



Approval Criteria

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Version 5



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Failure to meet criteria before approval	3
3. Failure to meet criteria after approval	3
4. Approval Criteria	4
4.1. Section A: Management systems.....	4
4.2. Section B: Policies, procedures, records and administration.....	5
4.3. Section C: Qualification delivery arrangements	6
4.4. Section D: Delivery of external assessment	7
4.5. Section E: Learner experience	8
5. Centre staff roles and responsibilities	9
6. Qualification staff roles and responsibilities	9
6.1. Assessors	10
6.2. IQAs	10
6.3. Unqualified assessors and IQAs	10
6.4. CPD requirements.....	10
7. Realistic working environments	10

1. Introduction

To gain and maintain approval to offer VTCT and/or ITEC qualifications, centres need to meet the following approval criteria. Centres will be initially checked that they meet the approval criteria as part of the approval process and reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to meet the Approval Criteria during monitoring activities.

Examples of how the criteria can be evidenced are provided within this document.

Evidence in support of the approval criteria will be reviewed during the approval visit or on the first monitoring visit to the centre. Continuing compliance with the approval criteria will then be monitored through our monitoring activities.

2. Failure to meet criteria before approval

As part of an Approval Visit, we will check that the centre meets the Approval Criteria before granting approval. Where a Centre doesn't meet the Approval Criteria, the centre will be issued with an action plan to become compliant with the approval criteria, thus allowing approval to be granted.

Where possible we will view evidence of completed actions remotely. However, the centre may need an additional approval visit to sign off some actions and centres will require an additional visit where the centre has taken a period of 6 months or more to complete actions. (Centres will be required to pay for any additional visits).

Centres cannot be granted approval until they comply with the entire Approval Criteria.

3. Failure to meet criteria after approval

Where an approved centre doesn't comply with this criteria, we will usually issue the centre with an action plan to the centre to complete. We will only apply sanctions (as defined in the Sanctions Policy) where actions are not implemented or if the failure is severe enough to threaten the validity or integrity of our qualification(s); our function as an awarding organisation; or could undermine the confidence in our qualifications.

Failure to remedy actions and sanctions may ultimately result in the withdrawal of centre approval.

4. Approval Criteria

4.1. Section A: Management systems

Criteria		Examples of evidence
A1	The centre disseminates actions to appropriate staff and implements corrective measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EQA reports circulated to the assessment team and senior management Evidence of action plans being implemented
A2	The centre has defined and agreed responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities for the qualification delivery team (e.g. the team of assessors and internal quality assurers).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An organisational chart Defined job descriptions Lines of accountability in relation to the assessment and quality assurance process Single point of overall responsibility (e.g. principal or head of the centre)
A3	The centre has procedures in place to ensure effective communication between all centre staff and with VTCT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agendas and minutes of team meetings Staff handbooks and updates Records of emails
A4	The centre has clearly defined the roles and responsibilities that are to be fulfilled by any sub-contracting arrangements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented and signed agreements indicating the lines of accountability of partner organisations in relation to the management of assessment and internal quality assurance
A5	The centre has the necessary resources, equipment and facilities to comply with the requirements of qualification delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of resource availability Evidence of additional resources obtained Records of equipment, accommodation and facilities Access to workplace or realistic working environment (where required), see section 11 for more information on realistic working environments
A6	The centre complies with the requirements of relevant health and safety legislation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health & Safety Procedures and maintenance schedules
A7	The centre plans adequate time to meet the requirements for delivery of qualification(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned time allowances for qualification to meet the guided learning hours (GLH) or total qualification time (TQT) Evidence of using feedback to adjust time provided for a qualification
A8	The centre has a staff development programme established for the qualification delivery team in accordance with identified needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided induction and guidance materials for staff Development plans in place Action plans for staff to become qualified, with the relevant process for countersigning all unqualified assessor and internal quality assurer decisions
A9	The centre monitors and reviews its approach to qualification delivery to inform future activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of monitoring and review of delivery Evaluation forms and surveys Evidence of review and implemented action plans Analysis of achievement rates

4.2. Section B: Policies, procedures, records and administration

Criteria		Examples of evidence
B1	<p>The centre has documented policies in place to provide advice and guidance on key aspects which are reviewed and updated regularly and made available to learners, where appropriate.</p> <p>The centre must specifically have policies to cover the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals • Complaints • Equality & Diversity • Health & Safety • Malpractice & Maladministration • Conflicts of Interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented policies and procedures in place • Documented Policy Review mechanisms • Includes time frames for resolution and escalation routes (see VTCT's complaints policy for more details on when a complaint can be escalated) • For Scottish public bodies (e.g. FE colleges) reference to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) is included in the centre's complaints policy
B2	<p>The centre ensures that records are maintained and are made available upon request for the purposes of auditing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of learners' registration, tracking and achievement • Assessment and IQA records • Plans for storage of records
B3	<p>The centre has a process for the registration and certification which ensures that learners are registered within 8 weeks of starting their qualification.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process for checking the identity of learners • Awareness of VTCT requirements • Learner registration and certification records
B4	<p>The centre has a process in place to verify that the identity and information provided by the learners upon registration is accurate and complete.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolment process includes viewing learner's original documents confirming identity • The centre uses records and data which have previously verified the learner's identity and information

