



Learner Handbook



Smarter support for
brighter futures
www.vtct.org.uk

**“We wish you every success
in your studies towards your
VTCT qualification.”**



Your questions answered

This handbook is designed to help you as a new VTCT learner. It covers everything you need to know about us, your qualification and any other questions you may have whilst studying. If you do have further questions, your tutor should be your first point of contact.

You can find this handbook online at **www.vtct.org.uk** under the 'learners' section of the website.

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Section 1 - Your Awarding Organisation

Who is VTCT?

VTCT is a market-leading specialist Awarding and Assessment Organisation, with a UK market share of over 60%, offering vocational and technical qualifications in a range of 'services to people'. The qualifications suite offered by VTCT, spans a range of sectors including hairdressing and barbering, beauty therapy, complementary therapy, sport, active health and fitness, business, retail, hospitality and catering, and learning and development.

Section 2 - Your Qualification

What is an NVQ/SVQ?

An NVQ is a National Vocational Qualification approved by Ofqual, which is the main regulatory body for qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. An SVQ is a Scottish Vocational Qualification approved by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Accreditation which is the regulatory body for qualifications in Scotland.

What are VRQs?

Vocationally Related Qualifications (VRQs) are assessed to competence standards identical to NVQs/SVQs, but tend to cover more specialised areas.

Are there age limits for NVQs/SVQs or VRQs?

Some VTCT qualifications have age limits. Your centre will clarify these when you enquire about qualifications.

How long will my course be?

Your centre will advise you on this, taking into account whether your course is a short course, full-time, part-time, evening, day release from work, or a long course.

What are competence based qualifications?

These are qualifications which confirm that the holder is fully competent to perform the specified skills to the level required by the industry and is able to incorporate the theory that is essential to the application of those skills. This is called a vocational qualification.

Do I have to pay a separate registration fee additional to every qualification I take?

No. We offer a lifetime registration. You are given a unique number and this appears on all certificates awarded to you by VTCT. It is important to quote this number on induction to every new qualification you undertake with us. If you do not know it, ask your tutor or ring VTCT Customer Support for your Unique Learner Number (ULN) if you are studying in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, or Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) in Scotland. VTCT does not issue these numbers, and your centre will tell you if you do not need one.

What is a Personal Learner Record (PLR)? (UK only)

This is your permanent, authoritative online record of your qualifications and achievements. It records general and vocational qualifications such as, but not limited to, QCF, A levels, GCSEs, BTEC, Diplomas and Functional skills. The PLR means that you should no longer have to show copies of different certificates to learning providers or employers. You can provide this information as a report generated from your PLR.

What are the entrance requirements for VTCT qualifications?

Some VTCT qualifications require a 'prerequisite' qualification to be completed or studied along with your practical study. Your centre will advise you of these requirements on enrolment.

What books do I need to buy for the course?

VTCT does not specify particular books, however, your centre may require you to have or purchase specific books. You will have access to resources provided by VTCT, such as a record of assessment book which will detail areas in which competence must be achieved and the essential knowledge and understanding you require. Also where applicable, your qualification may provide you with access to Pivot Point LAB.

There is also a link on the VTCT website where resources are available to purchase at <https://www.vtct.org.uk/learners/>

What is a portfolio?

This is a record of supporting information to confirm that you have the skills necessary to complete the qualification.

A portfolio can either be built using hardcopy evidence or by using an e-portfolio system. Your centre will advise you on the best way to build your evidence and should enable you to choose how you wish to collect it. At the end of your course, your portfolio will become your property to show to potential employers.

VTCT has a bespoke e-portfolio, ManageAssess, to support our qualifications. Your centre will advise you if you have access to this system.



What if I have already passed a unit in the qualification I want to study, through previous learning?

