

UK Awards Centre Guidance

1. Centre and Qualification Approval.

Please see separate guidance.

2. Qualification Development

UK Awards will work with employers and other providers to develop new units or qualifications to meet their specific needs wherever a suitable unit or qualification does not currently exist within the QCF. Equally, UK Awards may choose an existing unit or qualification and provide an alternative assessment methodology that better fits the needs of the employer and/or learner.

Once UK Awards and one or more centres have identified a need, UK Awards will provide a qualification sector specialist to work with the centre to develop the criteria, the size and credit value of the unit(s) and the appropriate assessment methodology and, following an independent review, submit the unit(s) to the QCF.

3. Registration

All UK Awards processes use secure web-enabled systems to interact with centres. Registration may be undertaken using:

- Online secure upload of batch data using EDI, .csv or a range of other batch data transfer methods. Please discuss with your Business Development Adviser your specific needs and we will try to match your requirements with UK Awards' data criteria and requirements. This methodology is primarily of use to centres wishing to register large numbers of learners at the same time.
- Online secure registration and amendment. In addition to batch uploading, you can also use our secure website to register or amend the registration details of individual learners. This methodology is suitable for registering single learners or for amending details of individual learners where you do not wish to upload a complete database.

All learners must be registered at least 2 weeks before they undertake any assessment activity. This enables UK Awards to allocate an external verifier. If you are running a very short programme e.g. a one-day, one unit training programme, please discuss your requirements with your Business Development Adviser and we can arrange for shorter periods of notice.

Registration will trigger support from an External Verifier and an invoice.

4. On Screen Assessment Entries

Learners undertaking units where part or all of the assessment includes an on-screen test will also need to be entered for the test when they are ready to take it. Most UK Awards e-testing is on demand i.e. you will be able to enter a learner for a test and the learner can take that test within a few hours.

5. Using e-Portfolios

UK Awards is a “paperless” awarding organisation and uses e-portfolios for all evidence based assessment. Centres are free to use their own portfolio system and UK Awards will provide a list of those e-portfolio systems it will accept. If your system is not on this list, we will be happy to consider adding it, but there may be a fee for the approval process.

UK Awards will also provide a straightforward, secure, web-based e-portfolio for all registered learners as part of the registration fee. Learners will be expected to use this system or one provided by their centre; paper based portfolios will not be excepted unless there are accessibility issues that needs to be addressed. If this is the case, please discuss these with your Business Development Advisor before you register the learner so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

6. Language

Assessment can only take place in English or Welsh. A centre with candidates offering evidence in Welsh must advise UK Awards at the time of registration to ensure that UK Awards can allocate an External Verifier with Welsh language competency.

7. Internal Verification

Internal verification is the quality assurance system you use to monitor assessment practice and decisions, ensuring that:

- Assessment is consistent across assessors.
- Assessment instruments are fit for purpose.
- Assessment decisions accurately match learners work to the unit assessment criteria and are fair, valid and consistent and free from bias.
- Standardisation of assessors and assessment decisions take place.
- The language used in assessment material is fit for purpose, does not disadvantage any learner and does not introduce bias.
- Evidence provided by learners is authentic.
- If evidence is being offered by learners in Welsh, then there is comparability between evidence offered in Welsh and that offered by other learners in English.

Full evidence of internal verification should be available to the external verifier, via the e-portfolio system. Before the external verifier authorises the certification of a particular learner or group of learners, they will need to be satisfied that internal verification has taken place and that the internal verifier has monitored the programme effectively. This should include evidence that the internal verifier has sampled at least one piece of evidence from each learner for each unit.

For short programmes, UK Awards may agree with the centre for slightly different processes to be undertaken, particularly where UK Awards is certificating in-house employer training. Our Chief Verifier will work with you and your Business Development Adviser to develop a suitable process for these types of programmes.

