



Criteria for Centre Approval

Principles

1. UK AWARDS is committed to working with its Centres to ensure that learners receive the best possible learning experience, which includes the way UK AWARDS assesses its qualifications. UK AWARDS will work in partnership with its Centres to ensure that their assessment processes are fit-for-purpose, include appropriate quality assurance procedures and meet the needs of the qualification, the learners, employers and any regulatory requirements. The Centre approval process is designed to ensure that, before a Centre is permitted to offer and assess any UK AWARDS units or qualifications, it has the necessary resources and processes in place to meet these obligations.
2. UK AWARDS 's Centre approval process is designed to be as straightforward as possible with support to help you meet the necessary criteria and is proportionate to the volume of learners you intend to accredit.
3. If you intend to offer units that are only assessed using an external on screen test, then go the section "Approval for using on-screen testing".
4. For all other forms of assessment – portfolios, internal tests etc. there are three possible routes to approval:

Route 1 – Prior approval with other AO (same sector and level)

If you already have approval to offer QCF, NQF, or qualifications from another UK awarding organisation in the same sector and at the same level, UK AWARDS will ask you to provide evidence in the form of quality reports, external verifier reports or similar documentary evidence to show that your currently approved qualifications are running satisfactorily with no outstanding significant quality issues.

Route 2 Prior approval with other AO (different sector or level)

If you already have approval to offer QCF, NQF or NVQ units/qualifications from another UK awarding organisation but not in the sector or at the level required, UK AWARDS will ask you to

provide documentary evidence to show that the Centre's quality assurance processes continue to be approved by another awarding organisation with no outstanding significant quality issues.

You will then be asked to provide evidence to demonstrate that you meet the requirements for delivering and assessing the units/qualifications that you now wish to offer through UK AWARDS .
(See details below)

Route 3 – No Prior Approval

If you do not currently hold any Centre or qualification approvals from another UK awarding organisation, UK AWARDS will work with you to ensure that you have the necessary processes in place to meet the criteria for approval. These fall into two parts:

1. **Centre approval**; approving the organisation to offer UK AWARDS units/qualifications, and
2. **Unit/qualification approval**; approving the Centre to offer and assess particular units/qualifications in a sector and at a level. Once you have approval as a Centre, you will only need to apply for any additional units/qualifications you wish to offer.

Criteria for Centre approval:

1. Internal Quality Assurance:

Centre has appointed a person responsible for quality and has developed an acceptable Quality Assurance Policy.

2. Health and Safety:

The Centre has a written Health and Safety policy.

3. Equal Opportunities:

The Centre has a written Equal Opportunities policy and UK AWARDS expects all approved Centres to maintain the highest ethical standards in relation to Equal Opportunities and the prevention of discrimination.

4. Equalities Legislation - Accessibility:

The Centre should provide an explanation of how it manages learners with special needs with particular reference to the use of IT and IT support mechanisms. UK AWARDS will wish to be assured that the centre is able to accommodate learners with special needs and be able to give them fair access to the assessment for our qualifications.

5. Malpractice:

The Centre has deterrents and sanctions in place to minimise the risk of malpractice. There is a clear process in place to deal with suspected malpractice in an open, fair and effective manner.

6. Appeals

The Centre has a written appeals policy with at least 2 stages that enables learners to appeal assessment decisions and, if necessary, appeal to an independent assessor.

7. Assessment

The Centre has appropriate systems and processes in to ensure that assessment meets the requirements of the specification laid down by UK AWARDS and that it is conducted in a way that makes it fair, reliable and consistent.

Assessors are appropriately qualified and the assessment process is supported by internal verification, assessor training and other appropriate measures to maintain the quality of the assessment process for each unit/qualification.

8. Records

The Centre must maintain records for each learner.

The Centre must retain the records of each learner (assessment and internal verification decisions) for at least 3 years after completion of the programme.

The Centre must have systems or use UK AWARDS systems to track learner assessment progress against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Criteria for Unit/Qualification Approval:

1. Resources

The Centre has the appropriate number of qualified and experienced staff to deliver and assess the unit/qualification.

The Centre has the necessary specialist knowledge and other resources e.g. computers or other specialist equipment to deliver and assess the unit/qualification.

Staffing and other resources are reviewed annually to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the unit/qualification and the number of learners undertaking the unit/qualification.

2. Programme Review

The Centre maintains a process for programme review which includes appropriate feedback from learners, employers and other interested parties.

Application Process

Before UK AWARDS accepts an application to offer its units or qualifications, the UK AWARDS Business Development team will discuss the proposals with you and work with you to agree the best development model. As part of this discussion, the development team will support you in making your Centre or qualification approval application.

All applications are processed on-line. You are asked to complete the necessary details depending on the nature of the application and the route being taken and to provide, if necessary, the documentation needed to evidence that you meet the criteria. Unless particular pieces of evidence are not available electronically, all evidence should be uploaded as part of the process.

For new Centres who are not currently offering qualifications from any other awarding organisation, it will be necessary for a Centre approval visit to be made. This will be undertaken by an independent, specialist evaluator who will work with you to ensure our criteria are met. On occasions, it may be necessary and helpful to undertake an approval visit for other applications.

Approval for Using On-Screen Testing

For some units or qualifications, assessment will be through an on-screen testing process with tests developed, delivered and marked by UK AWARDS. Under these circumstances, the Centre will be required to become an approved e-assessment Centre and to operate the assessment Centre

broadly in line with the “e-Assessment – Guide to effective practice”¹ published by the UK regulators in 2007. You will not be required to complete the Centre Approval process described above.

In particular, UK AWARDS will ask you to provide evidence that:

- You have appropriate accommodation to operate an e-assessment Centre.
- You have appropriate, secure IT resources that meet the minimum specifications set by UK AWARDS from time to time.
- You operate a clear invigilation policy that takes account of:
 - The needs of learners with special requirements
 - The management of test sessions
 - The management of disruptions
 - The need for invigilation to be undertaken by at least one person who has no connection with the programme
- You have an appropriate process for confirming the identity of candidates.
- There is access to appropriate technical support during testing sessions.
- Learners are appropriately prepared for e-testing.

All applications are processed on-line.

Please note that, if you are operating a mixture of assessment modes, you will be required to complete both sets of approvals.

Credit Approval

UK AWARDS reserve the right to undertake credit approval checks prior to granting approval to a new Centre.

Next Steps

Unless the application is a particularly complex involving a number of qualifications and sectors, the approval process should take no longer than 10 business days and this can usually be undertaken while we are working with you to develop the programme.

Centre Contract

Approved Centres are asked to sign a contract with UK AWARDS setting out the basis of our relationship and responsibilities.

¹ e-Assessment – Guide to effective practice, QCA et al, 2007. Available to download at <http://toolkit.efutures.org/resources/>