



SQA Centre Qualification Approval Policy

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Why do we need the policy?

To deliver SQA qualifications, a centre must be approved as an SQA centre, and then be approved to offer SQA qualifications.

There are two parts to centre approval:

- Systems approval — approval of systems and procedures
- Qualification approval — approval to deliver and assess qualifications

Systems approval is how a centre becomes an SQA approved centre. Guidance and the process by which a centre can become a SQA delivering centre can be accessed here: [Offer SQA qualifications - SQA¹. Before you apply to deliver any SQA qualification, you must have systems approval.](#)

This policy is for centres who already have systems approval, and are therefore SQA approved centres.

SQA sets different approval requirements for its qualifications. This is to ensure that centres delivering them have the required expertise and resources to deliver and assess those qualifications to the defined standard.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that SQA approved centres understand the requirements of them in terms of having the appropriate approval status to deliver qualifications. SQA must maintain the credibility of its qualifications and their assessment with all users of the qualifications.

Centre: An organisation (such as a school, college, training company or provider, or place of employment) that is approved by and accountable to an awarding body for the examination and assessment arrangements leading to a qualification award.

¹ Systems approval is not applicable to all centre types. Please refer to the guidance linked.

Partnership: Where a centre enters into an arrangement with another organisation, with SQA approval, for all or part of the delivery, assessment and internal verification of SQA qualifications. Centres should adhere to the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

Delivery: In the context of this policy 'delivery' means delivery of the assessment and internal verification. It does not refer to teaching and learning, as that falls within the remit of other organisations. Centres should adhere to the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

This policy outlines how an SQA approved centre can be approved to offer SQA qualifications.

What does it apply to?

The policy applies to all SQA centres that have systems approval, and who are therefore already SQA approved centres.

Who is it for?

This policy is for SQA centres and SQA staff.

What support is available?

The following people can provide support:

- SQA Qualification Managers
- SQA Account Managers
- SQA Qualification Approval team
- SQA Quality Enhancement team

You can also get support from the following documents and guidance:

- SQA Quality Assurance criteria for Qualification Approval

- Systems and Qualification Approval Guide
- Quality Assurance Criteria – SQA Advanced/Higher National and vocational qualifications
- Systems Approval
- Verification support materials
- Guidance documents and application forms for centres on SQA's website

1 Policy statement

SQA's qualification approval process ensures centres delivering our qualifications are assessing candidates in line with national standards, and that assessment decisions comply with our quality assurance criteria.

This means that once you are an SQA approved centre, you must come forward to apply to deliver specific qualifications, demonstrating that your centre has the resources and expertise to deliver that qualification in line with the defined qualification requirements.

Once a centre has SQA approval to deliver SQA qualifications, it remains the centre's responsibility to ensure its systems, resources and expertise² continue to meet this required standard to maintain the credibility of all qualifications and assessments.

SQA is committed to equality of opportunity and to a culture that respects difference. We believe that, as an employer and public body, we can play a leading part in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion by making them an integral part of our decision making. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed at the development stage of this policy to assess how this policy may impact on equality groups. The findings from this are reflected in this policy.

2 Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of both SQA and the centre to comply with the centre operating agreement.

Responsibilities of the Awarding Body:

- SQA must ensure that the delivery of our qualifications is valued and credible with users, learners, partner organisations and the wider community.

² Assessor and internal verifier expertise

- SQA must set appropriate approval status for its qualifications in line with the defined qualification requirements.
- SQA must be satisfied that, at the time of approval, the centre has evidenced that they have the systems, resources and expertise within their centre to deliver, assess and internally verify qualifications in line with the defined qualification requirements.
- Via the quality assurance processes, SQA will ensure that centres continue to maintain the standards in line with the defined qualification requirements.
- Via the quality assurance processes, SQA will ensure assessors and internal verifiers are competent and, where applicable, qualified to assess and internally verify in line with the defined qualification requirements.
- SQA is responsible for notifying local authorities where state schools are delivering SQA qualifications without approval.

