

Use of Alternative Assessment Sites and Partnership Arrangements for the Delivery and Assessment of Qualifications Scotland Qualifications: Information for Centres

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1 Introduction

Qualifications Scotland approved centres may use multiple assessment sites, including distance learning and assessment, and enter into partnership or sub-contracting arrangements for the delivery and assessment of Qualifications Scotland qualifications, for operational or business reasons.

Qualifications Scotland must protect the integrity of its qualifications, the interests of candidates and the safety of our staff and appointees. We must, therefore, be made aware of such arrangements and be satisfied that they are appropriate.

We have reviewed our approach to this and the following updated guidance provides details on the actions that centres must take in relation to ensuring the appropriateness of different types of alternative assessment sites, partnerships and sub-contracts and informing Qualifications Scotland about these. This applies at initial centre approval, on-going qualification approvals and changes made to arrangements for assessment post-approval. You may also wish to seek advice from Qualifications Scotland at an earlier stage, when you are beginning to plan delivery under any of these arrangements. Requirements for providing information are different if assessment is conducted in the same country as the main site or in another country (see Section 2 below).

Qualifications Scotland's approach to considering these arrangements will be fair and proportionate, and based on the level of risk that the arrangements could pose to the integrity of its qualifications and its reputation.

2 Restrictions on delivery in other countries

Centres may not be allowed to offer Qualifications Scotland qualifications requiring visiting quality assurance by Qualifications Scotland in countries where there are safety concerns. You should check current Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice about visiting the country: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

There may be other reasons why it would be inadvisable or impermissible for centres to deliver in a particular country or for Qualifications Scotland to be associated with that country through delivery of its qualifications. These factors can change over time. They include: diplomatic relations with that country, trade embargoes, and concerns about corruption.

There are also some restrictions relating to the qualification type:

National Courses - Only Scottish centres can deliver National Courses and only within Scotland (with the exception of a few approved centres in the Isle of Man)

HNs - Centres may not offer HNs outwith Scotland. Please refer to information on the Qualifications Scotland website on Qualifications Scotland Advanced Certificates and Diplomas.

PDAs - Centres may not offer PDAs which contain HN or SVQ units outside Scotland. The exceptions to this are PDA Conduct the Assessment Process and PDA Conduct the Internal AAS Info for Centres

Verification Process, which have versions for delivery outside Scotland (GM4L 48 and GM4M 48). Contact Qualifications Scotland if you wish to discuss other options – such as offering a customised award.

SVQs: If you are planning to deliver in England and Wales, there may be more suitable alternative awards regulated by Ofqual or Qualifications Wales.

SVQs may be delivered outwith the UK, by centres which are based in the UK. Consideration must be given to whether the assessment strategy and National Occupational Standards can be fully met in candidates' workplaces – including the full scope and range of performance criteria and knowledge and understanding (including UK legislation relating to eg health and safety), and the experience and qualifications requirements of assessors, including work-based assessors. If the qualification gives a licence to practise in the UK, it may not be delivered outwith the UK.

SVQs may not be delivered by centres which are based outwith the UK, with the exception of existing arrangements for delivery of oil and gas qualifications. Contact Qualifications Scotland if you wish to discuss other options – such as offering a customised award.

Qualifications regulated by Ofqual – Ofqual has regulatory authority in England. Qualifications which are regulated by Ofqual may be undertaken by candidates who are resident in other countries and nations of the UK, provided that Ofqual still has oversight of quality assurance arrangements for that qualification being delivered in England. If all your candidates will be based outwith England, you should contact Qualifications Scotland to determine whether or not this is permissible.

Qualifications regulated by Qualifications Wales – Qualifications Wales has regulatory authority in Wales. Qualifications which are regulated by Qualifications Wales may be undertaken by candidates who are resident in other countries and nations of the UK, provided that Qualifications Wales still has oversight of quality assurance arrangements for that qualification being delivered in Wales. If all your candidates will be based outwith Wales, you should contact Qualifications Scotland to determine whether or not this is permissible.

We strongly recommend that you contact Qualifications Scotland using the online form at an early planning stage to seek advice if you believe that any of these type of factors might apply and including any specific queries that you have. This could prevent refusal by Qualifications Scotland at a later stage.

