

Centre approval

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| Responsibility | Responsible Officer |
| Author | Operations Manager |
| Version | 1 |
| Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition | C2: Arrangements with centres |
| Relevant for | Prospective OAL centres and customers |

1. Purpose and scope

This document is available to new customers wishing to apply to provide OAL qualifications as an approved OAL centre. This guidance should be read in line with the Centre Approval Enquiry Form.

The document is not designed for approved OAL centres to expand their approved range of qualifications.

2. Centre approval

2.1 Centre approval application

Our centre approval process enables us to determine the capability and capacity of an organisation to provide OAL qualifications to learners, in accordance with our requirements. We take this process very seriously as it is subject to regulatory controls and ensures we can protect the best interests of learners in learning. We are happy to help you through the approval process should you have difficulties or questions.

The first step of applying for centre approval is to declare your organisational status by completing our centre approval enquiry form. Once this has been approved by OAL you will need to provide us with evidence in four critical organisational areas, to assure us that you have the necessary resources and systems in place to manage, administer, quality assure and deliver our qualifications.

The evidence you provide us with will be judged against our centre approval criteria, which are set out in section 5 below. Examples of the types of evidence you should consider are also set out in section 5.

These include; organisational status, current awarding position, funding arrangements, delivery sub-contracting arrangements, policies, procedures, systems, physical resources and human resources which collectively demonstrate that the delivery of learning, assessment and internal quality assurance will meet our requirements.

Additionally, the approval process requires you to be fully aware of the delivery arrangements for the qualifications that you intend to provide, and our centre monitoring criteria and sanction policy. This enables you to have an understanding of the standards that will need to be met in the delivery of our qualifications.

You will conclude our centre approval application process by signing up to our centre agreement. This must be carried out by a responsible person within your organisation with accountability and authority to enter into binding agreements with regulated external organisations.

2.2 Qualification approval application

Where organisations are applying for centre approval they will need to identify and confirm the qualifications they wish to provide as part of the centre approval application process.

Current and active OAL centres that wish to expand the scope of their qualification provision must use our qualification approval process to apply for the specific qualification(s) they propose to deliver. This is an evidence-based process that enables us to determine the capability and capacity of a centre to provide OAL qualifications to learners, in accordance with our requirements.

3. The application process

Our centre approval application is a 4-step process as detailed below. Once you have declared your organisational status to us using the centre approval enquiry form we will set up your centre account within the OAL Portal. This is where you will complete your application. You will find a document called How to complete my centre approval application on the home page.

You will be able to submit evidence to us through the Portal and set up your personnel, sites and users. You will be able to review our product library that provides purpose, structure and unit information and also read our arrangements for the provision of each product, as detailed in the related Qualification Handbooks. Details of product fees are provided in the product library.

Our Portal provides you with visibility of which stage your application is at and any requests for further information will be sent to you through the Portal.

We have provided details of each of the 4-steps below including our timescales.

1. Declaring organisation status

- Complete the enquiry form and email it to quality@oawards.co.uk
 - We will confirm receipt of your enquiry within 48 hours
 - Within 7 working days of your enquiry we will email details of how you access the OAL Portal to complete your application form
 - Please note that the OAL Portal will email your login information at the same time
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2. Providing evidence to meet our centre approval criteria

- You will need to login to the OAL Portal and complete the centre approval form. You will be able to select which qualifications you are applying for at this stage
 - You must answer all questions in the application form and upload the relevant evidence to your centre account in the OAL Portal
 - You will be asked to create staff, site and user information during this stage within your centre account in the OAL Portal
 - You must declare that you have read and understood our arrangements on the provision of the qualifications you applying for. These arrangements are set out in the specific Qualification Handbooks. These documents are available in the OAL Portal through the product library
 - Once you have completed the application form you will be asked to read the OAL Centre Handbook. Which provides details of our Centre Monitoring Criteria and Sanctions Policy and sign our Centre Agreement. These two documents are available on your centre homepage
 - Submit your completed application to us and we will carry out an initial review to check that you have completed the application correctly and supplied us with the correct information within 5 working days of submission
 - Should we require further information at this stage we will return the application to you with details of what to complete
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3. Application review

