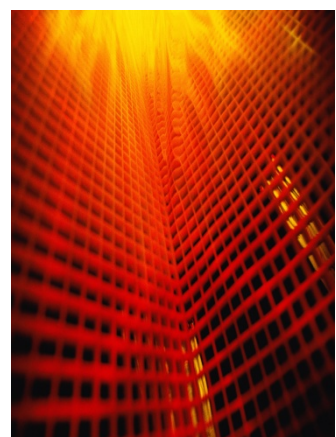
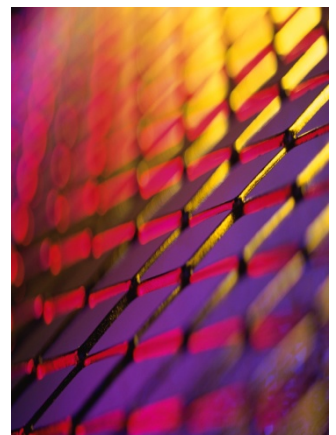
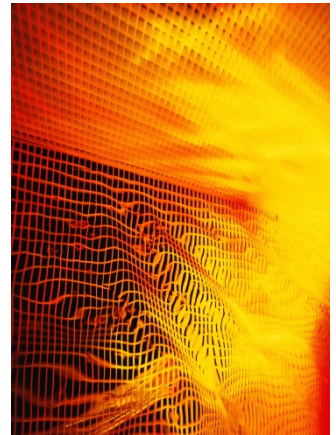


NOCN Centre Handbook



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NOCN Centre Handbook

Introduction



1. Introduction

Welcome to this NOCN Centre Handbook which has been produced to help you understand our systems and processes and so that you can use our Qualifications to meet the needs of your learners.

NOCN Qualifications and OCN validated courses have been developed so that you can use them flexibly with a wide range of learners and in many contexts. They range from small first step courses and Qualifications to larger Diplomas but all share the same credit-based format. This allows you to plan for learner progression within your curriculum offer.

To use NOCN Qualifications and OCN courses you will need to show that your organisation is able to meet our minimum Quality Assurance threshold. This is set out in the Centre Recognition section. We also require you to have a robust system for internal quality assurance and details of this are set out in Section 4. Your OCN will ensure that your systems are in place and operating effectively by providing you with a Quality Reviewer to support your internal quality assurance systems.

The administration of our Qualifications is simple and straightforward. Once you have agreed your curriculum plan and set up your courses you will need to register your learners with us. Details of how to complete this is given in Section 5. The forms and learner data then go forward ready for the award of credit and the production of certificates to learners.

All Centres will receive support from their OCN to help them with every stage of the process. Staff are trained to respond to your needs and work with you to help you use NOCN Qualifications and OCN courses effectively.

2. NOCN Centre Recognition

Centre Recognition is an agreement made between you as the Centre and NOCN, through your OCN, specifying the minimum requirements your organisation must commit to in relation to curriculum, quality and administration. It provides us with information about your Centre and its structure and contacts. It sets out the terms and conditions for Recognition and the obligations on the Centre when using NOCN or OCN provision.

Your OCN will assign a Development Adviser to your organisation who will support you in the Centre Recognition process.

As part of the NOCN quality assurance process a Recognised Centre will be monitored regularly by a Quality Reviewer (QR) who will report on your organisation's ongoing commitment and continued Recognition as a NOCN Centre.

2.1 Centre Recognition: Policies and Procedures

NOCN Centre Recognition requires that your Centre has in place the following policies and procedures, to support your Centre's quality systems:

- Access to Fair Assessment Statement.
- Appeals procedure for candidates.
- Complaints procedure.
- Disability Discrimination policy.
- Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy.
- Health and Safety policy.
- Internal Verification policy.
- Malpractice procedure.
- Policy on checking for criminal records.

Section 7 gives guidance on the drafting of policies to support Centre Recognition and your OCN can provide further guidance and support to develop these policies. However, it is the responsibility of the Centre to develop the policies and procedures that reflect their operating circumstance and extent of curriculum offer.

2.2 Centre Recognition Application: Guidance

This guidance has been provided to help you with completion of the Centre Recognition Application and to understand the meaning of our terms and conditions. Your OCN will provide you with additional guidance and you should return the form to them once it has been completed and signed by the Centre contact.

(Please note all numbers refer to the Terms and Conditions in the Centre Recognition Application)

4.1 Have a robust system for the internal approval of all NOCN or OCN courses

All Centres must be able to demonstrate and have documented a robust internal approval process for the approval of all NOCN or OCN courses prior to them being submitted to the OCN, to ensure that courses are coherent.

The system should cover:

- How courses will be designed and written.
- Who will be responsible for designing and writing courses.
- How you will ensure that your courses are coherent.
- How courses will be validated internally.
- Who will be responsible for approving courses for submission to the OCN.

There is further guidance on Developing Courses for your Learners in Section 3.

4.2 Have resources, systems and staffing that will be appropriate to support the qualifications provided and ensure that staff have access to appropriate training, guidance and support

Your Centre must ensure that:

- An appropriate staffing structure is in place to meet all course delivery requirements.
- The qualifications and profile of all staff that deliver NOCN accredited learning are appropriate for the curriculum assessment and the target group.
- All delivery staff will be supported to achieve relevant and appropriate professional qualifications in line with current Government strategy

and policy. This includes specific requirements, for example, basic skills qualifications.

- All delivery staff will be able to access training in NOCN Assessment and Internal Verification.
- All staff new to NOCN or OCN provision will be inducted by the Centre into relevant procedures, including administration and internal quality assurance.
- All staff new to NOCN or OCN provision will be provided with relevant NOCN or OCN documentation and be supported in administration requirements, delivery and assessment.
- The OCN is notified in writing of any changes to staff appointed as OCN contacts.
- Appropriate IT/materials/facilities are available to enable learners to achieve learning aims.
- It uses buildings for assessment purposes that provide access for all candidates, in accordance with relevant legislation.

E-assessment

NOCN recognises that e-assessment is a rapidly growing area and supports the work of the regulatory authorities and LLUK in developing standards for systems and staff.

At the present time, Centres that wish to offer qualifications using e-assessment must have:

E-Testing

- An ICT system that meets the specifications set out by NOCNs technical partner where this is required.
- Staff to administer e-tests and provide technical support, prepare learners, and invigilate to ensure that e-tests are conducted appropriately.

E-Portfolios

- Systems that comply with the criteria set out in the Awarding Body protocols.

Further details about these requirements are available from your OCN.

4.3 Ensure that valid and reliable assessments of learners' achievements are conducted and recorded

Examples of recording could include records of learner self-assessment, group and peer assessment, tutor records of assessment activities and individual/group progress and achievement. The following are indicative of sources of assessment evidence:

- Learners' files, journals, diaries.
- Portfolios, artwork, videos, audiotapes.
- Performances, exhibitions and displays.
- Individual or group learner testimony.
- Artefacts, photographs and other forms of evidence.

The Centre must ensure that systems are in place for recording and tracking learner achievement over time. Further guidance on this is available from your OCN.

4.4 Ensure that it has in place an appeals and complaints procedure and learners are made aware of this

Your Centre must have an appeals and complaints procedure(s) which learners are able to use where they wish to challenge assessment decisions and lodge other complaints. The Centre should make learners aware of this policy.

4.5 Implement a quality management system that is systematically reviewed to ensure that learners and staff needs are met, that all appropriate persons are kept up to date with quality policy, procedures and standards, and that responsibilities for the management of these systems are clearly and appropriately allocated

Your Centre will need to develop and implement a robust internal quality assurance system that is periodically reviewed/amended where necessary.

Further guidance on the development of quality assurance systems is set out in Section 4 of the NOCN Centre Handbook.

4.6 Agree to contribute to the process of NOCN standardisation

Your Centre must:

- Plan and undertake standardisation of internally set tasks and the outcomes of internal assessment.

- Contribute assessed material to NOCN or OCN standardisation activity in accordance with published procedures.

Purpose

- To ensure consistency in the application of level and credit across NOCN or OCN provision.
- To promote consistency of practice in assessment and verification.
- To inform NOCN or OCN quality improvement cycle, including training and development.
- To ensure that different assessment activities allow for the generation of appropriate assessment evidence, with direct reference to the assessment definitions document as appropriate.
- To share good practice.
- To identify national exemplary benchmarks.

OCN Quality Reviewers are responsible for identifying and collecting evidence from Centres, based on levels, i.e. top, middle, bottom within a level or from different levels. OCN staff will, at Regional Standardisation events, select a further, smaller sample to send to National Standardisation.

4.7 Have administrative systems that will enable NOCN requirements to be met promptly, accurately and securely

Your Centre must ensure:

- Accurate and prompt administration of all course, qualification and learner registrations in accordance with the published deadlines.
- Accurate record keeping of all course, qualification and learner registrations.
- Prompt distribution of certificates to all learners.
- Appropriate documented security arrangements for storage of external assessments or examination papers.
- Adherence to examination/external assessment venue criteria and invigilation requirements which are listed in the relevant qualification handbooks.