3 Centre responsibilities for assessment sites

At the qualification approval stage, centres must provide evidence that the appropriate checks of all assessment sites have been carried out. Scottish colleges with devolved authority must establish this through their internal approval processes. Thereafter, it is the responsibility of the centre to carry out site checks and keep up-to-date records:

- ◆ When a new site is being used for the first time
- ◆ If new qualifications are to be assessed at an existing and/or new site
- ◆ To review the on-going suitability of the site (at least annually, or if there is a changes of circumstances or key personnel at the site)

Checklist of requirements at all assessment sites

- ◆ Is the assessment environment appropriate for assessing the award? (Refer to the assessment strategy and any specific requirements for assessment of the qualifications being assessed at the site.)
- ◆ Are appropriate equipment and resources available for assessment?
- ◆ Is the assessment environment safe for candidates and staff?
- ◆ Do all candidates have equal access to assessment at this site?
- ◆ Is there secure storage at the site for assessment materials and records?
- ◆ Is there agreed access to the site for centre assessors and internal verifiers?*
- ◆ Is there agreed access to the site for Qualifications Scotland QA staff (for all qualifications) and regulatory body staff (for regulated qualifications)?*

**Note:* There may be exceptional circumstances at some assessment sites that make physical access impossible, but there must be remote access to candidates and evidence in these cases, and confirmation of the other points on the checklist.

If you have staff and/or candidates based entirely, or for part of their time, at a site that is not owned or managed by your centre, you must also consider the following issues:

- ◆ Are candidates, assessors and internal verifiers based at this site given induction covering the requirements of Qualifications Scotland?
- ◆ Do candidates and staff have access to the relevant policies and procedures of the centre?
- ◆ Is the centre's quality assurance system being applied at this assessment site?
- ◆ Are there effective mechanisms in place for collecting, submitting and securely storing candidates' personal, entry and results data, in line with the centre's data management policy and procedures?

Centres should have copies of up-to-date records of checks of assessment sites available for Qualifications Scotland qualification and systems verifiers to view.

One form of evidence of this process is a site checklist (see appendix 1) — but other types of record can also be used, at the discretion of the centre, if they cover the issues required by Qualifications Scotland (see checklist above). These may be included as part of a wider document.

The site checklist, or other agreement document, must be signed and dated by representatives of both the centre and the organisation which owns the site.

In addition, centres are required to seek approval from Qualifications Scotland to use assessment sites in countries other than the country of their main site – both at initial qualification approval and on-going basis, if assessment in other countries is introduced post- approval.

This includes sites in different nations within the UK and different states within a country, where there are different governance arrangements for education.

The information on assessment sites will be used to inform qualification verification selections and sampling. Qualification verifiers will also ask for evidence of review of the on-

going suitability of the sites for assessment of the qualification being verified, under quality assurance criterion 2.4:

2.4 There must be evidence of initial and on-going reviews of assessment environment(s), assessment procedures, equipment, learning and assessment materials.

Systems verifiers will discuss with the centre their arrangements for managing assessment sites and ensuring that their quality assurance processes are implemented effectively across all sites, under quality assurance criteria 2.3 and 2.5:

2.3 There must be a documented system for initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.

2.5 All sites where candidates undertake assessments for Qualifications Scotland qualifications must be safe and appropriately resourced, and must provide access for candidates, staff and Qualifications Scotland personnel.

4 Requirements for notifying Qualifications Scotland about alternative assessment sites and partnerships

Centres must seek approval from Qualifications Scotland if they intend to use alternative assessment sites, satellite sites or remote assessment in another **country, nation within the UK, or state**, or to enter into partnership arrangements for the delivery and assessment of Qualifications Scotland qualifications. Details of the definitions of terms and requirements are provided in the following sections.

Where these plans are known at the centre and/or qualification approval stage, they must be included in the approval application.

Centres must make clear to Qualifications Scotland whether any of their plans involve delivery and assessment of qualifications in a country other than that in which the centre was originally approved by Qualifications Scotland. This also applies to different states within a country, where there are different governance arrangements for education.

Centres must also seek approval from Qualifications Scotland if they intend to enter into such arrangements after centre approval and/or the original approval of the qualification. An on-line form is available for this purpose.

Qualifications Scotland's approach to considering these proposed arrangements will be fair and proportionate, and based on the level of risk that the arrangements could pose to the integrity of its qualifications and its reputation.

Information on plans to use alternative assessment sites, satellite sites in other countries, or remote assessment; or to enter into partnership or sub-contracts and the candidate entries, will be used by Qualifications Scotland to plan verification activity.

Any partnership arrangements or sub-contracts must be documented, including clear

allocation of roles and responsibilities to the different parties.

The centre which submits entries and results for the candidates to Qualifications Scotland will be responsible for the quality assurance processes and for standards being met and maintained.