This may be possible through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Both prior learning (experience gathered through working) and a formal programme of study (previous qualifications), may be used to achieve some 'learning outcomes and assessment criteria' for a unit. The process of RPL will be available to you if you wish to use it, and should be accurate and reliable. If RPL does apply to you, it is a voluntary process. You will be offered advice and guidance from your centre on the suitability of the range of evidence you need to submit for RPL. Types of evidence could include a one-to-one discussion, witness testimony or a practical skills test.

The process of RPL will have the same monitoring and quality checks as any other form of assessment (test, observation etc.), by both your centre and VTCT. If you achieve a unit through RPL it will have the same recognition as a unit achieved as part of a study programme. RPL can be used for any RQF unit unless the 'assessment requirements' do not allow for this, providing you have suitable evidence that relates to the area of learning. An example of this would be five years working as a receptionist which could be considered for the 'Level 2 Salon Reception' unit.

If the evidence you provide for RPL is agreed, VTCT will certificate the unit on completion of the qualification.

Can I study my course online?

The courses that you have chosen are vocational courses, this means that you need to demonstrate your practical skills, these skills cannot be taught or assessed on line. Some of the theory units may be accompanied by e-learning resources, VTCT learners have access to Pivot Point resources, and your centre may also provide their own resources on a virtual learning platform or VLE that will support your learning.

How much will my course cost?

Your centre sets the fees for your course, you will need to refer to their prospectus and price list to find out the cost.





Section 3 - Whilst you study

What do I do if I think that there is an error in my exam paper?

If you think there may be an error on your exam, notify an invigilator immediately and continue with the exam as normal, unless told otherwise by your invigilator. Your centre will notify VTCT and we will ensure that if there is an error, it will not affect your result.

What if I have a specific need that may affect my ability to successfully complete my course?

If there is anything that may affect your learning during your qualification, you will need to tell your centre and they can make arrangements with VTCT as necessary. It is important that you discuss any requirements with your centre on induction or at the start of your learning experience.

I have been told that whilst under training I can't wear facial piercings and other jewellery. Why not?

VTCT makes no specific requirement regarding dress, but we do offer guidelines which can be found in this book. Your centre will advise you on its regulations regarding appropriate dress, this is usually in line with industry standards and must be adhered to.

I'm moving. Can I attend a different centre from the one at which I started my course?

Yes, provided you go to another approved VTCT centre. You may need to negotiate any training fees with your new centre, but will not need to re-register your qualification with VTCT.

I don't want to finish my course; can I still have a certificate?

Yes. Any units in which you have achieved full competence can be recorded on a certificate of unit credit (NVQ/SVQ/VRQ only).

If I come across anything that may contribute to the award of fraudulent certificates, what can I do?

You are able to write to us or send us an email, marking it confidential on the envelope or subject line, addressed to the attention of Head of Quality. We will not disclose to the centre who brought the concern or issue (potential malpractice or maladministration) to our attention without seeking prior agreement.

If I have a complaint against my training centre, what can I do?

If you have a complaint against your centre you must first exhaust the centre complaints procedure and you may wish to keep VTCT informed of progress. Your contract is with the training centre and VTCT cannot be involved in contractual disputes.

If your complaint relates to qualification assessment, you may use the appeals procedures described at the end of this booklet.

Can I retake an exam to get a higher grade?

This is dependent on the qualification you are studying, your centre will advise you if this is applicable.

What happens if I fail my exam?

There is no limit on the number of permitted attempts at an examination; unless specifically stated in the qualification specification. The subsequent attempt will however be subject to a resit fee, which is stated in VTCT's Qualifications and Fees document. The Exams Officer will be able to schedule and conduct the examinations following the standard process.

Have I been registered?

You should be registered on your course within the first 6-8 weeks of your course starting. You will receive a VTCT Registration Number which is yours for life and will be used with all VTCT courses.

Section 4 - Work Experience

I am expected to take part in a commercial workplace session at college. Why is this?

You cannot be signed off for a qualification until everything is completed and this includes sufficient practical performance to show you are fully competent. It is also vital to keep practising your skills so you are ready to go out to work.