4.8 Document the respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of each partner/sub-contracted service, with clear lines of communication between the partners, where a Centre is part of a partnership agreement between organisations

Your Centre must have an appropriate and effective system for the management of all partners or sub-contracted services. All policies and

requirements referred to in this application will apply to any partnership and/or sub-contracted service. Your Centre is also responsible for ensuring that these policies and requirements apply to any satellite site affiliated to the Centre for example remote assessment sites or delivery points.

4.9 Inform NOCN or OCN immediately if they are aware that a candidate has particular requirements that will need to be considered as requiring reasonable adjustments or special consideration

NOCN's policy on assessment is to give all learners equal access and opportunity to demonstrate their achievements. This is to ensure that arrangements are made to take account of particular requirements, without giving unfair advantage over other learners.

Further guidance regarding reasonable adjustments and special considerations is contained within the NOCN Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations policy which is available on the NOCN website www.nocn.org.uk

4.10 Report to NOCN or OCN any suspected malpractice involving candidates, Centre staff or any other party

Malpractice is any action which threatens the integrity of the assessment and certification of the NOCN award of credit. It covers those actions which might come under the headings of non-compliance, maladministration or professional misconduct.

NOCN reserves the right to withhold the issuing of results of assessment while investigations are ongoing. Depending on the outcome of the investigation results may be released or permanently withheld.

4.11 Keep complete and accurate records, for at least three years from the end of year to which they relate, for all qualifications and make these available to NOCN or OCN on request

Your Centre is required to retain the following records:

- Name of learner, date of birth and contact address.
- Title and accreditation number of each qualification and unit studied.
- Name(s) of assessor(s).
- Assessment records, including assessment decision and reason for decision.
- Name(s) of Internal Verifier(s).
- Internal Verification reports.

4.12 Agree to abide by all reasonable stipulations by NOCN or OCN concerning the use of their logos

Your Centre must gain prior permission in writing to use the NOCN or OCN logo from your OCN.

It is only possible to use the logo on promotional material that relates directly to NOCN qualifications or OCN accredited programmes once permission has been granted.

Once agreed the Centre is able to use all the logos that they are sent provided that they replicate the logo in line with NOCN guidance.

4.13 Agree to provide NOCN or OCN and the regulatory authorities, on reasonable notice, with access to premises, people and records as required. Agree to fully co-operate with their monitoring activities, including but not limited to providing access to any premises used (including satellite sites)

If any clarification is needed then please contact your OCN.

4.14 Comply with all relevant law and regulatory criteria as updated and amended from time to time

Any changes to the regulatory criteria that your Centre is expected to adhere to will be communicated to the Centre via your OCN.

You are expected to be aware of and comply with other changes to the legal framework which may affect your NOCN or OCN activity. For example, changes in health and safety legislation, employment practices, disability discrimination etc.

4.15 Have effective communications systems in place both internally and with your OCN, and with learners

It is the responsibility of your Centre to ensure all contact names provided to the OCN are kept up to date and that relevant information is communicated to staff and learners as appropriate.

Centres are required to submit the **Centre Recognition Application Form** to notify your OCN of changes.

4.16 Agree to the prompt payment of all invoices relating to the accreditation process in line with NOCN or OCN annual published charges. For providers in Wales and Northern Ireland these charges will be issued directly by OCN Wales and OCN Northern Ireland

The NOCN annual charges are published and updated on the NOCN website and are available from your OCN.

4.17 Accept that if the Centre defaults on the commitments made in this application it may lead to the removal of its recognised status

NOCN or OCN will be entitled to terminate Centre Recognition by summary notification if at any time the following events occur:

- The Centre acts in any way which may bring into disrepute the name and reputation of NOCN and/or the OCN.
- The Centre does not allow access, on reasonable notice, to premises, people and records as required.
- The Centre does not adequately respond to issues raised in Quality reports which affect the security of the award of credit.
- The Centre makes use of any intellectual property rights of NOCN or the OCN other than as permitted by the contract with the OCN.
- The Centre ceases to trade or becomes insolvent or it, or its assets, becomes the subject of receivership, administration or liquidation or any other form of arrangement with creditors.
- The provider is in breach of its confidentiality obligations to NOCN and/or the OCN.

NOCN or OCN will impose sanctions where necessary to ensure that requirements of the Centre Recognition agreement are met.

Sanctions could vary from the imposition of conditions on continued Approved Internal Verifier Status (AIVS) to withdrawal of Recognition. The level of sanction imposed will depend on the nature of the Centre's non-compliance in relation to the:

- Quality of provision/qualifications.
- Interests of the learner.

In cases of serious breach of the agreement, for example, in relation to security of assessment, NOCN may withdraw Centre Recognition. In other cases conditions may be put in place and monitored by the OCN. The Centre will be supported by their OCN officer to address the areas for concern identified.

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Centre Recognition

In cases of serious breach, and at its discretion, NOCN will inform the Qualifications Regulators of any breach which it deems may impact beyond the Awarding Body to other Awarding Bodies and/or the Qualifications Regulators.

In all cases the Awarding Body will endeavour to ensure the security of learner achievement.

3. Curriculum Offer

The curriculum offer describes the range and volume of provision that you are developing through the OCN. It can contain NOCN Qualifications as well as OCN validated units.

The curriculum offer is developed through discussion with your OCN and will focus on your identification of learner need. The Qualifications and Units of Assessment which you wish to use are arranged in sectors and have been approved at different levels, from Entry Level to Level 3.

Deciding What you Need in Your Curriculum Plan

Your OCN has available a large number of NOCN Qualifications to meet a range of learner need. These Qualifications cover specific curriculum areas as well as our unique Qualifications for Progression, which are a number of Awards, Certificates and Diplomas from Entry Level to Level 3.

NOCN Qualifications are predominantly credit based and use Units of Assessment which combine into the right course for your learners. You can select the best Units of Assessment for your learners from the unit bank and, using guidance from your OCN, ensure that the course is targeted at the right level and volume of learning.

OCNs are also able to develop and approve Units of Assessment that can be used alongside NOCN Qualifications to add greater flexibility to your curriculum offer or on their own as a local course designed specifically for your organisation.

Once you have discussed and agreed the initial curriculum offer you can, at a later date and as circumstances change, add new Units of Assessment or new sectors to your Curriculum Plan. Your OCN will guide you in developing the range and scope of your offer.

3.1 The Curriculum Plan

Each organisation has its own Curriculum Plan which identifies the detailed offer at each Centre. It is completed through discussion between the Centre and the local OCN.

The Curriculum Plan has the following sections:

1. Centre Details

These are completed automatically from the information you have already supplied to the OCN. You will be asked to confirm these details which are entered on our database.

2. Key Contacts

These are completed automatically from the information you have already supplied to the OCN. You will be asked to confirm these details which are entered on our database.

3. Curriculum Contacts

Centres are asked to provide an overall Curriculum contact when providing initial details to the OCN. This section of the Curriculum Plan is used to identify staff responsible for different parts of the curriculum offer so that details of individual courses and other information can reach the right person.

4. Development Record

This part of the form is used to record key details of discussion about the curriculum needs of the Centre and is completed by the OCN.

5. Sectors Requested

This section is used to record the range and level of sectors and Units of Assessment that will be used by the Centre. Through discussion with the OCN the Centre will request Units of Assessment in specific sectors from which to build their curriculum offer.

This may involve more than one sector and more than one level. The OCN will discuss with you any limitations on the sectors available for you to use at any one time. Limits are normally applied depending on resources and staffing at a Centre, the type and mode of delivery or the target group for the particular offer.

Details from this section will be used by the OCN to determine the range and type of external quality assurance interventions required to ensure the safety and security of the award of credit.

Centres may alter their offer through discussion with the OCN by, for example, adding sectors and levels of Units of Assessment.

6. OCN Sector Approval and Internal Verifier Status

NOCN has developed a system of Direct Claims Status for those Centres which operate robust internal quality assurance systems and have staff with Approved Internal Verifiers Status (AIVS). Section 4 outlines the requirements for AIVS.

This section of the Curriculum Plan is used to identify those staff with Approved Internal Verifier Status at a Centre. Normally where a Centre has AIVs they will be able to sign off the award of credit and complete the Recommendation for the Award of Credit (RAC) form. See Section 5 for more information on the RAC.

Where a Centre has no Approved Internal Verifiers, or wishes to have more staff gain this status, the OCN will be able to advise on training and the requirements of robust internal quality assurance systems.

Curriculum Plan Reports

The OCN will upload information from the Curriculum Plan onto our database. This information will then be used to produce two reports for the OCN and for the Centre.