4.3. Section C: Qualification delivery arrangements

Criteria		Examples of evidence
C1	<p>The centre has sufficient appropriately qualified and competent staff (e.g. assessors and IQAs) as required to deliver the qualification.</p> <p>More details on qualification delivery staff requirements can be found within qualification specifications; assessment strategies; and section 6 of this document.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of assessor's and internal quality assurers' qualifications, experience and CPD • Details of countersigning arrangements for any unqualified assessors' or internal quality assurers' decisions • Staff records (Certificates, CVs and CPD logs) that evidence the requirements to deliver any requested qualifications have been met
C2	<p>The centre uses assessment methods which are valid and reliable and will allow access to assessment for learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment plans and learner assessment records • Provision for learners with particular assessment requirements
C3	<p>Adequate procedures in place for liaising with, and ensuring consistency across, the qualification delivery team (e.g. team of assessors and IQA team), including any associated sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of team meetings and records of communication • Evidence of standardisation meetings that have taken place and future meetings planned • Records of relevant action plans • Record of all assessment sites and personnel
C4	<p>Necessary procedures and activities for qualification delivery are planned and recorded, and findings are acted upon to ensure quality and consistency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented IQA plans and reports/records of activity • Sampling strategy and schedule of activity • Assessment and internal quality assurance records • Minutes of team meetings /standardisation • Evidence of actions taken
C5	<p>Potential and actual conflicts of interest (e.g. assessing a family member or IQAs signing off their own assessments) are identified, recorded and mitigated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of potential or actual conflicts of interest; • Process for identifying and mitigating conflicts of interest
C6	<p>Where appropriate, the centre has procedures and records to support Recognition of Prior Learning in accordance with VTCT's Policies and Procedures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process for identifying RPL, Equivalence and/or Exemption • Records of where RPL, Equivalence and/or Exemption has been applied
C7	<p>Assessment records are in place which will show accurate assessment tracking, progress and achievement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment records • Processes and procedures for assessment tracking
C8	<p>Equipment and accommodation used for the purposes of qualification delivery comply with the requirements of relevant business legislation and qualification requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available resources to meet any relevant legislation for qualifications or sectors being delivered
C9	<p>Qualifications and assessments are delivered in the English language, or in another language which VTCT has granted prior written approval to the centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments are planned and undertaken in English. • The centre can produce written evidence of authorisation by VTCT to deliver in another language.
C10	<p>Qualifications are only delivered at approved teaching/examination/assessment venues/sites which the centre has gained approval for.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval letters or certificates for all sites being used to deliver the qualification.

4.4. Section D: Delivery of external assessment

Criteria		Examples of evidence
D1	External assessment is conducted in accordance with our Instructions for Conducting Examinations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invigilation requirements are available to view and invigilators understand the arrangements • Invigilation reports and seating plans • Details of invigilators allocated to tests
D2	<p>Examination papers and assessment materials are securely stored and managed.</p> <p>Centres are required to store all examination papers and results securely complying with "VTCT Instructions for Conducting Examinations" document.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security and access arrangements • Secure storage facilities in place (e.g. alarmed room/building, fireproof safe, cabinet with external locking bar, reinforced glass) • Examination papers, seating plans and marking sheets securely stored
D3	The centre has processes in place to notify VTCT when there has been a loss or theft of, or a breach of confidentiality in, any assessment materials by the centre or learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures for notifying VTCT of events occurring • Evidence of notifications to VTCT • Investigation reports into incident(s) • Evidence of completed actions issued by VTCT

4.5. Section E: Learner experience

Criteria		Examples of evidence
E1	Learners receive an induction which provides information, advice and guidance about qualification procedures and practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner guidance and induction materials • Details of support services available • Provision of complaints and appeals procedure to learners • Contract between centre and learner for a qualification undertaken
E2	There is an established appeals and complaints procedure that is documented and made available to all learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented appeals and complaints procedures, including time frames • Records of appeals and complaints made and their outcomes • Signed and dated induction checklists
E3	Learners have regular opportunities to review their progress and goals and to modify their assessment plan accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner assessment plans, with records and procedures, and holds review meetings • Learner records • System to track learners' progress; • Feedback provided by delivery staff
E4	Particular needs of learners are identified and met where possible, and VTCT is notified where a reasonable adjustment is required following the published guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process for identifying a learner's need for a reasonable adjustment. • Materials, equipment and facilities available to support learners with learning disabilities or reasonable adjustments

5. Centre staff roles and responsibilities

To be able to effectively offer VTCT qualifications, the centre will need to allocate staff to fulfil the following roles:

- Head of Centre – this role has overall responsibility for the centre;
- Head of Quality – this role is responsible for the centre’s quality assurance processes (this is usually a lead IQA or centre coordinator);
- Examinations Officer – this role is responsible for submitting registrations and certification claims to VTCT;
- Finance Officer – this role will be the first point of contact regarding any financial queries.