I have been told I have to practise on real clients and I am worried whether it is safe for me to do this.

If you are practising on real clients in the workplace, then adequate treatment liability insurance is essential. It is vital as a learner and also when you go on to practise, that you have appropriate treatment liability insurance to cover you whilst working on clients. Your centre will have insurance to cover work undertaken within the centre whilst you study.

How do I find someone to take me on for workplace experience?

Workplace arrangements will be discussed with you and assistance will be given to you by your training provider.

Section 5 - How will my qualification be examined

What does 'assessed' and 'verified' mean?

Because NVQs/SVQs and VRQs are based primarily upon practical performance, they use a system in which you are assessed continuously against the requirements as detailed in the record of assessment book for that qualification. If you take a formal assessment and the assessor believes you are not yet competent, you will be given guidance on what you need to do before being re-assessed.

Verification is the process used by VTCT to check that the assessments have been undertaken properly and in accordance with our requirements. It is only when the VTCT External Quality Assurer is satisfied that all the proper procedures have been undertaken that a certificate can be issued.

What are independent and external assessments?

Independent assessment is a set of questions set by VTCT, taken under exam conditions and marked in your centre. It then forms part of your portfolio to be verified by an External Quality Assurer. External assessment is a set of questions supplied by VTCT, taken under exam conditions in your centre and marked externally by VTCT. External assessment may be sat as a paper test or an online test. Independent and external assessments represent just one way of testing knowledge and understanding.

How many assessments do I have to do for an NVQ/SVQ or VRQ?

Your assessor will decide how many assessments you will have to do based on your level of competence.

How many assessments do I have to do for a TLQ or Tech Cert?

You will need to build up a formative portfolio of evidence showing you have met all of the criteria set. There will then be a graded assessment for each mandatory unit in your qualification and a pass/fail grade for your optional units. You will have a synoptic practical assessment, a bit like a trade test, in the last third of your course.

What happens if I don't agree with the assessment decision and I want to complain?

Every centre has an appeals procedure in place so that you can appeal against an assessment decision or treatment you think is unfair. This will be explained to you on induction. 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.



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. At all levels, qualifications are offered as awards, certificates or diplomas depending on the Total Qualification Time (TQT).

What is the pass mark for VTCT qualifications?

Many VTCT qualifications are competence based and to obtain one, it is necessary to achieve 100% competence in practical performance. There may also be an independent assessment or external assessment requirement.

What does the grading mean in TLQs and Tech Certs?

These qualifications allow you to gain the following grades: fail, pass, merit, distinction and distinction*. They are hurdle based assessments, which means that you must complete the pass criteria and all of the merit criteria before moving on to the distinction criteria. Your grade/s is/are agreed by your assessor, IQA and EQA.

I've been told I need to attend my centre on a day I don't usually go, because an External Quality Assurer will be there. Do I have to attend?

Yes. As explained on induction for a qualification, you must attend on specific occasions when required to do so by the VTCT External Quality Assurer. The names of those to be checked are chosen at random and the continuing approval of your training centre partly depends upon this. Normally the External Quality Assurer will give four weeks' notice for a session of this type.

Section 6 - Once you've qualified

Can I join VTCT after qualifying?

VTCT is the Awarding Organisation and is not a professional body, therefore you are not able to join.

What should I do if I have not yet received my certificate?

Your certificate will be claimed for by your centre. We will then dispatch certificates to them directly, and they are responsible for either sending them to you or arranging a collection date. It is important to ensure that they have the correct address for you, your centre is your first point of contact. At busy times of the year, for example at the end of the summer term, certificates may take longer to be dispatched. You need to allow between 6-12 weeks for the certificates to be sent to your centre.

Does my certificate expire?

Your certificate will not expire unless specifically stated, but it is your responsibility to maintain your currency by continuing to work in the industry and stay up to date by attending courses that update your knowledge, these are referred to as Continuous Professional Development courses or CPD. If you have not been practising your skills for the last three years and apply to do a course where you have covered a unit before, you will be expected to refresh that knowledge and understanding by attending lessons and you will need to take any assessments associated to that unit.