(i) Centre Course List

You will be provided with a list of courses that have been submitted to the OCN. Please see Section 3.2 below for information on how to submit courses.

(ii) Course Unit List

The OCN will provide you with a list of the Units of Assessment that you can use to generate courses at your Centre. The Units of assessment are listed with the Unit Code, Unit Title, Credit Value, Credit Level and Sector Code.

You will need to use this information on the New Course Notification form so that the OCN can verify that the details entered are correct. You should not change any of the details but, if the Unit of Assessment does not meet your needs, you should discuss alternative Units of Assessment that may be available.

3.2 Developing Courses for your Learners

The Curriculum Plan indicates the broad offer of what you would like to do. In order to run NOCN Qualifications and OCN validated courses you will need to complete a New Course Notification Form to show which Units of Assessment you will be using on a particular course. You can set up as many courses as you wish and your OCN will give your guidance on the optimum combinations for your learners.

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Quality Assurance System



As well as listing the Units of Assessment you will be asked to give the course a title and identify the Intended Credit Value.

Internal Approval

As part of Centre Recognition the OCN expects that the Centre will have a **robust** system in place for internal course approval to ensure courses are coherent.

Course Coherence

A course needs to be coherent in that; the units are combined so that the learning outcomes relate to one another in a meaningful way and meet the needs of the particular target group, leading to appropriately identified progression routes. Where the units selected are NOCN qualification units, they should be combined wherever possible according to the rules of combination for the particular qualification to maximise the opportunities for learners to achieve the full qualification. Additional guidance for NOCN qualifications is available on the NOCN website www.nocn.org.uk in the qualification guide. You should also discuss this with your OCN if you are unsure about putting together a course.

In designing a coherent course all of the following should be considered:

- How does the course meet the needs of the target group?
- What are the entry requirements/skills required to ensure that a learner will benefit from the course?
- What are the likely progression routes for learners and are these as wide as possible?
- What is the volume of learning and does this relate to the guided learning hours being proposed?
- Is it at the appropriate level(s)?
- What is the expected intended credit value for full achievement for a learner who successfully completes the course?
- For NOCN qualifications are all the rules of combination being applied, including the use of mandatory and optional units to ensure that the opportunity for learners to achieve the full qualification is maximised?
- How any units previously achieved can be used to enable progression towards the qualification?
- Does the course title fully reflect the course content? Remember the title of the course will appear on the learners' certificate for OCN courses.

Choosing your course title

- Your chosen course title must accurately reflect the content of the course.

- You must not use the words “Award, Certificate or Diploma” in any locally designed course.
- You must avoid using “Access to-----” except where the course is a QAA recognised Access to HE course.

3.3 New Course Notification Form

A New Course Notification Form must be completed for each course you wish to run whether this is a NOCN Qualification or a course using OCN validated units.

1. Centre Details

These should be entered on the form so that the OCN can ensure the course is allocated to the correct Centre. Normally the Curriculum Development Contact will be the same person as shown on the Centre Recognition form and would be the person signing the New Course Notification Form. Where this is not the case you should discuss this with your OCN.

2. Course Details

In this section you should complete the Course Title, using the guidance above. You should also identify the AIV for the course if one has been approved. The name of the AIV will then be attached to the course for recommending the award of credit and only their signature will be accepted. Where there are several staff with AIVS in this sector the OCN will discuss with you how these staff are attached to courses.

If you do not have an AIV leave this section blank.

You need to indicate the target group for the course. This can be done following discussion with the OCN and can be a broad target group or a more specific group depending on the nature of the course.

The **Intended Credit Value** is used to indicate the achievement aim for learners taking the course. Where there are more credits available than the total credit value of all the Units of Assessment on the course the Centre should indicate if there are rules of combination where some Units of Assessment are mandatory and other designated as optional.

The OCN uses the credit target for full achievement to levy charges for the course and so it is very important that you complete this accurately.

Some Units of Assessment are not available for learners under 16. Please contact your OCN for more guidance.

NOCN Qualifications are listed on the NOCN website www.nocn.org.uk and you should use this to confirm the title of the qualification and the accreditation number. This website also contains details of each Qualification in a Qualification Guide.

3. Units

These should be listed in the appendix to the Form. For each Unit of Assessment you will need the Unit Title, Unit Level, Credit Value and the NOCN or OCN Unit Code.

These details can be found in the Unit of Assessment report from the Curriculum Plan or can be supplied to you by your OCN

4. Confirmation

The form should be signed by the Curriculum Contact for the Centre unless otherwise agreed with the OCN.

3.4 Units of Assessment

Your OCN has access to a wide range of Units of Assessment as well as NOCN Qualification Units which are available via the NOCN website www.nocn.org.uk. If after searching these two sources you are unable to locate the Units you require then your OCN can help by requesting Units of Assessment from other regions or by guiding you to write a Unit which meets your specific needs.

OCNs have extensive experience in writing Units of Assessment and approving these through their own systems. Units can be written for specific learning requirements and to support employers and training providers.

Please contact your OCN for more guidance on writing Units of Assessment.

4. Quality Assurance System

Internal Quality assurance

As a recognised Centre you have undertaken to meet certain requirements regarding internal quality assurance arrangements as detailed in the **Centre Recognition Application**. Compliance with these requirements will be monitored regularly by your allocated OCN Quality Reviewer, who will report on the progress of any agreed actions for quality improvement.

4.1 Internal Verification

Definition and Purpose

An effective Internal Verification system ensures assessment practices and decisions are regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure the validity of the award of credit.

Guidance on Internal Verification

Any Centre delivering NOCN or OCN provision must have quality systems in place to underpin that delivery. Systems will vary between Centres according to what is appropriate in the particular situation. Practices that work in a large Centre will not necessarily work in a small one and the context of, for example, an employer-based provider may mean that there are different requirements from that of a College. Whatever the situation there are two key points – there must be an appropriate system in place, and there must be evidence that it is implemented effectively.

‘Quality system’ is an umbrella term that includes a number of key aspects of the way in which a Centre operates its quality assurance. In reviewing the system that any Centre has in place we are looking for it to deliver a range of outcomes, including:

- A team of well-informed committed and supported tutors, sufficient in number for the planned provision.
- Adequate resources to support learners’ study.
- Guidance and support for learners and provision for individual needs.
- Equal opportunities in practice that help to maximise the participation of learners.
- Assessment procedures which are inclusive and offer participation, equity and reliable standardisation.
- Systems which provide efficient recording and evaluation.

- Real progression routes for learners, and preparation for work and/or further study including confidence building and basic/key skills achievements.

Implementing Internal Verification

Internal Verification is the means by which a Centre ensures that many of these outcomes are achieved. It is a process by which the Centre regularly samples and evaluates its assessment practices and decisions and acts on the findings, to ensure consistency and fairness. It involves two key processes – verification and standardisation – and is carried out by one or more internal verifier.

The role of the internal verifier is to ensure that:

- Assessment is appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent and does not unintentionally discriminate against any learner.
- Tutors/assessors receive ongoing advice and support, for example in designing assessment activities.
- Learners clearly understand assessment requirements and are given opportunities to achieve against the assessment criteria.
- Learners' work is presented in a manner that enables effective verification to take place.
- Evidence of learner achievement is clearly mapped to the assessment criteria.
- Recommendations for the award of credit are valid, reliable and consistent.

Internal Verification arrangements must include as a minimum:

- An identified individual responsible for co-ordinating the Internal Verification process.
- A planned structure for Internal Verification that incorporates all of a Centre's NOCN and/or OCN provision.
- An agreed and published annual timetable for Internal Verification, including Internal Verification meetings.
- Clear and documented roles and responsibilities for all those involved.
- A forum for discussion of borderline cases and good practice in assessment.
- Sampling of assessed work.
- Standardisation of assessed work.
- Full and clear records and action plans.
- Regular evaluation of the process.

An internal verifier therefore has a central role in the operation of the Centre's quality system. A Centre may have one or more internal verifiers, according to the size and variety of its provision. All must have experience relevant to the area(s) for which they have responsibility. They should also have an understanding of quality assurance and improvement, and the Centre must ensure that they develop their practice in this field. Most OCN regions offer introductory and refresher training for internal verifiers and the NOCN Internal Verifier Award (IVA), which covers both the theory and practice of the role in more detail.

Models of Internal Verification

There are a number of models of Internal Verification that the Centre can operate, depending on their particular situation. Some key points underpin all models:

- All tutors/assessors must be involved.
- All NOCN and/or OCN provision must be included.
- Nobody can internally verify work that they have themselves assessed.

Model 1 – Single Internal Verifier

This is the simplest arrangement, in which there is one internal verifier who verifies the work of all of a Centre's assessors. This model would be particularly appropriate for a small Centre.

