

NOCN Centre Recognition Policy

1. Scope

This policy covers NOCN requirements for Centre approval. All UK and International Centres wishing to become approved by NOCN must meet the requirements of the policy, and for NOCN regulated UK and international qualifications including those entitled NOCN_Cskills Awards, meet the Requirements for Approved Centres. This policy also covers non-regulated provision including endorsed programmes.

NOCN set out full details of the Terms and Conditions within the Centre Agreement and Terms and Conditions document. Centres are provided with a copy of this for information purposes at the time of an application for approval.

NOCN have adopted a risk based approach to Centre monitoring and approved and active Centres will be monitored not less than twice a year to ensure compliance with the policy. Failure to meet the requirements of the policy will result in the Centre receiving corrective actions and sanctions, weighted on the severity of non-compliance.

The intended audience for this document is:

- NOCN Directors and Board of Trustees
- NOCN Core and Associate staff
- All staff of NOCN Delivery Partners associated with NOCN provision
- All staff in NOCN recognised and partner Centres
- Qualification Regulators¹
- Industry Regulators

2. Policy Requirements

All Centres wishing to offer NOCN regulated UK and international qualifications, including those entitled NOCN_Cskillsawards, and NOCN endorsed programmes must go through a centre recognition process before it is permitted to deliver and assess NOCN qualifications and endorsed programmes. Centres must not promote NOCN products or start delivery without confirmation of approved status from NOCN.

NOCN will consider applications from all Centres.

Centres will be required to fully complete and submit a Centre Recognition application form. As part of the application process, Centres must provide NOCN with:

- A named point of contact that has overall accountability for the management of the Centre and quality assurance.

¹ Ofqual in England; Qualifications Wales; CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland

- Confirmation that they adhere to the relevant laws and acts of the United Kingdom or other regulatory jurisdiction as appropriate
- Details of recognition or qualification approval by any other Awarding Organisation, including any sanctions or restrictions that may have been imposed on them within the last 18 months. Please note, if the Centre has had approval withdrawn by another Awarding Organisation, then NOCN will not progress the application.
- Expected number of Learners annually
- Details of all locations/sites the Centre intends to use (Note: these will be extensions of the main Centre and not considered to have their own NOCN centre number)
- Details of any partnership arrangements that are in place, including identification of the roles and responsibility for Quality Assurance. Note that NOCN will hold the recognised centre wholly responsible for such arrangements.
- Confirmation that the Centre has all required policies and or documents in place and that they have arrangements and resource to ensure these can be communicated across the Centre and any partner sites/organisations.
- Confirmation, and evidence of, required insurance policies.
- Details of all delivery and quality assurance staff for the qualifications/programmes they are seeking approval for. It is the Centre's responsibility to have completed relevant checks on their staff to ensure they meet the qualification requirements. NOCN retain the right to request, if required for specific regulatory purposes copies of all relevant CVs, Continuous Professional Development activity and relevant qualification certificates.
- Evidence that the Centre has systems in place to track the progress of Learners towards their chosen qualification, units or programme.
- Evidence that the Centre has arrangements and procedures in place to identify Recognised Prior Learning (RPL)
- Evidence to support Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), identification of learning needs and initial assessment arrangements, if required.

NOCN will conduct due diligence checks on the Centre applying for recognition and on any partner organisations, where applicable. This will include checks on the Centre staff and credit checks on the organisation. Where Centres fail to meet NOCN credit requirements, they may be declined. Where Centres do not meet the requirements for the qualification/product, the application may be declined or deferred. Where NOCN identify other factors, which are considered high risk, the application may be declined.

Where a decision is made to decline a Centre's application for approval, an appeal cannot be made. NOCN may state that an approval visit is required as part of the recognition process. There will be a charge for this, which is non-refundable.

3. Applying for Centre Recognition

All Centres must complete and submit a Centre Recognition application form. Applications must confirm that the Centre has policies and procedures in place which define the quality assurance at the Centre and which support NOCN's regulatory requirements. Centres must be able to evidence this during the application and/or during an approval visit.

If a Centre commences an application, but has not provided all required information to support the application **within 2 months** of the form being made available, then the application will be automatically closed.

The point at which a visit takes place is determined by a risk assessment of the Centre. The criteria upon which these judgements are made will include a Centre's experience, expertise, association and performance with other recognised awarding organisations and the qualifications, units and/or endorsed programmes approval is being sought for.