8. External Verification

For programmes where assessment is the responsibility of the centre, UK Awards will allocate an External Verifier (EV). Depending on the nature of the programme the EV will either monitor the programme through the e-portfolio system following consultation with the centre and/or arrange with the centre to undertake to visit the centre to undertake a more general verification visit. In general, EV's will not visit centres simply to undertake portfolio evaluation; visits will be more concerned with ensuring that the centre continues to meet obligations to undertake assessment, provide advice and guidance and to work with the centre in any quality improvement activity that may have been identified.

All UK Awards EV's will:

- Be appropriately qualified and experienced based on the qualification they are verifying.
- Have detailed knowledge of UK Awards' policies and procedures.
- Review assessment processes, including IV and assessor records to ensure that assessment decisions are fair, valid and consistent and free from bias.
- Sample assessment evidence – see below.
- Provide an EV report to both UK Awards and the centre following any EV activity.
- Provide a more detailed end-of-programme report to both UK Awards and the centre.
- Be subject to quality monitoring by the UK Awards Chief Verifier.

The EV will undertake their role primarily through the on-line review of learner, assessor and IV activity. The frequency of review will depend on the length of the programme and the number of learners undertaking the qualification but, with the exception of programmes lasting 2 weeks or less the EV will:

- Agree the centre's assessment plan.
- Identify a sample of learner evidence to sample – see below.
- Sample learner evidence on a regular basis, timings agreed in advance with the centre.
- Review IV and assessor records.
- Advise the centre on an on-going basis, if sample reviews highlight any assessment issues and concerns.
- Where standards are clearly not being met, advise the centre that they will be required to review the evidence as appropriate – the prime purpose of EVs sampling evidence on an on-going basis is to make centres aware at an early stage of instances where standards are not being met so that the centre can take the appropriate action to review their assessment decisions.
- At the end of the programme EVs will:
 - Confirm provisional results with the centre.
 - Identify action to be taken where results cannot be confirmed either because of standards not being met in specific areas or by particular learners.
 - Provide a report to both UK Awards and the centre, agreed with the centre.
 - Identify an action plan for quality improvements, where appropriate.

For programmes lasting two weeks or less, the UK Awards EV will agree a verification plan with the centre that enables the EV to undertake the process above within the timescales available, whilst ensuring that the centre can be confident that its assessment meets the standards and UK Awards is able to maintain the quality of its qualifications.

The EV will be responsible for deciding the basis on which they will sample learner evidence using the records that they can access in the on-line portfolio system. Normally, this will be 10% of evidence expected and structured to ensure that it covers:

- All units within the qualification
- All assessors
- All groups, if there is more than one
- Assessment which is deemed pass and fail

Our aim is to manage the EV process in such a way that it does not overly impinge on the work of the centre and its staff whilst maintaining the highest possible quality levels.

9. Centre Quality Assurance

UK Awards operates a risk and evidence based approach to centre quality assurance. In addition to the initial centre approval process, one role of the EV is to monitor the internal quality procedures that the centre operates, including the methods the centre uses to sample learner evidence against standards and the standards being applied by assessors. UK Awards operates a “traffic light” review process whereby EVs assess each centre:

The status indicated by the report will indicate:

| Status | Impact | Action |
|--------|--|--|
| | Programme seen as operating with consistently high quality assessment processes. There are no concerns regarding the programme or the way the centre operates. | Potentially, the centre could be enabled to process results on a “fast track” basis whereby the EV monitors the programme but is not required to “sign off” each individual learner at completion. |
| | Programme seen as operating effectively but with some concerns regarding processes or quality which do not impact on final outcomes. | EV always “signs off” individual learner completions and monitors centre progress with action plans from EV reports. Chief Verifier monitors reports from other programmes to get overall centre view. |
| | Significant quality concerns. Either processes are not being followed and/or are ineffective in maintaining quality. | EV provides continuous monitoring of learners, assessors and IV processes. Multi-stage action plan. Chief Verifier evaluates the necessity of giving whole centre a quality review or whether issues are programme based. If no improvement, review possibility of withdrawing programme and/or centre approval. It would not be UK Awards’ intention to withdraw approval without having explored all possible avenues with the centre to improve their performance. |

10. Certification

See separate document.