Qualifications Scotland reserves the right to refuse, suspend or withdraw approval if the arrangements do not fully meet its requirements, as expressed in the quality assurance criteria.

5 Requirements for different types of assessment site

The 'main site' is defined as the address held by Qualifications Scotland for the centre.

5.1 Satellite site

A satellite site is geographically separate from the main site, but is owned and operated by the centre, under the same policies and procedures, and with staff employed by the centre.

Centres must seek approval from Qualifications Scotland if they intend to open a satellite site only if it is **in a different country, nation within the UK or state**. An on-line form is available for this purpose.

5.2 Alternative assessment site

An alternative assessment site is premises owned and operated by a different organisation, and not by the approved centre. It could be in the same country as the main site of the centre or in another country.

The centre must ensure that the site is suitable for assessment, both initially and on an on-going basis, and keep up-to-date records of the agreement with the organisation which owns the site.

If candidates and/or your centre's staff are based at this site for all or part of their time, you must also ensure that they have the same rights and information as candidates and staff based at your main site (eg access to information about, and the mechanism for, making a complaint).

If your centre is hiring a site owned by another organisation, it is likely that you will have a formal rental agreement or contract. This may address responsibilities for the safety and maintenance of the site, and provision of certain facilities, but may not cover issues relating to assessment and quality assurance. It may be appropriate in this circumstance to use the Qualifications Scotland exemplar site checklist in its entirety, or a similar document, in addition to any rental agreement or contract.

Scottish colleges with devolved authority for qualification approval should carry out checks at
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the time of initial approval on assessment sites to be used. Checks must also be carried out on new assessment sites introduced after the approval stage for every qualification. The site checklist could be used as a record for both purposes.

Regular reviews should be carried out of the continued suitability of assessment sites. Outcomes of reviews and any actions to be taken may be recorded in the centre's own records of meetings or other quality review documentation.

Site checklists are signed agreements and should have regular planned review dates. They should also be reviewed and updated if there are any significant changes at the assessment site before the planned review date (eg change of ownership, change of key personnel, changes to facilities).

Centres must seek approval from Qualifications Scotland if they intend to use an alternative assessment site only if it is **in a different country, nation within the UK or state**. An on-line form is available for this purpose.

5.3 Candidate's workplace (employed candidates)

If an employed candidate is being assessed for an Qualifications Scotland qualification in their usual place of work, their employer will already have responsibility for them as their employee. However, your centre has responsibility for them as a candidate. In particular, you must ensure that:

- ◆ the activities, environment and resources at the site will allow the candidate to be assessed in line with the assessment strategy for the qualification
- ◆ workplace assessors are competent to carry out assessment
- ◆ there is agreed access to the site for your centre assessors and internal verifiers to carry out their roles, and also, if required, for Qualifications Scotland quality assurance personnel and regulatory body personnel (where regulated qualifications are being delivered)
- ◆ candidates must have equal access to assessment in any sites — including the provision of any agreed assessment arrangements
- ◆ any concerns about safety at the site are raised with the employer

For multiple workplaces, it may be appropriate to use a shortened and adapted version of the Qualifications Scotland exemplar site checklist (Appendix 2), to ensure that you have a signed record of your agreement with the candidates' employers to meet these requirements. These may be included in approval records, although this will probably only be if you are working with a few key employers from the start of the delivery of the qualification.

There is no requirement for centres to make declarations to Qualifications Scotland about employed candidates' workplaces.

5.4 Temporary candidate work placement

If there is any assessment to be carried out at the work placement site, you will need to ensure that the site is suitable for the assessment and that there is agreed access for

assessors to carry out that assessment.

It is likely that you will be carrying out a risk assessment on the site. You may wish to combine relevant elements of the Qualifications Scotland exemplar site checklist with your risk assessment record.

There is no requirement for centres to make declarations to Qualifications Scotland about candidates' temporary work placements.

5.5 Remote assessment

In remote assessment, the assessment is being conducted in locations other than the centre's premises, either online or by mail. There may be groups of candidates undertaking assessments in one venue or individuals undertaking assessments in a range of locations, including their own homes or workplaces. Candidates may be in the same country as the main site of the centre or in another country.

Centres must ensure that all conditions of assessment for the qualification are met — whether using paper-based or on-line assessment. This includes aspects such as:

- authentication of candidates' identity
- invigilation or on-line proctoring arrangements
- security of assessments

Candidate assessment evidence and assessment and internal verification records must be accessible for Qualifications Scotland qualification verifiers.

