit which you have successfully completed.

**(19) What level qualifications will I get?** VTCT qualifications are provided at a number of different levels. The levels are a way of indicating the complexity of the tasks covered. All our qualifications are widely recognised as being of high quality and enable the learner to readily qualify for treatment liability insurance and employment. More information on levels can be found in the international VTCT Record of Assessment Books.

**(20) What letters can I put after my name, after qualifying?** Once you have received your certificate, you can use the Awarding Body initials and the words “qualified in ...” after your name if you so wish, as follows:

Vocational Training Charitable Trust qualifications	VTCT Qualified in ...
VTCT/International Health and Beauty Council qualifications	VTCT (IHBC) Qualified in ...
VTCT/International Institute of Health and Holistic Therapies qualifications	VTCT (IIHHT) Qualified in ...
VTCT/International Institute of Sports Therapy qualifications	VTCT (IIST) Qualified in ...

**(21) Can I join VTCT after qualifying?** No, because VTCT is purely an Awarding Body issuing qualifications and is not a membership body.

**(22) I have been told that whilst training I can't wear jewellery. Why not?** We make no specific requirement regarding dress, but we do have a statement on dress standards containing advice on a common sense approach. You will find the statement in this booklet. However, your centre will advise you on their requirements relating to appropriate dress and this must be adhered to.

**(23) I already have some qualifications/learning and I understand that part of these duplicate what is in the qualification I want to complete. Can I get any credit for what I have already done?** You may be able to. The process used is one known as APL, or accreditation of prior learning. Your centre will be able to advise you on how an APL Assessor can arrange for you to have credit for anything suitable as a result of previous recognised and accepted qualifications or experience. Sometimes what you have done does not cover the ground completely for a VTCT unit, and this is the smallest part of a qualification that can be considered for credit. In such a case, your Assessor will advise you on what you must do to ensure completion in the easiest possible way.

**(24) If I lose my registration card or certificate, can I get another one to replace it?** You may apply in writing to VTCT for a replacement card or certificate for a fee, stating the reasons why a replacement is required. If VTCT agrees to issue a duplicate it will be marked as a duplicate. Employers can check at any time with VTCT regarding the authenticity of any certificate.

**(25) If I marry or change my name, can I obtain a replacement certificate in my new name?** The regulatory authorities do not allow Awarding Bodies to issue replacement certificates because of a name change even when due to marriage or divorce. However, if you change your name *before* your certificate has been issued, then you must contact VTCT stating your registration number, new name and a request for the database to be amended. You must also fax the appropriate legal documentation to support your request (eg marriage certificate/deed poll).

**(26) I have been told I have to be at my centre on a day I don't usually have to go, because a VTCT External Verifier will be there. Do I really have to go?** Yes. The regulations provide that you must attend on specific occasions when required to do so by the VTCT External Verifier. The names of those to be checked are chosen at random and the continuing approval of your training centre partly depends upon this. Various cross checks have to be made with individuals and against their assessment records. This, as part of a quality control system, ensures that you get qualifications which have high status and are recognised by the best employers. Normally the External Verifier will give 4 weeks' notice for a session of this type.

**(27) Are VTCT qualifications recognised everywhere in the world?** VTCT vocational qualifications are internationally recognised and you should find no difficulty in transferring your skills. However, sadly there is as yet no guaranteed international recognition agreement in place worldwide, and countries (and indeed provinces/states within some countries) do have their own specific regulations which can change regularly. VTCT therefore strongly recommends that you seek advice in the country concerned about the recognition of specific qualifications at that point in time, and any other evidence which may be needed to work and to gain insurance. It is vital that you always keep your portfolio of evidence from your course, as well as your certificate, so that you can show this to employers, Government officials, insurance companies, etc.

**(28) I'm moving away. Can I complete my course at a different centre to the one at which I started my course?** Yes, provided you go to another VTCT approved centre. You will need to negotiate any training fees with your new centre,

and your centre will need to inform VTCT, but you will not need to re-register with VTCT if your registration is still current.

**(29) If after starting on a course I find I don't like it, can I have my registration and qualification fees back?** There are no refunds, but you can complete the qualification later (usually within 3 years) without paying any extra qualification fee to VTCT. This is useful to those who have to break off the course but want to come back to it later. You can also transfer to any other VTCT approved centre to complete, subject to their regulations on charges, and their willingness to accommodate you. When you start on a course you are making a contract with the training centre, *not* VTCT. You should receive information from them about their procedures in relation to fees when students leave before completion of their course.

**(30) I don't want to finish my course, but can I still have a certificate?** Yes, if you have fully completed one or more units. Any units in which you have achieved full competence can be recorded on a Certificate of Unit Credit, and your centre will apply for this.

**(31) If I come across anything that may contribute to the award of fraudulent certificates, what can I do?** You can write, marking the envelope or email 'Confidential', direct to the VTCT Chief Executive. VTCT guarantees not to disclose your name to your centre.

VTCT will conduct an immediate investigation to establish whether there is a problem of the type you describe, and will inform you of the outcome. However, VTCT cannot accept any anonymous complaints. This is important because, if serious allegations are made, even in confidence, we will need to check certain facts with you. It is in the interests of everyone that any such behaviour is brought to light as quickly as possible and dealt with appropriately. This may require notification to the regulatory authorities.