- A member of the OAL team will review your submitted application within 10 working days of submission.
 - Should a centre visit be required we will notify you through the Portal and arrange a suitable date. It is expected that all organisations new to the provision of qualifications will be subject to a centre approval visit
 - Further to the review, and visit if required, judgements will be made against each of our 21 approval criteria. You will need to meet each of these criteria to be approved as an OAL centre
 - Our Responsible Officer makes the final decision on the outcome of centre approval applications
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4. Application outcome

There are 2 possible outcomes:

Approved

The centre has provided satisfactory evidence to meet our centre approval criteria and have the necessary resources and capability to provide the qualifications specified within the approval.

- You will be notified of our decision through the OAL Portal
 - Your centre approval invoice will be sent to you at this stage. You will need to pay this before we give you access to your centre account
 - Once you have settled your invoice you will be notified that your centre account is live. All newly approved centres will have registration rights only to the qualifications they have been approved to provide
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Denied

The centre has failed to meet one or more of our approval criteria.

- You will be notified through the Portal of our decision
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4. Fees

| Activity | Fee | Description |
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| Centre approval | £600 | Fee includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre approval application for up to 5 qualifications • Initial review of application to ensure you have completed our application correctly • Full desktop review of your application |
| Approval visits | £350 | For centres requiring an approval visit, this fee is added to the centre approval fee above |
| Qualification approval | £150 | Per application |

Please note that invoices for centre approval must be paid in full before OAL will provide access to approved qualifications.

Fees are correct as of May 2019.

5. Centre approval criteria

OAL approves centres that can demonstrate that they meet the criteria set out in the table below. Each of the criteria have been mapped to the clause in the centre agreement for your reference. Examples of potential sources of evidence have been provided of how a centre can demonstrate each of the criteria. This is not an exhaustive list centres may submit a variety of evidence.

| Criteria | Examples | Agreement clause |
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| Leadership and Management – the organisation has: | | |
| 1. Capable leadership and management, to plan and maintain provision, and apply policies and procedures effectively across the centre and satellite sites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and procedure maintenance, review and control • Implementation plans • Staff training and development | |
| 2. Robust quality assurance and management of sub-contractor and partnership agreements, including incorporation/application of the OAL centre agreement to these third party agreements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service level/contractual agreements with third parties • Quality monitoring policy/procedures • Quality management reporting and actions | |
| 3. No history of withdrawal of centre approval or significant and current sanctions that indicate high risk provision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration of withdrawal of centre approval • Recent External Quality Assurance reports for current provision | |
| 4. Adequate safeguarding arrangements to ensure the safety and security of learners in a managed learning environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding policy/procedures • Health and safety policy/procedures • Protection of learners from extremism and radicalisation/British Values policy | |
| 5. Respects the equality of opportunity, diversity of learners and their fair treatment in the provision of qualifications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality or Opportunity and Diversity policy/procedures • Equality and Diversity monitoring and reporting • Whistleblowing policy | |

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| <p>6. Sufficient and appropriate personnel who are monitored effectively to ensure that their experience, qualifications and performance meets provision requirements; training needs are identified and met, and continuing professional development (CPD) is supported, managed and recorded</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organogram/organisational structure • Organisational/operational development plans • Personnel records, CVs qualification certificates • Appraisal, monitoring and training records • Staff meeting minutes/records • CPD records |
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| <p>7. Purposeful physical resources and maintained facilities to meet qualification requirements</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment of physical resources • Commissioning and maintenance records • Resource updating/replacement plans |
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Centre Administration – the organisation has:

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| <p>8. Adequate arrangements to manage the withdrawal of centre approval and/or qualification approval which protects and prioritises the best interests of learners</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy/procedures for the withdrawal of provision, centre approval/qualification approval |
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| <p>9. Reliable and secure arrangements to manage learner records, qualification registrations, administer examinations/ assessment and process claims for certification</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies/procedures for management of records, registrations, examinations and certification • Administration resources • Staff training and development |
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| <p>10. Adequate arrangements for obtaining Unique Learner Numbers and learner records/ funded learner plans where required</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy/procedures for obtaining ULNs • Procedures or system arrangements for records and plans |
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| <p>11. Robust arrangements for the management of document security, data and information confidentiality and any breach of security/confidentiality</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and information protection policy/procedures • Document security policy • Security/confidentiality incident management and control records and actions |
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Quality Assurance – the organisation has:

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| <p>12. Robust arrangements for the identification and management of any incident that may occur, which could have an adverse effect on the quality of a learner’s experience, assessment or qualification outcome</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment of provision risks • Monitoring of incidents, actions and records • Staff meeting minutes/records |
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| <p>13. Adequate arrangements to manage actual and potential conflicts of interest for centre and sub-contracted personnel</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict of interest policy/procedures • Conflict of interest declarations and records • Management of actions |
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| <p>14. A well-communicated and timely complaints and appeals process</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints and appeals policy/procedures • Monitoring of complaints and appeals • Complaints and appeals records |
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| <p>15. Robust arrangements for carrying out the internal quality assurance of assessment including the identification and management of plagiarism, malpractice and maladministration, and dealing with claims for learner certification</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Internal) Quality Assurance policy/ procedures including IQA strategy, sampling plan arrangements • Malpractice and maladministration policy/procedures • Procedure for dealing with plagiarism • Procedures for claims for learner achievement |
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| <p>16. Robust quality performance monitoring arrangements to drive continuing improvement in the quality of provision; using feedback from learners, evaluation of internal quality assurance activity, standardisation and moderation to ensure provision meets learners' and qualification requirements</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Improvement policy/procedures • Quality monitoring records • Quality improvement plans, action plans and progress monitoring • Learner feedback surveys/evaluations |
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Qualification Delivery – the organisation has:

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| <p>17. Adequate arrangements for the initial assessment, induction and assessment of Recognition of Prior Learning/Accreditation of Prior Learning status of learners including any exemptions and proxies, to plan individual learning and development</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial assessment policy/procedures • Induction policy/procedures • Induction materials/programmes • Individual learning plans • RPL/APL policy/procedures |
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| <p>18. Consistent and reliable arrangements to support learners, review, track and record their progress, ensuring through feedback that they understand their learning and assessment requirements, their achievements and what they might do to improve their progress, knowledge, skills and behaviours</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner progress review and feedback policy/procedures • Learner tracking and recording policy/ procedures • Learner support arrangements • Evaluation of learners' progress and action planning to improve progress and achievement |
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| <p>19. Adequate arrangements for planning assessment and for providing/recording effective feedback to learners that ensures they understand what has been achieved and what they might do to improve their knowledge, skills and behaviours</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning of assessment policy/procedures • Feedback to learners policy/procedures |
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| 20. Robust arrangements for the fair and valid assessment of learners including; checking authenticity, invigilation, marking, observation of learner performance, questioning, and other methods where appropriate to meet qualification requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment/examination policy/procedures• Invigilation and marking policy/procedures• Assessment plans/schedules |
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| 21. Adequate arrangements to ensure that learners' needs for reasonable adjustments and special considerations are identified effectively, claimed and applied in the assessment process where appropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reasonable adjustment and special consideration policy/procedures |
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6. Maintaining approval

All approved centres are monitored through external quality assurance. Our Centre Monitoring Criteria are used to make judgements on centre performance in respect of the following 5 areas:

- Leadership and management
- Centre administration
- Quality assurance
- Qualification delivery
- Learner experience

Judgements made against these criteria are used to inform the risk rating of the centre and apply our sanctions policy to qualifications as required.

Details of our Centre Monitoring Criteria are available in the OAL Portal. Organisations applying for centre approval are required to declare that they have read our monitoring criteria and can meet our on-going quality arrangements.