6. Qualification staff roles and responsibilities

In order to deliver a VTCT qualification, the centre must have appropriately qualified and occupationally competent staff as required to deliver the qualification.

The requirements for a qualification will be given in one of the following documents, where available:

- the assessment strategy;
- the qualification specification.

Qualification specifications and assessment strategies for VTCT qualifications as well as the Approval criteria are available to view on the VTCT website.

Where there is only a record of assessment book available for a qualification, the following criteria apply:

To be able to offer and deliver a VTCT qualification, the centre must have:

- at least one qualified and competent assessor; and
- at least one qualified and competent IQA.

NB. Generally, a member of staff is deemed competent if they hold the same, equivalent or a related higher level qualification as the qualification or unit they are assessing or quality assuring.

Centres must also have an appropriate number of Invigilator(s) for qualifications requiring external assessment under exam conditions. For further details of VTCT’s requirements relating to invigilation, please refer to VTCT’s Instructions for Conducting Examinations, available from the VTCT website.

6.1. Assessors

Unless otherwise specified in a qualification's assessment strategy or qualification specification, assessors must be competent, as described previously, and must hold at least one of the following recognised assessing qualifications to be considered a qualified assessor:

- D32 Assess candidate performance;
- D33 Assess candidate using differing sources of evidence;
- A1 Assess candidate performance using a range of methods;
- A2 Assess candidate performance through observation;
- Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment;
- Level 3 Award in Assessing Vocationally Related Achievement;
- Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement.

6.2. IQAs

IQAs must be competent, as described previously, and must hold at least one of the following recognised internal verification/quality assurance qualifications to be considered a qualified IQA:

- D34 Internally verify the assessment process;
- V1 Conduct internal quality assurance of the assessment process;
- Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice;
- Level 4 Certificate in Leading the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice.

Please note that IQAs may only quality assure evidence that they did not assess.

6.3. Unqualified assessors and IQAs

Centres must ensure that unqualified assessors and IQAs are registered on an appropriate qualification and have an action plan and timeframe for completion (usually within 12 months). Centres must ensure that all decisions made by unqualified assessors or IQAs are countersigned by a qualified and competent assessor or IQA respectively.

6.4. CPD requirements

Assessors and IQAs should have access to, and be engaging in continuous professional development activities in order to keep up to date with developments and issues relevant to the qualification and/or its units. CPD should be demonstrated through a personal development plan (PDP) or as a reflective diary. Responsibility for CPD is the individuals, not the organisation they work for.

CPD requirements may be stated in Assessment Strategies and/or Qualification Specifications, however where they are not stated or these documents are not available the centre must contact the appropriate Sector Skills Council and apply required CPD for staff. This will be checked by EQA's when visiting.

7. Realistic working environments

Where a qualification's purpose is to confirm competence in a job role but a centre doesn't have access to a workplace, a realistic working environment should be used. A realistic working environment recreates the workplace, (including pressures and service time constraints) and prepares learners for the workplace by working under normal conditions and meeting published or expected service times. Where appropriate and relevant, the following aspects should be incorporated into a realistic working environment:

- Learners need to maintain a professional appearance, attitude and standards.
- A reception area should be provided to greet clients/customers/guests and take telephone calls, bookings/reservations and payment.
- Use of paying clients/customers/guests (avoiding friends or relatives) for services; responsibility for this provision rests with the Centre.
- Appropriate facilities and resources for the service following best industry practice.
- Meet the needs of relevant health and safety legislation set nationally or by any local authorities and need to be at the forefront of all activity occurring within the realistic working environment.
- Meet all workplace requirements of confidentiality and data protection.
- Deliver services within expected service times and focus on reducing waste and making services cost effective.

Document History

Version	Issue Date	Changes	Role
v1	01/01/2015	New Policy	Quality Assurance Supervisor
v2	01/09/2016	Added section for Assessor and IQA requirements	Quality Assurance Supervisor
v3	01/08/2017	Added appendix for revisions to this document, clarified CPD requirements, added retention requirements and realistic working environment guidance.	Quality Assurance Supervisor
v4	09/02/2018	Combined VTCT and ITEC requirements and added requirements specified in the Centre Agreement. Removed Record Retention Requirements section as this is now detailed within the Centre Agreement.	Quality and Processing Supervisor
v4.1	12/02/2018	Formatted and updated to branding	Product Designer (Qualifications)
V5	19/04/2018	Amendments to remove duplication in sections and clarify CPD requirements	Compliance Manager

Document Review

Role	Review Status
Quality and Processing Manager	Reviewed

Document Sign-off

Role	Sign-off Date
Chief Academic Officer	19/04/2018