Qualification verifiers will also verify conditions of assessment, under criterion 4.4:

4.4: Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under Qualifications Scotland's required conditions.

Centres must seek approval from Qualifications Scotland if they intend to use remote assessment only if the candidates are based **in a different country, nation within the UK or state**.

Centres must complete the [remote assessment declaration form](#) available on the Qualifications Scotland website using the form guidance.

6 Partnerships and sub-contracting

Partnership or sub-contracting is where a centre enters into an arrangement with another organisation for all or part of the delivery and assessment of Qualifications Scotland qualifications. This organisation may be in the same country as the main site of the centre or in another country or devolved nation/state.

The centre which submits entries and results for the candidates to Qualifications Scotland

will be responsible for the quality assurance processes and for standards being met and maintained.

Staff employed by the partner or sub-contractor who are involved in the assessment and/or internal verification of the qualification must be appropriately qualified and experienced.

Copies of partnership or sub-contracting agreements must be provided with qualification approval applications to which they apply. You will be asked to submit a copy of your partnership agreement. If this is in the form of a contract, which may be commercially sensitive, it is acceptable to submit a summary of the main points of the contract which relate to the delivery, assessment and internal verification of the Qualifications Scotland qualification and include details of the names and designations of the signatories and the date of the contract.

Any updates to these should be brought to the attention of qualification and systems verifiers in relation to verification visits.

Qualification verifiers will use information about partnerships and sub-contracts to inform their sampling strategy and in consideration of the staff qualifications and the effectiveness of the implementation of internal verification procedures.

Systems verifiers will discuss with the centre their arrangements for managing partnerships and sub-contracts and ensuring that quality assurance processes are implemented effectively, under quality assurance criterion 1.4:

1.4 The roles and responsibilities of those involved in the administration, management, assessment and quality assurance of Qualifications Scotland qualifications across all sites must be clearly documented and disseminated.

Specific requirement: If applicable, centres must have documented agreements in place for sub-contracted services or partnership arrangements in relation to assessment and quality assurance of Qualifications Scotland qualifications.

Centres must seek approval from Qualifications Scotland if they intend to use partnerships or sub-contracts only if the assessment will be carried out **in a different country, nation within the UK or state**. An on-line form is available for this purpose. You will be asked to submit a copy of your partnership agreement. If this is in the form of a contract, which may be commercially sensitive, it is acceptable to submit a summary of the main points of the contract which relate to the delivery, assessment and internal verification of the Qualifications Scotland qualification and include details of the names and designations of the signatories and the date of the contract.

Qualifications Scotland needs to be satisfied that a comprehensive appraisal of a new centre has been carried out and no risks have been identified, before entering into an agreement with them. This process also applies to Qualifications Scotland centre partnerships and sub-contractors. Centres are therefore required to complete a Centre Partnership Due Diligence & Site Checklist (see Appendix 2). For further information see [Qualifications Scotland's Alternative Assessment Sites webpages](#).

Appendix 1: Site Checklist Form (full version — exemplar)

This form is for recording checks of sites to be used for assessment of Qualifications Scotland qualifications which are not owned, leased or managed by the approved centre.

Centre name	
Name of assessment site	
Organisation which owns the site	
Address of assessment site (including country)	
Postcode	
Phone number of site	
Contact name at site	
Qualification(s) being assessed at this site	

Comments on how site is used:

Checklist

Section 1: Assessment requirements

Reference should be made to the assessment strategy and any specific requirements for assessment of the specific award(s) being assessed at the site when completing this section.

	Yes	No	Comment
Is the assessment environment appropriate for assessing the award?			
Are appropriate equipment and resources available for assessment?			

Section 2: The site

	Yes	No	Comment
Is the assessment environment safe for candidates and staff?			
Do all candidates have equal access to assessment at this site?			
Is there agreed access to the site for centre assessors and internal verifiers?			
Is there agreed access to the site for Qualifications Scotland and regulatory body QA staff?			
Is there secure storage at the site for assessment materials and records?			

Section 3: Support for candidates and staff

This section should only be completed if centre staff and/or candidates are based at the site.

	Yes	No	Comment
Are candidates based at this site given induction covering the requirements of Qualifications Scotland?			
Are assessors and internal verifiers based at this site given induction covering the requirements of Qualifications Scotland?			
Do candidates and staff have access to the centre's policies and procedures?			
Is the centre's quality assurance system being applied at this assessment site?			
Are there effective mechanisms in place for collecting, submitting and securely storing candidates' personal, entry and results data, in line with the centre's data management policy and procedures?			