Model 2 – Designated assessors act as Internal Verifiers

In this model a number of a Centre's assessors are identified as internal verifiers, and each is responsible for moderating the work of one or more other assessors. There must be an identified co-ordinating internal verifier, who has overall responsibility for ensuring that the verification process operates effectively. S/he would normally verify assessment carried out by the other internal verifiers.

This model would be appropriate for a larger Centre, particularly where there is provision across a number of sectors. In this case the co-ordinating internal verifier is likely to have significant experience in quality assurance that enables him/her to verify across the range of the centre's provision.

Model 3 – All assessors act as internal verifiers – round robin and pairs

Round Robin: involves a 'circle' of assessors each verifying another's work – for example assessor A verifies for assessor B, assessor B for assessor C and

assessor C for assessor A. In theory there is no upper limit to the size of the 'circle', although in practice it must remain manageable.

Pairs: where verifiers work in pairs to confirm assessment decisions. – A+B, C+D.

In both of these models one member of staff must act as co-ordinating internal verifier to ensure that the process operates effectively.

Internal Verification activities

The following activities must take place during the course of an Internal Verification cycle. The length of this cycle will vary according to a Centre's provision. In many cases this will be based on an academic year, but some will use the calendar year and others will operate on a 'rolling' basis with a succession of short courses for which the start and finish of a 'year' could be set at any agreed point.

Planning for Internal Verification

A plan of the proposed Internal Verification activity must be developed before the cycle begins. This must indicate what will happen, when it will happen, who is to be involved and how it is to be recorded.

Induction and updating for tutors/assessors

All new tutors/assessors must be introduced to the Centre's NOCN or OCN provision, processes and practice. It is essential that they:

- Have all the relevant units, assessment materials and other course documents.
- Clearly understand the assessment requirements and procedures.
- Have information about, and access to, training opportunities and support materials, both within the Centre and as provided by the OCN.

All tutors/assessors must know who is managing the Internal Verification process and who will actually carry out the Internal Verification of the work they will be assessing. They need to know what is in the verification plan and about any issues relevant to their work that may have arisen from previous Internal or External Verification or from evaluation of the verification process.

Planning and managing assessment

It is essential that assessment is carried out in a structured way, both for the benefit of the learners and in order that effective Internal Verification can take place.

The internal verifier will therefore need to work with tutors/assessors before a course begins to ensure that:

- Assessment tasks allow learners to meet all the necessary assessment criteria.
- Wherever possible a range of assessment methods is used.
- Where more than one tutor/assessor works with a learner group the assessment tasks form a coherent whole across the course in terms of content, style and timescale.
- Where more than one learner group is following the same course the assessment tasks are either the same for each group or, if the diversity of the groups requires differing tasks, consistent with each other in terms of fairness to the learners.
- Learners are made aware at the beginning of the course what the assessment requirement will be.
- A process is in place that incorporates constructive individual feedback to learners on their assessed work.

Over the course of the year the internal verifier will need to ensure that assessment is being carried out as planned. This will involve holding regular Internal Verification meetings with tutors/assessors. These meetings should be specific to the Internal Verification process to allow it to receive the necessary focus – even if all those involved work closely together and discuss assessment and verification informally in the course of their work.

The internal verifier will also need to meet with learners at some point during their course to ensure that their experience of assessment is positive. In particular it is important that they:

- Understand the assessment requirements.
- Are receiving clear and constructive feedback on their assessed work.
- Are making progress towards meeting all the required assessment criteria.

The timing of a meeting with learners should be appropriate to the particular course and group. It should be far enough into the course for some meaningful assessment to have taken place, but early enough for any issues to be addressed before the learners' chances of achievement are compromised.

Sampling assessment

It is the internal verifier's responsibility to monitor the quality of assessment through the sampling of assessment practices and decisions. The internal verifier – not the assessor – should specify the sample of assessed work that s/he wants to see, and it is important that the sample is sufficient for the internal verifier to form a view on the consistency and validity of the assessment. The minimum sample size is 10% or five portfolios, whichever is the greater.

In sampling assessed work the internal verifier should look for evidence that:

- Assessment activities are standard and appropriate for the course and the learners.
- Assessment decisions are fair and consistent, both across provision and over time.
- Assessors are providing learners with clear and constructive feedback on their work.
- Clear and accurate assessment records are maintained.

It is not usually possible, or necessary, to verify every aspect of assessment at each Internal Verification exercise or event. A properly selected representative sample should identify any issues with assessment practices and decisions. To ensure that a sample is representative, the internal verifier must take into account all variable factors that may impact on the quality of assessment.

These factors, on the basis of which the verifier defines a sampling strategy, include:

- Delivery sites.
- Tutors/assessors.
- Number of units.
- Unit level and credit value.
- Delivery methods.
- Assessment methods.
- Borderline cases.
- Reasonable adjustments.
- Issues arising from previous verification.

The internal verifier should check the selected sample in three ways:

- All assessment for an individual learner – to ensure assessment is appropriate, consistent and complete.
- Specific learning outcomes across a number of learners – to ensure that assessment is consistent for all learners.

- Level and credit value – to establish that standards are maintained across units, assessors and sites, and over time, and continue to reflect the requirements of the assessment criteria.

4.2 Awarding Credit

The outcome of the Internal Verification process is the award of credit to learners. Your OCN supports two ways in which credit can be awarded to learners; through the role of the Quality Reviewer, or through Direct Claims status.

Recommendation for Award of Credit: Role of Quality Reviewer

In cases where the internal verifier is not approved, and for all new Centres, you will need to arrange for the Recommendation of the Award of Credit through the OCN.

This will normally be by the OCN's appointed Quality Reviewer for the Centre or, possibly in particular cases, by a Quality Reviewer who is a subject specialist.

The person from the OCN who is carrying this out may need, amongst other things, to:

- Sample the assessment strategy and the assessment evidence provided by the learners.
- In the case of qualifications confirm that all elements of the qualification assessment requirements have been met in order to verify the award.
- Check that a robust internal moderation has taken place and ensure that any outcomes of this process are included in a quality improvement cycle.
- Support the development of the provision by making recommendations for improvement and highlighting good practice in the curriculum area.
- Ensure that any recommendations for improvement or particular good practice identified are incorporated into the Quality Improvement Plan.

Direct Claims Status

Direct Claims status can be given to a Centre where there is one or more Approved Internal Verifier (AIV) for the sector or course(s) where learners are being recommended for the award of credit.

A Centre where there is one or a number of Approved Internal Verifiers will be able to claim the award of credit direct from the OCN. Approved status is monitored by the Quality Reviewer and can be withdrawn by the OCN if quality systems are not operating effectively.

4.3 Approved Internal Verifier Status (AIVS)

If an internal verifier holds Approved Internal Verifier Status (AIVS) within a Centre they will be able to sign off the award of credit for that Centre's learners. This should only be done when the internal verifier is satisfied, on the basis of their verification activities, that the learners have met the appropriate assessment criteria.

AIVS are only approved following completion of the appropriate NOCN training and after providing evidence of good practice. They are approved individually, for a particular Centre and, in larger Centres, normally for a particular curriculum area.

AIVS relates only to an individual verifier within a particular Centre and is not in any way transferable, either between verifiers or between Centres. It can be withdrawn at any time if either the practice of the verifier or the structure and support provided by the Centre falls below the expected standard.

All Centres should seek to achieve AIVS for their OCN provision in order to both ensure and measure the rigour and robustness of internal quality systems and to avoid potential future increases in the cost of quality review.

What are the benefits of AIVS?

Where a Centre has one or more AIV then it is possible, for those courses for which the AIV is able to sign the RAC, for the award of credit to be approved immediately on completion of a course and therefore allowing prompt certification. Secondly, the records required by the OCN provide an audit trail of internal quality assurance and improvement. Other benefits include ongoing monitoring and advice by the NOCN Quality Reviewer and the opportunity for Centre staff to access training and professional development.

Routes to AIVS

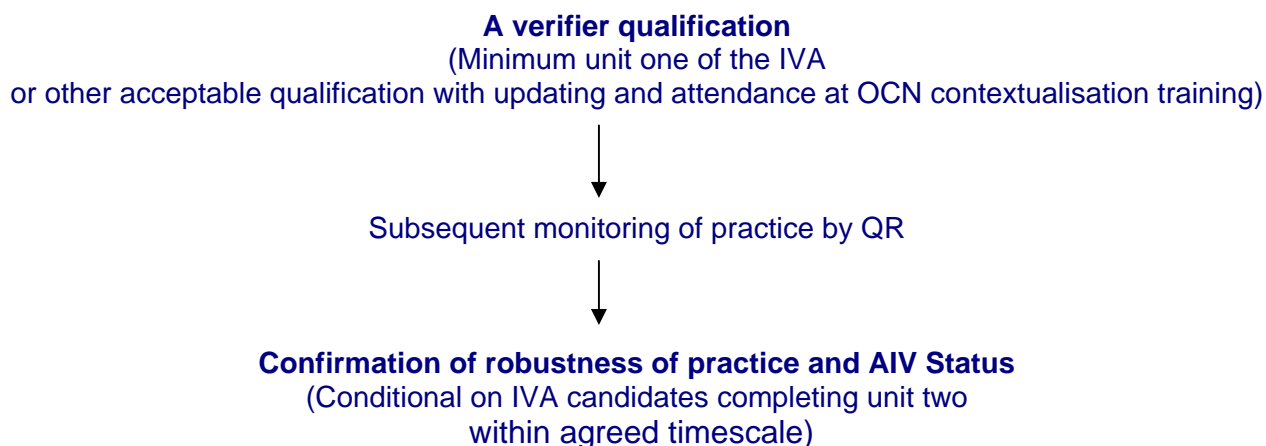
A Centre can nominate staff for AIVS and the risk assessment process, undertaken by the OCN, will identify, through the training plan for the organisation, the most appropriate route.