What letters can I put after my name, after qualifying?

If you hold a Diploma (37 credits or above) or Certificate (13 to 36 credits) at Level 3 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), Level 6 (Scotland), or Level 5 (Ireland), and received your certificate after 1st January 2012, you may put the appropriate format below after your name:

VTCT Qualification Sector	Diploma	Certificate
Beauty Therapy	HDipBT (VTCT)	HCertBT (VTCT)
Hairdressing and Barbering	HDipHB (VTCT)	HCertHB (VTCT)
Complementary Therapy	HDipCT (VTCT)	HCertCT (VTCT)
Sports and Active Leisure	HDipSAL (VTCT)	HCertSAL (VTCT)
Hospitality and Catering	HDipHC (VTCT)	HCertHC (VTCT)
Business and Retail	HDipBR (VTCT)	HCertBR (VTCT)
Customer Service	HDipCS (VTCT)	HCertCS (VTCT)

If you hold a Diploma or Certificate at Level 2 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), Level 5 (Scotland), or Level 4 (Ireland) you may put the appropriate format below after your name:

VTCT Qualification Sector	Diploma	Certificate
Beauty Therapy	DipBT (VTCT)	CertBT (VTCT)
Hairdressing and Barbering	DipHB (VTCT)	CertHB (VTCT)
Complementary Therapy	DipCT (VTCT)	CertCT (VTCT)
Sports and Active Leisure	DipSAL (VTCT)	CertSAL (VTCT)
Hospitality and Catering	DipHC (VTCT)	CertHC (VTCT)
Business and Retail	DipBR (VTCT)	CertBR (VTCT)
Customer Service	DipCS (VTCT)	CertCS (VTCT)

If you achieve a VTCT Certificate or Diploma at Level 4 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), Level 7 (Scotland), or Level 6 (Ireland) you may put the appropriate format below after your name:

VTCT Qualification Sector	Diploma	Certificate
Beauty Therapy	ADipBT (VTCT)	ACertBT (VTCT)
Hairdressing and Barbering	ADipHB (VTCT)	ACertHB (VTCT)
Complementary Therapy	ADipCT (VTCT)	ACertCT (VTCT)
Sports and Active Leisure	ADipSAL (VTCT)	ACertSAL (VTCT)
Hospitality and Catering	ADipHC (VTCT)	ACertHC (VTCT)
Business and Retail	ADipBR (VTCT)	ACertBR (VTCT)
Customer Service	ADipCS (VTCT)	ACertCS (VTCT)

If I lose my certificate, can I get another one to replace it?

Yes, as long as you meet our criteria you will be able to order a replacement certificate. There is a charge for this service.

If your certificate was issued less than 6 months ago, our Quality Assurance team are required to authenticate the claim for your certificate with your centre of study before a replacement can be issued. Alternatively, your centre can request this on your behalf.

For more information, please visit the replacement certificate page on the VTCT website:

www.vtct.org.uk/learners/replacement-certificates/

If I marry or change my name, can I obtain a replacement certificate in my new name?

You will need to provide VTCT with the following:

- Your original certificate(s) - If you have lost the original certificate(s) please indicate this within the covering letter
- A signed covering letter explaining why you are requesting the change of name - the letter must include a return address - the letter must include a contact number so that VTCT can call you to take payment
- A certified copy of your identification (do not send originals)
- A certified copy of the legal documentation confirming the name change (do not send originals)

The above documentation must be posted to us, recorded delivery is recommended. Once received VTCT will make contact with you to take payment. Where the above criteria has not been fully met, VTCT retain the right to refuse requests for name changes.

If you change your name before your certificate has been issued, you must ask your centre to change your name on the registration details. You must also include a photocopy of appropriate documentation (e.g. marriage certificate/deed poll).