11. Appeals

Appeals against examinations/on-screen tests

If a centre is dissatisfied with an examination result and has reasons to suspect it may not be accurate, the first step is to make a “Results Enquiry”. All learner appeals must be directed via the centre at which the assessment took place.

If concerns about the accuracy of the results still persist, the centre should submit an appeal.

Appeals are processed in two stages:

Stage 1 involves an investigation by a senior officer of UK Awards who has had no previous involvement with the results in question. The appellant will receive a report following this investigation. If the centre remains dissatisfied, they may take the appeal to Stage 2.

Stage 2 involves a hearing before the UK Awards Standards and Quality Committee which includes external and independent members.

If an appeal is accepted, an investigation into the candidate’s and/or centre’s results and the awarding body’s procedures will follow. A further re-mark of the examination/tests involved may be undertaken.

Appeals will only be accepted from the appropriate senior person in the centre. Appeals should be made within 10 working days of the receipt of the original result or the result for Stage 1 if proceeding to Stage 2.

The decision of the Stage 2 Appeal hearing is final, subject to any appeals procedure that may be introduced by Ofqual in due course.

Appeals against Internal Assessment Decisions

Where a candidate disagrees with an assessment decision made by the centre assessor the matter should initially be reviewed by the centre’s internal verifier. If the candidate remains dissatisfied, the matter should be passed to the next stage of the centre’s internal appeals procedure. This usually involves an investigation by the centre-co-ordinator or other member of the senior management team.

If this does not resolve the situation and the candidate is still dissatisfied, the centre, may refer the matter to the UK Awards external verifier for re-consideration. If the matter remains unresolved following consideration by the external verifier, an appeal should be made, either by the centre or the external verifier to the UK Awards Chief Verifier for further consideration. This re-consideration of an assessment decision by the Chief Verifier will be taken to meet the requirements of Stage 1 of the UK Awards appeals process.

Where the re-consideration of an assessment decision by the Chief Verifier does not resolve the matter, the centre may then write to UK Awards and request a Stage 2 hearing before the UK Awards Quality and Standards Committee.

12. Access Arrangements and Special Consideration

In line with UK Awards' Equality and Diversity Policy, UK Awards expects its centres to make all possible effort to provide access to assessment irrespective of the personal circumstances of the learner in order for them to be able to fully demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

The centre should discuss with their EV at the earliest possible stage any concerns they may have in relation to the assessment process for any particular learner, so that the necessary arrangements can be put in place.

13. Malpractice

UK Awards takes the issue of malpractice very seriously. Any allegations of malpractice, whether from centre staff, senior management, learners or as a result of EV monitoring, will be investigated independently by the UK Awards Quality and Standards committee. If necessary, UK Awards will instigate an appeals process so that any party affected by the allegation of malpractice has access to an appropriately structured process whereby they can appeal against any issue raised by a malpractice allegation.

UK Awards reserves the right to withdraw recognition from any centre that is found to have operated in an inappropriate manner and will share with other Awarding Organisations any properly proven malpractice activities.

Examples of possible malpractice include:

- Contravention of UK Awards centre and qualification approval conditions.
- Failure to enable UK Awards to carry out its work or by failing to give access to UK Awards staff, EVs or other associates who have reasonably requested access to the centre, its records and learner evidence.
- Actions required by UK Awards' EVs not being met within agreed timescales.
- Failure to carry out delivery, internal assessment, internal moderation or internal verification in accordance with our requirements.
- Failure to maintain auditable records, e.g. certification claims.
- Fraudulent claims of qualification and/or unit credit achievement.
- Intentional withholding of information from us which is critical to maintaining robust quality assurance mechanisms.
- Forgery.
- Plagiarism of any nature by learners.

14. Co-operation with regulator

UK Awards approved centres agree that, where requested, they will co-operate with any reasonable requests or investigations being undertaken by the relevant regulator.