An approval visit will not be conducted until the appropriate fee has been paid. Invoices must be paid **within 30 days** of the invoice date. If the invoice is not paid, the application will be declined and automatically closed.

4. Centre Recognition Approval Visits

All Centre Recognition Approval visits will be arranged in advance with the Centre Contact and conducted by an NOCN External Quality Assurer (EQA) or member of the Assurance Team. NOCN reserves the right to still charge for any pre-arranged visit that a Centre cancels without reasonable notice.

The purpose of the visit will be to review all policies and processes, training materials and resources, meet with staff and seek assurance that the Centre is able to operate and maintain a robust quality system. The Centre will be advised before the visit what the EQA will want to sample and see and it will be the Centre Contact's responsibility to ensure that everything is made available

Where a Centre have not been able to demonstrate that requirements are being met in full a recommendation will be made by the EQA on whether to agree an action plan or decline the application. If further work is required before approval can be given, an action plan will be made available **within 5 working days** of the approval visit. This will provide the Centre with clear guidance and advice and realistic timescales for the actions to be completed.

Centres will not be able to register any Learners, or promote the NOCN approved status, until the action plan has been completed fully and full approval has been granted by the NOCN Assurance Team. If Centres do not complete the action plan by the agreed timescales, the application will be declined and closed.

Where the EQA recommends the application is refused, the Centre Contact will be notified **within 5 working days** of the visit date, by the Head of Assurance.

Where the EQA has recommended approval, the Centre will be provided with a summary of the feedback **within 5 working days** of the visit. There may be instances where all the requirements are not met but the fundamental principles of training and assessment are not affected, and so the Centre may still be granted approval and given actions to complete.

Once the NOCN Assurance Team has granted approval to the Centre, the Centre will be allocated a Customer Co-ordinator, who will provide information, support and guidance regarding the registration, awards and quality assurance processes. Centres will be contacted **within 5 working days** of the approval.

5. Centre Approval and Continuation of Recognised Status

Centres will be advised of the agreed Credit Terms by the NOCN Finance Department in accordance with NOCN's Policy.

Once a Centre has been recognised and approved by NOCN, they will be required to sign a Centre Agreement and Terms and Conditions. The Agreement sets out the terms of approval and the joint commitment to the interests of Learners and protection of NOCN qualifications, units and endorsed programmes. Once an Agreement has been received, Centres may commence Learner registration. No registrations will be permitted without an Agreement being in place.

All Centres will be subject to Centre monitoring. The NOCN Assurance Team will monitor Centre adherence to the Centre Agreement and Terms and Conditions.

If Centres do not register any Learners for a 2-year period, the approved status will be removed and Centres will be required to go through the recognition process again, for which there will be a charge.

Centres must ensure that they register Learners within the required timescales, or they will find they will be subject to late registration fees and sanctions.

No Learners should be recruited onto qualifications or programmes for which approval has not been granted.

6. Centre Withdrawal

NOCN recognise that there are three main reasons for Centre withdrawal:

1. **Voluntary withdrawal** – when a Centre states that it no longer wishes to deliver NOCN qualifications and wishes to renounce its Centre recognition status.
2. **Involuntary withdrawal** – when NOCN or Delivery Partner terminate its agreement with a Centre for quality or compliance reasons (Level 5 Sanction).
3. **Cessation of Trading** – when a Centre ceases to operate and can therefore no longer offer NOCN qualifications.

In the case of voluntary withdrawal, the Centre must give NOCN at least one month's written notice of their intention to withdraw. They must put appropriate plans in place to allow for claims for achievement for which may be entitled to and ensure Learners are not disadvantaged. The Centre must also pay any outstanding debts. The Centre must also remove references to NOCN and/or Cskills awards.

If a Centre makes the decision to renounce its recognised status, they will be required to go through the Centre recognition process again if they choose to offer NOCN and/or Cskills awards products after one year of renouncing its recognition status.

NOCN may terminate the Centre Agreement in the following situations:

- Where a Level 5 sanction has been imposed.
- Where new Centres do not enrol any learners for a two-year period.
- Where Centres do not pay the annual fee.

Please refer to **NOCN Centre Withdrawal Policy**.

7. Quality Assurance

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. Next review date: April 2019

Version	Approved by	Date	Next Review Date
1.1	GHE	March 2018	April 2019