In existing Centres staff may have already achieved the Internal Moderator Award (IMA) and be able to provide evidence of practice. In these cases staff could migrate to AIVS through this route.

In all other cases staff nominated or identified for AIVS would be able to achieve this through a combination of current verifier qualifications or the achievement of the full NOCN Internal Verifier Award (IVA) together will

demonstration of robustness of practice within their sector/curriculum area, which would be confirmed by the Quality Reviewer for the Centre.

The following diagram illustrates this process:



Role of the Quality Reviewer in Monitoring AIV status.

AIV status can only be granted in an existing Centre that has demonstrated robust internal quality systems and whose internal verifiers have met the minimum requirements for the role.

Once an AIV has been approved the Quality Reviewer will monitor their practice by sampling the Internal Verification documentation and practice. In addition they may from time to time wish to sample the assessment evidence of the learners for whom the award of credit is claimed.

Withdrawal of AIVS

Where there is evidence that the required standards have not been met the OCN may decide to withdraw approved status of an individual verifier.

4.4 Centre Quality Review

Quality Monitoring of a New Centre

Once recognised as a Centre the OCN will allocate a Quality Reviewer. The Quality Reviewer will have ongoing responsibility for monitoring your Centre's compliance with the requirements of Centre Recognised Status.

NOCN Centre Handbook

Quality Assurance System



Initial Quality Review Visit

Following Centre Recognition the Quality Reviewer will contact your Centre to arrange their initial visit. The focus of this visit will be to monitor any areas identified for development in the initial risk assessment process. The Quality Reviewer will communicate in writing to you using the **Centre Recognition Report** what these areas will be.

You should prepare for the visit by collecting together all the evidence of further development against the identified priorities to show the progress that has been made since Centre recognition. This will almost certainly have included a commitment to attendance at introductory training offered by the OCN for key identified personnel.

Quality Improvement Plan

Following the initial quality review visit a Quality Improvement Plan will be drawn up by the Quality Reviewer. This will identify any areas for improvement that the OCN requires the Centre to address with allocated responsibility and target dates for completion being clearly identified. Quality Reviewers will also support the development of the Centre through further developing the training plan.

Continuous Quality Improvement of all Centres

Quality Reviewers will make regular visits to all Centres. During these visits he/she will:

- Monitor the Centre's compliance with the Centre Recognition agreement by reviewing course documentation, meeting managers, tutors, internal moderators, learners and administrative staff.
- Identify any staff development needs.
- Through an audit trail ensure that all procedures are being complied with, and that the award of credit/qualifications to learners is secure.
- Authorise Approved Internal Verifiers to sign off the award of credit as appropriate (AIVS).
- Monitor the work of AIVS to ensure that the award of credit is secure.
- Report to the OCN on all visits/meetings and update the Quality Improvement Plan.

A summative report of a Centre's progress against the plan will be produced as required and this may form the basis of a further risk assessment of the Centre. Centres are encouraged to strive for continuous quality improvement and to develop the skills and experience of staff through appropriate training and CPD.

Where a Centre is demonstrating a robust internal quality system the frequency of review visits will decrease. Where a Centre is giving cause for concern additional visits may be deemed necessary and the OCN may impose additional charges. In cases where a Centre is giving serious cause for concern sanctions may be imposed leading to the ultimate withdrawal of Centre Recognition.

4.5 Standardisation

Centres are required to contribute to regional and national standardisation as requested by their OCN and also to carry out appropriate internal standardisation.

Internal standardisation involves ensuring that, where there is more than one tutor/assessor delivering OCN provision or more than one site, internally set tasks and the outcomes of internal assessment are consistent across the range of courses. It is recommended that internal standardisation meetings include all tutors and internal verifiers concerned and that action plans are produced and followed up. NOCN Quality Reviewers will ask to see evidence of internal standardisation activity and of how the Centre identifies and disseminates good practice.

Internal standardisation provides:

- Evidence of consistency and a common understanding of credit value and level.
- Opportunities for staff to share good practice in assessment, including writing assignment briefs, benchmarking, evidencing, providing feedback to learners and record keeping.
- Opportunities for self assessment and action planning towards quality improvement.

Regional Standardisation

The OCN will hold regional standardisation events by sector on a rolling basis. Quality Reviewers will identify samples of learners' work that they wish to retain for standardisation purposes during verification visits. Centres will need to retain records of the assessment and Internal Verification process. Centres will be required to contribute to standardisation events, and in Centres where AIVs are in place they will normally be expected to attend regional meetings.

National Standardisation

Samples of learner evidence of achievement used for regional standardisation will be made available for national standardisation as required. Quality Reviewers will represent the regions at these events.

4.6 Retaining Evidence

Centre Evidence

Centres must keep complete and accurate records, for at least three years from the end of year to which they relate, for all qualifications and make these available to NOCN or OCN on request.

Centres are required to retain the following records:

- Name of learner, date of birth and contact address.
- Title and accreditation number of each qualification and unit studied.
- Name(s) of assessor(s).
- Assessment records, including assessment decision and reason for decision.
- Name(s) of internal verifier(s).
- Internal Verification reports.

Evidence for standardisation

Centre standardisation events will consider evidence produced in the last year, minimum three from every/tutor assessor, representing the full range of provision.

For regional standardisation events Quality Reviewers are responsible for identifying and collecting evidence from Centres, based on levels, i.e. top, middle, bottom within a level or from different levels.

Following standardisation, for Awarding Body purposes, Centres are not required to retain samples of learner evidence.

The OCN will decide which of these samples to retain for its own use and which it forwards for national standardisation events (the retained sample should include that sent to national standardisation).

Standardisation sample must include:

- Unit.
- Assessment Task.
- Learner's Work.
- Tutor Feedback.

5. Registration and Awards

5.1 Registering Learners

In order to register learners all Centres must have received Centre Recognition from their OCN and have been through the Curriculum Plan and the New Course Notification process which is detailed at Section 3. This enables Centres to identify the courses that they intend to deliver.

Learner Registration

Early notification is required to ensure that the necessary documentation can be sent to you and that the award of credit for learners can be completed quickly and efficiently. The Learner Registration Form (LRF) can be submitted as csv files. Further information on this and other methods of registration is available from your OCN.

How to complete the Learner Registration Form

- Complete details of all learners to be registered on this specific course using the LRF. You must check where NOCN qualifications (or units from NOCN qualifications) are included in the course that learners are registered prior to the qualification accreditation end date and meet the minimum age requirements (see the qualification guide for this information).

For short courses (less than 12 weeks duration) learners should be registered within **25 working days** of the start date of the course. For all other courses, learners should be registered within **40 working days** of the start date. If you have any problems complying with these arrangements please contact the OCN to discuss this. A late registration fee may be charged.

The OCN will enter learners onto our database from your completed LRF. The information on the form will be used to generate:

- An invoice, which will be sent to your Finance Contact. This will be according to the National Charging Structure.
- A Recommendation for the Award of Credit form, which will be issued to the Centre Administration Contact.

The Centre must make learners aware that their information will be passed to the OCN for registration purposes.

Amending Course Runs

Please notify OCN in writing of any changes to learner details e.g. withdrawal of learners or registration of additional learners. Please use the Learner Registration Form to register additional learners.

Guidance on completing the Learner Registration Form (LRF)

The Learner Registration Form is pre-populated with:

UKPRN or NOCN Centre Number

The UKPRN is a unique identifier used to share information with the UKRLP partner agencies such as the LSC, HESA, UCAS etc. Providers have to register and apply for this number. Further information on this number can be found at <http://www.ukrlp.co.uk/ukrlp/ukrlp.first> If you have a UKPRN and it is not printed on the form then please contact the OCN to ensure their records are updated.

If you do not have a UKPRN then the OCN will have populated this field with your number which relates to your Centre Recognition.

Centre name

This will be automatically populated.