Section 4: Declaration

We declare that, to the best of our knowledge, the information given in this form is correct:

Centre representative

Name	
Designation	
Signature	
Date	

Site representative

Name	
Designation	
Signature	
Date	

Date of next planned review	
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Appendix 2: Qualifications Scotland Centres establishing Partnership and Sub-contracting Agreements: Due Diligence & Site Checklist

This form should be completed by Qualifications Scotland approved centres if the following modes of assessment have been selected in the Alternative Assessment Sites (AAS) Form:

- ◆ in-country delivery and assessment using a partner organisations staff
- ◆ In-country delivery and assessment using a sub-contractor's staff

Qualifications Scotland needs to be satisfied that due diligence has been carried out by the Qualifications Scotland approved centre for any partner or sub-contracting organisations and staff who will be involved in the delivery and assessment of Qualifications Scotland qualifications. As part of your Alternative Assessment Site (AAS) submission, please complete the **Due Diligence & Site Checklist** below and send to opportunity.appraisal.managers@sqa.org.uk with a copy of the **partnership or subcontracting agreement**.

Once received, it will accompany your Alternative Assessment Site (AAS) Form where we will review and appraise the contents to establish if Qualifications Scotland can support your proposal.

Section 1 Centre and proposed Partner/Sub-contractor information Please provide information about your centre and the proposed partner/sub-contractor organisation	Add Detail
Centre Name (Centre name establishing the partnership)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Centre Number	Click or tap here to enter text.
Partner/Sub-contractor Name (Partner/sub-contractor organisation name)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Partner/Sub-contractor Contact Name & Email Address	Click or tap here to enter text.
Registered Address (Registered address of partner/sub-contractor organisation)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Address of Assessment Site (Address where assessment will take place (if different to the above)	Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 2 Security and Human Rights Assessment Please provide us with information on the checks you have carried out on the partner/sub-contractor organisation	Yes	No	Please provide us with a brief explanation to support your answer
Has the partner/sub-contractor site been visited by your centre?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Has web/media search of the partner/sub-contractor and its operations been carried out including senior officials?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Does the partner/sub-contractor have policies and/or statements on the following and have these been checked by your centre: ◆ Counter fraud ◆ Anti-bribery and corruption ◆ Human rights considerations (including ethics and equality considerations) ◆ Anti money laundering	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Is the partner/sub-contractor listed on the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre? https://www.business-humanrights.org	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Does the partner/sub-contractor have any verifiable association with individuals or organisations who have a record of human rights breaches? https://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUS/Pages/WhoWeAre.aspx	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 3 Site & Assessment Environment Please provide us with information about the partner/subcontractor organisation site and assessment environment	Y	N	Please provide us with a brief explanation to support your answer Reference should be made to any specific requirements for assessment of the qualification(s) being assessed when completing this section.
Has the English language skills of staff been established? (if applicable)	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Is the assessment environment safe for candidates and staff?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 3 Site & Assessment Environment Please provide us with information about the partner/subcontractor organisation site and assessment environment	Y	N	Please provide us with a brief explanation to support your answer Reference should be made to any specific requirements for assessment of the qualification(s) being assessed when completing this section.
Is the assessment environment appropriate for assessing the qualification?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Is there appropriate equipment and resources available for the assessment?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Will all candidates have equal access to assessment at this site?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Is there secure storage at the site for assessment material and records?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Is there agreed access to the site for Qualifications Scotland quality assurance staff if a visit is required?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 4 Support for Candidates & Staff Please provide us with information on how the partner/subcontractor organisation will support candidates and staff	Y	N	Please provide us with a brief explanation to support your answer Reference should be made to how Qualifications Scotland's quality assurance processes and standards will be met and maintained
Will candidates, assessors and internal verifiers based at the site be given induction covering the requirements of Qualifications Scotland?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Will candidates and staff have access to your centre's policies and procedures?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Is your centre's quality assurance system being applied at the assessment site?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
Are there effective mechanisms in place for collecting, submitting, and securely storing candidates' personal, entry and results data, in line with your centre's data management policy and procedures?	☐	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 5 Declaration (Qualifications Scotland Centre Representative)

The Qualifications Scotland approved centre is responsible for the quality assurance processes and for standards being met and maintained. I declare that to the best of our knowledge the information contained within this form is correct. Any update to the information above will be brought to the attention of qualification and systems verifiers at verification events.

Name	Click or tap here to enter text.
Designation	Click or tap here to enter text.
Signature	Click or tap here to enter text.
Date	Click or tap here to enter text.