What does it mean to be qualified?

To be qualified means that you have achieved full competence in a particular skill areas. When you have done this, VTCT will issue you with a certificate. If you have not completed a full qualification, you may be issued with a certificate of unit credit for the units you have achieved.

Can I get a badge once I'm qualified?

Once qualified, you will be able to order VTCT qualified badges. If you achieved your qualification after 2009, you can order VTCT qualified badges through our main website, under the 'Learners' area. Alternatively, you can also order these over the phone by contacting Customer Support on +44 (0)2380684500.



I want to work abroad when I'm qualified. Will my VTCT qualification be recognised?

VTCT offers a comprehensive suite of qualifications on the Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF) (England). They are recognised internationally through the Lisbon Treaty and are aligned to the EQF. The table below summarises the equivalencies between the various UK qualification levels and the EQF. VTCT are currently making available Europass supplementary certificates for our UK regulated qualifications.

For further information, please visit the VTCT FAQs at www.vtct.org.uk/faqs

Main stages of education or employment	England, Wales, Northern Ireland www.gov.uk	Wales www.cqfw.net	Ireland www.nfq.ie	Scotland www.scqf.org.uk	Framework for higher qualifications in England, Wales, Northern Ireland www.qaa.ac.uk	European Qualification
	Level 8	Level 8	Level 10	Level 12	Level 8	Level 8
Professional or postgraduate education or employment	Level 7	Level 7	Level 9	Level 11	Level 7	Level 7 ----- Level 6 ----- Level 5
Higher education Advanced skills training	Level 6	Level 6	Level 8 ----- Level 7	Level 10 ----- Level 9	Level 6	Level 5 ----- Level 4
Entry to professional graduate employment	Level 5	Level 5	Level 7	Level 9 ----- Level 8	Level 5	Level 3
Specialised education and training	Level 4	Level 4	Level 6	Level 8 ----- Level 7	Level 4	Level 3
Qualified/Skilled worker Entry to higher education Completion of secondary education	Level 3	Level 3	Level 5	Level 6	X	Level 3
Progression to skilled employment Continuation of secondary education	Level 2	Level 2	Level 4	Level 5		X
Secondary education Initial entry into employment or further education	Level 1	Level 1	Level 3 ----- Level 2	Level 4 ----- Level 3 ----- Level 2		Level 2
Qualifications can be taken at any age in order to continue or return to education or training	Entry Level	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1

We strongly recommend that you contact the embassy or high commission of your intended destination country, as they will be able to advise you about the transferability of qualifications and any other evidence which may be needed to work and to gain insurance.

A wide range of VTCT qualifications are also accredited on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and/or aligned to the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Section 7 - Policies and Procedures

Codes of Ethics

Codes of Ethics are rules of conduct binding on those who join Professional Bodies. Infringements of these Codes are taken very seriously by Professional Bodies and can result in penalties up to and including expulsion from membership.

As an Awarding Organisation we cannot make it mandatory upon those taking our qualifications to abide by a Code of Ethics. We expect that all educational services using our qualifications and the learners undergoing training take account of appropriate Codes of Ethics in training centres. Most Standard Setting Bodies (SSB) or Sector Skills Councils (SSC) issue a Code of Ethics which may be found on their websites. Your centre can advise you of the SSB or SSC for the qualifications you are taking.

The term 'appropriate Codes of Ethics' in our qualifications covers the fact that many individuals who are themselves members of medical professional bodies take VTCT qualifications to provide for extra specialist skills. In such cases, it is their medical memberships which take precedence with regard to Codes of Ethics.

Diversity Statement

VTCT and its Board of Trustees value diversity and believe that people from differing backgrounds can bring different ideas, perspectives and experiences to all aspects of learning and development.

VTCT is fully committed to treating everyone fairly, with respect and with dignity in their employment and in their learning.