Course Code and Course Title

The Course Code and Course Title will have already been agreed and is unique to the course and must be used for identification of this.

Approved Internal Verifier (AIV)/Quality Reviewer/External Verifier

This information will be pre-populated. If AIV status has been given to a Internal Verifier at the centre their name will be automatically populated.

Intended Credit Value

The intended credit value for the course will have been agreed on the New Course Notification Form. This is the number of credits a learner will gain for full achievement of the course.

NOCN Centre Handbook

Registration and Awards



The information that the provider is required to completed is:

Delivery Venue

This will be the venue where the training will be delivered.

Provider Reference

This is the unique reference number provided by your organisation for the course. This can be either alpha or numeric.

Start Date

The start date entered should be your confirmed start date for the course. If the course has multiple runs (for example, will run three times a year with different groups of learners) a separate course run must be identified and given a unique provider reference number. You must check where NOCN qualifications (or units from NOCN qualifications) are included in the course that learners are registered prior to the qualification accreditation end date (see qualification guide for this information).

End Date

The end date given should be the final end date of the course.

Authorised by

This is the name of the Examination Officer or the Administration Contact authorising the form.

Date

This is the date of submission to the OCN.

Purchase Order Number

If you require a purchase order number to be quoted on your invoice please provide this here.

Tutor Name

This is the name of the tutor who will be delivering the course. They will be responsible for signing the RAC.

NOCN Centre Handbook

Registration and Awards



Unit Information

The unit information will be pre-populated and includes all the units within the course. The information includes National Code, QCA Code, Unit Name/Title, Level, Credits, Unit ID. Your OCN will provide further information on courses and units if required. If the learners are only to be registered against specific units you will need to tick these units. If the learners are to be registered against all units within the course nothing needs to be entered. If it has been already agreed with your OCN that all units within the course will be used the units will have been automatically ticked.

Learner registration details

Provider Learner Reference (if applicable)

If you have a unique learner reference that is used within your centre enter the details next to the learner.

ULN

This is the unique learner number which is given to the learner through the Learner Registration Service (LRS) which is operated through MIAP. The LRS is an internet based facility capable of providing a Unique Learner Number for every person in education and training aged 14 and over. This allows people to build a lifelong record of their learning participation and achievements (through their Learner Record). Further information on the ULN can be found at <http://www.miap.gov.uk/lrs/>

Surname/Forename/Middle Name

This information should be clearly printed. The name(s) given on this form will be the name (s) that appears on the certificate.

Date of Birth

This information is mandatory.

Postcode

This information is mandatory.

Gender/Ethnicity (Centres should make every effort to include the appropriate ethnicity code for each candidate)/**Employment Status/Learner Support Status/Provider Reference**

This information is collected for monitoring and statistical purposes only. This information is treated as confidential and will not be available to anyone outside NOCN or OCN. Please use the codes provided with the Learner Registration form when completing the LRF.

5.2 Recommendation for the Award of Credit (RAC)

Further information on the assessment and quality assurance processes leading up to the recommendation for the award of credit can be found in Section 4.

The Recommendation for Award of Credit (RAC) form contains details of the units and learners for each course run you have registered. It will be provided by the OCN once learners have been registered on a run.

The RAC should be signed by the Tutor, Internal Verifier (IV), and the Quality Reviewer (QR), except in Centres where the IV is authorised when RACs will be accepted without a QR signature.

Your Administration Contact will be expected to:

- Receive RACs.
- Distribute to relevant tutors for completion.
- Receive completed forms from tutors, ensuring that the Internal Verifier/Quality Reviewer (named on the RAC) has confirmed achievement.
- Check the RAC form is fully completed.
- Retain copies of the RACs.
- Return the RAC to the OCN as soon as possible following verification.
- RACs must be returned to the OCN within 12 weeks of the end date of the course.

Guidance on completing the RAC

Pre-printed information

Pre-printed information should **not** be amended except for spelling mistakes. In no circumstances should unit information be amended on this form. Please contact the OCN should any of the pre-printed information be inaccurate (except spelling mistakes, which should be amended on the RAC form and initialed by the IV).

Learner Name

Please check that all learners are listed on the RAC and names are spelt correctly. Any amendments to names should be corrected on the RAC form to avoid inaccuracies appearing on learners' certificates.

Recommending Credit

Tutors are responsible for ensuring that the RAC is completed. Credit **must only** be recommended when a learner has achieved all of the learning outcomes for a unit. This is done by placing a tick against each learner and the unit they have achieved. If a learner has previously been awarded credit for the unit(s) this will be shown on the RAC. The Tutor must sign the RAC once all recommendations are completed.

Internal Verifier/Quality Reviewer signature

If the Internal Verifier assigned to verify the course has AIVS (Approved Internal Verifier Status) then the Internal Verifier is able to authorise the Award of Credit. If you do not have an Approved Internal Verifier for the course then the award of credit must be authorised by a Quality Reviewer. Once the RAC has been signed off by the Quality Reviewer/Approved Internal Verifier it can be submitted to the OCN.

The Internal Verifier/Quality Reviewer whose name appears on the RAC must sign the RAC to verify the achievement of credit. This must be an original signature to ensure the process of awarding credit is reliable and robust. **Photocopies or faxes can not be accepted.**

The Internal Verifier/Quality Reviewer must initial any changes/additions made to the RAC (except corrections to spelling of learner names).

5.3 Issuing Certificates

The OCN will issue certificates for learners who have successfully completed unit(s) **within 35 working days of receipt of completed RAC form**. This will show the course title, the unit title, credit value and level of units achieved by the learner. If a learner has achieved units from a NOCN Qualification, this will be indicated on the certificate.

All certificates will be forwarded to your Centre, via a secure route (courier, recorded delivery or by hand), for the attention of the specified contact for distribution to learners.

Qualification Certificates

In circumstances where a learner is being recommended for a qualification it is essential that the Tutor, Internal Verifier, and Quality Reviewer, where appropriate, confirm that all assessment tasks required to achieve the qualification have been successfully completed, to the required standard, including any externally marked tasks.

The Centre should confirm to the OCN that this is the case using the paperwork appropriate to the qualification. Please consult your OCN if you require assistance with this.

Learners who achieve all units within a qualification and meet the criteria for successful completion of a qualification will be awarded a qualification certificate **within 35 working days of receipt of the completed documentation.**

You must return a signed copy of the NOCN Qualifications Certificate Receipt Form NQ7 to the OCN within 5 working days of receipt of certificates to acknowledge they have been received. A copy of this form will be sent to you with your certificates.

Re-issue of Certificates

Requests for a certificate to be re-issued must be made in writing to the OCN, please follow the process below.

Your Centre must write to the OCN confirming details of lost or incorrect certificates. The letter should provide details of the circumstances leading to the loss or destruction of the certificate. The letter must formally request a re-issue. The letter must also contain the learner's correct name, postcode and date of birth. In the event of an inaccurate certificate the original must be returned before a replacement can be re-issued.

On receipt of the letter the OCN will authenticate the claim and a replacement certificate will be issued within 35 working days of receipt of request, this will be marked as a reissue. The fee for a replacement certificate is shown in the annual fees and charges available from your OCN.

NOCN Centre Handbook

Fees and Charges



6. Fees and Charges

NOCN and all OCNs publish their charges annually.

A copy of the fees and charges is available from your OCN. Please contact them for more details.

NOCN Centre Handbook

Centre Recognition Policies: Guidance



7. Centre Recognition Policies: Guidance

The NOCN Centre Recognition requires that Centres have in place the following policies and procedures, to support the Centre's quality systems:

- Access to Fair Assessment Statement.
- Appeals procedure for candidates.
- Complaints procedure.
- Disability Discrimination policy.
- Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy.
- Health and Safety policy.
- Internal Verification policy.
- Malpractice procedure.
- Policy on checking for criminal records.

This guidance has been produced to assist Centres to develop the required policies and procedures. The guidance sets the expectation of what the policy or procedure should contain. However it is the responsibility of the Centre to develop the policies and procedures that reflect their operating circumstance and extent of curriculum offer.

Model policies have not been produced as they cannot include every Centres operating circumstances.

Additional support can be provided to the development of the policies and procedures by OCN staff.

It is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that:

- Policies and procedures are appropriate to the size and curriculum offer of the Centre.
- Policies and procedures are communicated to all staff and supported by the Centre management structure.
- A system is in place for regular review and evaluation of Centre policies and procedures.
- There is compliance to NOCNs published policies and procedures.

7.1 Access to Fair Assessment Statement

Scope

Fair assessment is the process by which assessments within qualifications/courses/units can be designed to give all candidates the fairest possible opportunities to show attainment.

NOCN Centre Handbook

Centre Recognition Policies: Guidance



The groups which need to be included

In the context of externally accredited provision the policy will need to make reference to the following groups:

- Learners.
- Tutor/Assessors.
- Internal Verifiers.
- Awarding body personnel.