Responsibilities of the centre:

- Centres should adhere to the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.
- Each centre, depending on their approval status, must follow the appropriate qualification approvals process in line with the defined qualification requirements. Please see section 4, Policy requirements for more detail.
- Centres must ensure that they know their approval status in relation to the qualifications they can offer. Centres can check their approval status on SQA Connect or SQA.net.
- Centres must ensure that they have SQA approval to deliver a qualification before any delivery takes place. Failing to do so could result in disadvantaging learners as entries cannot be processed and certification cannot take place without approved status.
- Centres who do deliver prior to gaining SQA approval may be referred for investigation by SQA to determine whether maladministration or malpractice has occurred. Centres approved to offer SQA qualifications must continue to meet SQA quality assurance requirements in line with the defined qualification requirements.
- Centres must ensure all practitioners conduct assessments with integrity to maintain the standard and credibility of SQA qualifications.

- Centres are responsible for ensuring that practitioners have the expertise, resources and skillset to deliver, assess and internally verify the qualification, meeting the national standard.
- Centres are responsible for ensuring the staff delivering qualifications are competent and, where applicable, qualified in line with the defined qualification requirements.
- Centres should be mindful that they may have been approved for qualifications that they have not offered in some time; therefore, when offering any qualifications, they should ensure they still have the expertise, resources and skillset to deliver, assess and internally verify the qualification, meeting the national standard.
- Where a qualification has not been offered in some time, centres must ensure they are working with the most up-to-date qualification and unit specifications, and assessments.
- Centres must ensure that, if there is a change to the expertise, resource and skillset in their establishment, they review the qualifications they offer and take the appropriate action to ensure they continue to deliver in line with the defined qualification requirements. The centre must either:
 - align to the qualification requirements and continue to deliver, or
 - request the removal of approval for that qualification from SQA, or
 - stop delivering the qualification until they meet that qualification's defined requirements

Failing to do so will disadvantage learners, as the centre may not meet external verification requirements and this could result in certification not taking place. Centres that experience a change to the expertise, resource and skillset of their establishment that means they no longer meet qualification requirements, and who continue to deliver qualifications, may be referred for investigation by SQA to determine whether maladministration or malpractice has occurred.

- Where a centre is working in partnership or has more than one site, the SQA approved centre is responsible for ensuring that all quality assurance requirements are met are in line with the defined qualification requirements.

- Where a centre is working in partnership with another delivering centre, it is the approved SQA centre's responsibility to ensure that the partner centre is aware of their responsibilities in line with SQA requirements. The SQA approved centre must also ensure a valid partnership agreement is in place.

3 Policy relationship to SQA's governing principles

SQA's governing principles govern how SQA meets its statutory duties and self-regulates its activities. The SQA Centre Approval policy supports the following Governing Principles:

- Governing Principle 5:** SQA will ensure that any centre offering SQA qualifications has the systems, resources and expertise to deliver and assess those qualifications to the defined standard.
- Governing Principle 6:** SQA will work in partnership with its appointees and centres to ensure that all assessments used in its qualifications are valid and reliable.
- Governing Principle 8:** SQA will quality assure centre assessments and assessment judgements to ensure that they maintain the defined standard.
- Governing Principle 9:** SQA will work in partnership with centres to ensure that all quality assurance processes are fair, open and proportionate.
- Governing Principle 11:** SQA will work in partnership with centres to ensure that the standards of its qualifications are consistently monitored and maintained.

4 Policy requirements

Centres must meet SQA's approval criteria to become an approved centre.

An SQA approved centre must also show that they meet SQA's criteria to deliver a specific qualification or qualifications to the defined qualification requirements.

Centres must come forward to SQA and apply to deliver such qualifications.

It is the centre's responsibility to check the approval status of all qualifications it delivers.

If a centre were to deliver a qualification without first being an approved SQA centre, this would impact on certification of candidates, as certification and verification could not take place.

5 Definitions

Centre: An organisation (such as a school, college, training company or provider, or place of employment) that is approved by and accountable to an awarding body for the examination and assessment arrangements leading to a qualification award.

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6 Related SQA policies and legislation

SQA will set qualification approval statuses in line with the SQA Qualification Approval Status. This is an internal policy document.