**(32) If I have a complaint against my training centre, what can I do?** A learner having a complaint against their training centre must exhaust the centre's complaints procedure first, and may wish to keep VTCT informed of progress of this. The learner's contract is with the training centre, and VTCT cannot be involved in contractual disputes, however VTCT is an interested party and will be concerned to ensure that learners are supported in seeking to complete their qualification requirements.

If the complaint relates to qualification assessment, the appeals procedure described at the end of this booklet may be implemented.

## Codes of Ethics

Codes of Ethics are rules of conduct which anyone who joins a professional body agrees to abide by. Infringements of these codes are taken very seriously by professional bodies and can result in penalties up to and including expulsion from membership.

Awarding Bodies giving qualifications are concerned to ensure that standards for those qualifications are met. In the major sectors covered by VTCT (Beauty Therapy, Hairdressing, Holistic and Complementary Therapies, and Health and Fitness), we are the largest UK-based international provider of qualifications. VTCT and the professional bodies working in the same fields are both concerned with the high professional and ethical standing of those whom we qualify and who go on to practice.

As an Awarding Body we cannot make it mandatory upon those taking our qualifications to abide by a Code of Ethics, however we do expect that all educational services delivering our qualifications, and the learners, take account of appropriate Codes of Ethics in the way in which treatments are performed on models or clients. Most UK Standards Setting Bodies or Sector Skills Councils issue a Code of Ethics which may be found on their websites.

## Learner Dress

We are often asked what appropriate dress is. The following notes may help.

The psychology of dress is a big subject and clothes create a powerful visual signal. It is therefore important to be aware of the signal you wish to convey. What is correct depends essentially on who our clients are and what we are trying to say to them by the way we dress.

The client must be made to feel at ease and have confidence in you as a professional; this will encourage further bookings to be made and recommendation to be given.

Clothing must also be comfortable because much of personal service work is arduous, involving bodily movement, a lot of standing, and is frequently in a high heat atmosphere.

It is always important for clothes to be clean and neat. People who place their bodies in our hands expect cleanliness and hygiene.

In addition to the right appearance it is essential to also offer a friendly smile and a helpful approach.

Jewellery should be minimal for most treatments, and facial jewellery should be considered in the context of what is generally acceptable to the cultural groups with which you are working.

***Your Centre will advise you on the specifics of what you must wear throughout your training.***

# Appeals Procedures

## General

All VTCT approved centres are required to publish their appeals procedures, which must ensure that the centre operates a system for reviewing the quality and fairness of the assessment procedure for the learners.

The procedure will outline how the appeals process is made known to learners and how an appeal is to be recorded and processed, including the provision of a quality assurance committee to hear the appeal.

New centres will not be approved by VTCT if they have not provided a copy of an appropriate appeals procedure.

The VTCT International department keeps records of all appeals received relating to international centres, recording outcomes. Details will be reported annually to the Chief Executive, who will in turn report to the Board of Trustees.

## Learner Appeal Against an Internal Assessment Decision

In the first instance, appeals must be made within the centre and following the centre's appeals procedures which must be fully exhausted before VTCT may become further involved.

A learner appeal may be placed against:

- assessment decisions affecting the learner's results;
- other decisions affecting the centre and learner(s) where appropriate.

## Centre Action

In the event that a satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved, the centre must notify VTCT by e-mail or by telephone that the learner appeal to VTCT.

The centre will also confirm that the learner has exhausted the centre's own appeals procedure.

## Learner Action

Learners who choose to appeal to VTCT following the outcome of the centre's investigation must provide VTCT with written confirmation of their intent within fourteen working days following the centre's decision.

In all such cases the following information must be provided:

- name of centre;
- learner name;
- learner registration number;
- title of qualification undertaken;
- details relating to the learner appeal.

The VTCT External Verifier will liaise with the centre contact, who will provide a copy of the centre's initial report following the learner's appeal. The External Verifier will make recommendations to VTCT within seven working days. It may be necessary for further enquiries to be carried out before VTCT is able to provide a written report to

the learner and the centre. The report will include recommendations and details of any decision taken and will be completed within four weeks.

This may result in the learner returning to the centre within a further eight weeks to be reassessed by the VTCT External Verifier.

If necessary a further appeal may be made to VTCT's Chief Executive and the Educational and Vocational Advisory Committee (EVAC). EVAC involves in the decision-making at least one independent member, who is not, and has not been at any time during the past seven years, a member of the VTCT Board or the VTCT Board Committees, or an employee or examiner of VTCT. The Chief Executive and EVAC will review the appeal and determine VTCT's final response, which will be communicated to the learner in writing within eight weeks from the date that the appeal was received.

If the learner is still not satisfied with the appeal decision, an independent review will be conducted. The independent review will confirm that all procedures have been followed and make recommendations to EVAC whose decision will be final.

Where the outcome of an appeal brings into question the accuracy of other results, VTCT will take all necessary steps to protect the interests of other learners.

### **Fees**

There are no charges for learner appeals. This is to ensure that no unnecessary barriers prevent the learner from appealing against an assessment decision.

## **Contact**

VTCT invites learners to provide written feedback, which we will keep a record of, and react to, when necessary, to maintain or improve quality.

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