The principles

The policy will need to make reference to the following types of NOCN provision where applicable:

- NOCN nationally accredited Qualifications.
- NOCN nationally accredited Qualifications with External Assessment.
- Internally devised assessment.
- Locally accredited courses and units.

In designing an assessment strategy and/or individual assessment tasks the following principles will need to be included:

- Reliability.
- Validity.
- Fitness for purpose.
- Transparency.
- Recognises and respects equality and diversity.

Sources of further information

NOCN

- NOCN Qualification guides
- NOCN Centre Handbook
- Assessment definitions
- NOCN Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

Website: www.nocn.org.uk

OCNs

Guidance on assessment principles and practices.

NOCN Centre Handbook

Centre Recognition Policies: Guidance



Ofqual

Provides guidance for awarding bodies on ensuring that fair assessment is built into their qualifications. For internally assessed qualifications assessors should ensure that they are aware of the principles.

See Fair Access by Design

<http://www.qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/rtf062656-fair-access-by-design-for-vocational-qualifications.doc>

7.2 Appeals procedure for candidates

Scope

An appeal is a procedure through which a Centre may be challenged on the outcome of an enquiry about results or, where appropriate, other procedural decisions affecting an individual candidate.

A complaint is where a criticism of the services a Centre provides is received, when a reply is expected and there is an expectation that things need changing.

The groups which need to be included

The procedure will only cover candidates.

The principles

In developing a Centre Appeal's procedure, the following principles should be addressed:

- Format of the submission of the Appeal (this would normally be written).
- Assessment outcome appeals will investigate the procedures followed and will not include a review of candidates work.
- Retention of candidate documentation during Appeal procedure.
- Expected timescales for responding to candidates.
- The stages in the procedure clearly set out.
- Candidate to refer to third party in case of unresolved Appeals e.g. Awarding Body Appeal's policy and procedures.

Sources of further information

NOCN

- NOCN Enquiries, Appeals and Complaints Policy: Procedures for Dealing with Enquiries about Results for NOCN Qualifications

NOCN Centre Handbook

Centre Recognition Policies: Guidance



- NOCN Enquiries, Appeals and Complaints Policy: NOCN Arrangements for Considering Appeals and Complaints concerning NOCN Qualifications and Units of NOCN Qualifications

Website: www.nocn.org.uk

OCNs

Guidance on assessment principles and practices.

7.3 Complaints procedure

Scope

A complaint is where a criticism of the services a Centre provides is received, when a reply is expected and there is an expectation that things need changing.

An appeal is a procedure through which a Centre may be challenged on the outcome of an enquiry about results or, where appropriate, other procedural decisions affecting an individual candidate.

The groups which need to be included

The procedure will cover:

- Candidates.
- Candidates' relatives.
- Centre staff.
- Employers.

The principles

The following principles should be incorporated into a Centre's Complaints procedure:

- Responsibility within the Centre.
- How Complaints should be submitted.
- How the Complaint should be set out.
- Timescale for the Complaint.
- Set out the Stages of the procedure, for example three stages:
 - To staff directly involved.
 - Formal investigation.
 - Third party appeal.

NOCN Centre Handbook

Centre Recognition Policies: Guidance



- Response timescales.
- Outcomes of the complaint e.g. upheld or not.

Sources of further information

NOCN

- NOCN Enquiries, Appeals and Complaints Policy: Procedures for Dealing with Enquiries about Results for NOCN Qualifications
- NOCN Enquiries, Appeals and Complaints Policy: NOCN Arrangements for Considering Appeals and Complaints concerning NOCN Qualifications and Units of NOCN Qualifications

Website: www.nocn.org.uk

OCNs

- OCN Complaints policy

7.4 Disability Discrimination Policy

Scope

The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, makes it illegal to discriminate against disabled persons who fall under the definition of the act and that they are treated fairly and equally. The act places specific emphasis upon disabled persons within educational establishments.

The groups which need to be included

The policy will need to address all groups and prospective groups which may be in contact with the Centre. It is the Centre's responsibility to identify the appropriate groups.

The principles

A Centre's Disability and Discrimination policy will need to set out the arrangements and management structure that will operate to ensure that it meets its responsibilities as set out in the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995.

NOCN Centre Handbook

Centre Recognition Policies: Guidance



Sources of further information

Department for Work and Pensions

The Department for Work and Pensions provides guidance to employers on meeting their responsibilities in respect of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995.

Publication: Adjusting for Better Business.

Website: www.dwp.gov.uk/employers/dda

7.5 Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy

Scope

An Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy:

- States your values on equality and diversity (fairness) and how they will be put into practice.
- Shows your learners, staff, potential recruits and customers that you are serious about fairness and helps them understand:
 - What behaviour you expect and what is not acceptable;
 - What they can expect of you.
- Helps win business. Public sector and other large organisations may take equality policies into account when awarding contracts.
- Underpins your action plan.
- Helps you comply with the law.

The groups which need to be included

The policy will need to address all groups and prospective groups which may be in contact with the Centre. It is the Centre's responsibility to identify the appropriate groups.

The principles

The Centre policy should relate to your organisation's size and make-up and the nature of your business. The opening section of your policy should contain:

- A statement of your aim to encourage, value and manage diversity.
- Your commitment to providing equality for all.

NOCN Centre Handbook

Centre Recognition Policies: Guidance



- Your wish to attain a workforce that is representative of the communities from which it is drawn.

You should then identify the areas of discrimination that you will counter, usually:

- Gender (including sex, marriage, gender re-assignment).
- Race (including ethnic origin, colour, nationality and national origin).
- Disability.
- Sexual orientation.
- Religion or belief.
- Age.

All of these are covered by law; there may be other categories that are relevant to your organisation or local circumstances.

Sources of further information

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Website: www.equalityhumanrights.com

ACAS

Provides advice and guidance to employers to meet their legal responsibilities in respect of the law.

Website: www.acas.org.uk

7.6 Health and Safety policy

Background

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 sets out that

“Except in such cases as may be prescribed, it shall be the duty of every employer to prepare and as often as may be appropriate revise a written statement of his general policy with respect to the health and safety at work of his employees and the organisation and arrangements for the time being in force for carrying out that policy, and to bring the statement and any revision of it to the notice of all his employees.”

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Sources of further information

Health and Safety Executive

Provides guidance to employers to ensure that they meet their responsibilities in respect of Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, 1974.

Website: www.hse.gov.uk

7.7 Internal Verification policy

Scope

An effective Internal Verification system ensures assessment practices and decisions are regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure the validity of the award of credit.

The groups which need to be included

A Centre's Internal Verification policy will need to cover:

- Candidates.
- Tutors.
- Assessors.
- Internal Verifiers.
- Awarding body staff.

The principles

A Centre's Internal Verification policy will set out the Centre's arrangements and management structure to ensure its effectiveness. Areas to address include:

- Role of Internal Verifier.
- Model of Internal Verification.
- Planning Internal Verification.
- Sampling assessment.
- Centre standardisation.
- Record keeping.

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Sources of further information

NOCN

- NOCN Centre Handbook provides guidance on Internal Verification systems.

OCNs

OCN staff can provide support to Centres developing their Internal Verification systems and provide introductory and refresher training for Internal Verifiers.

7.8 Malpractice Procedure

Scope

Malpractice is defined as any deliberate activity, neglect, default or other practice that compromises the integrity of the assessment process, and/or the validity of certificates. Malpractice may include a range of issues from the failure to maintain appropriate records or systems to the deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates.

Failure to deal with identified issues may in itself constitute malpractice.

The groups which need to be included

The procedure to investigate cases of Suspected Malpractice must include the following groups within a Recognised Centre:

- Learner malpractice.
- Centre staff malpractice.

The principles

The fundamental principle of investigations is to conduct them in a fair, reasonable and legal manner, ensuring that all relevant evidence is considered without bias.

The process of investigation will be conducted in accordance with regard to:

- Confidentiality.
- Retention.
- Evidence storage.
- Conclusions reached.

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Sources of further information

NOCN

- NOCN Centre Handbook
- NOCN Code of Practice Suspected Malpractice

Ofqual

Ofqual provides guidance to awarding bodies who find it necessary to investigate allegations of significant malpractice by those involved in the delivery of qualifications. The principles apply to all regulated qualifications.

http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/qca-06-2662_suspected-malpractice-guidance-for-awarding-bodies.pdf

7.9 Policy on checking criminal records

Background

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), an Executive Agency of the Home Office, provides wider access to criminal record information through its Disclosure service. This service enables organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to make safer recruitment decisions by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially that involve children or vulnerable adults. The CRB was established under Part V of the Police Act 1997 and was launched in March 2002.

The groups which need to be included

In the context of OCN accredited provision the policy will need to make reference to all types of Centre staff.

The principles

Centres, depending on their target learners, will need to consider the need for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosures depending whether individuals will be involved in working with children and adults.