VTCT requires its approved centres to have their own Diversity/Equal Opportunities policy and procedures which include monitoring the application and effectiveness of the procedures. Diversity/Equality of Opportunity law requires that all learners and those who have responsibility for their recruitment, teaching and the assessment, can enjoy a positive learning environment, without artificial barriers to entry, achievement or progression; whilst at the same time safeguarding the integrity of VTCT qualifications.

VTCT is committed to developing and promoting an understanding of diversity throughout all products and activities relating to our qualifications. This includes our qualifications, publications, training and assessment procedures to support learners to have a positive and inclusive learning and assessment experience.

VTCT is committed to helping everyone who works in its sectors to contribute to the development of a truly diverse and inclusive society. The Trustees and staff at VTCT are fully committed to complying with any current or future legislation and requirements from regulators on diversity and inclusion. VTCT will continue to support its approved centres to provide an enriched and inclusive learning experience for all learners.



Learner Dress

VTCT expects any learner working in a realistic working environment to wear the appropriate uniform as specified by the centre.

Clothing must be comfortable and always look clean and neat.

Appearance and uniform requirements must also conform to the accepted standard of the industry for which the learner is training.

It is essential that the uniform is thought of as representing an acceptable professional image, but also as protective wear. This can be adapted to the environment and the service being offered and to the potential client or customer. Clients or customers expect a certain appearance and behaviour from those working in a professional capacity.

Health, safety and hygiene must be considered. For instance, hair, jewellery and clothing should never come into contact with a client or customer. The products being used may soil the clothing and jewellery and may provide a potential contamination risk. It must also be considered that touching hair or jewellery during a treatment/service and then touching the client/customer is unhygienic.

The effect of wearing facial and other jewellery should be considered, as what is acceptable in some instances may be less acceptable in others. This may make clients feel uncomfortable and discourage them from returning. Jewellery should be kept to a minimum for most treatments/services. There is also risk of injury to yourself and others.

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

Appeals Procedures

General

All approved VTCT 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.

The VTCT Quality Assurance Department maintains records of all appeals received, including 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 following the centre's appeals procedure which must be fully utilised before VTCT may become further involved.

A learner appeal may be placed against:

- assessment decisions affecting learners' results
- other decisions affecting centres and learners where appropriate.

Where a learner is not satisfied with the outcome of an internal appeal, VTCT must be notified by the centre.

Centre Action

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved the centre must notify VTCT that the learner may seek advice from VTCT by appealing in writing, by email or by telephone.

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

Learner Action

Learners who choose to appeal to VTCT following the outcome of the centre's investigation must provide 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 Quality Assurer will liaise with the centre contact, who will provide a copy of the centre's initial report following the learner's appeal. The External Quality Assurer 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 complete 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 Quality Assurer.

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 the VTCT Head of Quality, 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.

Approved centres in Scotland are advised by VTCT that all appeals policies and procedures within centres delivering SQA accredited qualifications must ensure that the appropriate references to SQA Accreditation are in place. This must include the requirement to acknowledge the role of SQA Accreditation as the final arbiter in any appeal and/or complaint relating to SQA accredited qualifications.

Centres offering SQA qualifications are advised that once the awarding organisation's process has been started, an appeal or a complaint could be progressed to SQA's accrediting body if the learner or centre is unsatisfied. The circumstances where SQA's accrediting body may review an appeal or complaint, on behalf of a learner or centre, are:

- The appeal or complaint is made in connection with an SQA-accredited qualification or in connection with SQA's Awarding Body Criteria (April 2007).
- The appellant or complainant feels the appeal or complaint has been inadequately or unfairly investigated by the awarding organisation.
- The awarding organisation was the subject of the appeal or complaint.

Fees

VTCT will not charge for learner appeals to ensure that no unnecessary barriers prevent the learner from appealing against an assessment decision.

Contact

VTCT, Aspire House, Annealing Close,
Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO50 9PX

Telephone: +44 (0) 23 8068 4500

Email: customersupport@vtct.org.uk

Web: www.vtct.org.uk