The policy will need to set down the arrangements that the Centre intends to operate.

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Sources of further information

Criminal Records Bureau

Further guidance can be obtained from the Criminal Records Bureau website at

Website: www.crb.gov.uk.

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Glossary of Terminology



8. Glossary of Terminology

Terms	Description
Accreditation	Confirmation that learners evidence meets the assessment criteria.
Accreditation of prior learning (APL)	The process of identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of prior learning and achievement.
Accreditation of prior experiential and learning (APEL)	The process that enables people of all ages, backgrounds and attitudes to receive formal recognition for skills and knowledge they already possess. A person's learning and experience can be formally recognised.
Appeal	An appeal is a procedure through which an Awarding Body/Centre may be challenged on the outcome of an enquiry about results or, where appropriate, other procedural decisions affecting an individual candidate.
Approved Internal Verifier Status (AIVS)	AIVS is the mechanism whereby the OCN approves named individuals to authorise the award of credit for specific courses at a Recognised Centre. Please note that AIVS cannot currently be applied to Access to HE provision.
Assessment	The process of making judgements about the extent to which a learner's work meets the assessment criteria for a unit or part of a unit. Formative assessment provides feedback to learners to help improve their performance/achievement. Summative assessment takes place at the end of a defined period of learning.
Assessment criteria	The requirements that learners need to meet in order to achieve success for a unit or part of a unit.
Assessment evidence	Proof that the learner has achieved or is working towards the achievement of assessment criteria. Satisfactory evidence for all assessment criteria enables the Internal and External Verifier to confirm the award of credit.
Assessor	The person who assesses a learners work.
Awarding Body	An organisation that awards qualifications. An Awarding Body must meet the criteria laid down by the Qualifications Regulators e.g. Ofqual.
Benchmark assessment	Provides a set of tasks that should be used to assess the unit. Tasks can be designed by the Centre, but these must use the benchmark assessments as a guide and must cover all the assessment criteria.
Centre recognition	A process through which a Centre wishing to offer accreditation is confirmed as being able to maintain the required quality and consistency of assessment and comply with other expectations of the Awarding Body.
Certification	The procedure by which NOCN recognises the award of credit to learners and issues certificates and credit transfers.
Course approval	The process by which OCN's approve coherently organised units into a course, submitted by NOCN Recognised Centres.

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Terms	Description
Credit	An award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of the designated learning outcomes in a unit.
Credit accumulation	The process of putting together a combination of credits to meet the achievement requirements of the qualification.
Credit transfer	The process of using credit or credits awarded in the context of one qualification towards the achievement requirements of another qualification.
Credit target	Is the achievement aim for learners taking a course.
Credit value	Is the measurement of notional time that a learner, on average, will take to achieve the learning outcomes in the unit. Credit value is calculated in terms of total learning time and can be made up of contact and self study time. 1 credit = 10 notional hours of learning.
Criterion reference assessment	The setting of an assessment where achievement is measured against approved assessment criteria.
Curriculum plan	NOCN document that sets out to give an understanding and agreement regarding which qualifications/courses and units a Recognised Centre will be running, to give an indication of the business relationship with the Centre and inform the Quality Improvement Plan.
Direct claims status	Provides a Recognised Centre the ability to claim certification from OCN. Status conferred on Recognised Centres who have AIVS and operate robust internal quality assurance systems.
E learning	Is a general term used to refer to computer enhanced learning. It is used interchangeably in so many contexts that it is critical to be clear what one means when one speaks of 'eLearning'. It is commonly associated with the field of advanced learning technology (ALT), which deals with both the technologies and associated methodologies in learning using networked and/or multimedia technologies.
Evidence portfolio	An evidence portfolio is usually a file or folder in which evidence is presented for assessment. An index should be included showing where each evidence requirement has been met.
External assessment	A form of independent assessment, where assessment tasks are set (externally to the Centre) and a learner's work is assessed by the Awarding Body. This can either be internally or externally marked depending on the qualification assessment specification.
Functional skills	Functional skills are the core elements of English, Mathematics and ICT, which provide the essential knowledge, skills and understanding needed to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work.
Guided learning hours (GLH)	The number of hours of teacher-supervised or directed study time required to teach a qualification, or unit of a qualification.
Information, advice and guidance (IAG)	Service provided to all individuals on appropriate job roles, career paths and development opportunities.

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Terms	Description
Intended credit value (ICV)	The total number of credits a learner would be awarded for full achievement of a particular course.
Internal verifier (IV)	An individual appointed by the Centre to ensure accurate and consistent standards of assessment, between assessors operating within a Centre.
Level	An indication of the relative demand, complexity and/or depth of achievement and/or the autonomy of the learner in demonstrating achievement.
Level descriptors	A set of statements that enable achievements to be located at a particular level in the framework.
Learning outcomes	Express the knowledge, skills and understanding learners are expected to acquire.
Malpractice	Any deliberate activity, neglect, default or other practice that compromises the integrity of the assessment process, and/or the validity of certificates. Malpractice may include a range of issues from the failure to maintain appropriate records or systems to the deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates. Failure to deal with identified issues may in itself constitute malpractice.
Mandatory units	Are units through which credit must be achieved in order to meet the requirements for the qualification.
National Occupational Standards (NOS)	Statements which describe the outcomes of competent work in an occupational field. NOS's are developed and recognised by Sector Skills Councils or recognised bodies.
National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	Defined by Ofqual it sets out the levels against which a qualification can be recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It helps learners make informed decisions about the qualifications they want to pursue, by comparing the levels of different qualifications and identifying different progression routes.
New Course Notification Form	NOCN form which sets out which units of assessment a Recognised Centre will be using on a particular course.
Optional units	Units that learners may select in order to achieve credits that meet the requirements of the qualification.
Policy	A policy provides the principles and system on which procedures can be built, it is fixed and concise. A policy reflects philosophy, values and fundamental aims. A policy tends to be established and agreed at a higher executive or managerial level.
Procedures	A set of step by step instructions to enable a task or job to be completed.
Quality reviewer (QR)	OCN role responsible for the quality auditing of Centres on behalf of NOCN.
Quality systems	An umbrella term that includes the key aspects of the way in which a Centre is operated.

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Glossary of Terminology



Terms	Description
Qualification guides	Published by NOCN, the qualification guides set out the quality assurance arrangements for nationally accredited qualifications.
Recommendation for the Award of Credit (RAC)	The OCN form on which Centres indicate the achievement of their learners.
Recognised Centre	A process through which a Centre wishing to offer accreditation is confirmed as being able to maintain the required quality and consistency of assessment and comply with other expectations of the Awarding Body.
Rules of combination	A description of the credit accumulation requirements for the achievement of a named qualification.
Sector	Defined by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authorities break down of sectors.
Standardisation	A process to ensure that the assessment criteria for a qualification, unit or part of a unit are applied consistently by assessors and verifiers. Standardisation is carried out within Centres as well as across Centres.
Unit	The smallest part of learning that can be accredited in its own right. Units may be designed as part of a qualification or designed independently. Units do not have to be taught or delivered as discrete entities.
Unit Code	NOCN assigned unique code for a unit.
Unit Title	Must be relevant, clear and unambiguous and reflect the content of the unit.

Organisations involved

Terms	Description
Learning and Skills Council (LSC)	Responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training in England. www.lsc.gov.uk
Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK)	The Sector Skills Council responsible for the professional development of all those working in community learning and development; further education; higher education; libraries, archives and information services; and work-based learning. http://www.lluk.org/
National Open College Network (NOCN)	National recognised Awarding Body, offering wide range of accreditation credit based units and qualifications. www.nocn.org.uk
Open College Network (OCN)	Delivery organisations operating under licence arrangements from NOCN. There are nine OCNs across England, one in Wales and one in Northern Ireland. Most OCNs are recognised as Access Validating Agencies (AVA), licensed by QAA.

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Terms	Description
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)	Government appointed body responsible for qualifications in England. http://www.qca.org.uk/
Quality Assurance Authority (QAA)	An independent body funded from subscriptions from UK universities and colleges of higher education and through contracts with the main UK higher education funding bodies. www.qaa.ac.uk
Quality Improvement Agency (QIA)	Is a non-departmental public body and the successor to the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA). Like the LSDA, it is a charity. Its role is to work across the learning and skills sector to improve performance. www.qia.org
Standards Verification UK Ltd (SVUK)	Responsible for endorsing initial teacher training qualifications and approving specialist qualifications for teachers of ESOL, literacy and numeracy in the learning and skills sector in England. www.standardsverificationuk.org
Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)	Are employer-led, independent organisations that cover a specific sector across the UK. There four key goals are: to reduce skills gaps and shortages; improve productivity, business and public service performance; increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce; improve learning supply including apprenticeships, higher education and National Occupational Standards (NOS).